The IBMR in Retrospect and Prospect as an Editor Retires

The roots of the International Bulletin of Missionary Research stretch back to 1928, when Charles H. Fah at the Missionary Research Library (MRL) in New York City launched the Bulletin from the Missionary Research Library. Though financial crises in the early 1930s necessitated its suspension, the Bulletin was resuscitated by R. Pierce Beaver in March 1950, two years after his appointment as director of the library.

By 1960 the journal—now titled the Occasional Bulletin from the Missionary Research Library—had a paid circulation of approximately 800. Frank Wilson Price succeeded Beaver in 1956, and in 1961 was in turn succeeded by Herbert C. Jackson. By 1966 support for the MRL had dried up, and circulation of the Occasional Bulletin had dwindled to under 300.

In 1973 Beaver came out of retirement to become director of the Overseas Ministries Study Center (OMSC) in Ventnor, New Jersey. He was succeeded by his enterprising young associate, Gerald H. Anderson, on July 1, 1976. With his usual prescience, Anderson had proposed that OMSC assume responsibility for the Occasional Bulletin. His offer was accepted, and the journal—then renamed Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research—has been at OMSC ever since.

Contd next page
“Heritage with a Future,” announced the inaugural editorial. The lead article was a succinct but masterful overview of the journal’s history by Pierce Beaver, “The Missionary Research Library and the Occasional Bulletin” (vol. 1, no. 1 [January 1977]: 2–4).1 Given Anderson’s skillful editorship and international network, the journal thrived as never before, becoming genuinely international. Subscriptions climbed to a peak of 8,691 in April 1987. Who could have dared to hope that despite its exceedingly modest beginnings the Occasional Bulletin would become the premier journal in its field? The first issue contained 32 pages and featured book reviews, book notes, and dissertation notices—still staples in every issue.2 To reflect the journal’s wider scope and growing stature, it became, from January 1981, the INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN OF MISSIONARY RESEARCH.

When I became editor in July 2000, the volume of good material crossing my desk far exceeded the journal’s self-imposed 48-page delimitation. Accordingly, an additional 8 pages were added, beginning in October 2004. The October 2008 issue expanded to 64 pages, with subsequent issues running either 56 or 64 pages. Although circulation figures were still strong, the handwriting was on the wall for print journals such as the IBMR, and subscriber numbers slowly but inexorably dwindled.

At the end of that decade, the editors made a momentous decision. The idea that the IBMR was a print journal available online to subscribers was turned on its head. As of January 2010, the IBMR became a freely accessible online journal with a print option. While print journal subscribers would continue to pay an annual fee, anyone online could access current and back issues of both the IBMR and the Occasional Bulletin, as far back as March 1950.

The strong growth of the IBMR’s subscriber base since this change has affirmed this editorial decision. The journal now counts more than 13,500 subscribers in 170 countries. It continues to be the “go to” publication for scholars and practitioners whose academic interests and professional vocations intersect with Christian mission and world Christianity, and whose natural instinct is to search online.

It has been an extraordinary privilege to work with Robert T. Coote and Dwight P. Baker as associate editors. Most of the credit for the journal’s solid reputation must surely be attributed to them. Both men were an editor’s dream, as a good many contributors during my watch will attest! As I depart, it is with great satisfaction and no little confidence that I turn over the reins to Dr. J. Nelson Jennings. Jennings, who will become the executive director of the Overseas Ministries Study Center on July 1, brings to the task experience as a missionary and theological educator, a superb academic background, and several years as editor of Missiology: An International Review.

I would be remiss if I failed to express my appreciation to the scores of scholars all over the world who have expressed confidence in the IBMR by contributing articles that present the results of rigorous research, by reviewing books, and by serving as peer-reviewers for articles submitted. Acknowledgment is also due to our contributing editors, usually in the wings, but rallied every year to help the editors select fifteen outstanding books for mission studies. As I retire to Winnipeg, Canada, in July, I will join their ranks as a senior contributing editor.

Long may the IBMR thrive!

—Jonathan J. Bonk

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The Last Great Frontier: Currents in Resurgence, Convergence, and Divergence of Religion

Lamin Sanneh

In the minds of many, the events of 9/11 are associated with the unwelcome return of religion on the assumption that modern society has outgrown the religious habit, and what remains of religion can be reduced to polite weekend ceremonies for the recovering few. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 signaled the triumph of the liberal West, leading Francis Fukuyama to venture a triumphalist thesis about “The End of History and the Last Man,” the title of his popular 1992 book. Few observers exempted the Muslim world from the new secular alignment of world order in spite of the Iranian revolution of 1979 and its widening repercussions around the world. After all, Europe could now resume its march toward a new dawn of freedom and prosperity unimpeded by the Cold War. President George H. W. Bush had an intuitive sense of an unfolding watershed in the new world order but balked at venturing a prescription for the shape it would or should take. In retrospect his hesitation seems uncannily prescient in view of the subsequent turmoil.¹

Religion and Huntington’s Thesis

From another direction, hidden currents were meanwhile stirring the waters of the coming global cultural shift that would not spare the West. Such was the assessment of Samuel Huntington, who issued a sobering rejoinder in his book The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order (1996). This volume tempered the heady confidence of Fukuyama’s secular prognosis by arguing that new cultural fault lines are about to emerge threatening global stability. The assumption of Fukuyama and of others that the collapse of Soviet Communism has left Western liberal democracy in uncontested control of the field, Huntington argues, is false because there are outstanding ideologies that contest Western dominance, including divergent and hostile religious traditions. Muslims, Chinese, and Indians, Huntington argues, are not all suddenly going to fall into line behind Western liberalism. “The more fundamental divisions of humanity in terms of ethnicity, religions, and civilizations remain and spawn new conflicts.”²

The issue that in equal measure galvanized and jostled Huntington concerned religion—more precisely, the appeal to new assertive forms of religious activism and identity. The issue of identity in terms of self-avowal and belonging, according to Huntington, is fundamentally a religious question, and for people caught in the currents of change and challenge, “religion provides compelling answers, and religious groups provide small social communities to replace those lost through urbanization.”³ In that sense secularization acts as a mediation of religion.

Huntington’s argument has been an unexpected boon for political science, and in an earlier book, The Third Wave,⁴ he explores with growing confidence the subject of religion in international affairs. By the response to Huntington and by other indications, it was becoming crystal clear by the end of the twentieth century that neither accelerating secularization nor the rapid collapse of the colonial empires overcome by the surge of nationalist movements had been the decisive setback for religion that everyone expected, leaving observers in turn surprised and disappointed. A sign of the consternation was in the form of a letter I received from the Russian Academy of Sciences in the early 1990s, inviting me to a conference it was convening on the topic “the problem of religion.” The expectation that scientific socialism had eradicated religion was found to be unrealistic. Instead, religion had survived the Soviet Empire and was thriving in the most unlikely of places—among student groups and in house fellowships that had spilled over into the empty stadiums designed for party rallies. Why was this the case, and why was it missed by experienced observers?

With its hints alternately of alarm and incredulity, the title of the conference was proof that the organizers were in what classical Islam would call “a state between two states” (manzila bayna manzilatayn), neither nearly persuaded of the truth of religion nor completely dismissive of the fact of its return. Standing amid the debris of the collapsed Soviet Empire, the organizers were disconcerted by the fact of religion, against all odds, having made a comeback. Hence the problem.

Religion—the Facts and the Explanation

The facts, though, seem impressive enough. The total world population in 1900 was 1.6 billion; Muslims numbered just below 200 million, Christians 558 million. In 1970 total world population was 3.7 billion with a Muslim population of 577 million and Christians at 1.2 billion. By 2013, of the world’s 7.1 billion population, Muslims numbered 1.6 billion and Christians 2.4 billion, including 1.2 billion Catholics. Buddhists and Hindus remained stable, with natural increase rather than conversion accounting for growth. In 1970 there were 235.1 million Buddhists, in 2000 the number was 448.3 million, and in 2013, 509.7 million, showing an annual growth rate of 0.99 percent. Over 90 percent of the Buddhists were in Asia. Hindus in 1970 were 463.2 million, in 2000, 825.0 million, and in 2013, 982.3 million, also concentrated mainly in the Indian subcontinent. The annual growth rate there was 3.15 percent.⁵ The statistics for one twelve-month period during the early phase of the return of religion showed that 25 million people changed their religious affiliation, of whom 18 million were converts to Christianity and 7 million defectors from Christianity to other religions, making Christianity the most active and most diverse religious frontier in the world.⁶

Religious expansion in Africa entered its most vigorous phase in the period following the end of the colonial and missionary era, with the pace not abating in the midst of the postcolonial debacle. In 1900 the Muslim population of Africa was 34.5 million, compared to roughly 9.9 million Christians, a

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ratio of 3.5:1.7 By 1985 Christians outnumbered Muslims for the first time. Of the continent’s total population of 520 million in that year, Christians (including self-styled evangelicals) numbered 236 million, compared to about 216 million Muslims. In 2000, Christians in Africa grew to 360 million, with 317 million Muslims, concentrated mostly in the Arabic-speaking regions of Egypt and North Africa, and in West Africa. Projections for 2025 are 634 million Christians and 519 million Muslims. The Christian figures represent a continental shift of historic proportions.9 Thus, 67 percent of the world’s Christians were far fewer than the 1.6 billion for the rest of the world. By 2013, Europe and North America’s 790 million of the world’s Christians, compared to 130.2 million for the rest

Charismatic Christianity has been the driving engine of expansion, and is largely responsible for the dramatic shift in the religion’s center of gravity. In 1900 there were 981,000 Pentecostals; in 1970, over 62 million; and in 2013, over 628 million. Projections estimate that by 2025, Pentecostals/Charismatics will number 828 million.10 Now exploding in Brazil, Mexico, Russia, and China, Pentecostal Christianity may become the most widespread form of the religion, with uncertain effects on mainline churches and on global politics.11 As David Martin has shown, in Latin America the prominence of women Pentecostals has affected the machismo culture of the traditional military establishment.12 Female politicians are accordingly drawing on the energy of the Pentecostal movement to effect social change. Pentecostalism is also riding the wave of Latin American demographic flows, including immigration into the United States. Of the 37 million Latino immigrants in the United States, the vast majority are Pentecostal, with a strong Catholic overlay.13 Their convergence with U.S. evangelical groups, such as the Christian Coalition, the preachers of a health-and-wealth

**Statistical Summary Tables**

Table 1. **Worldwide Religious Profile**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious group</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1970</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2025 (projected)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buddhists</td>
<td>127.0 million</td>
<td>235.1 million</td>
<td>448.3 million</td>
<td>509.7 million</td>
<td>561.4 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>558.1 million</td>
<td>1.2 billion</td>
<td>2.0 billion</td>
<td>2.4 billion</td>
<td>2.7 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>203.0 million</td>
<td>463.2 million</td>
<td>825.0 million</td>
<td>982.3 million</td>
<td>1.1 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>199.8 million</td>
<td>577.2 million</td>
<td>1.3 billion</td>
<td>1.6 billion</td>
<td>2.0 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostals/Charismatics</td>
<td>981,000</td>
<td>62.7 million</td>
<td>459.8 million</td>
<td>628.2 million</td>
<td>828.0 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World total population</td>
<td>1.6 billion</td>
<td>3.7 billion</td>
<td>6.1 billion</td>
<td>7.1 billion</td>
<td>8.0 billion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. **World Christianity: New Center of Gravity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2025 (projected)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>8.7 million</td>
<td>361.5 million</td>
<td>509.6 million</td>
<td>687.8 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>59.6 million</td>
<td>209.2 million</td>
<td>227.6 million</td>
<td>238.5 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America and Europe</td>
<td>427.9 million</td>
<td>755.3 million</td>
<td>789.9 million</td>
<td>794.5 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of the world—population</td>
<td>130.2 million</td>
<td>1.2 billion</td>
<td>1.6 billion</td>
<td>1.9 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of the world—percentage</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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*a Combined total; figures include Russia. b Christians in the world excluding North America and Europe.*

Table 3. **Africa: Comparative Strength of Christians and Muslims**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious group</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1985</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2025 (projected)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christians</td>
<td>9.9 million</td>
<td>236.3 million</td>
<td>360.2 million</td>
<td>633.8 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>34.5 million</td>
<td>215.8 million</td>
<td>317.4 million</td>
<td>519.3 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa total population</td>
<td>107.8 million</td>
<td>520.4 million</td>
<td>784.5 million</td>
<td>1.3 billion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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gospel, and the burgeoning megachurch phenomenon has raised the political stakes in mainstream America and impacted the evangelical missionary agenda.14

Radical Islam

The resurgence of religion has coincided with the growth of radical Islam to upset calculations on a different front, creating much uncertainty and instability with the outbreak of new cultural tensions and conflicts. Philip Jenkins, for example, sees a double jeopardy with the onset of new Crusades and a cultural clash with liberal Christianity.15 Radical Islam, meanwhile, has spread across national boundaries and to areas of advantage and mobility in the West, defying arguments of deprivation, geographic alienation, and lack of access as causal factors.

Many observers discern a link between intolerance and strife on the one hand and, on the other, resurgence and radicalism. Others see a civilizational threat in the return of religion, while still others regard the ferment as evidence of the ravages of rampant secularization in centers of traditional religious life, confident that the drama of radicalism is but the last gasp of religion in its dying throes. Max Weber observed that Islam is not a religion of salvation, and so dropped it in his theory of modernization.16 Yet he did not on that account say Islam had no future, which suggests that the religion can survive accelerating secularization. Thus, these scenarios of intolerance, conflict, and rampant secularism are united in the view that “the problem of religion” is capable of solution.

Islam on the Western Front

At a crucial crossroad in relations with Islam, the West has been weighing its options, as we can see in Pope Benedict XVI’s comments in Regensburg in 2006. The issue is not new, even though the consequences of misunderstanding are today far more serious. When in the 1740s Frederick the Great of Prussia formed the first lancer unit from Tatar Muslim deserters from the Russian army, with some one thousand Muslim soldiers serving in Prussia, he did so from his commitment to Enlightenment ideals of religious toleration. Frederick allocated a prayer room for the use of Muslim troops—but on Sundays! Less clumsily, Frederick later had a Muslim cemetery built in Berlin. Through ups and downs, the Muslim community survived in Germany, and after 1951 the community created an organization, Geistliche Verwaltung der Muslim Community, to administer the affairs of Muslim refugees in Germany.

The Muslim view of the state as an organ of revealed law constitutes a major obstacle in relations with the West. It confronts us with many questions: can radical outbreaks in the West be contained without risk of a fundamental diminution of human rights and a breacl of the wall of separation? Can heartland Islam be reformed from the margins of the West? What role can the West play in the liberal reconstruction of religion globally? Are governments equipped to undertake this role?

In Britain, for example, with its 1.6 million Muslims, leaders have called for Muslim representation in Parliament to be greater than the present number of four MPs. According to Tarique Ghaffur, then assistant commissioner of the Metropolitan Police and Britain’s most senior Muslim police officer, there should be twenty Muslim MPs to reflect their strength in the country.17 While acknowledging that tolerance and respect for Muslims in a post-7/7 Britain have remained higher than elsewhere in Europe, Ghaffur nevertheless noted that “British Muslims still feel more resentful, more alienated and more suspicious than Muslims polled in Germany, France and Spain.”18 Still, an official like Sir Ian Blair, London’s police commissioner, declared before the London bombings, “There is nothing wrong with being an Islamic fundamentalist. . . . Bridges will be built.”19 Bridge-building, however, acquired a challenging meaning in the aftermath of 7/7. Europe seems defensive, with Euro-secularists resolved to deploy the European Union as a barrier against the return of religion, while somewhat maladroitly backing multiculturalism.20

Religion in China

By all accounts, the religious awakening has spread to China—a surprising vector, given the country’s hard-nosed campaign of suppression of religion. The statistics at the mid-twentieth century gave little indication of future changes. In 1949, the year of the triumph of Mao Tse-tung’s Marxist-Leninist revolution, there were about 4 million Christians in China, divided between 3 million Catholics and 1 million Protestants. Mao’s antagonism to foreign agents did not spare Christianity, except briefly in the Hundred Flowers Campaign, which opened in May 1956. But a year later, in June 1957, that leniency was revoked as the Great

Leap Forward campaign was launched. Buddhist, Christian, and other religious institutions were hit by new restrictions, with religious leaders reduced to playing cat’s cradle with the overweening thicket of official decrees and measures directed at them. Starting in 1966, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution deployed 17 million urban youths as Red Guards to stalk the countryside. They wreaked widespread havoc, sacking ancient Buddhist temples and Christian churches. Alarmed by the excesses of the Red Guards, Mao tried in vain in 1968 to rein them in. It took until 1976 to quell the uprising, by which time religions had retreated to the netherworld of secret meetings, house worship, home Bible study, and nocturnal assemblies.

Religion and the triumph of Mao. Meanwhile, Western observers predicted the end of religion, saying that nothing was more apt for China than for Christianity’s god to be the one “who knew the way of the grave,”21 meaning that Christianity belonged to the grave. China’s Marxist success achieved the goals for which missions had striven in vain. Joseph Needham of the University of Cambridge, a magisterial authority on Chinese civilization, declared that China had accepted the spirit of Christ from another source, namely, from Marxism, and that “China is the only truly Christian country in the world in the present day, in spite of its absolute rejection of all religion.”22 This means that, weaned from faith in false absolutes and fortified with the aura of proletarian liberation, true believers must henceforth march to the chant of “What a comrade we have in Jesus!”

The chariot of Mao’s nationalist revolution overtook the juggernaut of nineteenth-century missionary domination of China and crushed it.
german of nineteenth-century missionary domination of China and crushed it. “Through Marxism, humanism, and pacifism, through the liberation struggles of nations, races, and other repressed groups, and now through an officially sanctioned ferment in the Churches, both Protestant and Catholic, a new perception was growing in the West that there was a larger and worthier war to wage than the Cold War. . . . What made the New China a ‘yellow peril’ to the establishments was precisely what made it a ‘Red hope’ to the alienated and [to] their counter-cultures.”

Secular pundits were equally blind to the impending changes in China. Mother Jones, advertising itself as the standard-bearer of “smart, fearless journalism,” carried a report in 1979 with the spin that the People’s Republic of China was “on the verge of breaking into industrial statehood in a big way,” to become “the world’s first post-petroleum culture.” The report said that the likelihood of Shanghai becoming the Detroit of the Far East was remote.

Amid these galloping predictions, it did not occur to observers that religion might have a future. Official Chinese vacillations toward religion, however, began to show cracks, through which the wind of change was blowing. Party cadres, now as less starry-eyed about Mao as they were less doom-and-gloom laden about religion, had come up for air and, beholding a mesmerizing world of material affluence beckoning on their horizon, began to relent. At the beginning of the government’s liberalization program in 1978, Deng Xiaoping announced an easing of restrictions on religion. The following year, to universal astonishment, Deng roused the Chinese Communist Party to “seek truth from facts,” code for deserting Mao’s legacy. That opened the way for the return of religion and seemed ample reward for the long-suffering religions. Religious institutions felt vindicated for not having hauled down their colors and for not piping to the new generation in the airs of revolutionary solidarity, in the hope that it would dance.

As the flood receded, the rock reappeared. Churches bounced back as the government made good on promises of restitution for properties seized and wrongs committed. In the revised constitution of 1982 religious rights were reaffirmed under article 36, followed by the publication of Document 19 concerning religious policy in China. The document essentially repudiated as a “leftist mistake” the excesses of the Great Cultural Revolution against religion. Churches must be rebuilt, clergy educated, and believers protected, the declaration said. Some 4,000 Protestant and 2,000 Catholic churches were thus reopened or rebuilt. It did not take long for high-ranking officials to declare open sympathy for religion, and by 1986 the thaw had created a stream of official endorsements, including subsidies for church reconstruction projects. According to a report in 2003, besides the 45,000 registered churches in existence, between 30,000 and 40,000 groups affiliated with the Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Movement were still waiting their turn to register.

External pressure on the church, combined with internal struggles between the “open” registered church as officially sanctioned and the unregistered “underground” church under papal jurisdiction, complicated the whole question of the return of religion in China. There was expansion, but it carried the double burden of secret believers assembling in unauthorized places and of officially co-opted members in licensed churches. In Global Catholicism: Portrait of a World Church, the number of Catholics in mainland China is guardedly put at 7.5 million.

The expansion pointed to the strategic role religion was poised to play in China and to qualitative shifts under way. The government had sent mixed messages, especially since the Falungong outbreak of 1999 and the publication of “Office 610,” designed to combat what the government called “evil cults.” Religious clampdown was accompanied by measured Western-style economic liberalization. Reports in 2005 spoke of some 90,000 people being baptized in the Catholic Church in 2003. But the reports also noted the caution of the bishops about the numbers. In the ferment the underlying question remained what the return of religion might mean for China’s future.

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values. For his part, Huo Shui, a former Chinese government political analyst, contends that “Christianity has finally taken root in Shenzhen—in China, the land of God.” That enthusiasm may be a reflection of the aspirations of the church under persecution more than of the reality on the ground.

New Wind of Change

A growing number of U.S.-born charismatics are being swept up in the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement. In fact, one study estimates that 54 percent of the Pentecostals practicing in America are U.S.-born, of which 24 percent are white, 29 percent Hispanic, and 35 percent black. There are said to be 59 million Pentecostals in North America. In New York City alone there are over 4,000 Pentecostal-style churches, with a membership of some 800,000. Mainline churches have responded to the awakening by embracing Pentecostalism’s intimate and earnest worship style.

In a feature article in April 2009, the New York Times gave extensive coverage to the Christian resurgence in terms of its distinctive manifestation among Africans in the United States. It places the resurgence in the wider context of the charismatic Christian renewal. The article noted that revival is a recurrent theme in Christian history.

Time after time, evangelical fervor ignites, burns itself out and then re-emerges in some altered and surprising form, in constant cycles of migration and renewal. The ferment of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation sent Puritans to New England, Quakers to Pennsylvania and Jesuits into the wilds of South America. The missionary movements of the 19th century inspired pious adventurers to travel to Africa and spread, in the famous formulation of David Livingstone, “Civilization, commerce and Christianity.” Today the process is reversing itself, as the population of churchgoers dwindles in Europe, remains fairly static in the United States and erupts in the “global south”—a geopolitical term that encompasses Africa, Latin America and much of Asia. . . . Now it appears that phenomenon is starting to manifest across a broad spectrum of Christian belief, challenging patterns of leadership and notions of religious identity that in some cases have stood for centuries.

The effects in the United States are transformative, making America the last great frontier in the expansion and renewal of the faith. Current indications are that the impetus is growing and is reshaping faith-communities.

The story is similar within the Catholic Church, the world’s largest Christian denomination. Roughly a third of the College of Cardinals currently hails from the global south, lending support to predictions that someday, perhaps quite soon, they will elect one in six of all diocesan priests, and one in three seminarians, are now foreign-born. The world’s largest Catholic seminary is in Nigeria. When I went to my childhood home in South Carolina for the holidays last year, a visiting Nigerian priest celebrated Christmas Mass at my own family’s parish, surprising his passive audience with an upbeat, stemwinding, almost evangelical homily on God’s glory.

Conclusion

In an age of globalization and advanced secularization, the return of religion and its radical strains has superseded the center-periphery historiography of postcolonial discourse, and even the secularization thesis of development theory. The spillover in the United States has established the nation as a new critical frontier of World Christianity, the proving ground of means, forms, and styles best adapted to ride the flows of global traffic and the emergence of transnational communities in multicultural neighborhoods. God, says de Tocqueville, has placed Americans upon a boundless continent, a continent designed for ambition, adventure, and enterprise. In de Tocqueville’s opinion, America provides geographical scope and warrant to religion as free enterprise suited to exploration and experiment.

In his day de Tocqueville argued with justification that America has no neighbors, or at least no pestering neighbors. The sentiment persists, if it persists at all, with a complicated nuance best expressed in the words of Arthur Bird (1899) that America is bounded on the north by the North Pole, on the south by the Antarctic, on the east by the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, and on the west by the Day of Judgment. America’s landscape and skies resonate with the beckoning impulse of endeavor as a moral cause, of new beginnings in the spirit. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Christian resurgence in Africa should thrive here with the sense of a homecoming. The New York Times article observes that the leaders of these immigrant churches are notable for their boundless confidence. “They are filled with the confidence of miraculous faith, though they realize they are contending with cultural impediments.” That upbeat outlook is the handle that fits the design of mission on the frontier of the New World.

The return of religion has superseded the center-periphery historiography of postcolonial discourse, and even the secularization thesis of development theory.

Notes
3. Ibid., 97.
Anticipation

“A Christian Perspective on the Chinese Experience,” World Pro Mundi Vita Society, The Everlasting Man [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1953], chap. 6, again “because it had a god who knew the way out of the grave” (G. K. Chesterton, who meant something entirely different by it). Christianity had had five deaths by his time, he said, and “risen faith,” up to the point that the Enlightenment to the Great War Earthly Powers: Religion and Politics in Europe modern times. See his Melanie Phillips, see “Allah’s Daughters,” trickle of British converts to Islam, including white British women; Tarique Ghaffur, “Sections of Muslim Britain in Denial about Extremism,” The New International Christians in China, 1900–1999), 7–8; available online via Google Books. 8, 2009, p. 32. Also David Aikman, “Chinese Christianity: Turning the Nation Around,” ChinaSource 5, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 1–4. Also David Aikman, Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity Is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 2003). The Christian outcome in China may be more complex, according to Choo-Seng Song, who speaks of “the cross in the lotus world,” indicating thereby the importance of the perennial Buddhist tradition (Jesus, the Crucified People [New York: Crossroad, 1990]).


Ibid.


See Arthur Bird, Looking Forward (Utica, N.Y.: L. C. Childs & Son, 1899), 7–8; available online via Google Books.

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Christian Mission in Eastern Europe

Valentin Kozhuharov

Europe’s division into East and West after World War II was conditioned by both political and ideological motives and actions. The regimes spawned by Communist ideology oppressed the peoples of Eastern Europe politically, and they also tried to eradicate all religion from people’s minds and hearts. Though the Communists never succeeded either in ideology or in the field of religion, the oppression they spread did prevent the churches of Eastern Europe, whose very existence was at stake, from undertaking any missionary activity. With the regime shifts of 1989 came changes in both ideology and religion, as the countries of Eastern Europe received both political and religious freedom. The churches in each country experienced amazing growth and expansion. But what of mission on the part of the Eastern Orthodox churches—did it expand and grow? This question is the focus of the present article.

Western Christian churches have “done mission” on a large scale (especially in the last two centuries), but the forms of mission used by Western Christians have never been part of the experience of Orthodox Christian churches. Therefore, though the 1990s saw the restoration of Orthodox churches’ ecclesiastical and spiritual life, there was not a corresponding resurgence of their mission. For an Orthodox Christian the word “mission” sounds strange, even unknown; the closest equivalent is “witness”—that is, believers bearing witness to Christ and his Good News among other nations and peoples.

Some Orthodox theologians hold that the Eastern churches have in fact carried out mission, both now and in the past, as far back as the early centuries of the Christian era. We need to understand, however, that this mission was usually done within national or other local boundaries in which an Orthodox presence already existed. The examples usually given—the Slavic missionaries Sts. Cyril and Methodius, the Russian missions of the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries, the missions to Japan, China, Korea, and so forth—represent dual missionary endeavors undertaken by the church and the emperor together, in which so-called caesaropapist relations between church and state are evident. Orthodox mission has always consisted primarily of “internal mission” on the part of the church in witnessing to the truth, not external ecclesiastical endeavors or missions in foreign lands, whether in the form of crusades or of some other sort. Examples exist of church planting done by local Orthodox churches in various countries on all continents today. But Orthodox churches’ predominant concern continues to be internal witnessing; Orthodox missionaries are mainly engaged in the work of catechizing and liturgical “planting” of the truth in people’s mind and heart.

This historic character and ethos seems to explain the fact that no substantial missionary movement has appeared within the Orthodox churches of Eastern Europe since 1989. Beneath the surface of the slow and sometimes painful restoration of church life in Eastern Europe, however, we can now see tiny mission movements taking form. These are movements that engage increasing numbers of Orthodox Christians in obeying Jesus’ call “Go therefore and make disciples” (Matt. 28:19), drawing them out of inclusion within the church’s fence and leading them to serve their society and other peoples in their own country or abroad. Although these endeavors continue to be generally overlooked by observers, they seem to be increasing pace and are becoming more evident and influential both within the church and in society. In fact, missionary movements within the Orthodox churches of Eastern Europe after 1990 may be divided into two large groups: the mission of the Russian Orthodox Church and the mission of the other Orthodox churches.

Russian Mission

The mission of the church is God’s mission, reaching out toward the whole of creation and, viewed in historical perspective, carried out in practical ways by Christians in light of their local circumstances. Since true mission is ultimately God’s, it cannot be “Greek” or “Italian” or “Russian.” Still, mission has always been done by specific national churches and is often named after one or another national or denominational trait, such as “Russian missions” or “Protestant missions.” For four centuries, until suppressed by the Communists, the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) had been carrying out typically Russian and Orthodox mission. The new circumstances at the end of the twentieth century enabled the ROC to again undertake recognizably Russian and Orthodox missionary activities.

The Christian spiritual enthusiasm of clergy and laypeople in the early 1990s made possible the establishment (actually, the restoration) of a mission department within the ROC. Mission funds accumulated, along with small-scale missionary activities, and the first post–Soviet era document on mission appeared in 1995.2 For some ten years Russian Orthodox missionaries worked to implement the requirements of the Gospel, as well as to understand the meaning of mission work at the local level. The more they advanced in doing mission, the more they found that their theological reflections on mission needed to be analyzed and summarized in theoretical missionary documents. Three important official writings give theological definition to the missionary practice that the church was already carrying out: the Concept of 1995, the Report of 2004, and the Concept of 2005.3

In practice, ROC mission showed itself to be an ecclesiastical activity in which Orthodox missionaries were sent to places as distant as thousands of kilometers from Moscow and Belgorod (the point of origin for the missions) to Siberia and Russia’s Far East to proclaim the Gospel, to baptize, to plant churches, and to build the body of Christ—that is, the community of believers. Thousands were baptized, many hundreds of new churches were built, hundreds of new translations were made into local languages, and thousands of “new” Orthodox Christians were consolidated under the ROC’s leadership. This was mission done, not on the local level, but at distances of more than 15,000 kilometers. The missionaries sent showed great dedication, and the results, mostly between 2000 and 2005, were enormous. In

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this effort, old methods of mission were readopted, for example, using transportation in mission by turning trains, trucks, ships, and aircraft into temples on wheels and wings; building missionary camps; and employing new approaches to indigenization and inculturation.

Consider four examples during this period of such mission using a train-temple. The first “pilgrimage” (as they are known) took place October 19–30, 2000, going to the Archangelsk region. The second, March 6–16, 2001, traveled to the Karelia region. The third and largest pilgrimage, August 7–September 2, 2001, penetrated eastern Siberia and the Far East. The fourth, December 17–25, 2001, entered the Penzensk region. Other minor missionary pilgrimages were carried out between 2002 and 2005. A car-temple (in fact, a trailer truck with a temple built into it, accompanied by three other vehicles) undertook several missionary itinerations between 2003 and 2005. The main ones took place in February and March 2003; another one, to Russia’s Republics of Kalmykia and Adygeia, occurred between March 27 and April 13, 2004. Several minor traveling missions were held as well.4

Through missionary camps and field stations, which were built in many places throughout the country, especially in Siberia and the Far East, hundreds of new churches and chapels were erected throughout Russia’s territories, and hundreds of priests were sent to serve them. These mission ventures converted thousands of people to Orthodoxy, both ethnic Russians and people from other ethnic groups and language communities. Hundreds of educational centers and schools were established by the missions to further spread the Gospel among the local people. Most of the peoples in Russia’s eastern regions are of non-European cultural background, and some of them are culturally oral rather than literate, having no written language. The Orthodox missionaries found much uncultivated land to till, and they broke as much new ground as they could.

As these examples make apparent, mission was done mostly within the territory of the Russian Federation. This confirms the observation that the Orthodox do mission mostly as an internal ecclesiastical activity, not by sending out missionary personnel to foreign lands and peoples.5 The ROC’s intensive missionary efforts between 2000 and 2005 led its missionary department to reassess its activities and theoretical findings and to produce a new missionary document, “The ROC’s Concept of Mission.”6 It appeared in April 2007, following vigorous discussion and exchanges of opinion and experiences.

These missionary documents are important resources not because of what they reveal about Orthodox mission theory but mostly because they describe current Russian Orthodox mission practice. They reveal the missionary fields in which the ROC is currently active; the challenges Russian society and the ROC face at present; the forms of missionary activity currently being employed by Russian Orthodox missionaries; the nature of an ROC missionary parish; the responsibilities assigned to bishops, other clergy, and laypeople in their missionary ministry; and many other top priority issues in the ROC’s mission today.7

The Russian church’s missionary documents, together with its missionary practice, cast light on certain theological issues that underlie the ROC’s missionary activity. It is essential first to understand what theology is in Orthodox terms. “Christian theology is always in the last resort a means: a unity of knowledge subserving an end which transcends all knowledge. This ultimate end is union with God or deification, the theosis of the Greek Fathers,” writes Vladimir Lossky.8 Theology is not merely an abstract scholarly discipline such as is taught in Christian seminaries, colleges, and schools; theology is life itself. “In the Orthodox tradition, theology is related to life.”9 How is this possible in practical terms? It is possible only through the participation of Orthodox believers in the life of the church in their struggle to live a Christlike life. What life is this? It is a life of acquiring the Holy Spirit within ourselves. “We acquire the Holy Spirit through our celebration of the Eucharist and the reception of Holy Communion, through our participation in the sacraments, through our discipline of daily prayer, of deeds of love, and through the practice of fasting, all of which result in a Christ-like life.”10

These postulates of the Christian faith and of the Fathers’ teaching (along with other teachings of Orthodoxy) are clearly reflected in the ROC’s understanding of mission. For example, the goal of mission is defined thus: “The ultimate and universal goal of the Orthodox mission is the fulfillment of God’s original plan—theosis [divinization] of all the creation.”11 This ultimate goal can be achieved if specific and immediate objectives and aims of mission are being accomplished, which are defined as follows: “Mission is spreading the Orthodox faith, bringing people into the church to begin a new life in Christ, and passing on the experience of communion with God. In this, the immediate aim of mission is the organization of Eucharistic Christian communities ‘to the ends of the earth’ (Acts 1:8).”12 Furthermore, the concept reveals that this can be achieved if the church catechizes people and baptizes them, brings the Christians into communion with God in the sacraments (first of all, the Holy Communion), and helps each of them become holy in order to sanctify both people and nature.

In this understanding of theory and practice (that is, of theology and the Christian life), theology becomes practice enacted in the lives of believers through their participation in the liturgical and, consequently, the mystical life of the church. So understood, theology is not something abstract and inconceivable; it is worship and life in Christ. “Theology is something in which all believers can and must participate. It is no wonder that Orthodox theology is seen as ‘practical’ theology, and some have commented that it is expressed more in liturgy and prayer than in dogmatic confession.” For the Orthodox, all theology is worship; all worship is theology. . . . The examination of Orthodox theology then must include an examination of the liturgy.”13 Thus, practicing theology means participation in the liturgical life of the church. This undergirding fact was fully acknowledged by the Orthodox tradition and is confirmed in Orthodox writings. “Christianity is a liturgical religion. The Church is first of all a worshipping community. Worship comes first, doctrine and discipline second.”14

This explains why the liturgy and eucharistic participation are discussed at extended length in the ROC’s missionary documents. It also explains why the ROC is now turning “ordinary” churches into missionary parishes all over the country, in which believers are being taught to live the Orthodox liturgical tradition in a true and most dedicated way.15

Mission in the Rest of Eastern Europe

As mentioned above, Orthodox Christians would consider mission simply to be witnessing to Christ in their life as Christians and in the society where they live. Mission as an active program of carrying the Gospel to lands or peoples where Jesus Christ is not known has not found yet its proper place in the practice of the Orthodox churches of Eastern Europe. For this reason there are no mission departments within those churches, with the excep-
tion of the Russian and the Romanian Orthodox Churches. For the same reason missiology is not taught in Orthodox theological schools, again with the exception of Russia and Romania.

Nevertheless, the idea of connecting “mission” with witnessing about Christ is spreading more and more among believers in this part of Europe. To compensate for lack of experience and to obtain guidance in mission, they are looking to other churches, both Orthodox and non-Orthodox, for models. Mission-minded clergy and laypeople participate in conferences and consultations on mission and evangelism, and Orthodox Christians in a number of parishes and dioceses undertake church initiatives that they call diakonia and, sometimes, mission. The mission ministry in which they engage is not, in fact, the same type of mission as was studied and practiced in the past or in Western churches, but it constitutes a missionary awareness that helps Orthodox Christians to reassess their presence in their respective contemporary societies. The choice of “presence” rather than stating “active participation in the lives of the people” in a country is deliberate, because in most Eastern European countries there is no organized and socially significant movement of missionaries that seeks to see lives and whole societies transformed by the love of Jesus Christ and his presence in every person’s heart.

Orthodoxy provides an example of an Orthodox church that actively participates in the lives of the Romanian people. The catechetical ministry of the church is extremely well developed, at the levels of both state education (through teaching of religious education in the secular schools as an obligatory subject) and church catechization. Social ministry is also thoughtfully and efficiently managed. The church successfully carries out mission ministry in numerous prisons, hospitals, old people’s homes, orphanages, and similar settings. Mission movements, such as The Lord’s Army, try to revive the traditional parish and encourage Christians to go out of their churches and to witness to their faith within the whole of Romanian society.

In the last several years Bulgaria has been seeking ways to introduce missionary elements into the Orthodox Church’s ministry in the society and within itself, but with no visible success. Between 1993 and 2001 a strong Christian youth movement operated in the country in conjunction with numerous efforts to teach the basics of the Christian faith to people in the society at large. It was not a missionary movement, but it fulfilled to some extent missionary educational goals of the church. Toward the end of 2009 a mission department was opened in one diocese, and that example seems to have encouraged other dioceses to consider initiating such a department. The main thrust of the mission department has been to develop internal mission through Christian education (including education of the diocesan priesthood) and mission ministry in social institutions such as prisons, orphanages, hospitals, old people’s homes, and schools for children with special needs.

In 2010 a missionary document entitled “Principles of Mission: Bulgarian Orthodox Christian Perspective” appeared. It sought to summarize the experience of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and to present the main principles of mission as understood within Orthodoxy. During December of that year, “Principles” was hotly discussed on a Bulgarian Christian website, and then it was proposed to the Synod of Bishops for consideration. As of September 2012 no adequate response had been given, mainly because of the pressure of time and because of fears that, if adopted, the new tasks the mission departments would be required to fulfill would increase the load on clergy, who are already overburdened. Consideration of “Principles” was also deferred because of internal problems currently facing the Bulgarian churches.

Similar missionary tendencies are taking place in the other Balkan countries, as well as elsewhere in Eastern Europe. The Greek church has been organizing widespread church planting in many countries of the world, especially in Africa and North America. The past twenty years have seen the revival of the Albanian Orthodox Church’s missionary activity, particularly through the work and devotion of Archbishop Anastasios. Christian movements resembling mission movements have been organized in Georgia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova. Some of them are humanitarian Christian charities (for example, Zarebi in Georgia); others utilize the missionary potential of theological schools with their teaching staff and students. It is interesting to note that the Orthodox Christian Mission Center, the official missionary agency of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in America, operates in Romania and Albania through its missionaries, thus raising the awareness of mission within the Orthodox communities there.

Another example of an Eastern European Orthodox missionary movement is the establishment of the Orthodox Mission Network in 2010, initiated by the Anglican Church Mission Soci- ety. The Orthodox Mission Network organized its first mission consultation in Minsk in February 2010 and another in Bulgaria in October of that year. A third consultation took place in Finland in 2011, and a fourth was held in Bucharest, November 2012. In addition, the Network cooperates with theological schools, missiologists, and mission researchers, as well as with several missionary movements in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe. This activity maintains vital contacts between missionaries and keeps open dialogue with mission organizations and agencies of other Christian traditions, enabling exchange of experience and good practices in mission.

Challenges in Eastern European Mission

The timid missionary steps taken by the Eastern European Orthodox churches may in the near future lead to widespread mission initiatives in these countries and beyond their borders. The twenty years that have transpired since they received their freedom is too short a time for old attitudes to change and traditional myths to dissipate that still prevent most Orthodox churches from adequately responding to the Great Commission. Furthermore, these churches are now faced with challenges that make their missionary endeavors even more difficult. Overcoming challenges such as the following would help the Orthodox churches enormously as they seek to do mission truly in Christ’s way.

Overcoming their Communist past. It is not only in Bulgaria that decades of Communist rule are bearing bitter fruit, with consequences that are currently damaging the life of the body of Christ. All other Eastern European churches also are in one way or another continuing to struggle with their past. Orthodox mission needs to become truly Christ’s mission, avoiding ideological influences and aspirations to state support or to new or renewed caesaropapist relations between church and state.

Dealing appropriately with migration. Many millions of Eastern Europeans now live in countries other than their own. Over the past two decades the Orthodox churches have had difficulties with their own flocks, and now in both Eastern and Western Europe they need to respond adequately to the needs of newcomers.
Giving practical expression to Orthodox theological conceptions combined with care for and attentiveness to those being helped. Many Orthodox missionary groups minister in social contexts of special need, especially among the marginalized, such as orphans, prisoners, old people, and people with disabilities. At the same time, the Orthodox understanding of what is good and what is bad or wrong is not always helpful to missionaries and their social ministry.2 For example, missionaries may first want to help the poor, the sick, the deprived, and the imprisoned in a purely “human” way, without insisting on immediate conversion or on baptizing them, and without employing in their mission the Orthodox theological thinking that only deeds done overtly and explicitly in the name of Jesus are good, while all other deeds (even feeding the hungry, healing the sick, and so forth), if not done in the name of God, are essentially not good and are wrong. After they have helped those people, the missionaries may find ways, with the help of God, of converting or of baptizing them while building the body of Christ.

Combining the Orthodox Church’s understanding and practice of mission with the understanding and practice of making a difference through missionary endeavors. Often Orthodox Christians are not able to see any distinction between their own ecclesiastical life and the external expression of this life as mission and proclamation. Orthodox missionary activities would become more evangelistic (that is, they would bear the impress of the effort to proclaim the Gospel “unto the end of the earth”) if missionary outreach was considered above all to be ministry in the “dimension of difference” as articulated by Titus Presler and not simply as emphasizing matters of personal spiritual growth and growth within the Orthodox ecclesiastical community.22

Overcoming “the problem of the relationship between the catholicity of Orthodoxy and the parochialism of the Orthodox.” For Orthodox mission to be truly successful, the Orthodox churches need to express clearly their attitude toward local expressions of faith, articulating their understanding of the universality of the Gospel vis-à-vis the different “shapes” faithful response to the Gospel takes in various cultural realizations.

Engaging in ecumenical initiatives and inter-Christian dialogue. Here “ecumenical” means truly catholic, involving all Christians worldwide. Mission today is being done in a globalized world, and it cannot be purely “Russian,” or “Romanian,” or any other single cultural expression. Yet in many ways, mission still expresses itself too rigidly in Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, Anglican, or other denominational “clothing.” We need to recognize the presence and missionary endeavors of the non-Orthodox churches in our own countries, as well as in the world in general.23

Conclusion

Notwithstanding their difficult past, especially under Communist rule, and the difficulties that the Eastern European Orthodox churches are currently facing, the new mission movements in Eastern Europe seem to be gaining spiritual strength and to be expanding even further beyond the borders of their countries of origin. In their activities they are seeking to keep the mission of the church as close to the mystical and liturgical roots of Christianity as possible. Orthodox missionaries are convinced that true witness to Christ can be most clearly expressed through participation in God’s mission and in the Eucharistic Holy Gifts he offers to every human being who faithfully follows him in love and devotion.

The Orthodox churches offer an abundance of riches, which have been collected and preserved over the centuries. These churches need to share their treasures with other Christian churches, seeking common ground with them for true witness and true mission both within our own societies and far beyond.

Notes
2. “Konsepsiia vozrozhdenia missionerskoi deyatel’nosti Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi [Concept of revival of the missionary activity of the Russian Orthodox Church],” in Pravoslavnaya missiia segodnia [Contemporary Orthodox mission], ed. Vladimir Fedorov (St. Petersburg: Apostol’s City, 1999), 11–16.
4. Ibid., 28–30. Unfortunately, it is difficult to find details in English of the ROC’s missionary expeditions. Details appear in the 2004 Report, which is only in Russian and has never been published. More details can be found in the ROC’s missionary journal, Missionersko koozovarene [Missionary review], but again only in Russian.
5. It should be noted, however, that the mission department did send priests to three countries, Indonesia, Thailand, and Mongolia, where they are now planting new churches.
11. Concept, 10.
12. Ibid., 11.
15. For Orthodox mission as teaching and liturgy, see Valentin Kozhuharov, “Christian Mission as Teaching and Liturgical Life,” 1–45. For discussion of the principles guiding Orthodox Christian mission at the local level, see Valentin Kozhuharov, Doing Christian Mission in a Local Orthodox Church [in Bulgarian] (Veliko Tarnovo: Vesta Publishing House, 2010), 39–110.
16. One instance of external mission was the sending of a Bulgarian Orthodox priest to Johannesburg in May 2010 to plant an Orthodox church. Unfortunately, his effort did not succeed.
17. The document has been published by various journals and websites. For the text in English, see Valentin Kozhuharov, “Principles of Mission: Bulgarian Orthodox Christian Perspective,” Acta Missiologica 3 (2011): 61–95.
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18. One of the problems that provoked great uncertainty and chaos in the churches was the decision of the Bulgarian government at the end of 2011 and the beginning of 2012 to reveal the secret dossiers of clergy who had been collaborating with the Communists and the secret services. To our immense shame, most leaders of both Orthodox and other Christian churches were found to be former collaborators and informants. Now the churches are seeking ways of healing and reconciliation.


20. Together, Russia and Ukraine have had some 35 million migrants entering and leaving their countries: 12.2 million immigrants have entered Russia, and another 11.2 emigrants left it; for Ukraine, these figures are 5.26 million and 6.45 million. See Pew Research Center, Faith on the Move: The Religious Affiliation of International Migrants (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2012), 23.

21. According to Vigen Guroian, a contemporary Orthodox theologian, “In modern liberalism and human rights theory, the good is autonomy. In Orthodoxy, the good is theonomy: the fulfillment of humankind is participation in and communion with the divine Life itself (2 Pet. 1:4). No temporal human good exists apart from a movement either toward or away from holiness in the company of the saints” (“Evangelism and Mission in Orthodox Tradition,” in Sharing the Book: Religious Perspectives on the Rights and Wrongs of Proselytism, ed. John Witte, Jr., and Richard C. Martin [Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1999], 238).

22. Orthodox theologians and missiologists could benefit greatly by developing the issue of mission and difference further. See Titus Presler, “Mission Is Ministry in the Dimension of Difference: A Definition for the Twenty-First Century,” International Bulletin of Missionary Research 34, no. 4 (October 2010): 195–204. The Orthodox will find his essay to be more “true Orthodox” than “Western” in its postulates.

Bishop K. H. Ting, 1915–2012

Bishop K. H. Ting, China’s foremost Christian leader over the last four decades, died peacefully in Nanjing on November 22, 2012. He had been hospitalized for several years and was 97 years of age.

Born and raised in Shanghai, Ting (Ding Guangxun) was the third of four children. The greatest influence in his early life was his mother, a devout Anglican, who encouraged her son to enter the ministry. Ting received a B.A. in 1937 from St. John’s University, Shanghai, and a B.D. from its school of theology in 1942. In the same year, he was ordained to the Anglican diaconate and priesthood and married Siu-may Kuo (d. 1995). He worked for the church in wartime Shanghai, and he was one of the many YMCA student workers inspired by Y. T. Wu (1893–1979). In 1946 the Tings went to Canada, where K.H. had been appointed mission secretary for the Student Christian Movement. The following year they moved to New York to continue their studies. In 1948 Ting received an M.A. in religious education from Union Theological Seminary, New York. He then moved to Geneva to assume the position of executive secretary (responsible for mission) with the World Student Christian Federation. In this capacity, he traveled widely and got to know many men and women in the then-flourishing ecumenical movement.

The Tings returned to China in 1951, committed to the newly established People’s Republic of China. Ting served for a brief time as general secretary of the Christian Literature Society (1952–53) in Shanghai before moving to Nanjing, where he became principal of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, a position he held until 2010. Ting joined in the work of the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) and became a well-known interpreter of the Chinese revolution to the West. In 1955 he was consecrated bishop of the diocese of Chekiang (Zhejiang). With the intensification of radical political movements in China beginning in the late 1950s, Ting’s position became increasingly difficult. He was removed from all his church and political posts at the start of the Cultural Revolution in 1966.

With the beginning of the period of “openness and reform” in the late 1970s, K. H. Ting emerged as the preeminent leader of China’s Protestant Christians and headed both the newly organized China Christian Council (1981) and the reestablished TSPM. He promoted the reopening of churches and other religious institutions, the printing of the Bible and religious literature, and increasing contacts with churches in other parts of the world. He was the leading spirit behind the Amity Foundation, which promoted Christian involvement in society. As China’s best-known Protestant theologian, Ting’s central concerns were love as God’s primary attribute and the importance for Christians to practice love in society. After his retirement, Ting promoted “theological reconstruction” in the Chinese church, which involved a broadening of theology and an opening of Christian faith to the changes taking place in society. His theological views and emphasis on working in concert with the government continue to be criticized in some conservative church circles, but his views have also been commended by theologians in China and abroad.

Under Ting’s leadership, Christianity assumed a higher profile in Chinese society and culture than at any previous time in its history. He was among the most important figures in world Christianity in the late twentieth century. K. H. Ting worked for reconciliation between church and society, Christian and non-Christian, China and the world. This is his enduring legacy to Christians in China and to the church universal.

A simple funeral was held for Bishop Ting in Nanjing on November 27, 2012, and on December 8 the China Christian Council held a memorial service for him at the Mochou Road Church, a short distance from his home of almost sixty years. K. H. Ting is survived by two sons and their families, including two grandchildren.

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Emerging Adults and the Future of Missions

Rick Richardson

Several recent studies have focused on emerging adults in the United States, considering the spiritual and religious lives of high school teens (ages 14–18) or of twenty-somethings (ages 19–29). Two works helpfully draw out the implications of this research for the spiritual formation of high schoolers and of twenty-somethings, but so far little attention has been given to the implications this research holds for mission. It is evident that shifts in the emerging generation (especially twenty-somethings) will have profound consequences for the recruitment, formation, training, deployment, and retention of the next generation of missionaries and thus for the shape and sustainability of mission itself, as this generation will practice it. What do we know about emerging adults, and what are the implications for the future of global mission?

I start by exploring two broad interpretive ideas that enlarge our understanding of the spiritual lives of today’s emerging adults. Then I examine more closely the cultural and social forces that have shaped the spiritual and religious trajectories of teens and twenty-somethings. Finally, I draw out implications for cross-cultural mission in the twenty-first century.

Religious and Spiritual Trajectory

The best description of the spiritual and religious lives of teens aged 14 to 18 comes from Christian Smith. He labels the dominant religion of teens in America today “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism” (MTD). It is moralistic in that teens today believe that being a good and moral person, and especially being kind and fair to other people, is central to living a happy and fulfilled life. It is therapeutic in that, for teens, religion is about providing therapeutic benefits, that is, making people feel good, helping people with pain and fear, and giving them tools to deal with life’s traumas. American teen religion is also a form of Deism, in that God does not need to be particularly involved in one’s life except when needed to solve a problem. Otherwise, people are on their own to pursue the endless activities and the multiple real and virtual social and relational connections that are such a ubiquitous part of life in the twenty-first century.

Kenda Dean compares MTD to a parasitic symbiote that draws its life energy from a stronger host—in this case, historic Christian faith—but in the end corrupts and deforms the host beyond recognition. MTD, says Smith, seems to be “colonizing many historical religious denominations and, almost without anyone noticing, converting believers in the old faiths to its alternative religious vision of divinely underwritten personal happiness and interpersonal niceness.” For Smith, this is a moral indictment not so much of teenagers as of American congregations, for often the source from which teenagers have gotten their alternative faith has been their parents and their churches. From this observation Smith draws an astonishing conclusion: namely, that MTD is supplanting Christianity as the dominant religion in the United States.

If such is the case for a majority of teens, including most churched teens, what of the faith of people in their twenties? Christian Smith, in a follow-up study of the religious and spiritual lives of emerging adults (ages 19–29), discerns “a shift toward diluting the concentration of MTD among emerging adults over these years. They exhibit somewhat more variety and originality than did the teenagers.”

In place of images of MTD undergoing dilution, Robert Wuthnow offers an alternative overarching interpretive image: one of tinkering, or bricolage, which may better describe the twenty-something cohort in America.

The single word that best describes young adults’ approach to religion and spirituality—indeed life—is tinkering . . . Tinkers are the most resourceful people in any era. . . . The French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss wrote of the importance of the bricoleur (the tinkerer) in the societies he studied. The bricoleur in preindustrial societies is a handy person, a do-it-yourself crafts-person who uses the tools of his or her trade and the materials that happen to be at hand to fix things and keep them in good repair.

The spiritual tinkerer creates a do-it-yourself faith that cuts out and pastes together convictions and beliefs that work and that help one get along, get ahead, and do what one wants in life. In line with this bricolage approach to faith, twenty-somethings tend to embrace doctrines that make sense in a society that celebrates tolerance and scorn’s exclusion. Belief in hell, judgment, the seriousness of sin, and the lostness of all people without Christ tends to get short shrift among younger Christians. Some of the urgency of evangelism therefore leaks away. Conversely, doctrines about God’s love, inclusion, reconciliation, and social justice are embraced in cobbled-together fashion, making for an eclectic, tolerant collection of convictions.

As a result, mission training must address these biblical convictions and instill an urgency for evangelism in people who will be deployed that goes along with the increasing levels of concern for justice, compassion, and service. Mission organizations can no longer assume emerging adults will seek engagement in global mission with these convictions intact. What is more, those organizations focused on justice or compassion must give considered attention to how they will train and deploy people who pursue works of mercy and justice in the name of Christ and in ways that can lead people to respond ultimately to the Gospel. The distinctiveness of Christian mission for the future is at stake.

I should mention one caveat. Wuthnow’s data show that people aged 18 to 45 are becoming more polarized, with conservatives becoming more conservative and liberals becoming more liberal. In particular, Wuthnow found that approximately 9 percent of the twenty-something population is very conservative or traditional (double the percentage fifteen years earlier) and getting more so, at the same time that 19 percent of that age cohort is very liberal and getting more so. That means, in part, that a minority—an increasingly vocal minority—of twenty-somethings is embracing more traditional and conservative doctrines and beliefs and, at least in principle, lifestyles. This

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Efforts to stir up mission motivation among today’s twenty-somethings need to take these culturally significant questions and concerns seriously.

of an “anything goes” approach. How has this cohort gotten to where it is spiritually? What would it take to engage this age cohort in the cause of global mission?

I address these questions by exploring cultural and social trends that have both contributed to and in turn emerged from MTD and bricolage spiritualities. Note that in speaking of “cultural trends,” such as the shift toward a relativistic ethic and a self-constructed sense of identity, I focus on larger and more general changes in thinking, mind-set, and sensibility. In contrast, “social trends” describes changes that are more quantifiable and statistically measurable, such as marrying later and delaying having children. We might think of cultural trends as software, the less visible programming, or even as inputs. Social trends might be conceived of as outcomes, the hardware of our society—visible, discrete, and measurable.

The remainder of the article focuses almost solely on twenty-somethings, since the cultural inputs, social outcomes, and mission implications are all more relevant to this later age group.

Cultural Trends

According to Christian Smith, contemporary culture stresses difference over unity, relativity over universals, subjective experience over rational authorities, feeling over reason, situated perspectives over objectivity, the local over the national, and audiences over authors. It also displays overall skepticism toward “master narratives.” One way to approach these cultural trends and to understand their impact on faith and mission is to examine the ways that people’s questions about faith have shifted. Elsewhere I have explored the new questions being asked, seeking to identify what lies behind them so as to gain a deeper understanding of the mind-set of people today and to see how they perceive Christians and Christian faith in a postmodern (or hypermodern) culture. Culturally significant questions and issues include the following.

Questions of power and motive. For people today, even logical answers can feel like an exercise of colonizing power. To many people, Christians are just another tribe using logic to gain power. Postmodern thought has redefined truth as “whatever works for you, whatever rings true to your experience, whatever feels real to you.” There is no metanarrative, no grand story to inspire people, no explanation of everything. Any attempt to claim that one has the truth for everybody is experienced as an arrogant, offensive attempt at domination and control.

Questions of identity. Who am I? Who will I listen to, to help me in developing my identity and sense of self? How can you Christians think that you can tell other people who they are? You church people have gotten it wrong so often, as with women, blacks, and now gays. Each person has to create one’s own meaning and identity and align with others to increase one’s leverage and security in the world. In postmodern (or hypermodern) culture, identity becomes the most contested human reality, and “Who am I?” becomes the central question of existence.

Questions of personal and group pain and suffering. Questions about how a good, loving, and all-powerful God can allow suffering and evil have become much less philosophical and much more personal and relational. How could God have let me be raped or abused when I was young? How could God let my child become so sick? Where was God when . . . ? Christians can seem to have such trite and simple answers for profound and disturbing questions.

Questions of character, trust, and attractiveness. The question of trust is seen as a question not so much about ideas and propositions as about beauty, goodness, and utility. Something is true if it resonates in my experience, if it works in my life, if it helps people get along better, if it is inclusive and accepting and authentic and attractive. As David Kinnamon and Gabe Lyons show, people in our culture today think Christians are narrow and judgmental and right wing and antihomosexual. But people in the broader U.S. culture think Christians are not very Christian, for they are not very attractive or good or useful!

Questions of interpretation. Is not the way you see the world completely dependent on your community and place of birth? Can you not interpret the Scriptures any way you want, and have you not actually done so? I do not care about the Bible’s reliability. I am concerned about its integrity and moral value and interpretability. After all, it was written by patriarchal, ethnocentric people. There is no God’s-eye view of reality, but only situated and culturally conditioned views of reality and of the meaning(s) of events, experiences, and texts such as Scripture.

What implications for mission flow from the cultural forces that have engendered these new questions and sensibilities? What will capture the misional imagination of younger people? The practice of mission today and efforts to stir up mission motivation among today’s twenty-somethings, if they are to be effective and inspiring, need to take seriously the questions and concerns delineated above. I suggest four characteristics essential to mission today.

First, expressed negatively, mission cannot act as though it is focused merely on gaining numbers for the Christian cause. More positively, it needs to focus on caring for people on their own terms and not just on our terms. The generation of emerging adults loves mission when it genuinely and authentically accepts people where they are, has no strings attached, cares for felt needs of the people themselves, honors the people’s perspectives on what actually helps them without being humiliating or creating dependency, and guards the dignity and worth of
people at the same time as it challenges them toward conversion to Christian faith.

Second, mission motivation cannot be confined to urging potential missionaries to pursue a missional call and purpose or asking them to consider what people ought to be doing to expand the cause of Christ around the world. For emerging adults the call to cross-cultural missions must also speak to who they are as people now and with whom they will discover who they are becoming as persons. It is about identity and community; team expressions of mission are critical. Stories about the ways in which experience of mission is also an experience of identity discovery and formation are crucial. Mission mobilizers need to be able to speak about these issues through stories of struggle and identity formation and of genuine community and friendship. Too often the gap in sensibilities between mission mobilizers and younger people is a yawning chasm. Motivationally, mobilizers and the emerging generation speak different languages. Must mission motivators today therefore focus on what mission does for the missionary rather than on the benefits, spiritual and material, for the people being reached and served? No. Biblical motivations for mission still provide the structural framework; the cruciform life of Christ is still the pattern for mission. But stories built around team and around developing identity, community, and friendship are necessary to add color and humanizing depth to presentations of the biblical mandate for mission if younger people are to become involved in greater numbers and with greater passion.

Third, mission in the contemporary world is understood by emerging adults as being true and compelling if it goes beyond doctrinal purity and evangelistic success. It must also show itself to be humanly good, to be beautiful, and to be useful to people and communities. For the emerging generation, Mother Theresa, who prayed continually to be given “souls and saints,” is an inspiring example of mission because she embodied these qualities of moral beauty, goodness, and usefulness to dying and impoverished people.

Fourth, mission for the emerging generation has compassion, justice, and diversity at its heart; they are integrated into its core. For many emerging adults no dichotomy exists between evangelism and compassion, or between Jesus and justice. Causes that are capturing the missional imagination of the younger generation include, for example, present-day slave trafficking and AIDS prevention and cure.

**Social Forces**

In addition to these deepening cultural trends, with their disproportionate impact on twenty-somethings, a mix of social trends has significant implications for mission. In some ways these social trends are an expression of cultural changes in the ways people think, decide, and act. But these trends are also a result of technological change and of global economic realities. Christian Smith and Robert Wuthnow have identified later marriage and fewer children, economic shifts, globalization, and changes in forms of relationship as having a significant impact on the shape of faith for twenty-somethings. I comment here on each of these social trends, drawing attention to implications for mission outreach.

**Later marriage and fewer children.** Between 1950 and 2011, the median age of first marriage for women rose from 20.3 to 26.5. For men during that same time the median age of marriage rose from 22.8 to 28.7. For both men and women the sharpest increase took place after 1970, but recent research shows the median age of first marriage in the past decade trending higher at an increasing rate. Various historians of religion have tied ebbs and flows in religious participation to larger social events, maintaining that religious participation grows during periods of social unrest and times of transition and that traumatic cultural events catalyze people into seeking spiritual and emotional comfort. But probably even more important are people’s everyday life circumstances and their geographic and social locations. Are they married? Do they have children? Do they live in areas where churches are more common and their presence more felt? In contemporary U.S. society, influences that reinforce religious participation are weaker than they were for past generations. In consequence, fewer young adults are participating in local congregations.

Furthermore, many of the people not in church on any given Sunday today are dropouts from faith or at least from church. Many were involved as high school students, but in the transition to college and work, they lost their connection to a congregation. According to research by the Barna group, 60 percent of Christian youth will drop out of church for a significant period during their twenty-somthing years, and one-third of Christian youth will lose their faith or significantly doubt it at some point during that period. Whereas teenagers today are some of the most religiously active Americans, twenty-somethings in the United States are the least religiously active.

We are losing our youth as they wander or fall away from involvement in faith. Furthermore, the historically prominent motivators to come back, including marriage and children, are happening later, leaving long periods of time between high school involvement in a congregation and later emerging adult involvement in a congregation. Such a gap increases the likelihood that for emerging adults there will be no return.

How can we assure greater rates and levels of connection to congregations and to cross-cultural mission on the part of post-teenage emerging adults? One crucial step would seem to be to engage teens in genuine cross-cultural mission and service through urban plunges, service days, and experiences in short-term mission. Yet many scholars question the value of short-term mission, at least from a cost/benefit perspective, hesitating to call such projects “mission,” both because of the focus on the experience of the teens and because of the very marginal help they provide to hosts and nationals. Still, given the interest in justice and global issues expressed by a significant percentage of twenty-somethings, short-term and then longer-term cross-cultural mission experiences may be crucial. Although such projects may initially benefit the teens more than the “mission field,” such efforts, over the long term, may focus teens outward, helping them to grow beyond an MTD kind of faith. They may thus lead participants to genuine Christian connection, mission, and service when they enter their early twenties.

Mission is understood by emerging adults as being true and compelling if it goes beyond doctrinal purity and evangelistic success.
Economic factors: debt, lack of jobs, job changes, dual-income families, and the role of parents. Contemporary changes in the American and global economy often undermine stable, lifelong careers, offering instead careers with lower security, more frequent job changes, and an ongoing need for new training and education. This dynamic pushes youth toward extended schooling, delay of marriage, and, arguably, a general psychological orientation of maximizing options and postponing commitments.

Christian Smith summarized the consequences of these economic factors by pointing out the degree to which today’s twenty-somethings live in transition.

They move out [of their parents’ home], they move back, they plan to move out again. They go to college, they drop out, they transfer, they take a break for a semester to save money; some graduate, some don’t. They want to study architecture, they hate architecture, they switch to criminal justice, a different career path. Their parents separate, make up, get divorced, remarry. They take a job, they quit, they find another, they get promoted, they move. . . . They find their soulmate, they get involved, their soulmate dumps them, they are crushed. . . . Changes are incessant.20

The flexibility and uncertainty of twenty-somethings offer both a strength and a weakness for mission. Many emerging adults are free of family responsibilities and often are not rigidly set in a career. This flexibility creates a potential cohort of missionaries who could take gap years (one year off during transition times) or even two to three years for creative expressions of mission in some of the most challenging places around the globe. Here the Peace Corps could be a wonderful model for mission agencies and for churches, and in a Peace Corps–style approach much less expensive economic models could be pursued. What if committed Christian young people were given the vision and had the opportunity and expectation to give two to three years to global service during their twenties?

Teach for America offers another model that has worked well. Young people are given a challenge, chosen competitively, trained, and deployed across the urban schools of the United States, providing needed human capital and resources. This same age group and similar flexibility are fueling the new monastic expressions of church. Some churches are beginning to create financial tracks that open the way for emerging adults who want to give one to two years.

A critical economic factor that needs to be addressed is the educational debt many emerging adults accrue for undergraduate and sometimes graduate education. At present, college debt in the United States totals over $1 trillion and is rising, with the average student burdened by more than $25,000 of debt upon graduation. Students who attend the top ninety-five U.S. colleges and universities leave with an average debt load exceeding $35,000. Peace Corps volunteers have their loans deferred for their period of Peace Corps service. Financial models for emerging adults who give two to three years of cross-cultural mission service would need to integrate ways to defer loans or to make regular payments to decrease debt during the time of service.

It also is critical that the process of raising support be streamlined and scaled back. The amount of funding and models of salary and benefits associated with long-term missionaries will not work for young people going for a year to three years. By the time they raise their support under present models, it is almost time to quit. Less costly economic models for younger people could help empower a whole generation of U.S. twenty-somethings to avail themselves of the current ease and affordability of travel. Economically affordable room and board could be sought among underresourced people who want help in developing their own economies, jobs, communities, and churches. In a globalizing economy emerging adults should find several years of global and cross-cultural experience to be a great asset to résumés they later send to potential employers.

A major challenge facing the effectiveness of mission-team stints of from one to three years is that learning a language often takes that long or longer, and effectiveness in direct ministry to nationals is limited until missionaries learn the language. All the same, as long as longer-term missionaries and, more important, nationals can oversee the activities of shorter-term missionaries, the benefits can far outweigh the costs, especially given the realities of globalization.

Global flows of people, resources, ideas, influence, and culture. Globalization consists of international and transregional flows of goods, money, services, power, information, ideas, images, and people. It describes the increasing interdependence—economically, politically, socially, culturally, and spiritually—that people experience around the globe. It also describes the decreasing importance of geographic distance in how the world functions. The ease and speed of transportation, computers and the Internet, cell phones, and cheap airline tickets have all contributed to the shrinking of the world and to the erasing of boundaries between domestic and foreign, between “here” and “overseas.” As a result, the nature of missionary work has changed, for often economic structures shape mission structures far more than mission leaders have recognized. In earlier days, with Western economic hegemony, the military-industrial complex of the West was mirrored by a missionary-industrial complex that exported and controlled the spread of Christian faith, combining it with the spread of Western culture. In the present era of globalization, mission structures are changing, necessarily so, and once again they mirror larger economic structures and realities.

Ralph Winter and other observers of mission anticipated these changes. Winter suggested that we have moved into a fourth era of mission,21 what he termed the Kingdom Era, and what Robert Priest has recently called the Missional Era.22 In this era, Priest contends, mission is best understood, not primarily as reaching the unreached and introducing Christian faith where it does not exist, but predominately as bringing resources and people to bear in order to strengthen Christian faith and witness where the church already does exist and in contexts in which the church has lost its leverage or reputation because of its past. Thus, mission is about using flows facilitated by globalization to increase the credibility and positive influence of Christian institutions and spokespersons. Missionaries are seen primarily as catalysts, coaches, facilitators, and brokers of these flows of people, resources, ideas, technology, and expertise that can improve the quality of life and human relating. In postmodern and post-Christian cultures, the credibility of the Gospel is under great threat, and facilitating life-enhancing global flows of people,
resources, technology, ideas, and influence becomes a way to build the credibility of the Gospel in countries all over the world. The most desired and most successful missionaries are those who serve as nodes in larger networks and who best facilitate flows. The archetypal highly competitive, risk-taking, and individualistic Lone Ranger is not the ideal missionary today. Instead, people possessing skills who are also creative and collaborative networkers with a high social IQ better meet the needs of today’s global mission, which is itself highly networked. Interview processes, missionary personnel profiles, and assessment tools are being adapted to focus on recruiting cross-cultural missionaries of this type. Building, being part of, and leading collaborative teams becomes central to mission, something that is matched by an increasing desire on the part of emerging adults to do life in teams and in community.

Changing forms of relationship, including technological mediation (e.g., Facebook and texting) and the ongoing impact of the sexual revolution, hooking up, access to birth control, and Internet dating services. Defining relationships today is a very challenging task for emerging adults. Boundaries and roles, to say nothing of romantic relationships, can be confusing. According to Smith, “Romantically, the lines between just met, just friends, something a bit more than friends, ‘talking,’ ‘going out,’ ‘dating,’ being boyfriend and girlfriend, sleeping over, semicohabiting, cohabiting, and relating like married people can seem like passing through a series of gradually darkening shades of grey.”

Besides the changing nature of intimate relationships, our culture has seen exponential growth in the Internet, tweeting, texting, e-mail, YouTube, Facebook, multiple-player online video games, and other social media. A virtual social world now exists in which many emerging adults find themselves immersed 24/7. It is not unusual for emerging adults to be at an event or in one social context (e.g., with family) and simultaneously to be carrying on three or four other electronic conversations relating to several other social contexts. Whether people are in a worship service, at a movie, attending a concert, doing homework, or riding (and sometimes driving) in a car, texting is ubiquitous and constant. Much of the lives of emerging adults seems to be centered on creating and maintaining personal connections through such conversations.

Immersion in a virtual social environment has been accompanied by a withdrawal from civic life and the public square. The apparent move of Americans away from civic participation in public life and toward the enjoyment of “lifestyle enclaves” . . . may for emerging adults be progressing yet further toward the nearly total subversion of self into fluidly constructed, private networks of technologically managed intimates and associates. . . . The instant feedback and stimulation from friends and family about every choice and action and emotion they make and feel seems to be very satisfying to them, sometimes perhaps addictive.

Mission in the future will need to adapt to the new reality of potential recruits’ immersion in extensive social connectivity. If bridging, facilitating, and brokering flows of people, resources, ideas, and influence are central to the missionary task in the twenty-first century, then facility with these social technologies can help. Facility in their use can help in fund-raising. It can help also with prayer, with quick and immediate communication, with catalyzing engagement and motivation for mission, with overall information flow. Each missionary is a central node for rapid and constant communication to a network of people and resources. Fortunately, many mission agencies are rapidly acquiring skill in the use of social media.

In some ways we have entered an era of “liquid mission,” in which the flows are more important than the structures of mission. Not that the two are antagonists or mutually exclusive; rather, flows blur the boundaries between structures. Some mergers of mission agencies and networks reflect the liquidity of the present situation.

At the same time, mission leaders and agencies need to understand the social media’s downsides and limits. They must exercise wisdom and discernment in their use of today’s avenues of connection and communication. Social media and connectivity can be addictive, with virtual presence squeezing out actual presence. Mission has always played a spiritual role in the lives of people and churches, calling for lives to be lived by the way of the cross, the way of giving and sacrifice, in order to see people come to know Christ and become whole. In relation to the social media, the spiritual dimension exemplified by fasting, sacrifice, and incarnational ministry remains, and must remain, a counterbalance. Mission leaders and mission organizations need to continue to call emerging adults to walk in simplicity of service, maybe most especially in relation to patterns of faddishness and instant fulfillment highlighted by social media.

Conclusion

The faith trajectory of emerging adults may be summarized as movement from the Moralistic Therapeutic Deism of their teens toward the bricolage (tinkering and picking and choosing) of their twenties. This trajectory presents challenges for evangelism and discipleship and for recruiting the next generation of committed cross-cultural missionaries. The bent of the trajectory does not entail a sure and certain result. During their passage through this stage of life, emerging adults may pick and choose doctrines and beliefs that have greater appeal to them and may leave out more exclusive and challenging beliefs such as the lostness of humanity without Christ, the uniqueness of Christ in contrast to other religious figures for salvation, and the central truthfulness of the Christian metanarrative for all peoples of the world, convictions that historically have been important in motivating people to enter into cross-cultural mission and evangelism. Twenty-somethings may also display a significant gap between their moral convictions and their lifestyle. At the same time, the broad trajectory of twenty-somethings going from MTD to bricolage can conceal nuances within the emerging adult population—for instance, the growing polarization of increasing conservatism (9 percent) and increasing liberalism (19 percent) mentioned above.

The cultural trends (inputs) and closely correlated social consequences (outcomes) enumerated in this article lead strongly to the conclusion that priorities shaping the character of mission in the years, if not decades, ahead will include the following:
• For a generation that is skeptical that mission can rise above self-centered motives, other-centeredness and humility in mission are of paramount importance.
• In order for the Christian message to be received by emerging adults and by hosts and partners in mission as true, credible, or even moral, mission must be shaped so that it is attractive, good, and useful, contributing demonstrably to human flourishing.
• Mission must give pride of place to teams and community, creating spaces for missionaries to develop identity, personhood, and calling in their community and context. Neomonastic and multicultural communities pursuing mission together are here to stay and will increase.
• Mission organizations must enable high school students to participate in more, not fewer, experiences of short-term cross-cultural service and mission in order to sustain and deepen their commitment to genuine Christian faith and mission as they enter their twenties.
• For emerging adults, mission must fully embrace integration of justice, compassion, relief, diversity, and witness.
• Younger mission mobilizers are needed who can set a high bar for sacrifice and service, doing so in ways that highlight the identity-shaping and community-enhancing dimensions of missionary engagement and sacrifice.
• Mission-sending churches and organizations urgently need to develop new and less expensive ways to fund younger missionaries. They must create shorter term (e.g., two-year Peace Corps-type) models of mission, finding creative ways to defer or to pay down debt. They need to develop innovative cross-cultural partnership opportunities through which emerging adults can be productive and fruitful in a two- or three-year time period, despite the limitations that brevity of time will place on their depth of language acquisition.
• Cross-cultural missionaries must become skilled as collaborative coaches, brokers, bridge-builders, and facilitators of flows of resources, people, skills, ideas, and influences who can use social media technologies with facility and wisdom to serve and strengthen these flows.

As mission leaders and mission organizations pursue these priorities, emerging adults will become more engaged and will chart a vibrant future for global mission. In addition, emerging adults will create new networks and initiatives based on these priorities, and they ought to be encouraged and funded to do so. The coming years promise to be exciting and creative times to be in collaboration with God on God’s mission for the world!

Notes
4. Smith, Soul Searching, 171.
6. Smith, Soul Searching, 166, 171.
15. Wuthnow, After the Baby Boomers, 21–23; for the recent increasing trend toward higher age at first marriage, see www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/12/14/barely-half-of-u-s-adults-are-married-a-record-low.
17. Wuthnow, After the Baby Boomers, 70.
21. Winter’s First Era focused on establishing the church outside of Christendom, often in geographic spaces accessible to ships, such as the islands of the South Pacific and the coasts of Asia and Africa. The Second Era focused on expanding missionary efforts into the interior of countries (e.g., China Inland Mission) where the church was not yet present. The Third Era focused on “unreached peoples” and aimed at bringing the Gospel, the Scriptures, and the church into every ethnos (linguistic group) where they were not yet present, often envisioning the achievement of the evangelization of the world within a particular time period (e.g., the watchword of Edinburgh 1910: “the evangelization of the world in this generation”). In these eras, mission work was celebrated by the sending countries in part because missionaries and Christian conversions reinforced the economic, ethnic, and nationalist interests of these sending societies.
Gideon and Esther Achi live among the Muslim majority in Northern Nigeria, a nation with over 521 languages and 250 ethnic groups. With Asbury Seminary’s M.A. and Ph.D. programs in Intercultural Studies, they will be equipped to reach these diverse cultures for Christ.

“This degree serves as a key to open doors that would otherwise have been locked; doors of people from other faiths. With it we can build bridges and fulfill the great commission in far greater ways.”

To learn more about the Master of Arts and Ph.D. degrees in Intercultural Studies, please visit asbury.to/interculturalstudies.
Ecclesial Identities of Socioreligious “Insiders”: A Case Study of Fellowship among Hindu and Sikh Communities

Darren Duerksen

One of the contentious issues surrounding “insider movements” is the question of church. Is church important for those seeking to follow Jesus within their socioreligious community? If so, what does it look like in these settings? The issues are numerous and familiar to the myriad of missionaries and church leaders who have debated the degree to which churches should reflect local culture. The issues are made more complex, however, when the culture in question includes practices and identities closely related to a non-Christian religion. If, as I will assume for this article, churches are communities of Christ-followers with practices and beliefs that are distinct from their surrounding communities, is it possible for such churches to also reside “inside” a Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, or Buddhist cultural and religious community? How and why should an ecclesial community, for example, identify with its Hindu socioreligious community?

This article is based on a field study of several groups of Christ-followers in North India who are seeking to renegotiate their relationship with the wider Hindu and Sikh communities. Though they are relatively new in their formation, the experiences of these groups provide opportunity for fresh reflection on how Christ-followers understand the nature of other religious communities and how to “be church” in these contexts.

Theoretical Background and Issues

The debate regarding how Christianity should relate to the socioreligious context of India has a long and rich history. Recent iterations of this debate were ignited through Herbert Hoefer’s Churchless Christianity (2001).1 In this study Hoefer and his colleagues identified people who professed faith in Christ but had not received baptism or joined a local church. Though Hoefer’s findings provoked much discussion, it was perhaps the book’s title that raised the most eyebrows. Was it possible, or acceptable, for people to be devoted to Christ but “churchless”? Hoefer’s title was not so much a theological statement as an observation that some people are following Christ outside of the existing sociological and institutional structures known as the Christian church. Nevertheless, his title highlighted what has sometimes been a weakness among those advocating close associations between Christ-followers and their non-Christian socioreligious community—namely, if and how a group of Christ-followers can cultivate both an ecclesial and a socioreligious identity. Can both be maintained, or are they mutually exclusive?

Religious studies scholars have long maintained that a view of world religions as bounded (i.e., as mutually exclusive, or nonoverlapping) is a recent development that reflects modernity and that such a view does not always agree with sociological realities.2 Furthermore, numerous anthropological studies have demonstrated ways in which religious boundaries tend to blur in the face of local terminology and practices.3 Such blurring and overlap become more apparent when researchers avoid imposing and reifying classic Western religious categories and identities, such as “Hindu,” “Muslim,” or “Sikh” and instead research religious practices and discourses as used by the communities themselves.

The critique of Western views of religions comes not only from the field of religious studies. In recent years evangelical leaders and theologians in various parts of Asia have begun to fault the ways in which Western evangelicals have characterized and interacted with other religions. For example, Japanese theologian Jin Arai discusses the difficulty some Japanese Christians have in reconciling their Christian and their Japanese identities, seeing their difficulty as stemming in part from Western perceptions of religions. “For Western scholars, non-Christian religions are ‘other’ religions, and never ‘their own’ religions. As a result, they try to establish dialogues with different religious groups, to cooperate for social justice, and to participate in ‘other’ religions in order to enhance mutual understanding. However, ‘other’ religions are not ‘other’ but rather ‘our’ religions for Japanese people. This represents a distinct vantage point.” Arai further suggests that the Western understanding of non-Christian religions as other has had an impact on the practices and self-understanding of Japanese Christians: “Japanese Christian churches . . . have not provided their members adequate opportunities to reflect upon the relation between Christian tradition and non-Christian traditions. As a result, a fragmentation of our identity as both Christian and Japanese occurs.”4

Such critiques suggest that groups of evangelical Christ-followers ought to consider ways of understanding and interacting with non-Christian socioreligious communities that lead not to fragmentation of identities but toward integration. But how can the ecclesial identity of a group of Christ-followers be both integrated with, and at the same time distinct from, the social identity of their wider socioreligious community?

Hindu and Sikh Yeshu Satsangs

To answer such questions, we consider a group of Yeshu Satsangs in Northwest India. Satsang (lit. “truth gathering”) refers to a religious gathering, often occurring in homes or meeting halls, whose purpose is to worship, pray, and listen to and embrace truth as revealed by the Scriptures and gurus. Such gatherings may include songs, discourses, and other worship rituals. This study focuses on several Yeshu Satsangs, or Jesus truth-gatherings, located in Punjab, eastern Himachal Pradesh, and northern Haryana, all in Northwest India.5 Four of the Yeshu Satsang leaders live in predominately Hindu communities, and four live in predominately Sikh communities. An experience common among all eight leaders is that they all came to faith in Jesus through, and were discipled in, churches and/or Christian parachurch organizations. Most led house churches for a time and, at various times since around 2000, came into contact with other leaders who were uncomfortable with the identity and practices of Christian churches. In particular, all of these lead-
ers began to disagree with the ways in which Christian church identities and practices were viewed as distinctly “other” by their Hindu/Sikh friends and family, and which created barriers between them and others when sharing Christ.

Countering Christian “Otherness”

Christian pastors and churches in Northwest India have often distinguished themselves not only through their distinct beliefs but also through the practices that they have embraced or rejected. For their part, the Yeshu Satsangs leaders agree with Christian pastors that Christ-followers should practice rituals and a lifestyle that focus on Christ. They disagree, however, regarding the types of rituals and lifestyles that Christ-followers should and should not embrace. In particular, the Yeshu Satsangs leaders argue that Christian pastors have often promoted practices and teachings that perpetuate the social otherness of Christian churches. For example, some Christian leaders and missionaries have at times requested converts to express their new faith by adopting new names, dress, and Christian ritual practices. Concurrently, believers have also been instructed to reject Hindu or Sikh burial practices, as well as to avoid participating in or attending prayers and other religious rituals. To counter this tendency, the Yeshu Satsangs leaders have created several strategies to minimize the otherness that certain practices can produce.

First, these leaders reframe and adapt current church practices to minimize some of their Christian associations. An example of such a change involves the physical handling of the Bible. In order to symbolize the centrality of the Bible in satsangs teaching, leaders often place it in a central position on a rehal, a traditional wooden stand, exactly where Hindu groups place an idol and Sikh groups put their sacred text, the Guru Granth Sahib. In addition, the Sikh Yeshu Satsangs refer to the Bible by the Sikh term bani, or “word,” and at least one of the Hindu Yeshu Satsangs calls the Bible the Pran Veda, or Life-Word/Knowledge. In these ways the Bible is honored and referenced in ways that would befit Scripture according to Hindus and Sikhs and that, more broadly, signal an association with the Hindu and Sikh communities. Similarly, the Yeshu Satsangs adapt the forms of the Lord’s Supper and baptism in ways that allow Hindus and Sikhs to see them as somewhat related to their own socioreligious communities.

Another way in which Yeshu satsangis (or members of a satsang) and leaders seek to minimize their social otherness is to de-emphasize the need for a change of social identity, emphasizing instead the need for internal change. Hindu and Sikh relatives, when hearing a satsangi pray to or talk about Jesus, sometimes suspect that he or she has become a Christian. In response, sat- sangis commonly respond, “I have not changed my religion, but I have changed my heart.” Here “religion” (bhakti) is chosen to follow various practices that involve language, symbols.

Use of Hindu/Sikh Practices

Though the Yeshu Satsangs retain and adapt certain practices that are shared with local and global Christ-following communities, they have also incorporated select Hindu/Sikh practices and in various ways are seeking to reidentify themselves with their Hindu/Sikh communities. Implicitly critiquing a bounded understanding of religion and religious community, they have chosen to follow various practices that involve language, bhakti (or devotion), and symbols.

Language. Many Yeshu Satsangs leaders have made changes in the way they identify themselves in terms of their religious community, including their use of greetings. One self-ascription used among Hindus is “Hindu Yeshu bhakt” (Hindu Jesus devotee). Ravi, a Hindu Yeshu Satsang leader, reflects on this phrase: “I always say it like this, ‘I am not a Christian, I am a Hindu Yeshu Bhakt.’ Then I am ready for their questions, like, ‘You believe in Jesus, then how are you a Hindu?’ Then I say, ‘On my [birth certificate] and my father’s it is written “Hindu.” And I live in Hindustan [India], and I speak Hindi. That is why I am a Hindu. And also Hindu is not a religion, it’s a community’” (H).
As this quotation indicates, many Hindus and Sikhs associate a Yeshu satsangi with the Christian community once the satsangi begins to pray or mention the name “Yeshu.” In response, Ravi clearly distances himself from the Christian community and embraces a Hindu identity.

Just as some Hindu Yeshu satsangs call themselves Hindu, some of the Sikh Yeshu satsangs continue to call themselves Sikh. When I asked one satsangi about her Sikh identity, she responded that one of the literal meanings of “Sikh” is “learner.” She went on to explain: “I am still Sikh. . . . People have said that you are now Christian.” And we have told them, ‘We don’t have any change in our clothes. So we change only our heart. We change only our life. So how you can say that we . . . are now Christian? We are still Sikh. We are learning” (E).

In addition to self-ascriptions, the satsang leaders encourage the use of other local terms. While many Christians in Punjab often greet each other with “Jai Masih di” (Praise the Messiah), the Sikh Yeshu Satsangs leaders encourage their satsangis to retain the Sikh greeting “Sat Sri Akal” (God is ultimate Truth). Instead of “amen,” the Sikh Yeshu Satsangs use the Punjabi word satbachan (true word), and the Hindu Yeshu Satsangs use tathaastu (so be it). Likewise, “Satguru Yeshu” (True-Guru Jesus) often replaces “Prabhu Yeshu Mash” (Lord Jesus Christ/Messiah) as a title for Jesus. In each case the choice of language is designed to create association and identity with the Hindu/Sikh communities while also facilitating worship and teaching.

The path and worship practices of bhakti. Yeshu Satsangs leaders generally shape worship gatherings to reflect the reverent and devotional gatherings of many Hindu bhakti groups or a Sikh gurdwara (temple). “Bhakti” refers to the tradition known as bhakti marga, which emphasizes the role of devotion and self-surrender in obtaining moksha, or salvation. Hindu bhakti sects and traditions are prevalent throughout India and vary in location and emphasis. In Northwestern India, bhakti teachings helped to shape and inspire various leaders and movements, including those who would eventually identify themselves as Sikhs. While Hindu and Sikh bhakti may be directed to various gods, the Yeshu Satsangs direct their bhakti to Jesus.

One practice through which the Yeshu Satsangs leaders express and promote ideals of bhakti devotion is the use of bhajans, or kirtans, which are a particular genre of devotional music intimately tied to Hindu and Sikh bhakti traditions. The use of bhajans shapes the ecclesial and social identity of the satsangs in two ways. First, since Hindus and Sikhs associate the sound and style of the bhajans with the Hindu/Sikh communities, the Yeshu Satsangs leaders use bhajans to express their own Hindu/Sikh identities to their neighbors. One satsang leader, for example, refuses to use worship songs common among Christian churches of the area because they reflect “a Western style of worship.” Instead, he uses a book of bhajans compiled by other Yeshu Satsangs that sound more like the Bollywood bhakti bhajans that the Hindu people in his area like. Such an association is important for him, since he is conscious that his Hindu neighbors hear the music that his Yeshu Satsang sings. The Hindu associations of certain bhajans thus help foster a social connection between the Yeshu Satsang and the surrounding Hindu community.

Second, in addition to the connection to the Hindu/Sikh communities, bhajans help some satsangis feel close to God by evoking feelings of peace and the “right” atmosphere through which to approach and relate to the divine. For example, one satsangi, who enjoyed bhajans growing up, reflects on those that she now sings in the Yeshu Satsang. “When we sing bhajans, when we pray with the bhajans, then I feel very good at that time because we feel that we are not on the earth. It seems that we are flying in the heaven. I like this part [of the satsang] very much” (H).

Symbolism. Though Hindu sects of Northwest India use symbols less than those of South India, symbols still form an important part of most Hindu worship gatherings. For this reason the Hindu Yeshu Satsangs incorporate select Hindu symbols into their satsangs. For example, when preparing for Communion, some leaders use the diya (oil lamp), incense, and coconut. These objects, especially the coconut, are important symbols for some Hindus, creating an atmosphere that connotes worship of the divine.

In addition to using a coconut, satsang leaders always sit on the floor, use Indian instruments such as the tabla and harmonium, use a rehal for the Bible, and sometimes blow the shankh (shell horn), which is commonly blown in Hindu worship. When used, such Hindu symbols create a valued association with the Hindu community. One satsangi explains, “This is our Indian culture. That’s why we are using this. [W]e want to give the message to others that we can serve the Lord in an Indian style” (H). In these instances, Hindu symbols help to counter the contradictory message that followers of Jesus are not Indian, or are “other,” having abandoned their Indian (Hindu) culture.

Achieving a New Ecclesial Identity

The Yeshu Satsangs of this study are still very new, and any analysis must be seen as provisional at best. Still, their use of practices and identity markers are consistent with some of the nonbounded, Asian definitions of religion highlighted by recent scholarship. In particular, Yeshu satsangis are seeking to identify socially with their Hindu/Sikh socioreligious communities through various practices that they are selectively adapting to shape a distinct, Christ-focused ecclesial identity. In these ways they seek to transcend and mend identity fragmentation.

The types of identities that the Yeshu Satsangs attempt to forge are similar to what sociologists have called an “achieved identity.” These are identities that counter or modify the ascribed identities that they have received from their Hindu/Sikh and the Christian communities. To do so, they embrace what sociologist Margaret Archer has called “emergent properties.” According to Archer, a people and a community derive their identity from any number of practices and beliefs. People select from and engage certain practices that they feel are important for relationship within the community and for creating or sustaining a personal and corporate identity. These practices thus have emergent properties that can accomplish particular social and cultural goals. The practices make up people’s cultural repertoire, or “cultural toolkit,” as sociologist Ann Swidler describes them, which helps them successfully navigate and shape their own roles and identities.

The Yeshu Satsangs have created practices that, they hope, will accomplish at least two goals. On the one hand, they accept practices of Hindu/Sikh culture in order to affirm an ascribed identity that they share with the larger Hindu/Sikh community. On the other hand, they modify or reframe these practices to forge an identity that expresses their devotion and commitment to Jesus. They have thus sought to enlarge their repertoire to achieve an ecclesial identity (focused on Christ) that also affirms a wider and socially ascribed identity.

Why are the Yeshu Satsangs leaders so concerned with questions of identity? First of all, such identity negotiation is important
for their evangelism. Yeshu satsangs talk about the desire to witness more effectively to their Hindu/Sikh friends and family by lowering what they see as unnecessary and unhelpful barriers put up by the Christian church. Evangelism is thus a major motivation. In addition, the attention to identity addresses many satsangs’ desire for cultural belonging. Rather than accepting practices that place them in the “other” (Christian) socioreligious community, the Yeshu Satsangs leaders seek to remain connected to the communities that gave them birth and social structure. I suggest that this latter reason provides rich material for theological reflection. Hindu/Sikh practices not only provide an opportunity to enhance evangelism, but they also in some sense express God’s presence and activity within the larger culture. Rather than demonize these communities and their practices, the satsangs are open to consider how God has placed evidence of himself within these practices. Thus bhakti, for example, provides a helpful framework through which to pursue and express devotion to God. With such a sense, it is not a contradiction to embrace a Hindu/Sikh identity, and which to pursue and express devotion to God. Thus bhakti, for example, provides a helpful framework through which to pursue and express devotion to God. With such a sense, it is not a contradiction to embrace a Hindu/Sikh identity, and even celebrate it, while also embracing Christ as one’s Savior.

In light of the attempt by Yeshu Satsangs leaders to reembrace Hindu/Sikh practices while remaining committed to Jesus, we might question views commonly inherent in church practices among Western evangelicals. For many evangelicals, these practices and their accompanying symbols are important primarily because of their missional value. Also, because Western evangelicals have often emphasized countercultural ecclesiologies, cultural practices are used and “contextualized” so as to present a clear and Christ-focused alternative to the prevailing socioreligious culture.

Though such concerns are important and valid, the Yeshu Satsangs are perhaps more positive in the view they advance of Hindu/Sikh practices and communities. Rather than viewing them with skepticism, we can imagine that Hindu/Sikh practices may contain aspects of God’s goodness that await to be fully developed by the aid of the church. When a church sees itself in a positive relationship with its context, it would seek to present not only an alternative world but a better world. In other words, the practices and identities of ecclesial communities represent the longing of people, not to counter their socioreligious context, but to fulfill it. In this respect there is perhaps merit in revisiting aspects of the classic fulfillment theology of Farquhar and others, not as an apologetic seeking to convince Hindus to follow Christ, but as a theology of how Hindu (and other) socioreligious communities possess symbolic longings that reflect God’s presence and handiwork.

Conclusion

The Yeshu Satsangs of Northwest India, though relatively new and tentative in their formation, nonetheless help to address an important question regarding insider movements, or people who in various ways follow Christ “inside” their non-Christian socioreligious community. Not only do the satsangs show that such Christ-followers need not remain churchless, but they also raise a needed critique of bounded understandings of religious practices and identities. In addition, the way in which they frame religion and religious identities creates space for a church to develop a distinct and Christ-focused ecclesial identity while at the same time affirming a Hindu/Sikh socioreligious identity. Finally, the trajectory of the Yeshu Satsangs opens up helpful and rich theological possibilities regarding the ways in which God might use a church not only to counter aspects of culture but also to activate elements that he himself has built into that culture. The development of relationships with the larger Hindu/Sikh culture needs to be seen as more than just a means to the end of evangelism. It is quite possible that practices that encourage a greater level of congruity between a church’s ecclesial and social identities will lay a strong foundation for understanding more deeply why and how to be church in the midst of a variety of multifaith contexts.

Notes

5. I became acquainted with some of the leaders of these satsangs while living and working in North India 2005–8 and then conducted research among them for six months in 2010.
6. In this study I indicate the language of the original quotation by (E), (H), or (P) (English, Hindi, or Punjabi). All quotations are from my research in 2010.
8. Sikhism has had a profound impact on worship practices in North-West India, particularly through its de-emphasis of symbols. As a result, many religious sects in the area use symbols much less than do groups in South India.
12. In the following I draw on William Dyrness’s recent discussion regarding practices of “poetic theology” (Poetic Theology: God and the Poetics of Everyday Life [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011]).
13. Ibid., p. 245.
The Recent Growth of Pentecostalism in Belgium

Colin Godwin

Sociologists of religion and casual observers alike have noted the steady decline of institutional religion in continental Europe. Belgium has been no exception to this trend, and while the schools, hospitals, labor unions, and political parties that were linked to the Roman Catholic Church insulated the devout for a time, secularism seems to have ultimately won out. Attendance at Mass plummeted in the 1970s, and many Catholics left the church, devoting more of their energy to economic pursuits than to God and church. Although not as secularized as the British, Bulgarians, Czechs, or Swedes, Belgians were already among the more secularized Europeans studied by Loek Halman and the European Values Study group in 1990.

It is a mistake to assume, however, that this loss of power of institutional Catholicism means that Belgian Christianity has retreated on all fronts. While Belgium may be considered to be “post-Catholic” in its overall religious orientation, younger Protestant movements have demonstrated strong growth in the last decades of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. If you met a committed churchgoing Belgian in the 1960s, most likely that person would have been Roman Catholic. Today, that person is very likely Pentecostal and of foreign descent.

The number of Protestant churches has grown significantly over the last several decades, almost doubling since 1980. In addition, some of the largest Protestant churches in Belgium today were started after 1980. Church membership statistics are more difficult to establish. In 1980, on the basis of school registration statistics and church membership rolls from 190 churches, historian Emile Braekman estimated the number of Protestants in Belgium to be between 90,000 and 100,000. By 2010, the number of Protestants in Belgium was estimated at 150,000, with the largest population percentage (6%) in Brussels.

Although membership statistics for all the churches are not available for 2012, it can be estimated that between 1980 and 2012 Protestants have grown from a little less than 1 percent of the Belgian population to closer to 2 percent, with the highest percentages in Brussels. This is surprising and unexpected growth, however it is assessed. In contrast, the total Belgian population has shown only slight growth over the same period, from 9.9 million in 1980 to 10.4 million in 2012.

### Foreign Influences

Belgian Protestantism has experienced steady growth from 1830, the date of Belgian independence. This growth has been in several major waves and has almost always been dependent on a missionary force coming from outside of Belgium: the Baptists in Belgium originated as part of a French work, the Reformed Church originated with an expatriate Dutch population left in Brussels, notably the English language International Church in 1994.

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### Table 1. Belgian Protestant Churches, 1830–2012, Listed by Denomination

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>1830</th>
<th>1865</th>
<th>1909</th>
<th>1940</th>
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<td>26</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: The most recent statistics come from the yearbooks of the Administrative Council of Protestant and Evangelical Religion in Belgium, which since 2003 has been the official intermediary between all Protestant churches and the government (see www.cacpe.be/index.php?page=annuaire_f; accessed on October 31, 2012). In addition, see the statistical resources cited in endnote 4.

a The figure for foreign churches in 2012 includes only Anglican churches (13) and the churches of the Italian-speaking Chiese Cristiane Italiane nel Nord Europa (14).

b For figures on Seventh-day Adventists in Belgium, see Georges Vandenveld, 100 Ans d’adventisme en Belgique et au Grand-Duché du Luxembourg, Spécial Centenaire (Brussels: Fédération Belgo-Luxembourgeoise des Églises Adventistes du Septième Jour, 1996), 2–15.

Between 1980 and 1993, three churches were closed, after which new churches were opened in Brussels, notably the English language International Church in 1994.
Belgium after its independence, the work of the Salvation Army was sponsored by Britain, and the Belgian Gospel Mission was financed and staffed by English and American Christians. With several historically Protestant countries in close proximity (Holland, Britain, Switzerland), and then with the American and British presence in Belgium’s religious situation after the two World Wars, the influence of foreigners has been a consistent theme in the growth and development of Protestantism in Belgium. In 2002 John Doherty surveyed twenty-two evangelical church planters, only nine (41 percent) of whom were Belgians.4

The presence of foreigners as part of Belgian Protestantism leads to the issue of language. When Belgium gained its independence, there were three language groups within its borders:

Table 2. Belgian Protestant Churches, 2012, Languages Used in Worship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Languages Used in Worship</th>
<th>583 national-language Protestant churches</th>
<th>201 nonnational-language Protestant churches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch (190), French (383), German (10)</td>
<td>Arab (3), Armenian (5), Congolese (6), English (93), Ghanaian (4), Italian (13), Korean (4), Portuguese (29), Romanian (5), Russian (6), Rwandan (5), Spanish (12), Turkish (4), other (12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

784 total Protestant churches


a The total number of churches by language, 784, exceeds the total number of churches, 690, given in table 1 because many congregations either have translation during their services or have separate services for different language groups.

French, Dutch, and German. Developing a national strategy for a denomination of churches has always been complicated by differing and sometimes competing regional needs. Each linguistic area of the country was influenced by the foreign national entity across the border (France, Holland, Germany) at least as much as it was by the other linguistic groups within the country. In many denominations, no national body exists, with the denomination made up of two sister denominations (one French-speaking and the other Dutch) that have developed in parallel. Church planting has always been less prolific in Flanders, and the growth of French-speaking churches indicates that this trend will continue.5

While the use of English in Protestant church services began in the sixteenth century as a service to expatriate English sailors, merchants, and soldiers, primarily through the Anglican Church, every major denominational grouping now holds church services in English. With the development of Brussels as the center of the institutions of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the use of English in the Belgian capital has grown, and English has become a major language in Protestant worship across the country.

Other languages have also come to be used much more in worship than in the past, and for the same reason: immigration.6 There are more Portuguese-, Spanish-, and Italian-language churches than German-speaking churches, although German is one of the three official languages of Belgium. A large number of the English-speaking churches consist, not of British or American residents, but of immigrants originating in former British colonies in Africa. In 2012 more than one-third of all Protestant worship in Belgium took place in a language other than Dutch, French, or German.

The African Christian Diaspora in Belgium

That Ghanaian and Congolese languages would even be listed as languages of worship demonstrates the impact of the African Christian diaspora on Belgian Protestantism. In 2000, Way-Way Dibudi estimated that 60 Protestant churches in Belgium originated with African immigrants.8 By 2012 more than a tenth of all Belgian Protestant churches were of African origin. Nevertheless, as is indicated by the relatively small number of churches that conduct their services in African languages, the thrust of these churches is toward integration into Belgian society as a whole. French is generally the language of choice for these churches, which are often pan-African in nature, with participants coming from a number of French-speaking African countries, including Burundi, Cameroon, Congo-Brazzaville, Congo-Kinshasa, Mauritius, Rwanda, and Togo. They resolutely object to being called “African” churches, for they see their mission as extending to all people and nations, whereby God would use the African diaspora for a special purpose in the globalization of Christianity. Many of these churches have the words “international,” “worldwide,” or “global” in their names to underline this conviction. In addition, many African pastors now serve as clergy in the older Belgian denominations, and large numbers of members of francophone, germanophone, and Dutch-language churches are of African origin.10 Their presence is shaping the present and future of Belgian Protestantism.

Growth of Historic Protestant Churches

In the period following the First World War, the efforts of the Belgian Evangelical Mission, Brethren churches, Methodists, and Seventh-day Adventists led to the establishment of 101 new churches by 1940. The period between 1909 and 1940 was the golden age of church planting for these groups in Belgium; they succeeded in beginning an average of 3.3 new churches per year. The fledgling Assemblies of God planted 11 churches in the same period.

As table 3 indicates, for the forty-year period between 1940 and 1980, non-Pentecostal churches grew from a total of 220 to 302 churches, for a total net growth of 82 new congregations. For the same period, 58 new Pentecostal or Charismatic churches were founded (not shown in the table), a startling rate of growth considering that there were only 11 Pentecostal churches in 1940. In comparison, the growth rate of non-Pentecostal churches was approximately 2 churches per year for this same period, a significantly lower rate of growth compared with the period from 1909 to 1940.

Table 3. Growth of Belgian Historic Protestant Churches, 1830–2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Churches at the beginning year</th>
<th>Churches at the ending year</th>
<th>Net growth</th>
<th>New churches per year</th>
<th>Annual growth rate (%) over period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1830–1865</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865–1909</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909–1940</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940–1980</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980–2012</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

April 2013
Although the Evangelical Free churches grew from 33 to 53 churches between 1980 and 2012, and the various Baptist groups grew to number 22 churches, the momentum of the Protestant church planting movement in Belgium after 1940 had passed definitively to the Pentecostal and Charismatic churches. When we consider church closures in the historic Protestant churches as shown in table 1, the net increase in the number of new non-Pentecostal churches slowed even more between 1980 and 2012.

Growth of Pentecostal and Independent Churches

Since 1980, Pentecostal and Charismatic churches have shown almost exponential growth and confirmed themselves as the dominant source of new Protestant congregations in Belgium, as shown in table 4.

Of a total of 308 churches planted between 1980 and 2012, over half—173—were affiliated with Pentecostal or Charismatic denominations. If the independent churches are included, many of which are affiliated with Pentecostal or Charismatic movements that do not have a national organization in Belgium, this shift would be underlined even more strongly. Also not included in the tally are churches with a charismatic orientation that have remained within the structures of the historic churches. Whichever way the data are evaluated, Pentecostal and Charismatic churches make up the lion’s share of new churches started between 1980 and 2012. Belgian Pentecostalism grew from 69 churches in 1980 to 242 churches in 2012, more than tripling its number in thirty-two years.

In 2012, even without the independent churches, Pentecostal and Charismatic churches made up 35 percent of all Protestant churches in Belgium. The growth rate of these churches between 1980 and 2012 was approximately 7.8 new churches per year, a stronger rate of growth than that of even the golden years of church planting among the non-Pentecostal denominations before the Second World War, which was 3.3 churches per year. If the current growth continues, Pentecostal and Charismatic churches will represent half of all Protestants in Belgium within the next fifteen or twenty years.

The growth of immigrant churches, especially in Brussels and other major urban areas, is strongly linked to the growth of Pentecostalism, but immigrants are not the only reason behind the increase. Many Belgians themselves have been drawn to Pentecostalism, even within immigrant-led Pentecostal churches. Pentecostalism has become, as Allan Anderson demonstrates in his 2004 monograph, a global faith, with a dynamism that seems destined to leave its mark on post-Catholic secular Belgium.

Table 4. Growth of All Belgian Protestant Churches, 1980–2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostal and Charismatic</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All others</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes


3. Halman and Riiis, Religion in Secularizing Society, 64.


6. John Doherty, “Church Planting in Belgium: A Study of the Structures and Support for New Church Plants” (unpublished paper, Univ. of Wales, 2002). 7. Of the non-Belgians, four were from the United Kingdom; two each from France, Italy, and the United States; and one each from Canada, Congo, and Switzerland. These non-Belgians, however, appeared to be permanent residents or immigrants; they had been living in Belgium for an average of 18.4 years.

7. The United Protestant Church of Belgium, the Baptist Union of Belgium, the Seventh-day Adventists, and the Belgian Gospel Mission remain bilingual or trilingual.

8. Other major French-speaking regions in the West have experienced a similar phenomenon. Between 1998 and 2002 in Quebec, Canada, the overall population increased by 3.4 percent, but French-speaking Protestant churches increased by 8 percent, and ethnic churches by an astounding 92 percent. During the same period, however, English-speaking churches declined by 12 percent (Church Planting Canada, “Workshop, implantation d’églises au Québec” [2004]).


11. A web-based survey of the 80 independent churches listed at www.cacpe.be/index.php?page=annuaire_f (accessed on October 31, 2012) showed international affiliations, for example, to Peniel (UK) and to the European Assemblies of God. The names of several other independent congregations clearly reflect their charismatic character (e.g., “Praise Centre” or “Church of Prophecy”).
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Evangelization and the Tenor of Vatican II: A Review Essay

Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder

Ralph Martin is associate professor of theology and director of graduate programs in the New Evangelization at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit, Michigan. He is also a consultant on the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization. This bold, hard-hitting book is a revised version of his doctoral dissertation at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas (Angelicum) in Rome, completed in 2011.

The focus of this book is an investigation as to why contemporary Catholics, despite encouragement from Vatican II and from Popes Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI, evidence a certain hesitation or lack of enthusiasm for evangelization and ad gentes missionary work. Martin argues that such evangelical lethargy is due to two causes. The first is a lack of attention to the teaching of the Council on the urgent necessity of mission, despite its teaching “about the possibility of salvation outside the visible bounds of the Church, or of Christianity” (6). The second is a “culture of universalism” or “practical universalism” in Catholicism that presumes the salvation of all humanity (196). It is in recognizing the authentic teaching of Vatican II, particularly in its key text Lumen gentium (LG), the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, and in unmasking what might be called a “creeping universalism” in interpreting the Council’s texts that Catholics will realize the need for an “adjustment in pastoral strategy” (196). Such strategy will move away from the Church’s more benign, noncondemnatory stance to one that recognizes and proclaims the danger that non-Christians and unchurched Christians face in regard to their eternal salvation. Thus, a “new evangelization” will take shape.

After an initial chapter laying out the basic problem—“the ambivalence of Catholics towards evangelization” (6)—the two arguments are developed in five subsequent chapters. Chapter 2 introduces the main text for examination, LG 16, dividing it into three parts (a, b, and c). LG 16a reflects on the relationship of Jews, Muslims, and other non-Christians to the church. LG 16b determines that all people of good will, through God’s grace, can in fact be saved without explicit Christian faith. LG 16c states, however, that “very often” (at saepius) people do not indeed have “good will” and so need to have the Gospel preached to them—therefore the need of “the missions.” The chapter goes on to introduce some related conciliar texts, point out the rather noncontroversial character of the text in the debate on the Council floor, and list some concerns with LG 16b.

Chapter 3 situates LG 16 within the context of the entire document on the church, outlining in some detail the complex development of church teaching regarding the possibility of salvation outside of explicit faith in Christ. This chapter ends by cautioning about a “salvation optimism” proposed by many in their interpretation of LG 16b. In a crucial passage, Martin writes that for some, the possibility of salvation taught by the Council quickly moves to a probability. And then “it is a short step from an assumed ‘probability’ concerning salvation to the widespread assumption now common in the culture of the Church as well as in the culture at large, that virtually everyone will be saved” (55). The reason for this, Martin argues, is that interpreters have largely ignored the additional teaching of the necessity of evangelization found in LG 16c.

Chapter 4 then moves to examine the two scriptural passages cited by LG 16c: Romans 1:21, 25 and Mark 16:15–16. The bulk of the chapter not only analyzes the two verses of Romans cited in the conciliar text but also develops a wider exegesis of Romans 1:18–32 and all of Romans 2–3. The Marcan verses are examined in much less detail. At the end of the chapter, Martin summarizes his findings: “The Council, citing Romans 1:21, 25, declares that many have been deceived by the evil one and rejected the truth for a lie and are in effect idolaters. This statement of the Council and the underlying texts from Romans that support it fly in the face of a mentality that presumes that almost everybody is a ‘good person’ and of course will go to heaven, and that God could not really be a good God and let people go to hell” (90). Therefore, concludes Martin, “It matters whether the gospel is preached or not. It matters if people believe and are baptized or not” (91).
Chapter 5 and 6 focus on the exposition and critique of two theories of salvation that in their basic presumption of universal salvation have been extremely influential in post-Vatican II theology and popular thinking. These are Karl Rahner’s idea of the “anonymous Christian” and the contention of Hans Urs von Balthasar that Christians have a “duty to hope that all be saved” (xiii). While neither theologian formally teaches a doctrine of universal salvation, Martin contends that—contrary to the Scriptures and traditional witness—their thought comes immeasurably close to such a position.

Chapter 7, then, sketches Martin’s conclusion: that the pastoral strategy of Vatican II, in its choice “to accentuate the positive’ in its presentation of the gospel” (192), should be seen today as a wrong choice. “In retrospect it might be fair to say that it was an unwise silence, a flawed pastoral strategy, and that we are overdue for a ‘rebalancing’ of our message and strategy” (201–2). In the light of today’s situation, it is time for the church to “recover the boldness of apostolic preaching” and proclaim “the reality of God’s wrath, properly understood; and our desperate need for Christ in order for us to be reconciled with God, bringing with it an appropriate fear of the Lord” (198). On the last page of his text, Martin concludes, “We have not seen that ‘biblical-thought world’ [words of Pope Benedict XVI] or its ‘spirit’ adequately ‘handed on’ in the postconciliar years. The omission needs to be corrected if the urgent call for a new evangelization is to achieve its considerable promise in the traditionally Christian nations that are not in massive apostasy and in the reenergizing of primary evangelization to the unevangelized peoples of the world” (208).

Martin’s challenge to contemporary mission theology and missionary practice, endorsed on the book’s cover and first pages by a host of key church leaders, should be taken seriously. He is right about a certain ambivalence in regard to explicit proclamation of the Gospel and a certain naïveté in regard to the goodness of the world and of humans. He is right about the urgency of preaching the Gospel in order to invite women and men into a church community that can shape, challenge, console, celebrate, and forgive in the life-giving, redeeming, and liberating name of Jesus Christ. He is right about cautioning Catholics against a too-facile belief that all will be saved, even though that is indeed a worthy hope. As Juan Alfaro of the Gregorian University used to say in his classes, although there is no list of people in hell, the possibility of hell remains “for you and for me.”

But we wonder: Is Martin’s stark interpretation of LG 16 what Vatican II “actually teaches,” as Martin claims in his title? The Council in no way denies the reality of human sinfulness, as seen, for example, in Gaudium et spes, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, sections 15, 41, and 58, but it is not its predominant tone. Does such an emphasis, therefore, on human depravity and sinfulness go against the conciliatory “style” of Vatican II that sought not to condemn and anathematize but to persuade and edify? We wonder if Martin has exaggerated somewhat the influence that Romans 1 has on LG 16c. If it were so important for LG’s argument, would it not have made sense for the Council to have cited the entire passage of Romans 1:18–32? In the same way, only Mark 16:15 is quoted in the passage. Interestingly, in the original Latin text on the Vatican website (not in the Latin version printed in the book), there is no mention of Mark 16:16 (“the one who does not believe will be condemned”). Could a typographical error in the English translation (both that of Abbott and Flannery, and the Vatican website translation) have influenced a too negative reading of a passage that serves as a transition to paragraph 17, on the church’s missionary work? Such a negative reading would not entirely cancel out the positive tone of LG 16b, about the possibility of salvation for those who “sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them.” It would seem strange, however, that the document spends so much time on a deeply traditional and yet, in another way, groundbreaking statement, only to undercut it as strongly as Martin suggests it does. In many ways, Martin’s perspective on the depravity of women and men without explicit faith in the Gospel seems to fly in the face of our experience of wonderfully devout and holy Muslim students and colleagues, evident sincerity of worshipers in temples in Thailand and Taiwan, startling integrity of atheist friends and unchurched relatives, and sincere and honest lives of Papua New Guinea villagers.

We wonder, too, whether the pastoral strategy of Vatican II is indeed “flawed,” unwise, and in need of rebalancing and readjusting (see pp. 202 and 195). Our own sense is that evangelization comes not from denouncing or scolding people, but first of all from witnessing to the peace, strength, purpose, and freedom that accepting Christ brings, then showing them a church that is not first concerned with what is wrong with people but with helping people live life to the full, one that is found only in a relationship with Christ, celebrated around the Eucharistic table. As a World Council of Churches meeting in 1989 put it in its final statement: “People will always believe their eyes first.” At the recent Synod on the New Evangelization, Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila said it well: “The seemingly indifferent and aimless societies of our time are earnestly looking for God. The Church’s humility, respectful and silence might reveal more clearly the face of God in Jesus. The world takes delight in a simple witness to Jesus—meek and humble of heart.” And when we proclaim, we need to do it in a way that connects with people’s experience. This in no way means watering down the Gospel to make it acceptable; rather, it means to preach and explain in a way that touches people’s deepest yearnings, challenges their prejudices, speaks a word of consolation in their sorrow, and offers the assurance of forgiveness for their sinfulness. Evangelization and mission come from being bowled over with the love of God-in-Christ and from realizing that we have been chosen to share God’s mission of healing, reconciliation, forgiveness, justice, and establishing relationships. This is the strategy of Vatican II. We believe it is still relevant and should be the starting point of the New Evangelization.

Ralph Martin’s book is a powerful one, and a timely reminder in many ways of human sinfulness and the healing power of the Gospel. It is clearly, passionately, and honestly written. Positions, even when disagreed with, are fairly presented. It is a book that deserves to be read by missiologists and mission practitioners. We daresay that it is one of the most significant books on mission to appear in 2012. Nevertheless, we believe the church should continue to carry out its mission, in the words of John XXIII, with “the medicine of mercy.”
Missions from Korea 2013: Microtrends and Finance

Steve Sang-Cheol Moon

The Korean missionary movement continues to slow down; the survey of the Korean missionary force and mission agencies conducted by the Korea Research Institute for Mission in 2012 shows that though the aggregate number of foreign missionaries is larger, the annual rate of growth continues to decline. In 2012 there were a total of 19,798 Korean missionaries serving in countries outside South Korea.¹ One year earlier, in 2011, there were 19,373 foreign missionaries, yielding an increase of only 425, or 2.19 percent annual growth.² Fifty-five agencies reported membership growth in 2012, whereas thirty-five agencies experienced membership decrease, due to attrition or transfer to another agency. The total number of missionaries serving with denominational agencies increased by 6.0 percent, while the larger number of missionaries serving with interdenominational agencies decreased by 0.9 percent.

Since 2008, because of closures, mergers, and inactivity, the number of mission agencies has decreased from 190 to 167. In 2012, three agencies closed their ministries and two new agencies began, for a net decrease of one from the total for 2011. In 2012 these 167 agencies included 118 sending agencies and 49 supporting agencies; 152 of the mission agencies were interdenominational, and only 15 were denominational. Korean missionaries are active in 175 countries.

More than half of all Korean foreign missionaries are working in Asia (52.9 percent), and more than a quarter in countries that are majority Islamic (26.9 percent). A large majority of them are involved in traditional soul-winning ministries, including Bible translation, church planting, discipleship training, educational ministry, itinerant evangelism, and theological education (81.3 percent).

Changes in Korean missions since 2008 include:³

- The proportion of Korean missionaries working in Asia has grown, increasing from 47.3 percent in 2008 to 52.9 percent in 2012.
- Korean missionaries working in Eurasia or the former USSR decreased from 14.6 percent to 9.2 percent. Government restrictions or termination of visas caused much of this decline.
- A slight increase in the proportion of Korean missionaries working in Western Europe—from 3.9 percent to 5.0 percent—reflects recent calls for missionaries to engage in the challenge of re-evangelizing Europe.
- Missionaries pursuing soul-winning ministries decreased from 90.7 percent to 81.3 percent; conversely, missionaries pursuing holistic ministries increased from 9.3 percent to 18.7 percent. In part, this change reflects recent emphasis on the need for holistic approaches such as community development.
- Emphasis on missionary deployment to Islamic blocs has led to an increase from 23.2 percent to 26.9 percent.

- The proportion of Korean missionaries focusing solely on reaching non-Koreans with the Gospel has increased noticeably, from 82.6 percent to 89.2 percent.
- The proportion of Korean missionaries joining denominational agencies instead of interdenominational agencies has grown from 46.7 percent to 48.5 percent. This trend arises from churches’ preference for seminary graduates with theological education rather than laypersons when choosing new missionaries to support.
- Accordingly, ordained clergy (including spouses) have increased from 64.0 percent to 70.4 percent.
- Also related is a sharp increase in full-time (vs. bivocational) missionaries from 75.8 percent to 92.5 percent.
- The proportion of missionaries working with Korean (vs. international) agencies increased significantly from 78.2 percent to 88.1 percent.
- Missionaries working with “regular missions” (vs. “frontier missions”) grew from 59.0 percent to 65.0 percent.
- The majority gender for Korean missionaries changed from male (52.0 percent in 2008) to female (53.7 percent in 2012).
- Single missionaries increased from 10.3 percent to 13.8 percent.
- Composition of the missionary population by age groups has changed. Korean missionaries age fifty or older have grown from 24.4 percent in 2008 to 35.6 percent in 2012, pointing to the increased need for retirement plans and preparations.
- Continuing increase is noticeable in missionaries’ educational level. Missionaries with an undergraduate or higher degree increased from 95.5 percent to 97.2 percent. Those with a master’s degree as their highest degree jumped from 27.3 percent to 33.3 percent over the last four years.

These microtrends are intertwined with financial issues, to which several survey questions were directed for the first time. These questions revealed the following:⁴

The total amount of mission finance channeled through mission agencies is estimated to be Korean won (₩) 385,874,403,850, or an equivalent of US$363,005,083, in 2012.⁵ The organizational budget per person was ₩18,809,194 (US$17,694) in 2011, and it grew to ₩19,490,575 (US$18,335) in the estimated budget of 2012. For 2009–12, aggregate income for all agencies grew 4.29 percent annually, which exceeded the annual rate of increase in personnel (2.36 percent) for the same period.

In 2012, support for mission finances came from local churches (41.6 percent), individual supporters (34.9 percent), organizations (9.8 percent), and others (13.7 percent). Categories of mission expenditures were missionaries’ living costs (41.9 percent), field ministry funds (23.9 percent), home administration and other maintenance costs (13.2 percent), project costs at the organizational level (2.8 percent), and general fund/other (18.2 percent).⁶

The average expenditure per month for living costs for a four-person missionary family was ₩2,500,000.7 The average ministry fund was ₩863,933 (US$812), with a spread extending from ₩200,000 to ₩1,000,000. The average ministry fund was ₩863,933 (US$812), with a spread extending from ₩300,000 to ₩2,000,000.

The current level of Korean mission finance, which is not

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adequate to support increases in the number of missionary personnel, impedes further growth of the Korean missionary force, both quantitatively and qualitatively. New missionaries as well as seasoned laborers are struggling under burdens caused by financial shortage. Creative and innovative ways need to be developed to fund strategic missionary services.

Korean Missionary Totals as of December 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Missionaries</th>
<th>19,798</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Mission agencies</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sending/supporting</td>
<td>118 / 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interdenominational/denominational</td>
<td>152 / 15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Receiving countries

175

Deployment (percentage)

by continent/region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continent/Region</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>52.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eurasia / former USSR</td>
<td>9.2</td>
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</table>

by religious/cultural bloc

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bloc</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

by ethnic/linguistic focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>non-Korean</td>
<td>89.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ethnic Korean</td>
<td>8.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>non-Korean and ethnic Korean</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

by ministry type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministry Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>church planting</td>
<td>45.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discipleship training</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>educational ministry</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theological education</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Personal data (percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>male/female</td>
<td>46.3 / 53.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>married/single</td>
<td>86.2 / 13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clergy (including spouses)/lay</td>
<td>70.4 / 29.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>full-time/bivocational</td>
<td>92.5 / 7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>serve with interdenominational/denominational agency</td>
<td>51.5 / 48.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>serve with Korean/international agency</td>
<td>88.1 / 11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>serve in “regular”/”frontier” mission field</td>
<td>65.0 / 35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>age distribution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;4 years</td>
<td>20s (4.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4–8 years</td>
<td>30s (17.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8–12 years</td>
<td>40s (42.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12–16 years</td>
<td>50s (28.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;16 years</td>
<td>60s and up (7.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>missionary experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>highest degree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doctorate (4.2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>master’s (33.3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bachelor’s (59.6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high school (2.8)</td>
<td></td>
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Missions finance (in US$, per year)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finance Type</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>total missions income</td>
<td>363,005,083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>annual rate of increase</td>
<td>4.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sources of income (percent)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>local churches (41.6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>missionaries’ living costs (41.9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>field ministry funds (23.9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>home administration (13.2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organizational projects (2.8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>general fund/other (18.2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expenditures (percent)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>missionaries’ living costs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>field ministry funds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>home administration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organizational projects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>general fund/other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cost per missionary</td>
<td>17,694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>living expenditure per month for four-person family</td>
<td>1,518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>educational expense per month for four-person family</td>
<td>556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ministry fund per month for four-person family</td>
<td>812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>missionaries with adequate support</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>portion of aggregate support need met</td>
<td>62.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trends in individual support raising</td>
<td>decrease (42.9), no change (25.0), increase (28.6), other (3.6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes

1. The total number of missionaries reported by Korean agencies for 2012 is 20,840. Of these, 1,042 are counted twice (i.e., they appeared on the list of more than one agency); the net total is 19,798.
2. The average annual growth rate since 2008 has been 2.36 percent.
3. As stated in “Errata” (International Bulletin of Missionary Research 36, no. 3 [July 2012]: 120), the figures shown in the table “Korean Missionary Totals as of December 2011” (International Bulletin of Missionary Research 36, no. 2 [April 2012]: 85) were drawn from a 2008 survey. Therefore those are the figures that appear in the following bullet points indicating trends in missionary personnel and finance between 2008 and 2012.
4. KRIM researchers Jung Ju Lee and Mi Suk Chae contributed significantly to the collecting and analysis of the data presented in this article.
5. This amount does not include mission funds that were sent directly to foreign countries by local churches. Such funds are hard to trace. The exchange rate on December 31, 2012 (US$1 = ₩1,063), is used here.
6. In many mission agencies, expenditures for field projects are managed in the category of general fund. Funds for missionary member care are also included here.
7. The disparity in living standard among missionaries needs careful attention. What does it mean for missionaries to relate to one another and to serve incarnationally in light of such disparity? For a significant review of these and related issues, see Jonathan J. Bonk, Missions and Money: Affluence as a Missionary Problem Revisited, rev. and expanded ed. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2006), 172–79, 182–88.
My Pilgrimage in Mission

David A. Shank

I come from a marginal Christian people. At least as far back as the 1560s, my ancestors were a part of a Täufer (Anabaptist) community of faith that had taken refuge at Eggwil in the mountainous Langnau district of Switzerland. In 1717 Christian Shank, son Michael, and their families migrated to William Penn’s Pennsylvania. In 1816 my mother’s great-grandfather John Neuhauser, an Alsatian Amish miller, immigrated to Canada to avoid conscription into Napoleon’s army. I was born to Charles and Crissie (Yoder) Shank on October 7, 1924.

Preparation

At age eleven I was baptized in the Orrville (Ohio) Mennonite Church. I knew nothing of other churches except that they were said not to practice the “all things” that Jesus told his apostles to teach to all nations (Matt. 28:20). I was the only Mennonite in my class in school in North Canton, Ohio. We remained a marginal people.

While at Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana, my parents had been deeply influenced by the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions and subsequently, from 1915 to 1919, had served as missionaries in Dhantari, Central Province, India. My father taught industrial arts to male youths who had been orphaned by the great famine of 1896–99, and my mother worked with Bible women engaged in grassroots colportage and evangelism. My parents buried their first child “under the mango tree,” and their mission was cut short when their second child developed life-threatening rheumatic fever. Thereafter my father lived under the burden of having abandoned the call because he was unwilling to pay the price of staying.

In 1929, when I was five years old, my mother died giving birth to her eighth child. From the early 1920s until her death, she had been the literature secretary for the Mennonite Women’s Missionary Association, and she was the first American Mennonite woman author. She often spoke about missions and India from the pulpit, at a time when Mennonite women did not speak in worship services. Her book with its pictures and my parents’ India photograph album and “India trunk” of exotic mementos never ceased to provoke my wonder and curiosity. Former colleagues from India who visited our family seemed to be another breed of Mennonite.

My father lost his job as research engineer for the Hoover vacuum company because he could not in good conscience work on its contracts related to war matériel. He moved our family to a Mennonite center. The relief team Bender had mentioned soon arrived for Belgium. A year later, in October 1951, we were joined by Orley and Jane Swartzentruber. We saw ourselves as servants of Jesus Christ, to whom we wished to introduce others.

In 1945 I was invited to transfer to Mennonite Central Committee’s headquarters, at Akron, Pennsylvania, to edit the C.P.S. Bulletin for Mennonite CPS units. In mid-1946 Harold S. Bender organized a conference on Anabaptism at which Franklin Littell presented a chapter of his Yale doctoral dissertation on the missionary dynamics of the sixteenth-century Anabaptists, adding a missional dimension to Bender’s earlier threefold “essence of Anabaptism.” For Littell the church was (1) disciples of Jesus responding to the Good News of God’s reign, (2) in a community of mutual support, (3) committed to God’s service through nonviolent love, and (4) engaged in the mission of sharing the Good News. I discussed my future with Bender, and he explained that, following relief ministries in Europe, the Mennonite Church would need church workers with an Anabaptist vision who were well trained in Bible and theology. I returned to Goshen College to earn a B.A. in sociology and then enrolled in Goshen College Biblical Seminary.

Between college and seminary, Wilma Hollopeter and I were married. Wilma has been the mother and co-educator of our four children, as well as my collaborator. With independent personal calls to India, we easily decided to go there to work in my parents’ unfinished mission. J. D. Graber of the Mennonite Board of Missions, however, told us that because of the postcolonial climate in India, Western missionaries were no longer welcome. He asked if we would be open to postwar relief service in Belgium, serving as missionaries to Europe, the historic heartland of Christianity. American Mennonites had entered Belgium immediately after World War II, aiding German prisoners of war and refugees from eastern Europe. Our assignment would be to build on those contacts to reestablish an Anabaptist witness among Belgians.

Mission I: Belgium, 1950–73

In September 1950, Wilma, nine-month-old Michael, and I sailed for Belgium. A year later, in October 1951, we were joined by Orley and Jane Swartzentruber. We saw ourselves as servants of Jesus Christ, to whom we wished to introduce others.

A Mennonite center. The relief team Bender had mentioned soon left for the United States, and we were on our own. We continued their assistance to Pastor Charles Grikman in his ministry to...
scattered refugee and immigrant Slavic congregations in Belgium, Germany, Austria, and Trieste, Italy, but in Belgium his refugee work served foreigners. We needed to orient ourselves more directly to the Belgian context.

Belgium’s postwar recovery was slow. A dense and industrialized population of 9 million people was undergoing rapid dechristianization and secularization. Class consciousness and permanent cultural/linguistic conflict between the Catholic Flemish and socialist Walloons roiled relations. Belgium was still a colonial power, and mission was understood as work among the various tribes in the Belgian Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi, not as work among the Belgian people themselves.

Orley Swartzentruber and I studied Belgian history and literature at the Free University in Brussels. Observing that there was no Protestant student ministry, we proposed to the Protestant Federation that a student center be established. The proposal fell flat when it received the response, “Why would this federation of proper and respectable churches want Belgian Protestantism to be represented at the Free University by a sect such as the Mennonites—and American Mennonites at that?” We were pushed to the margins.

In January 1952, seven American Mennonite men living in Europe—former relief workers, missionaries, and university students—met in Amsterdam. I made a presentation to them entitled “A Missionary Approach to a Dechristianized Society.” Our conversation turned on the relevance of Bender’s Anabaptist vision for European Christianity in the postwar ecclesiastical and spiritual context, as well as for American Menno- nitianism. Between 1954 and 1971 the group published a series of pamphlets under the title Concern.

Clearly, the fruits of our work in Europe would not resemble the sending Mennonite denomination in North America. Our ministry would be shaped by the four Anabaptist accents—discipleship, fellowship, the service of nonviolent love, and mission—but a local expression would emerge out of a grassroots understanding that the Spirit works with people in their own contexts, wherever Christ is present with two or three gathered in his name (Matt. 18:20).

The Brussels East congregation. Jules and Madeleine Lambotte became our first members. Jules, a Flemish evangelist of the national Protestant Union, had been converted during the streetpreaching ministry of the Belgian Gospel Mission, renounced Nazism, and embraced pacifist convictions. He wanted a spiritual home that recognized his pacifism. André Vandermensbrugge, who came from traditional bourgeois Catholicism and was determined to refuse military service, also joined. We located our congregation in East Brussels, creating the Foyer Fraternel and ordaining Jules Lambotte as evangelist. Following the public installation of Lambotte, Pierre Widmer, an influential French Mennonite leader, gave a series of Good News lectures.

Observing the one-by-one character of congregational growth, I was impressed that the singular Christ event, variously seized, trusted, appropriated, and believed, is like a diamond approached by individuals with their different personalities, experiences, gifts, and needs. The light reflected by one facet of that diamond can serve as an entry point to faith in Christ and enable a beginning appropriation of the fullness reflected by all the facets. The challenge is to recognize and honor this diversity of entry points to faith and personal itineraries in the Spirit toward faith-fullness.

The Bourgeois-Rixensart congregation. For some years we administered a children’s home at Ohain. A board member had been holding a Bible study in the nearby home of the Debroux family, who had Catholic origins but who during the war had become deeply involved in the Resistance through the Communist Party’s underground. I visited and then began participating and was invited, as a pastor, to lead the studies. As others joined, the group grew. On Easter Sunday 1955 a second grassroots congregation began with eight baptisms. The flavor of the group was seasoned by Brethren piety and informality, with the Lord’s Supper celebrated every Sunday. The members eventually erected a temple, and the Église Évangélique de Rixensart, as they called themselves, attracted Christians of many denominations living within a ten-kilometer radius. Ursmer Lefebvre was ordained for the Bourgeois congregation while studying at the Protestant Theological Faculty in Brussels, but later, when Ursmer and Suzanne Lefebvre followed a missionary call to Burundi, I again assumed pastoral responsibilities for the congregation. A biblical theology reflecting the fourfold Anabaptist thrust described above held the group together. Overt Anabaptist or Mennonite references were exceptional. For we were perceived locally to be the Protestant church. My own preoccupation no longer turned on being the true church of Christ, but rather on truly being the church of Christ in this place.

As an addition to our existing French Mennonite affiliation, we asked for an associate relationship with the Belgian Reformed Church. An Anabaptist/Reformed congregation was an ecclesiastical novelty, but the Reformed Church’s latest liturgy provided for an option for a service of presentation of a newborn and a service of baptism on confession of faith. I was invited to participate in the Reformed synod and held renewal meetings for Reformed consistory. Despite all the renewal, I felt I was getting involved in “churchianity” all over again.

During those years I discovered Jacques Ellul’s False Presence of the Kingdom, which led me to his earlier work The Presence of the Kingdom and ultimately to a shelf of some fifty of his books dealing with Christ, church, and world. These writings were pivotal in maintaining my bearings.

Congo missions, Congolese, and Kimbanguists. We had not foreseen our interaction with Mennonite missionaries from two North American agencies who were going to and coming from the Belgian Congo. Workers came to Belgium to study French, take courses in the Belgian colonial school, and study at the School of Tropical Medicine, in Antwerp. This relationship took on new importance following Congolese independence in 1960 and the increased presence of Congolese people in Belgium.

In 1966 Jean Van Lierde of the Mouvement de Réconcili-
Unlikely in Belgium thirty years earlier, we were committed not to introduce another denomination.

for European conscientious objectors, to place teachers and agriculturalists in Kimbanguist institutions. In 1971 the head of the church, Kuntima Diangienda, invited me to the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Church of Jesus Christ on Earth by his father, the Prophet Simon Kimbangu. Some 400,000 Kimbanguists gathered at the holy city of Nkamba, but missionaries and agencies in Kinshasa were largely unaware of the event and its significance. I was impressed with what I heard and saw, and a new dimension of mission opened up for us.

Mission II: United States and Scotland, 1973–79

We returned to the United States in 1973. I taught at Goshen College and then served as campus pastor for two years. Although I was asked to stay on as campus minister, Wilma and I were committed to the openings in Africa represented by those earlier calls. In August 1976 we left for the University of Aberdeen, in Scotland. There Andrew Walls had established his Institute for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World, and Harold W. Turner had launched his New Religious Movements research and documentation program. In light of the invitation from John Ahui, I began an in-depth study of the Prophet Harris himself and discovered texts and manuscripts from his time that opened up new perspectives and enlarged appreciation for his self-understanding. In 1982 I completed a three-volume doctoral thesis that documented and reflected on these understandings, their roots, their expressions, and their interrelationships. Walls generously referred to the published version of my thesis, *Prophet Harris, the “Black Elijah” of West Africa*, as a landmark volume.

The Harrist Church was the fruit of a messianic movement, which led me to a study of the phenomenon of messianism, nearly universally dependent on the Judeo-Christian scriptures. My own Mennonite/Anabaptist story was one type of messianic resurgence. There had been many similar movements before the sixteenth century, and the Kimbanguists, Harrists, and some other AICs were also similar, existing in non-Western contexts four centuries later. I shared these insights with my colleague Wilbert Shenk, who was committed to working on a messianic missiology. A collaborative volume to which I contributed two chapters was published later, in 1993.


We left for Abidjan in April 1979, anticipating a last decade of service under the Mennonite Board of Missions before retirement from ministry. I had a vision of what God was doing—and wanted to do—for humanity and creation, but I still had a lot to learn. In Côte d’Ivoire we joined our younger American colleagues James and Jeanette Krabill. Unlike in Belgium thirty years earlier, we were committed not to introduce another denomination. When asked, we explained that we were Mennonite Christians sent to learn about African Christian life and understandings and to share—through Bible study and making available the resources we had gathered on the Prophet Harris—and so to enable African churches in their various itineraries. We were *disponibles* (i.e., available) through conversation, dialogue, hospitality, or pastoral ministry—or, as requested, by teaching Bible, Christian history, or theology. Our special concern was to respond to the calls of the Harrist Church and the dozen AIC leaders in Cotonou.

With the Krabills, we lived in the burgeoning Ebrié village of Blokosso-Abidjan, a popular quarter of the city surrounded by urban sprawl. For almost three years we shared space on the second floor of the residence of the village schoolmaster with the Krabills, with whom we ate our daily noon and evening meals. Then Head Preacher N’Guessan Légre Benoît of the Dida Harrist contacted us about two Kimbanguist leaders who were returning from a world gathering of pacifists in Copenhagen. Belgian Protestant pastors would not receive them, and Van Lierde asked us to give them hospitality. During dinner in our home we heard their story—with its echoes of the sixteenth-century Anabaptist story. Although I was aware of Edwin and Irene Weaver’s experiences in Nigeria, this was my first contact with African Initiated Churches (AICs). This encounter led the Mennonite Central Committee and Eirene, a Mennonite program
From the beginning, Harrist Church Spiritual Head John Ahui welcomed us, and he blessed and supported the Krabills’ biblical work among the Dida. However, some among the older, largely illiterate Ebriés who controlled the Harrist National Committee disagreed with Ahui’s openness, although the Union of Harrist Youth was receptive. In time, the conflict became more than intergenerational.

Within the larger Harrist community, two parallel interpretations of the Prophet Harris were in competition. One tradition stemmed from the first Harrist catechism, published in 1956 and based on oral tradition, which proclaimed that God loves all peoples of the earth. When a people in distress cry out, God sends them a prophet: Moses for the Jews, Jesus Christ for the whites, Muhammad for the Arabs, William Wadé Harris for the blacks. God sent the Prophet Harris to deliver black Africans from their idols and fetishes and to teach them to live in peace with one another. The other tradition affirmed that God loves all peoples of the world, and when they cried out in their distress, God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to deliver them. But the whites killed him before he could reach Africa. Yet God did not give up on Africa. He sent the Prophet Harris to tell people about Christ and do Christ’s work among Africans. Harris delivered from fetishes and idols, taught God’s law, and made peace between tribes.

The Krabills learned that the Dida people largely followed the second tradition and were eager for biblical instruction, but the Ebrié and Attié peoples, to whom we related, followed the first. Harris was their prophet, and Christ was the white man’s prophet. While the Krabills were able to carry out a program of biblical teaching among the Dida people, our mission in Ebrié and Attié territory was to share what we had learned about the Prophet Harris and his thought—a ministry of the Gospel through the work and understandings of the Prophet Harris himself.

The documentation told us that the prophet had sought a universal, Christ-centered movement that would bring all the churches and missions under Christ’s reign. We shared this basic understanding through conversations in Harrist homes and in our own home, at meals following our visits to Harrist churches, to youth congresses, to preachers and other leaders who came to our sun shelter up on the roof, and through Sunday afternoon lectures for whole villages, organized by Harrist leaders under thatch-roofed apatams. In addition, I wrote a pamphlet that was essentially a résumé of Harris’s Christian thought. More than 6,000 copies were sold—largely to Harrists—through local Christian bookstores, and the work was reprinted repeatedly. The pamphlet instructed thousands of Harrists in the newly literate generations, who reported that Christ-oriented apostles and preachers within the church were freed to proclaim Christian accents more boldly. The pamphlet may well be the most efficacious piece I ever wrote, unwittingly contributing to the possibility that the Harrist movement would embrace more fully the vision of its founder. In 1998, less than ten years after our departure from Côte d’Ivoire, the Harrist church formally affirmed that it was a Christ-confessing church and was accepted as a member of the World Council of Churches.

During our decade of ministry we visited some forty Harrist congregations (always at their invitation) in ten different ethnic groups. Not once during that time was I asked to speak in a Harrist church. We always dressed in white, as do the Harrists, to attend their churches. We accepted invitations to festivals, where we would be received as honored guests and would dance through the village streets behind singing “honor women” as we were shown off to the village. We celebrated events with Harrists, visited occasionally in their homes, invited their leaders for meals, all the while aware of behind-the-scenes resistance to our presence. We observed and listened, asked questions, checked and rechecked answers, listened to stories, heard their understandings of problems, and listened to interpretations of their sermons and their life, generally valuing their experiences. As participant observers, we took copious notes.

The Harrist movement saw itself involved in a spiritual contest with “fetish,” like that of Elijah and the priests of Baal, or the spiritual conflicts that Harris himself had confronted during his ministry. Nevertheless, in contrast to the dynamic, eschatological, kingdom-of-Christ orientation of Harris during his original impact, the Harrist movement had become ritualized and hardened into an institution seeking recognition. Yet it was still winning people out of their traditional religions into a fetish-free, law-restrained (i.e., it’s “sin” only if caught) monotheistic faith, experienced as a break with and major advance over paganisme.

Côte d’Ivoire’s mission-planted churches—Roman Catholic, various Baptist, Methodist, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Adventist, various independent evangelical, Assemblies of God, and several Pentecostal—had all profited, largely unconsciously, from the remarkable and unique spiritual breakthrough of the Prophet Harris in 1913–14. In providing a foundation for the mission-planted churches, the Harrist Church is unique among AICs, which typically form by splitting off from mission-planted churches in reaction to their Western character. Yet the missionary churches have viewed the Harrists as an illiterate, fetish-enspired, marginal African sect, from which people need to be converted.

Interactions with Harrists. Although we were aware of their reservations about any religious input from us, we remained available to the Harrists—present as Christian whites, open to learning about them, sympathetic to their situation, appreciative of certain dimensions of their religion. We were students of their prophet with documentation they had never seen, ready
to share in discussion and study of the Bible. This posture gave us a wide variety of opportunities for building relationships. In several of the secondary schools of the capital, Harrist youth came together at the same time as Methodist and Catholic youth met for free-time religious study. At the request of the Harrist youth and with the full approval of Pierre Anin, then president of the Harrist National Committee, I gave a series of biblical and historical studies. During a typical week in Blokosso, there was always a trickle of Harrists interested in the materials in the Documentation and Resource Center.

We asked ourselves about the appropriateness of our open availability to the Harrists. Indeed, on one occasion Wilma and I met the new president of the National Committee, accompanied by his secretary, and asked them frankly whether we should remain in Côte d’Ivoire for the Harrists. The secretary immediately stated, “I see absolutely no reason whatsoever for you to remain; you are entirely free to leave at any time.” The president, however, without missing a beat, responded, “It’s just like my secretary says, we need a historian; you can be very helpful to me, particularly in these times when we lack clarity among us. You should indeed stay, and I will be grateful to you.” The president encouraged our work with the Harrist youth meetings. When the youth, however, ultimately joined the National Committee, to gain the elders’ approval they had to make a clean break with us, even formally opposing the Krabills’ work that had been thoroughly accepted by Dida Harrism and blessed by Ahui.12

When we left Côte d’Ivoire in 1989, we went to the national offices at Bingerville to officially turn over to the church a full copy of our collected documentation about the Prophet Harris. An erstwhile friend, now National Committee president, prevented us from giving farewell greetings to Spiritual Head John Ahui. It was the ultimate affront, a necessary political stance that enabled the president to maintain his authority. After we had lived for ten years in Côte d’Ivoire for and among the Harrist Church, it was a peculiar au revoir for us. Yet we understood.

An African itinerary to New Testament faith. Through rich contacts and relationships with the entire Christian community, I was able to get a feel for what was going on, not only among the Harrists, but also among the mission-planted churches. It was clear there were many Harrists whose personal itineraries had led them to a vital faith in Christ, and there were many in the mission-planted churches who were struggling with faith issues, even though they had learned all the proper language and practices of faith as members of recognized churches. These Christians did not yet have, in the words of Catholic missionary Jean-Paul Eschlimann, “the same confidence in Jesus that their brothers have in the customs of their ancestors and the Koran.”13

The study of many African Christian faith pilgrimages led me to understand that, just as there were religious movements all across Africa that ranged from traditional religion to Western mission churches, so also individual African Christians had their itineraries. These spiritual journeys moved progressively toward fuller understandings of God, Christ, and the life of faith, as the Spirit gave more and more clarity to understandings of the Gospel and the New Testament writings.14

Call from Cotonou. Contacts with AIC leaders in Benin were renewed in 1983. The Inter-Confessional Protestant Council invited me to conduct a one-week Bible seminar entitled “The Shepherd and His Flock.” At that first seminar we were told in the open discussion that the leaders perceived their main problem to be “sheep-stealing” among them. We were also told that we fulfilled two conditions necessary for the seminar’s success: we were from outside that context, and we personally had no denominational ambitions for Benin. We were committed only to building up the churches that were already there, recognizing the kingdom of God, in some sense, as already present in their midst. Over time this goal evolved into the Institut Biblique de Benin, in Cotonou, which became the shared enterprise of four unions of churches with their many and various congregations.

Wilma and I settled in Blokosso-Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, but during these years we were informed and enriched by various visits, exchanges, and ministries in Liberia, Ghana, Benin, Zaire, Kenya, Central African Republic, South Africa, Transkei, Lesotho, and Botswana.

In Retirement (1989–)

Back in the United States in 1989, though officially retired, I taught two semesters at Bluffton University, Bluffton, Ohio, and we served the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference both as mobile ministers and overseers of three congregations in Elkhart, Indiana, and by participating for several years on its Commission for Spiritual Deliverance. We have been available to share about our ministry, lecturing, teaching, preaching, and speaking wherever invited. Now, since 2003, in Greenscroft Retirement Community, Goshen, we keep in touch with what is going on in the world, for which we pray, even as we pray for different dimensions of the missio Dei in the world.

In 1992 we visited Cotonou again. To our surprise, the president of the National Committee of the Harris Church, who three years earlier had rudely spurned us at the time of our departure from Côte d’Ivoire, came to our door. Now he was on an evangelistic mission, accompanied by a choir and church officials, including John Ahui, by then about 100 years of age. The president was warm and friendly. It was the week before Easter, and we accompanied the dancing chorus through the streets of Cotonou, attending the president’s lectures and evening meetings, as well as the Easter Sunday service. For the worship service, the president’s protocol placed Wilma with his own wife on the left front bench of the church and placed me with several preachers on the right front row. Toward the end of the service, the president gave a special word of recognition, thanking us profusely for our presence with them during the week of witness and on the occasion of the Easter celebration and the meal to come, which he spoke of as a sort of communion meal.

The president concluded with reference to “the Shank family, who has given us unconditional support for twenty years.” At the meal, he had us seated at the table of honor with Spiritual Head John Ahui, with the president and me on the right, and the official with the title “first head preacher and cross carrier”
OMSC executive director designate Dr. J. Nelson Jennings says the initiative “will enable beleaguered Christian leaders to come to OMSC from challenging situations. Currently we have to turn away many worthy candidates due to lack of funding.”

The fund will provide friends of the Bonks, OMSC alumni from around the world, and others who have admired their ministries from afar, a “concrete way of honoring Jon and Jean on the occasion of their retirement,” adds Jennings. Jon and Jean have wanted to find a way after they retire and return to Canada to perpetuate their longtime commitment to serving marginalized church leaders and missionaries who live and minister in places where it is extraordinarily difficult and sometimes dangerous to be a follower of Christ.

“Christian leaders who face difficult sociopolitical situations are at the heart of OMSC’s ministry,” comments Jennings. “Many such leaders—including administrators, pastors, educators, academics, artists, development workers, and missionaries—have come to OMSC from throughout the world and found rest, perspective, and rejuvenation for reentering their challenging contexts.”

OMSC residents, he adds, “have inspired us to serve in our own contexts with newfound insight, wisdom, and passion. Even after these leaders have completed their OMSC residencies, friendships they have forged have deepened through visits from staff and friends, ongoing communication, and mutual prayer.”

Residency for a program year (September to May) “costs more money than most of these Christian leaders could ever imagine,” and the lack of funding most encounter “obviously presents a significant barrier,” Jennings comments. To permanently fund the endowed scholarships will require $500,000 each. These will include housing in an OMSC apartment, a stipend for basic needs including food, airfare to and from Connecticut, health insurance required to live for even a few months in the United States, and administrative support.

R. Donald MacDougall, former OMSC board member and treasurer, who is the fund’s honorary chairman, expresses appreciation for Jon and Jean for their service to OMSC, given “with such great energy and distinction.” He acknowledges that the cost for many residents, “while modest, is still beyond their means.” MacDougall retired as vice president of the Towers Perrin management consulting firm.

The Bonks, Mennonites who were famine relief workers in Ethiopia (1974–76), moved to New Haven from Canada in 1997, after then-director Gerald H. Anderson selected Jon as associate director. Jon was professor of global Christian studies at Providence Theological Seminary, Otterburne, Manitoba, Canada, and has been executive director since June 2000.
on the left with Wilma. During the solemn meal, conversation was typically absent, and it concluded with the aged Ahui’s ceremonial exit. Wilma approached him, extended her hand, and greeted him with “Bonjour, Papa.” He stopped and held her hand very warmly, and at length he smiled and repeated several times, “Ahh, Madame, Madame!” just as he had done on previous occasions when we visited him at his home in Petit Bassam. We were utterly astonished. From the beginning of our African decade, we lived with the fundamental messianic hope that all things will eventually be reconciled in Jesus Christ; but the way that happens, and is yet to happen, has not been fully disclosed.

In 2000 Wilma and I were invited to Belgium for the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of our work in there, and the twentieth anniversary of the current Brussels Mennonite Center. Catholic and Protestant representatives affirmed the importance of the ongoing Mennonite presence and witness in Belgium. Father Thaddeus Barnas of the Catholic National Office for Ecumenism delivered a written apology for Roman Catholic actions against Anabaptist-Mennonites carried out four hundred years earlier.

Conclusion

The Good News of God’s word is fulfilling its purpose as people meet Jesus Christ. The One Spirit-Creator of all things—by the covenant of grace and peace fulfilled through the life and teachings of Israel’s Messiah and his cross, resurrection, ascension, and reign—is reconciling alienated humans to their unique source, to various others, and to creation. I take this perception to be biblical, apostolic, Anabaptist, Mennonite, holistic, charismatic, ecumenical, catholic, missionary—and still marginal.

Notes

6. See Edwin and Irene Weaver, The Uyo Story (Elkhart, Ind.: Mennonite Board of Missions, 1970).
12. In addition to Bible instruction in six village centers, James Krabill was also helping to save a rich heritage of Dida hymnody; see James R. Krabill, The Hymnody of the Harrist Church among the Dida of South Central Ivory Coast, 1915–1949 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1995).
13. Jean-Paul Eschlimann made this assessment of the more than 11,500 Catholics in his parish among the Agni people, as reported in Afrique et Parole, Letter no. 10, ed. René Luneau (1984).
The Legacy of Mabel Shaw

Rebecca C. Hughes

Few people recognize the name Mabel Shaw (1888–1973) today, but in her time she was the most renowned female missionary in Africa. Shaw founded the London Missionary Society’s Girls’ Boarding School in Mbereshi, Northern Rhodesia, heading it from 1915 to 1940. This school not only educated numerous girls between these years but also served as a model for other mission schools. In addition to her work in Africa, Shaw deserves credit for her promotional work in Britain as an author who loved Africa and Africans. During an era when most African women either were obscure to the British public or were considered to be conservatives of the primitive, Shaw instead presented them as concerned and active members of a changing society. Finally, Shaw should be remembered as an authority billed as “an interpreter of Africa.” Her communication skills and her insights into missions work earned her recognition as an expert in a male-dominated field. Throughout her years with the London Missionary Society (LMS), Shaw was a featured speaker at mission events; and even after she transferred to the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1942, she wielded a degree of authority that few women in the Anglican community were able to attain. The role of “expert” enabled her to broadcast her vision for missionaries to respond to an urbanizing Africa and to emphasize friendships over institution-building. Still, despite her sensitivity and like other evangelicals of her day, Shaw did not question the inherent paternalism of British civilizing missions.

Mabel Shaw, the eldest of five, was born in Wolverhampton to a lower-middle-class, non-Christian family. When Mabel was five years old, she was sent to live with her grandmother in Berkshire, where she stayed until her grandmother’s death five years later. She credited her Baptist “Granny” with teaching her “how near God was in everyday things in this World,” and this theology underlay Shaw’s work in Africa and colored all her writings. She next moved to a boarding school on the Isle of Wight, where her Christian education continued. When home during holidays in Wolverhampton, she worshiped at Queen Street Congregational Church and actively supported the LMS, joining the Band of Hope and leading a study circle group. Shaw further pursued her interest in missions by studying at St. Colm’s College, Edinburgh, from 1912 until 1915. Although the missionary school was affiliated with the Church of Scotland, it attracted a wide range of evangelicals. Shaw thus embarked for Africa having imbibed a garden variety of evangelicalism.

Surprising in retrospect, Africa was not Shaw’s first choice. She initially had set her heart on India, but when the LMS asked her to go as the first single woman to Central Africa, she ascertained that “this must be God’s will for her.” Praying that she would “follow worthy” in the steps of David Livingstone, Shaw spent her first year in Northern Rhodesia learning the Chibemba language and traditional concepts of education for girls. Twelve years after opening the Girls’ Boarding School (GBS), Shaw launched the House of Life, a maternity and child welfare center that accorded with colonial maternalist endeavors. Shaw supplemented the funding for her work through the sales of her four books, with the proceeds from the second specifically designated for the House of Life. Her gift for writing and promotion empowered her to muster support beyond LMS circles to the point that the GBS received more funding than any other mission in Northern Rhodesia. Such promotional talents ensured her relative independence from male oversight. Her position was further enhanced when she was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1932 in recognition of her educational work.

Despite her reputation, Shaw’s last few years at Mbereshi were challenging. One colleague left the school after disagreeing with Shaw’s emphasis on pageantry, and other missionaries complained about her domineering manner. As the economic depression of the 1930s deepened, Shaw was forced to defend the design of the school as a girls’ boarding school. Proponents of mass coeducation were gaining the day, and Shaw found herself in the minority against this method. She was particularly indisposed toward it since it augured male supervision over her school (which came about in 1946). Consequently, she retired from the school in 1940.

Shaw soon returned to Africa, however, this time with the CMS in 1942. In an interview after her second retirement in 1952, she claimed that she had long held the more sacramental theology of the Anglican Church but that she had opted to work for the LMS because she was allowed more autonomy within an organization that afforded single women more independence. The CMS hired Shaw as an educational consultant in Uganda, but she became ill and was hospitalized for several months. After regaining her health, she spent four years in Uganda. In 1947 she returned to England as a traveling secretary, building support for missions among women. She also maintained close connections with Africa and conducted official tours for the CMS into the 1950s. Throughout retirement, Shaw offered herself as a speaker and retreat leader until she could no longer coax her body, “Brother Ass,” out of bed due to painful arthritis. She lived the last years of her life at a home for the aged in Surrey. Upon her death in 1973, her ashes were buried on the grounds of the chapel at Mbereshi, where the United Church of Zambia held a memorial service for her.

The Girls’ Boarding School

Shaw founded the GBS around the concept of Chief Jesus, her notion of African Christianity. She arrived at her idea from her training at St. Colm’s, where Annie Hunter Small, a former missionary in India, served as the first principal. Small incorporated psychology and current educational methods in the curriculum, expecting these tools to prepare her students to make Christianity relevant in any culture. Her successor, Florence Mackenzie, continued in the same vein and urged students to wrestle with the heart of the Christian message in fresh ways so that it could be expressed through local initiative and not as a Western religion.

Shaw implemented the philosophy of St. Colm’s with her experimental school designed to simulate an African village under the authority of “Chief Jesus.” Although the school featured
African architecture with an *nsaka*—a covered, round meeting place in the central area—the girls slept in oblong dorms. Everyone participated in necessary chores, with the goal of living as ordinary families in a village under “tribal discipline.” Despite an inauspicious opening with only four students, by the 1930s enrollment had increased to over 160. Most of the girls came from Christian families, and they typically lived at the school from about age nine until marriage at age fifteen. Shaw, however, prided herself on influencing girls to marry later, and many did not leave the school until they were at least eighteen. Instruction focused on the three Rs (reading, writing, and 'rithmetic), geography, history in the form of stories, some English (Chibemba was the main language of instruction), hygiene, and mothercraft. Shaw also offered a Christianized version of initiation rites for girls. She appreciated the teaching of “obedience, hard work and endurance,” but as the rites included “much that was repulsive” to her, she aimed to Christianize them. To accommodate the culture, Shaw longed for a theology textbook written by a “man who knows Bantu life and thought intimately and written for the people upon the foundations already there.” Perhaps the most powerful expression of Africanized Christianity at the school was the music that student Betty Chungu composed. Unlike Shaw’s peers, including Annie Small, who excluded African compositions from her compilation of non-Western songs, Shaw appreciated African hymns.

Her admiration for traditional African life only increased as she feared that urbanization in the Copper Belt was undermining traditional values. Before 1932 Shaw frequently stated that conversion to Christianity stimulated remarkable changes in the girls. For example, in her first book, *Children of the Chief* (1921), she emphasized that before the girls became Christians, they were prone to fighting and lying, but upon conversion they were transformed into sweet, honest Christians. Yet with towns swelling in the Copper Belt, Shaw was troubled that town life eroded traditional mores and promoted immorality. She defended African customs, clinging to the theology that Jesus came not to destroy, but to fulfill, claiming that his commandments “rarely conflict with the old tribal laws of the people.” While Shaw was not a cultural relativist, she was alarmed that Western materialism would destroy “much that is gracious and of value in Bantu life.”

**Shaw’s Writing and Theology**

Shaw publicized her mission work through nonfictional accounts of her life and the lives of several young women from the school. Her four books reached considerable audiences, with her third book, *God’s Candlelights* (1932), selling over 40,000 copies in fourteen printings. Shaw also penned numerous leading articles for LMS serial publications, and she contributed to the ecumenical and academic *International Review of Missions*.

What made her work stand out was her deep love for Africa and Africans. Africa was a land with “waters of healing for the peoples, . . . where all lost things [were] found,” and where “God’s awful majesty” abounded. Shaw’s views broke from Victorian tropes of Africa as the “Dark Continent” brimming with disease and primitive people. Her depictions, too, diverged from early twentieth-century discourses on Africa as a fantasy-land-cum-nightmare. More noteworthy, Shaw’s work deviated from imperial literature written by “progressive imperialists” such as Margery Perham, who constructed the “native” within a masculine colonial discourse and viewed African women “as silent icons of the primitive.” Despite some sentimentality, Shaw presented a picture of Africa and Africans that was grounded in lived experience and filled with ordinary women who aimed to lead fulfilling Christian lives.

One such young woman was Mary Livingstone, the subject of Shaw’s fourth and final book on Africa, *A Treasure of Darkness: An Idyll of African Child Life* (1936). Mary’s story was a testament to the GBS. When her mother died in childbirth, Mary faced customary death. Her father, however, rescued her, carrying her miles to Mbereshi, the only place where the half-dead baby could be revived. The girls at the school named the infant Mary, for the mother of “Chief Jesus,” and gave her the surname Livingstone after the famed missionary. With her lively disposition, Mary soon became a favorite.

Shaw’s biography of Mary may also have served as her rejoinder to George Bernard Shaw’s *The Adventures of the Black Girl in Her Search for God*. G. B. Shaw (no relation) wrote this fictional work after he and Mabel Shaw had become acquainted through the chairman of the Arthington Trust, one of Mabel’s supporters and admirers. While G. B. Shaw thought Mabel could “take up literature as a profession,” he did not appreciate mission work and wrote this tale to condemn evangelism in Africa. Modeling the female missionary in the narrative after Mabel, he characterized her as a prideful and masochistic woman who spurned marriage for a vocation. The story implies that marital life with children was a more noble choice as the protagonist, Black Girl, rejects Christianity and other religions but finds peace tending a Voltairean garden and marrying an expatriate Irishman, with whom she produces numerous children. Although G. B. Shaw violated social taboo with the promotion of racial intermarriage, he drew upon English stereotypes of Africans. Black Girl lived in a primeval forest, carried a knobkerrie (a wooden club with a knobbed end), and was highly sexualized with her nakedness and her pronounced womb. Mabel Shaw, in contrast, wrote about a real African girl who was not exoticized and who had much in common with English Christian girls. Mary loved Winnie the Pooh, Bible stories, and games, and she found deep satisfaction following Christ.

Mabel Shaw’s representations of African women as flesh-and-blood humans stemmed from her brand of liberal evangelical theology. She based her ideas of the relations between Christians and non-Christians upon the Christology of T. R. Glover and his argument that Jesus primarily left a friendship with his followers. Shaw asserted that Jesus proceeded through his three years of ministry leaving “no organized institution.” Instead, he bequeathed a “friendship” and “fellowship” with his followers and was bound to them by a relationship that transformed “men and women into the sons and daughters of God.” Shaw, despite her own contributions to institution building, urged Christian Britons and missionaries to welcome Africans as friends.

Shaw expected the idea of friendship to play out in practical terms: spiritual equality was to entail more than nominal equality. She chastised British patrons of missions for donating different gifts to African girls than they would give to British girls, since African girls also “enjoy toys and pretty clothes.” When a Christmas package arrived full only of Bibles from the British and Foreign Bible Society, Shaw was sorely disappointed. After she and another missionary “recovered our breath we . . . said all the impolite things we could say about the B.F.B.S.” Shaw condemned meanness of spirit and believed spiritual equality and friendship should be reflected in the material realm.

The most distinguishing aspect of Shaw’s theology was her emphasis on the immanence of God. Although Shaw claimed her grandmother envisioned the nearness of God, she may also have been influenced by the popular Congregational preacher.
R. J. Campbell (1867–1956) and his “New Theology.” This fresh theological position enabled her to elevate Africans to an unprecedented level in missionary propaganda. To begin with, she claimed that Livingstone did not bring God to Africa, but rather “found Him here in every village, in every man, and woman.” Shaw herself encountered God in a feeble old man suffering with leprosy who would not allow her to travel alone from his village to Mbereshi because a lion was reputed to be in the vicinity. Shaw insisted she would be fine speeding along on her bicycle, and she teasingly asked him what he would do if they faced a lion. He responded with “quiet dignity,” asking, “Have I not a life to give?” Shaw capitulated and thanked him, “having met with God face to face.”

Moreover, Shaw apprehended God actively at work in Africa, raising the land and peoples beyond the idea of “dawn,” a common twentieth-century missionary trope that Shaw herself had earlier employed. Echoing her belief that Christianity was the fulfillment of African religion, she asserted:

The word of God for Africa is not confined within the covers of one book, nor is it to be heard only within the walls of a church. It is not to be spoken by one priest alone. In many ways God speaks. The new voices that come to us in this school in all our lessons are all the voice of God. They heard Him of old, dim, mysterious, dreadful, an unknown voice: in the falling water, in the great trees God hid Himself. He haunted many places. He hid in the wisdom of the elders. He haunted many places. He hid in the wisdom of the elders. He hid in their laws, in their stories. They heard, most surely they heard. “I heard of Him by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eyes have seen.”

Africa was a special place where God was present, and he was speaking through African voices. Yet Shaw did not think that Africa was the only place God inhabited, since she maintained that “all ground is holy ground.”

A Woman and a Visionary in Missionary Culture

Missionary women gained the numerical majority in the late nineteenth century, but not until the early twentieth century did they regularly contribute to official missionary propaganda. Most wrote to rationalize female education via the building of Christian homes, and Shaw doggedly followed suit. Shaw, however, was recognized as an authority on African life beyond the female realm. Because of her pioneering approach to Africanized Christianity and education, she garnered larger audiences than did her male counterparts, strengthening her influence to the point that she was one of the most highly regarded missionaries of her day. Such a position was rare for a female in the LMS and CMS. Certainly single women were afforded greater autonomy within the LMS than in CMS, but even in that organization women were marginalized. For example, if a female missionary married, she was expected to forfeit her salary as an independent missionary and continue as a missionary wife.

Shaw was so appreciated as an expert on education that the International Missionary Council discussed her school at an all-day conference in London in 1925. Several years later, in 1932, the International Missionary Council appointed Shaw to an otherwise all-male commission convened to investigate urbanization in the Copper Belt and its effect on the rest of Northern Rhodesia. This six-member team consisted primarily of British and American academics, and the group spent weeks touring the major mining areas and visiting with government officials, missionaries, mining managers, and African employees. Although Shaw did not contribute to the final written report, which served as a guide for Christian action and a database for government and mining interests, she “played an equal part in [the group’s] deliberations.”

While home on furloughs, Shaw was in great demand as a missionary speaker. She was frequently featured at LMS anniversary gatherings, and upon her retirement from Mbereshi she commanded even more prestigious billing. In 1940 she was the lone female contributor to a BBC centenary commemoration of David Livingstone, and a year later she preached the Annual Sermon for the LMS at Memorial Hall, an honor typically reserved for ordained men. Shaw was also a primary speaker and chairman at the New World Order Exhibition in Cambridge in 1941. This ecumenical exhibition highlighted some of the foremost mission experts of the day, including Victor Murray, William Paton, and Prebendary W. W. Cash. And in a truly distinct honor, since Anglicans excluded women from ordination and other roles of high leadership, she delivered the main address at the 1947 CMS Anniversary Service held at the Royal Albert Hall.

Shaw gained such honors not only because of her experience and success in Africa but also because she had a visionary message for missionaries. At the Royal Albert Hall she charged her audience to consider Africans their “friends and comrades” and to appreciate the role of educated Africans in Africa’s future. In a more private gathering with CMS leaders after an official tour of Africa, Shaw stressed the need to relocate missions to urban areas in order to reach more Africans and to thwart rising materialism and secularism. She reiterated her criticism of missionaries for prioritizing institutions over friendships, and she urged missionaries to reside among Africans in towns rather than in cloistered compounds and to build closer unions with educated Africans. Although Shaw envisioned a multiracial society characterized by “partnership,” one must recognize that her commitment to material and moral uplift of Africans through British political oversight posed an obstacle to realizing spiritual equality.
Conclusion

Mabel Shaw deserves greater recognition than she has yet won as a missionary woman who worked within the confines of British evangelical culture. She crafted her own brand of theology that leveled Africans and Britons, and she promoted forward-looking evangelical culture. She crafted her own brand of theology that a missionary woman who worked within the confines of British colonialism, but she admonished Britons to live up to Christian ideals. In her eyes, the Victorian mantra “commerce and Christianity” was a failed policy: commerce only fostered materialism and the disintegration of traditional African mores, with expatriate Christians not living as close friends with Afircans. Keenly aware that Africa was changing, Shaw implored missionaries to adapt to and respect a modernizing Africa.

Selected Bibliography

Works by Mabel Shaw

Works about Mabel Shaw

Notes
2. “The Life and Work of Miss Mabel Shaw, O.B.E., at Mbereshi Station,” 1, no author or date (probably 1973), MS 380319, CWM Archives.
3. Although the LMS was nondenominational, it was closely tied to Congregational churches. The CMS was Anglican. CWM/LMS Candidates’ Papers, Mabel Shaw, 1900–1940, Box 34.
8. Ibid., 604.
“Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct”: Thinking Back and Looking Ahead

Indunil J. Kodithuwakku K.

The groundbreaking ecumenical document “Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct”—prepared by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID), the World Council of Churches’ (WCC) Programme on Interreligious Dialogue and Co-operation, and the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA)—will reach its second anniversary on June 28, 2013. This article seeks to analyze the document’s urgency and usefulness to Christians as members of one body, as witnesses to the world to whom they are to be a sign and symbol of the reign of God, and as those seeking to collaborate with other religions to bring peace and harmony to the world.

Present Situation

The following statistics on Christian denominations provide an overview of the complex situation of contemporary world Christianity. The number of Christian denominations has swelled during the course of the past two centuries, growing from 500 in the year 1800 to 1,600 (1900), 18,800 (1970), 34,200 (2000), and 44,000 (2013). That number is projected to increase to 55,000 by 2025.1 Foreign-mission sending agencies also continue to grow rapidly: from 200 (1800) to 600 (1900), 2,200 (1970), 4,000 (2000), and 4,900 (2013), with 6,000 forecast for 2025.2 Christian expansion in Africa and Asia is a blessing, but not an unmixed one. Christianity reborn through global growth manifests the fruit of mission and the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Yet the mushrooming number of denominations and of conflicting theologies of mission and conversion has in the past sown the seed of discord; unfortunately, that seed continues to this day to bear bitter fruit. Some new denominations add fuel to the fire, marring with further fragmentation the quest of the church for unity in Christ.

Conflicting understandings of mission and conversion among denominations are not only a serious ecumenical problem; they also fuel burning interreligious conflict. The aggressive missionary zeal of some Christian denominations (pursued even among radical Islamic groups and Hindus) has given birth, especially in Asia, to conflicts and tensions with other religions, as well as among Christians. Thus, representatives of other religions often accuse Christians of making conversions by force or otherwise unethically. In turn, traditional Christian churches point their finger at some new Christian groups as the culprit, while new Christian groups fight for religious liberty and accuse other religions of persecuting them. Growing religious fundamentalism further threatens the peace and stability of the world and undercuts laboriously built interreligious dialogue. Furthermore, the process of globalization, as it operates today, leads to marginalization or peripheralization of vulnerable segments of society. The dream of a global village has turned into a nightmare or at least a mirage. Resistance to globalization in different cultures takes the form of antiglobalism, ethnification, fundamentalism, and primitivism. Thus, instead of integration, globalization has brought about greater disintegration. Against this background, the church ought to shoulder the mission of building the reign of God together with other religions and people of good will. This mission invites the church to convert the global village into a symbol of integration, unification, and harmony—in place of now current difference, differentiation, demarcation, discrimination, and dissonance. In the present turmoil and darkness, the document “Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct” (CWM-RW) sends a beacon of light and hope by laying a solid foundation for interreligious and ecumenical dialogue.

Historical Background to the Document

CWM-RW is the fruit of a five-year period of consultations, compromises, and consensus. The first consultation, entitled “Conversion: Assessing the Reality,” was held in Lariano, Italy, May 12–16, 2006, with representatives of various religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Yoruba religion), as well as of the PCID and the WCC, taking part.3 The theme of conversion was timely and urgent; the consultation’s report rightly mentions conversion as “an issue which is often the cause of misunderstanding and tension among communities in many parts of the world.” The phenomena of unethical conversion, forced conversion, induced conversion, anticonversion bills, prohibition of forcible conversion of religion, and sheep-stealing were seen to be supplanting previously hard-built ecumenical and interreligious solidarity and cooperation. Bitterness and distrust were seen as growing among Christians, as well as between Christians and other religions, in many countries, especially in Asia. The first consultation offered participants an opportunity to express their feelings, concerns, and fears about conversion and to expose their wounds. The Report of 2006 paved the way for the next consultation: “We see the need for and usefulness of a continuing exercise to collectively evolve a ‘code of conduct’ on conversion, which all faiths should follow. We therefore feel that inter-religious dialogues on the issue of conversion should continue at various levels.”

“Towards an Ethical Approach to Conversion: Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World” was the theme for the second consultation, held in Toulouse, France, August 9–12, 2007. At the invitation of the WCC, the WEA, together with Pentecostals from the United States, participated in this second consultation, which consisted solely of representatives of various Christian bodies and had the intent of providing input into the eventual formulation. This consultation was historic both for comprehensiveness—the participants represented 90 percent of the world’s two billion Christians—and the significance of the topics considered, which included allegations of unethical methods of conversion to Christianity; distrust and

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misunderstandings between Christians of different churches and ecclesial communities; evaluation of missionary methods in multireligious societies, making a distinction between aggressive proselytizing and proper evangelization; reactions of other religions to Christian mission; and search for balance between the mandate to evangelize and the right to choose one’s religion.

Participants in the third consultation (also inter-Christian) met in Bangkok, Thailand, January 25–28, 2011, and finalized CWM-RW.4

Content of the Document

CWM-RW is not a theological statement on mission but rather a pastoral and catechetical instruction on Christian witness in a religiously plural milieu. The document’s Preamble opens by affirming that mission “belongs to the very being of the church” and that proclamation of the word of God and witness to the world are “essential for every Christian.” It continues, nevertheless, with a reminder that mission ought to be carried out “with full respect and love for all human beings.” The document itself contains three main parts: “A Basis for Christian Witness,” “Principles,” and “Recommendations.” An appendix summarizes the background to drafting of the document.

A Basis for Christian Witness. The opening section enumerates a scriptural basis for Christian witness. Jesus is seen as the supreme witness, and Christian witness is viewed as emanating from the triune God in the form of proclaiming the kingdom, serving one’s neighbor, and total giving of one’s self. The teaching of Jesus Christ and that of the early witnesses of the church are the guides for Christian mission. In a multireligious environment, Christian witness embraces dialogue with people of different religions and cultures. Witness ought to continue, in and out of season, in spite of any hindrances. Christian witness must avoid un-Christian methods of carrying out mission such as resorting to deception or coercive means for conversion. Christians can and must witness, but conversion ultimately is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Principles. In fulfilling Christ’s commission in a multireligious context, Christian witnesses are called to adhere to principles grouped under twelve headings: acting in God’s love, imitating Jesus Christ and that of the early witnesses of the church are the guides for Christian mission. In a multireligious environment, Christian witness embraces dialogue with people of different religions and cultures. Witness ought to continue, in and out of season, in spite of any hindrances. Christian witness must avoid un-Christian methods of carrying out mission such as resorting to deception or coercive means for conversion. Christians can and must witness, but conversion ultimately is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Noteworthy

Announcing

The American Society of Missiology (ASM) will hold its 2013 annual meeting June 21–23 at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois, with the theme “The Future of the Discipline of Missiology.” Presenters at plenary sessions will be Jehu J. Hanciles (Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta), Dana L. Robert (School of Theology, Boston University, Boston), Dwight Zscheile (Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota), and ASM president Craig Van Gelder (also at Luther Seminary). For details, see www.asmweb.org. The annual meetings of the Association of Professors of Mission (www.asmweb.org/content/apm), with the theme “Social Engagement: The Challenge of the ‘Social’ in Missiological Education,” and the Academy for Evangelism in Theological Education (acte.co/pb-annualmeeting) will take place June 20–21, in advance of the ASM meeting.

The Andrew Walls Centre for the Study of African and Asian Christianity will hold a conference entitled “ Pietism—Methodism—World Christianity,” June 21–23, 2013, at Liverpool Hope University, Liverpool, England. The conference will examine the facilitation and participation of Pietists and Methodists in the spread of the Christian faith and their Christian institutions in cross-cultural contexts both at home and overseas. Conference coordinator is Sarah Fretheim, frethes@hope.ac.uk; address queries about accommodation to Daniel Jeyaraj, at jeyarad@hope.ac.uk.

The Yale-Edinburgh Group on the History of the Missionary Movement and World Christianity, which is sponsored by the Centre for the Study of World Christianity at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, and by Yale Divinity School and the Overseas Ministries Study Center, both New Haven, Connecticut, will meet at Yale Divinity School, June 27–29, 2013, to address the topic “Health, Healing, and Medicine in the History of Christian Missions and World Christianity.” For further information, contact the conference coordinator, Martha Lund Smalley, special collections librarian and curator of the Day Missions Collection, Yale Divinity School Library, at martha.smalley@yale.edu.

Papers and discussion leaders are sought for two events to be held by the Alliance for Vulnerable Mission addressing the theme of vulnerable mission, defined as Christian mission or development intervention carried out outside the West using local languages and local resources. The first gathering, a one-day workshop at William Carey International University, Pasadena, California, will be held on September 24, 2013, and the second, a conference at Norwich Central Baptist Church, Norwich, England, will take place November 14–16, 2013. Further details are available from Jim Harries, jim@vulnerablemission.org.

The United States Catholic Mission Association will hold its 2013 annual conference October 25–27 in St. Louis, Missouri. The theme for this year’s meeting, “Social Media: A New Language for Mission,” provides opportunity to reflect on dialogue as an intrinsic element in proclamation and to explore the practice of dialogue in the digital age. See www.uscatholicmission.org.

JSTOR, a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary sources, is making some content available to individual scholars and researchers who do not have institutional access to its resources. As part of a working trial, readers who register for a free MyJSTOR account will have access to approximately 1,200 journals, a subset of JSTOR. For more information, go to http://about.jstor.org/rr.

Jon Miller, project director of the International Mission Photography Archive, has announced an upgrade to the website and, thanks to two grants from the National Endowment of the Humanities, the expansion of its series of visual essays and of the digitization and cataloging of photographs. Miller encourages users of the website (www.usc.edu/impa) to send feedback on their experience to jonmiller@college.usc.edu.
Jesus Christ, Christian virtues, acts of service and justice, discernment in ministries of healing, rejection of violence, freedom of religion and belief, mutual respect and solidarity, respect for all people, renouncing false witness, ensuring personal discernment, and building interreligious relations. The principles enunciate a practical ethical guide that seeks to overcome or at least minimize controversies and tensions related to Christian mission and conversion.

Recommendations. For the consideration of Christian churches and mission organizations, especially those working in interreligious contexts, the document concludes with six recommendations. They are pastoral and catechetical in approach: study, build, encourage, cooperate, call, pray. Study the issues mentioned in the document with an eye to formulating guidelines relevant to Christian witness in a given context—if possible, doing so ecumenically and in consultation with representatives of other religions. Build relationships of respect and trust among churches and with other religious communities for justice and the common good. Call on governments to respect religious freedom. Pray for all neighbors.

Newness of the Document

In at least three ways, CWM-RW offers a new point of departure for Christian witness.

Toward a new way of being Christians. This document is the first of its kind in the history of the church. In it three main world Christian bodies respond to criticisms and charges of proselytism leveled at Christians by some religious communities. The document does not dilute the missionary mandate of the church; instead, it interprets mission in the light of the situation prevailing in multireligious societies. The motto of mission in the document seems to be “not without my brother and sister,” and it observes the ancient Golden Rule: treat others as we wish others to treat

Personalia

Appointed. S. Douglas Birdsall as president and CEO of the American Bible Society (ABS), based in New York City. In March 2013 he will become the twenty-seventh president of the society, now almost two hundred years old, whose stated mission is to make the Bible available to every person in a language and format each can understand and afford. Birdsall was previously executive chair and CEO of the Lausanne Movement and in 2010 chaired the Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, Cape Town, South Africa. He is also the founding director of the J. Christy Wilson Jr. Center for World Missions at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Massachusetts. At ABS, Birdsall succeeds R. Lamar Vest, president since January 2009.

Appointed. Michael Oh as executive director and chief executive officer of the Lausanne Movement, which since 1974 has sought to engage evangelical leaders in collaborative world evangelization. A Korean-American, Oh is founder and president of Christ Bible Seminary in Nagoya, Japan, and will continue to live in Japan. Associated with the Lausanne Movement since 2004, Oh served as keynote speaker at the Younger Leaders Gathering in 2006 and as a member of the board since 2007. In announcing Oh’s appointment, the Lausanne Movement stressed that his selection reflects its eagerness to help equip a young and diverse generation for service. Oh succeeds S. Douglas Birdsall, who has been appointed president of the American Bible Society. Oh took up his new position with the Lausanne Movement on March 1 but will be formally installed at the Lausanne Global Leadership Forum, to be held in June in Bangalore, India.

Died. M. Douglas Carew, 56, Africa International University vice chancellor, November 9, 2012, in Indianapolis, Indiana. Born in Sierra Leone, Carew moved to Kenya with his family when he was nine years old. His university studies took him to Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone, to the Nairobi Graduate School of Theology (NEGST), Kenya, and to Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, where he earned the Ph.D. in Old Testament studies in 1998. Having returned to NEGST to teach Hebrew, the cultural world of the Bible, and hermeneutics, Carew was appointed vice chancellor of NEGST in 2004, a position that was renewed in 2008. He worked with colleagues to obtain a university charter for the school, and in March 2011 NEGST became Africa International University. Carew was also chair of the Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa and deputy chair of the global equivalent, the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education.


Died. Edwin L. Frizen, Jr., 87, mission executive, December 22, 2012, in Orlando, Florida. Jack Frizen was one of the World War II servicemen who were involved in beginning SEND International, an interdenominational mission agency founded in 1947. Having served in the Philippines, he and his wife, Grace, worked with the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association (IFMA) of North America for almost thirty years; Frizen served as executive director of IFMA, 1963–91, as consulting director, 1991–92, and as a board member of a number of other Christian organizations, including Pioneers USA.
How would Christ behave, and what would he teach if he were born in a religiously plural society today? The document is a continuing reminder of the importance of living as Jesus would live if he were here today. Furthermore, the mission of the church makes Christ’s incarnation possible, in the sense that mission makes it possible for Christ to be reborn again and again in every time and place.

The church is missionary by its very nature (Ad gentes, 2), but it becomes missionary in fact by attending to every context in which it finds itself. If Christianity is to be meaningful and relevant, it must address the issues that affect its own life (the church) and the lives of the people (the whole of humanity). “Recommendations for Conduct” invites Christians to imitate Jesus Christ in all aspects of life, following his call to love our neighbor as ourselves. It thereby seeks to overcome the impression that “religions today fight among themselves and not against Satan and Mammon.” Even though the document affirms freedom of religion and belief, including the freedom to change one’s religion, the principles and recommendations of the document view conversion in a broader sense, namely, as primarily a turning away from Satan and Satan’s evil powers. The missionary approach of the document seeks, further, to nurture the seed of the word of God and the seed of the reign of God present among all the people of God rather than trying to uproot or reroute them by spreading seeds of division and petty disputes in the name of God and his mission. Thus mission avoids becoming a counter-mission or merely mission against, but rather constitutes mission with and mission for.

“Recommendations for Conduct” and new humanism. If implemented rightly, CWM-RW will pave the way for new ecumenical and interreligious relationships and thereby contribute to the dawn of a new humanism. This is the need of the hour in our troubled world. Addressing the delegates of the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations, Pope Benedict XVI noted that today interreligious dialogue is increasingly becoming a sacred duty.

In our troubled world, so frequently marked by poverty, violence and exploitation, dialogue between cultures and religions must more and more be seen as a sacred duty incumbent upon all those who are committed to building a world worthy of man. The ability to accept and respect one another, and to speak the truth in love, is essential for overcoming differences, preventing misunderstandings and avoiding needless confrontations. . . . A sincere dialogue needs both openness and a firm sense of identity on both sides, in order for each to be enriched by the gifts of the other.”

Instead of aggressive and provocative evangelization and a frantic drive for conversions, this sacred duty invites Christians to collaborate with the missio Dei in converting the whole of humanity, including unjust structures that degrade the dignity of human persons created in God’s own image and redeemed by Jesus Christ. This sacred duty also encompasses convincing Christians to work toward restoring peace and harmony among all nations until the reign of God is fully realized with the second coming of Jesus as Lord. God’s world-transforming mission motivates Christians to enter into dialogue and cooperation with brothers and sisters of other religions on the basis of converging core principles and ideals or spiritual patrimony. “All of us believe that religions should be a source of uniting and ennobling of humans. Religion, understood and practiced in the light of the core principles and ideals of each of our faiths, can be a reliable guide to meeting the many challenges before humankind.” The future of humanity depends on a new humanism built on dia-
logue, which is thus both a sacred duty and a vital necessity. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI, “Interreligious and intercultural dialogue . . . cannot be reduced to an optional extra. It is in fact a vital necessity, on which in large measure our future depends.”

Conclusion

Today many countries, especially in Asia, are struggling to cope with the issue of conversion. Many countries, moreover, are devastated by poverty, conflicts, and violence, including interreligious tensions, ecological problems, and threats to the sacredness of life. On several recent celebrations of the World Day of Peace, observed each year on January 1, Pope Benedict XVI spoke clearly to many of these issues.

- **2009, poverty:** In the pope’s message “Fighting Poverty to Build Peace,” he situated the social problem of poverty in a wider context, namely, globalization. In his analysis, poverty and conflict become a vicious cycle, for “these conflicts fuel further tragic situations of poverty.” He thus identified poverty as one of the grave threats to peace in the modern world. “The gap between rich and poor has become more marked, even in the most economically developed nations.”

- **2010, protecting creation:** Benedict XVI’s message “If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation” stressed that the preservation of creation has now become essential to the peaceful coexistence of humankind. “Man’s inhumanity to man has given rise to numerous threats to peace and to authentic and integral human development. . . . Yet no less troubling are the threats arising from the neglect—if not downright misuse—of the earth and the natural goods that God has given us.”

Instead of yielding to pressure and pessimism, Christians must cultivate optimism and hope. We must zealously continue the dialogue of charity on the basis of our spiritual patrimony, without diluting or relativizing our identity. For today’s world, afflicted as it is by many maladies, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue is, as Pope Benedict XVI noted, a sacred duty and a vital necessity. CWM-RW presents an ethical foundation for overcoming tensions arising from conversion and for building a civilization of love. It is not utopian to call upon all peace-loving people to implement its recommendations for a better tomorrow. Submitting ourselves to the communion of the triune God, let us as Christ’s followers ecumenically and interreligiously serve the common good.

Notes

2. Ibid., line 44.
6. Ibid., §162.
12. Ibid., line 44.
14. Pope Benedict XVI, “Religious Freedom, the Path to Peace,” the pope argued that “the right to religious freedom is rooted in the very dignity of the human person, whose transcendent nature must not be ignored or overlooked.” He insisted that “fanaticism, fundamentalism and practices contrary to human dignity can never be justified, even less so in the name of religion.”
Writing the History of Indian Christianity: A Review Essay

Chandra Mallampalli

This volume presents a compilation of essays written from 1978 to 2011 by John Webster, a dedicated scholar of Indian Christian history. Webster draws upon a lifetime of research and interaction with South Asians as he narrates different approaches to the study of India’s Christian communities. Eschewing a disengaged church history written mainly for seminarians or missiologists, Webster connects Indian Christian history to issues addressed more widely in the history of modern South Asia, including nationalism, caste, subalternism, postmodernity, and gender. Webster’s own important contributions to Dalit studies equip him to set Christian history against a larger thematic canvas. Indeed, the chief contributions of the book lie in (1) its capacity to narrate the historiography of Indian Christianity to multiple audiences, (2) its balance of details and broader themes.

Webster’s relationship to many audiences—Indian and Western, secular and Christian—enhances the breadth of his treatment of Indian Christianity. His essays address both methodological and substantive topics with thoroughness and insight. At the same time, each essay reflects issues that concerned the author at the time of its writing, which accounts for the greater focus on some issues than on others. The early section of the book describes a transition in historiography from Eurocentric models (28) to those more influenced by Indian nationalism (43–53). This discussion includes pre-nineteenth-century studies of Catholic and Syrian Christian missions, early and late nineteenth-century Protestant histories, and the emergence of histories “told by Indians.” We often forget that old books are often still worth consulting, a point that Webster’s summaries demonstrate. John William Kaye’s Christianity in India (1859), for instance, addresses the 1857 Rebellion and its implications for ties between missionaries and the British Raj. While previously missionaries had viewed British rule as providentially ordained to promote the Christianization of India, Kaye uses history to argue for religious neutrality on the part of the Raj. Despite his plea, a tone of Protestant/European triumphalism persisted through much of the nineteenth century. This is evident in attitudes ranging from the anti-Catholic polemics of James Hough (1839) to the expansionist vision of M. A. Sherring (1875).1

The literature surrounding the 1857 Rebellion (or Sepoy Mutiny, as it is often called) is a matter that warrants considerable attention, perhaps more than Webster’s book affords. Writers have tended to assign an enduring place to Christians in the historiography of modern India.2 Christians, Protestant missionaries in particular, were those who attacked and interrogated Indian culture and religion. Through inflammatory preaching and tracts that exposed the deficiencies of Hinduism and Islam, Evangelicals awakened anti-British sentiment; and when those sentiments reached their boiling point, Indians engaged in their “first war of independence.” Regardless of how much of this narrative one accepts, one cannot deny the role of cultural and religious factors in various accounts of the Rebellion. The Rebellion, it appears, figures more prominently in the historiography of modern India than it does in that of Indian Christianity. Given this disparity, we should perhaps consider whether the historiography of Indian Christianity should not cast its net more broadly so as to place discussion of Christians in India more fully within the wider stream of India’s national history and not limit the field to histories of Indian Christians alone.

Amid the political climate of the twentieth century when Indians were fighting for home rule, Christian history writing became centered less on foreign missions and more on the Indian church. In The Cross over India (1952), which Webster refers to as “the first Indian nationalist history of Christianity” (46), Rajaiah Paul highlighted, as did many other writers of his day, the importance of Indianizing the church. Paul’s less scholarly history was followed by studies by P. Thomas (1954) and K. Baago (1969), who also addressed the indigenous heritage of Indian Christians.3 While much historical reflection during the twentieth century is found in the books Webster discusses, it is worth pointing out that the early twentieth century produced periodical literature of a very high order. In journals such as Christian Patriot, Young Men of India, Harvest Field, Catholic Leader, and Examiner, Indian Christians “rethought” their heritage by differentiating themselves from Western theologies and denominational structures.

Beyond his treatment of key works on the history of Christianity in India, Webster includes chapters that address the issues of women and Dalits. Among his more theoretically engaging chapters is “Women of Amritsar through Missionary Eyes” (115–40). At issue is whether missionary perceptions of Indian women reveal more about the perceivers than the perceived. This chapter offers an interesting compromise between postmodernist discourse analysis (which concentrates on the perceives) and a critical use of missionary sources to reach valid conclusions about the actual plight of India’s women. Drawing from his own area of expertise, Webster also devotes a chapter (182–218) to the field of Dalit Christian history, focusing on its integration into Christian history more broadly. Encompassing studies from the early twentieth century to the present, this chapter points out the more pervasive focus on Protestant over Catholic Dalits, and a stronger effort, especially in recent works, to highlight the agency of Dalits in shaping their own histories, especially in relation to upper castes and political authorities (215). This focus on agency is in step with contributions of the “subaltern school” of Indian historiography.

On the whole, Webster’s chapters describe works centered on the colonial heritage of Indian Christianity and the gradual

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Historiography of Christianity in India.

movement toward autonomy. He captures this transition well in his treatment of nationalist writings, as well as in the interventions of the Church History Association of India (176–77). The movement away from “foreignness” is certainly a vital aspect of the historiography. And yet, by situating the literature in relation to Eurocentric beginnings and lenses, he perforce extends less attention to more recent developments, for instance, those that might better situate Indian Christianity in relation to an emerging world or global Christianity. While the former studies highlight a quest for an Indian identity for the church (as opposed to one derived from the West), the latter would draw attention to the salience of independent, Pentecostal, or populist movements that are globally networked and not necessarily defined by the tropes of postcolonialism. In fact, a growing trend in historiography is a movement toward an emphasis on cultural interaction and global connections. Examples of this orientation can be found in Studies in the History of Christian Missions (Eerdmans), a hugely successful series of books coedited by Brian Stanley and Robert Frykenberg. Several contributions to this series address not only the more recent context of Indian Christianity but also the rich legacy of cultural interaction, translation, and knowledge production associated with Christian history.4

At a time when studies of world Christianity are heavily focused on African, Latin American, or Chinese case studies, Webster’s welcome book sheds light on the unique contributions of South Asian scholarship to the study of non-Western Christianity. Had it addressed the changing face of the global church more intentionally, its content could have been carried to a greater degree by these newer scholarly currents. Still, Webster’s patient, detailed treatment of a huge swath of literature concerning India’s Christians presents scholars of Christian history with an invaluable resource for the study of Indian Christianity and for drawing comparisons to literatures from other world contexts.

Notes
4. See, for instance, Michael Bergunder, The South Indian Pentecostal Movement in the Twentieth Century (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

OMSC Scholarships Strengthen the Christian World Mission

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

OMSC awards scholarships to church leaders from countries where Christian faith is often restricted, to those from impoverished countries, to senior administrators and academics of majority-world denominations and universities, and others. In recent years, OMSC has welcomed scholarship recipients from China, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nigeria, Russia, Sri Lanka, and Tanzania. Each year there are about seven applications for every scholarship available, and many deserving applicants must be denied due to a lack of resources.

On behalf of future residents, OMSC leaders express their appreciation for those who provide financial contributions for these scholarships. Go online to www.omsc.org/scholarships for details about the Anderson International Scholarships, the Doane Missionary Scholarships, the MacDouggall Senior Administrator Scholarship, and the Martens Latin American Scholarship.

For details of the latest scholarship fund, go to www.omsc.org/bonkfellowship. Donations may be made online at http://secure.omsc.org/donate or be mailed to OMSC, 490 Prospect Street, New Haven, CT 06511 USA.
Book Reviews


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

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

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

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

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

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

—Gillian Mary Bediako

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

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


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

The first part examines the productive role of local experiences in constructing theology. Heup Young Kim reinterprets his Korean Confucian experience, applying the concept of theo-tao (theology based on Eastern tao, way of life, instead of Western logos). Anri Morimoto insists that the past of Asian, particularly Japanese, Christianity should be considered contextualized, as well as cumulative.

According to the Vietnamese-American Peter C. Phan, we are to move in our models from colonialist to fulfillment to mutuality and partnership. Highlighting the danger of fundamentalist hermeneutics in the context of Sri Lankan ethnic strife, R. S. Sugirtharajah underscores intertextuality between secular stories and Scripture. Angela Wai Ching Wong argues that a materialist or economic factor is as important as a cultural one in Asian, especially Chinese, theology.

The book’s second part covers regional hot issues. Both Hisako Kinukawa and Benoit Vermander shed light on pacifism, the former citing a case of mission in reverse, and the latter suggesting peace-making as interfaith dialogue. Indian
Church History: Five Approaches to a Global Discipline.


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

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

Fifteen Outstanding Books of 2012 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 2012 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.


Longchar, A. Wattai. Returning to Mother Earth: Theology, Christian Witness, and Theological Education; An Indigenous Perspective. Tainan, Taiwan: Chung Jung Christian University, Programme for Theology and Cultures in Asia. Paperback $20.


Webster, John C. B. Historiography of Christianity in India. Delhi: Oxford Univ. Press. 725 Rs / £23.75 / $45.
indigenization processes, which provide the background theme present throughout all the chapters. The complexity of the debate over secularization theories is referenced briefly to note that secular Europe’s humanitarian movements of protest and reform could be recognized as Christian. Empty cathedrals, low birthrates, and so on appear as indicators of the trends. It is surprising, therefore, that women figure in stories but not in the analysis. Fertility, focused on in his sociological approach, is a growth mechanism, but women can choose to limit births. Women’s decisions about fertility would affect Christianity outside of Europe and America.

Geographical and biographical approaches receive creative and passionate treatment. People and narratives from Orthodox, African, and Asian Christianity appear, giving evangelical Protestants, seemingly the intended readership, insight into other traditions. Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Pentecostal movements receive significant attention, but mainline Protestant traditions and their institutions are largely bypassed. The World Council of Churches receives scant treatment, world confessional families do not factor in the analysis, and ecumenical and interfaith dialogues, as well as Christian relief efforts and development work, are not discussed.

—Maria Erling

Maria Erling is Professor of Church History and Global Mission, as well as Director of Teaching Parish, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

David Griffiths and the Missionary “History of Madagascar.”


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

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

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

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

—Hilary Ingram

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


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

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

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

—Daniel S. H. Ahn

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

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


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

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

The book continues with a well-organized historical survey of Christianity in Japan. Fujiwara illuminates points of particular interest, including kakure kirishitan, wakon yosai, and Mukyokai. He offers thought-provoking comparisons between the missional approaches employed by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Christian mission (common people, cultural accommodation, community formation)

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and those characteristic in the nineteenth and twentieth century (educated elite, cultural imperialism, institution formation) and the outcomes of these different approaches. He also addresses with honesty and insight the severely oppressive situation churches faced during World War II and the troubling attitudes adopted during that painful time.

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

—Michael J. Sherrill


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

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

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

Thus the book remains a bouquet of

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

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

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

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

—Angelyn Dries

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


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

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

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

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

Profiles of African-American Missionaries.


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

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

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


—Paul Harris

Paul Harris is Professor of History at Minnesota State University Moorhead.

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


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

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

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

—George R. Hunsberger

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

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


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

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

Accordingly, Laing follows Newbigin’s understanding of mission historically through reference to published works and archival material and across his many tasks: early responsibilities with the Student Volunteer Movement, his tenure as a missionary with the Church of Scotland, his late but crucial input to the South India Scheme for Church Union, and his responsibilities related to the WCC and the IMC.

Aspects of Laing’s thesis have been addressed in recent publications that articulate Newbigin’s ecclesiology and his theology of cultural plurality, as well as in works that invite contributors to assess his legacy. These projects typically rely on Newbigin’s published works. What sets Laing’s work apart, making it an important contribution to ongoing discussion about Newbigin and mission, is his deep engagement with Newbigin’s unpublished letters, sermon notes, and drafts of position papers, and his interviews with ecumenical leaders that allow him to uncover Newbigin’s convictions and aspirations. The result is a cogent and comprehensive picture of Newbigin’s theology of mission across history, in context and in dialogue.

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

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

—Benjamin T. Conner

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


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

Adams pays particular attention to the ways that, in Korean society, theological thought interacts with the culture. He takes special care in recounting the historical contexts out of which theology was developed in Korea and how Korean Christianity to local forms of religion and healing, Chapters 1–4 describe Naga Christianity to local forms of religion and healing. Chapters 1–4 describe Naga Christianity to local forms of religion and healing. Chapters 1–4 describe Naga Christianity to local forms of religion and healing.

A Matter of Belief: Christian Conversion and Healing in Northeast India.


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

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

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

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

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


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

Flanders’s overarching objective, however, is pragmatic: to provide “legs” for the Thai church to do theological construction and be a contemporary, contextually relevant witness. Toward that end, the excellent introduction provides a clear description of the book’s organization. This description is also placed at the beginning.


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

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

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

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

—William R. Burrows

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


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

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

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

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

—Matthew Krabill

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