

EDITORIAL

2006 has been an important year for the AASR, in particular by two events: the announcement that the Third AASR Conference in Africa will be hosted by the Dept. of Theology and Religious Studies of the University of Botswana in Gaborone, Botswana, from 8 to 13 July 2007; and the Focus on Africa events during the AAR/SBL congress in Washington DC from 18 to 21 November 2006. For the first great thanks are due to Prof. Musa Dube and her committee at Gaborone. The importance of the second is attested in this bulletin by Jacob Olupona's reflections on it, and the reports by Kathleen O'Brien Wicker, Cynthia Hoehler-Fatton, Nisbert Taringa, Edwin Gimode, Danoye Oguntola Laguda, John Omolafe and Bolaji Olukemi Bateye. The latter five were participants; the first two were also involved in the organisation of these events, and deserve great thanks from the AASR membership body for their efforts.

2007 will be as important a year as 2006 through the AASR conference on Health, Healing and the Study of the Religions of Africa at the University of Botswana. The theme merits massive attention by AASR members and others, not only because of the perennial relation between religion and healing, but also because of the current HIV/AIDS epidemic that rages in Africa, and in particular in Southern Africa, where average life expectancy has dropped dramatically in the last two decades. It is hoped that the conference will clarify realistically what the task of scholars of the religions of Africa is the face of this disaster. It is also hoped that many AASR members will have made use of the extension of the deadline for registration and that a fair number of AASR members will be able, or be enabled, to travel to Gaborone to discuss this pressing issue.

2007 will see a few important changes for the AASR Bulletin. As from this issue, AASR Bulletins are produced in, and shipped from, Nigeria. In July 2007, Jan Platvoet will resign from his post as Co-Editor of the AASR Bulletin, because he needs to concentrate on his task as AASR WebMaster. He has requested that the AASR Executive find and appoint a new Co-Editor by July 2007 to join Matthews Ojo.

As for the contents of this bulletin, apart from the reflections and reports on the Focus on Africa events already mentioned, the Review section is of particular interest to members we think. In it, publications on Shari'a in Northern Nigeria and Black Jews in Southern Africa are discussed, the resurrection of *The Ghana Bulletin of Theology* is celebrated, and the contributions to a volume on the burning issue whether religion is a bridge or barrier to peace and conciliation are summarised.

Of interest is also that the registration of nine new members is published in this bulletin, among them one posted in Japan, and another in Israel. In addition, some fifteen new members have registered during the AAR-Focus on Africa events at Washington DC. AASR is steadily growing and has now 224 members. That number is, however, likely to drop, when the annual membership fee has also been introduced in Africa. But that loss is insignificant compared to the strength the AASR will gather from the readiness of its remaining members to share financial responsibility for it.

The Editors wish you a peaceful, prosperous and fruitful 2007.

AAR FOCUS ON AFRICA WASHINGTON 18-21.11.06

Jacob Olupona
Harvard Divinity School

ENGAGING AFRICA: REFLECTIONS ON THE STUDY OF THE RELIGIONS OF AFRICA & THE AFRICAN DIASPORA¹

As the American Academy of Religion focuses on the international theme, 'Africa and African Scholarship in Religion', I will share these thoughts on the evolving nexus between African religious traditions and their transatlantic counterparts in the diaspora. This nexus compellingly suggests an agenda for advancing the study of religion in general as many issues central to the work of Africanists – such as globalization, immigration, ethnicity, identity, and religious market places – are of increasing concern to scholars of a wide variety of religions. The relative neglect of Africa and its diaspora in the discourse of broader religious studies is as regrettable as it is instructive.

Africa's 50 continental nations and five island countries are vast, with the majority of its 840 million people participating in at least one of three general forms of religion: the religious heritages of indigenous African ethnic groups, Islam, and Christianity. Responding to the Western media's image of the African continent in disarray – the majority of its people impoverished and despondent about their present and their future – scholars of African religion present a robust and creative Africa of deep religious sensibilities, the home of a cultural renaissance and an array of spiritual traditions reflecting complex hierarchies of power, agency, and authority. It is high time the broader academy took earnest notice, not merely to soothe the conscience of its racist past but to gain a truly holistic and balanced perspective about humanity's religious heritage. Virtually every story of importance in the study of religion can and should begin with Africa – the cradle of humanity.

African religions and its study

From the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, formal West African scholarship in the sciences, arts, and medicine began, as Islamic universities were instituted in the medieval empires of Mali, Songhai, and Kanem-Bornu. In the fifteenth century, Catholic missionaries arrived in Warri, Kongo, and the Benin Kingdom while European adventurers, most lacking scholarly training, visited Africa and returned to Europe to record their findings in what amounted to the first known studies of indigenous African religious traditions. Their research contributed directly to Europe's plunder of Africa by provid-

¹ Professor Olupona wrote this essay in preparation for the American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting in Washington DC, Nov 18-21, 2006. This essay first appeared in *Religious Studies News* (the American Academy of Religion Newsletter), 15 October 2006

ing 'evidence' of the supposed inferiority of African culture and of Africans' need for Europeans to lead them forcefully toward 'civilization'. This ideology was captured succinctly in Belgium's motto for its murderous reign in the Congo: *Dominer pour servir*, 'Dominate in order to serve'.

Many early European scholars viewed African indigenous religions as 'primitive' compared to Christianity, and promoted the idea of an African mind and thought system inferior to the European. False claims ran amok (1) that Africans were incapable of producing authentic religious traditions; (2) that Africans 'lacked true knowledge' of a Supreme God; (3) that African civilizations and religious belief systems must have originated 'elsewhere' and were 'transported' to the African continent; and (4) that religious philosophy and thought must have 'diffused' throughout Africa after European 'contact'. Thus, early scholarship on Africa and African religions reflected a pernicious racism that rendered impossible the kinds of sensitivity to human spirituality that would lead to a genuine appreciation of Africa's profound and inspiring religious culture – the kind of sensitivity that is foundational to some of the best work produced in religious studies in general.

In the 1960s, African universities encouraged a revitalized study of African religions, reflecting Africa's new nation-state status and re-emergent spirit of freedom and pride. African institutions of higher learning acknowledged the religious pluralism characteristic of most countries and emphasized Islamic studies and African traditional religions alongside dominant Christian studies. Inspired by political independence, a religiously pluralistic national identity emerged in many regions, anchored in belief of a Supreme God in each of the three dominant religions, and fostered by a unifying civil faith. This religious vitality also served to resist oppression. From the 1960s onward, the study of African religions developed as an autonomous field of comparative history of religion; African traditional religions, language, and literature were required, enhancing the study of local religious traditions even in cognate disciplines. Indigenous epistemology emphasized traditional theology and religious studies scholarship as research on African religions increased dramatically. Unlike nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Christian missions in Africa – which wed the notion of conversion to the development of 'Westernized' individuals through literacy, education, technological innovation, trade, and agricultural programs – the evangelical Pentecostal and Charismatic movements of the late twentieth century hastened a reevaluation of modernity and local and global aspects of belief systems. In the previous two centuries, indigenous knowledge, values, and culture were merely tolerated and adapted into indigenous theological project and indigenous style of worship, whereas today they are foundational to both Pentecostalism in Africa and the vibrant array of African Independent Churches. During the 1980s and 1990s, Africans began to study abroad in significant and increasing numbers. African scholars who chose to pursue the study of religion outside seminaries often landed in phenomenology and comparative history of religions. These programs addressed the grand questions of history, meanings, and functions of belief systems in a comparative fashion. In addition, these programs tended to focus on the relationship between centers and peripheries of religious traditions. Until recently, preoccupation with 'centers' (i.e., Rome for Catholics, Khalistan for Sikhs, Mecca for Muslims, and Ile-Ife for Yoruba) created disengagement with diaspora formations of religious practices as subjects of study. Upon returning to their homeland universities, young scholars injected into the religious studies curricula a degree of scientific study of religion despite the

pervasive theological and ecumenical trends in their home countries. Paradoxically, this period, coinciding with the decline of African economies, witnessed innovative scholarship in African religion that was theoretically shaped by the phenomenology of religion and history of religions, while emphasizing interdisciplinary approaches that encouraged more analytical, theoretical, ethnographic, and conceptual engagement.

Some scholars of African religions are now examining how religion is implicated in the human and social crises dominating discourse on Africa – poverty, environmental degradation, disease, corruption, ethnic and religious violence, and civil war. Since religion, alongside ethnic strife, is identified as the source of violent conflict throughout the continent, these scholars are equally engaged in various policy considerations concerned with ameliorating the crises confronting the continent. The ‘neutral’, socially disengaged scholar, once dominating the study of African religion, is increasingly seen as ineffectual in discussing a continent in crisis. African scholars today feel morally obligated to address religion as it relates to immediate and pressing human concerns, and, as such, they serve as models for the entire academy.

Religion in the African diaspora:

The Black Atlantic and Islamic global revivalism

A new generation of scholars of the African diaspora is breaking radically from the earlier trends. Those studying Black Atlantic formations are focusing on the prevalence and transformation of African religious practices and cosmologies in the Americas and exploring pre-transatlantic slavery social histories and cultural practices of African captives transported to the Americas. Others interested in exploring the spread of Islamic religious practices among diaspora Africans are engaged in tracing the change and transformation of for the spread of Islamic conversion in the Americas. With goals of understanding the adaptation of African practices in the Americas, studies of African religions in the Black Atlantic have focused on religious communities in the African diaspora – communities of survivors and their descendants who confronted racial segregation alongside gender and sexual discrimination.

Incorporating race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality as units of analysis, interdisciplinary approaches greatly enhance study of diaspora religion. Though these methodologies have long remained within the domain of area studies, cultural studies, and anthropology – religious studies scholars have produced a large body of relevant work today on Candomblé (Afro-Brazilian religion), Santería (Afro-Cuban religions), Vodou (Afro-Haitian religions), and Orisa traditions in Trinidad, Jamaica, and the United States. These emerging scholars are concerned with destabilizing the traditional centers and peripheries of religious studies and are instead examining the nontraditional sites and circulations of religious adaptation and invention.

As markers of Black Atlantic cultural life, African-derived religions continue to be essential in understanding the lives of people outside the African continent. A holistic approach in this understanding suggests that knowledge of African languages, religion, and culture is as important as knowledge of Portuguese, Spanish, and French for understanding religious traditions of the African diaspora.

From Saudi Arabian-focused perspectives, studies of African Islam have advanced to an exploration of various expressions of traditional and contemporary Islam: Sharia, Muslim identity, Sufi brotherhoods, etc. Such scholarship has examined the post-Iranian revolutionary fervor that inspired a new generation of Islamic study of the twentieth

century, as well as Islamic revivalism of the post-9/11 era. Muslims around the globe are forming new transnational alliances as more than one-third of all national state governments maintain membership in the Organization of Islamic Conference.

What, then, will prove critical in the study of African and African diaspora religious studies in the next few decades? A new paradigm is needed to view African religious experience and expression through a more comprehensive and holistic prism reflecting religions as they flourish in villages, towns, and cities in crisis. Religious traditions are conditioned by historical, spatial, and temporal situations. For example, the Church of Latter-Day Saints in central Ile-Ife is as African as the Ifa divination temple on the ancient sacred hill of Oke-Tase, Ile-Ife. Rather than seeing these two structures and fascinating religious institutions as separate entities – one ‘American’ and the other ‘Nigerian’ – we must understand them as integral to the same religious trajectory and spiritual mosaic that Nigerians, Europeans, and Americans participate in with the same vigor and deep sense of spirituality.

Additionally, more research is needed in the phenomenology of African religious creativity in the Americas – a creativity that so far eludes serious interpretation derived from theoretical discourse outside of religious studies. From my observation, this lack of analysis arises out of a particular problem: the inability of scholars to view these traditions as significantly self-reflective in their own interpretive modes. A sharper hermeneutical interpretation would allow agents of new traditions to interpret themselves at deeper levels. We should engage these traditions in ways to reveal their religious and cultural meanings, independent of Western theoretical, thematic, and conceptual frameworks. Engaging diasporic traditions in the context of their root and route will yield better meaning and rewards of research.

The new African diaspora

African Christians, Muslims, and Traditionalists are spreading their brand of religious practice worldwide at rates that deserve scholarly attention, especially in light of compelling advances in the study of globalization and transnationalism. From the late 1980s to the present, the influx of African immigrants to the United States increased significantly largely because of dire social and economic crises at home. Their influence has forever changed the American religious landscape. From magnificent mosques and evangelical headquarters, to modest masjids and storefront churches, African immigrants strive to redefine themselves, create a distinct identity, maintain contact with kin in Africa, and perpetuate their cultural values. The impressive and ever-expanding variety of these congregations indicates a growing and formidable trend in the American religious field.

Churches from West Africa were established as early as the era of Jamaican-born nationalist Marcus Garvey (1887–1940). Similarly, Sudanese Muslim immigrants interacted with earlier Black Muslim movements such as the Moorish Science Temple of America founded in 1913 in New Jersey. During the 1940s, Yoruba revivalism, often inspired by Cuban immigrants, began to open spiritual paths for thousands of African- and European-Americans.

Today, for example, the Redeemed Christian Church of Christ, a worldwide African organization of hundreds of churches, takes a leading role in global Christian outreach. Founded in Nigeria, its headquarters are in the United States, Europe, Asia, and Latin America. African religious organizations provide a conduit for addressing concerns for

family, finance, health, politics, and other issues that distress immigrants in their new homes. Such churches, furthermore, now attract American and European natives, in addition to African immigrants who founded them and comprised their initial congregational bodies.

Other seemingly paradoxical trends are emerging in African and African diaspora religions. For example, certain African-American religious groups actively proselytize in Africa drawing African converts, such as the Nation of Islam in West Africa and the ministries of Pentecostal preachers like Reverend Ike and Reverend T. D. Jakes in many countries across Africa. Meanwhile, other exogenous religious movements – the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon’s Unification Movement, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness – are establishing themselves in Africa to gain converts.

Such crosscurrents signify that the diaspora flows not only from Africa and beyond, but also in many directions. Its transnational character, furthermore, is rooted in a dynamic exchange of beliefs, materialities, commodities, hegemonies, and improvisational moral values. Fascinating new research on African immigrant religious communities revealed that in places of migration across the world African immigrants increasingly act as interpreters of their local traditions and beliefs systems. In most imaginative detail, especially in the cases of exiles and asylum seekers, their personal narratives and circumstances take us to the intersection of law, creative narratives, and religion.

Conclusion

To reconceptualize black religious experience in the context of the comparative history of religion today, new and exciting Africanist and African diaspora scholarship enables us to explore the connections linking the three expressions of our religious and cultural traditions in the United States: Continental African, African-American, and African diaspora traditions in the Caribbean and the Americas. Scholars and policymakers must investigate religion’s double-edged character rigorously, its functional and dysfunctional effects in public sphere, and Africa’s triple religious heritage to advance development policy. African and African diaspora scholarship offers evidence of cultural and social movements intersecting each other and producing a transnational tradition of global networks. Socially relevant scholarship will gain importance as we pass through what is already a chaotic era in which religion continues to dominate. Religious studies is entering an exciting period as we critically reflect upon, analyze, and interpret the transnational traditions generated by the African diaspora and as we engage the public dimension of our professional calling with honesty and integrity.



AAR FOCUS ON AFRICA REPORTS

Kathleen O'Brien Wicker
AASR North American Representative

THE AASR-NA MEETING WASHINGTON, D.C., NOVEMBER 19, 2006

The first meeting of the AASR-NA was held in Washington, D.C. on November 19, 2006, in conjunction with the meeting of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature. This was our first meeting since becoming a *Related Scholarly Organization* of the American Academy of Religion, and the affiliation allowed us to be a formal part of the meeting and to be listed in the AAR/SBL program book. This served us very well as we had a record attendance of fifty or more persons. Our meeting was greatly enriched by the presence of a number of Africa Focus scholars from the continent who were sponsored by the AAR. Membership in the AASR also increased by attendees at the meeting.

The meeting opened with welcoming remarks by Kathleen Wicker, AASR North American regional representative, Elom Dovlo, President of the AASR, and Rosalind Hackett, President of the International Association for the Study of Religions of which the AASR is an affiliate member. Afe Adogame, General Secretary of the AASR, gave a report on the state of the organization. Among other issues, he emphasized the importance of organizing active chapters of the AASR in all the countries of Africa so that scholars can take advantage of the many benefits of membership in the organization. He announced that the deadline for submitting proposals for the third AASR and IAHR Regional Conference in Africa to be held in Botswana July 8-13, 2006 has been extended to January 15, 2007. All members were encouraged to attend the conference. As much financial assistance as possible will be given to scholars in Africa to attend the conference. A special fundraising committee of the AASR has been established to raise money for this purpose. Regional AASR groups were also asked to contribute to this effort. The AASR-NA is now actively soliciting funds from its members and will contribute available resources from its treasury. Musa Dube, Chair of the local organizing committee in Botswana, also encouraged submitting proposals on the topic of *Health, Healing & the Study of the Religions of Africa*. She noted the attractiveness of Botswana as a destination site.

Following the business meeting, Professor Elom Dovlo addressed the group on *The Study and Practice of Religions in Africa*. The full text of his remarks will appear in a future issue of the AASR Bulletin. He focused on three areas: curriculum for the study of religions in Africa; research and publications, including student theses; and the

conference themes of religion and healing, and religion and lawmaking. Dovlo noted the shift in curriculum from the study of scripture and theology to areas considered relevant to national needs and the job market. He discussed the influence of religious pluralism in the public sphere and also highlighted the development of cultural studies and in particular the study of traditional festivals as an important way of understanding indigenous religions traditions. In the area of research and publications, Dovlo noted how the study of religions has focused on contemporary areas, highlighting the emphasis on gender issues in the Circle of Concerned African Women theologians. He lauded Dr. Mercy Oduyoye, founder of the Circle, who was in attendance at the meeting. He also noted new work on tourism and pilgrimage and also on the African diaspora in African scholarship. He observed that student theses are an untapped goldmine of information about traditional religious practices and more should be done to preserve and disseminate the results of this research.

Prof. Jacob Olupona gave the response to Prof. Dovlo's paper. He said he was concerned about the practice of religions in Africa, particularly in the mixing of religion and piety. He worried that religious leaders and groups cannot 'speak truth to power', and observed that overall there seems to be a crisis of faith on the continent. Dr. Mercy Oduyoye was also invited to make remarks, and a lively discussion among those attending the conference ensued. Following the meeting, the AASR-NA hosted a dinner for the Africa Focus scholars at a local West African restaurant which a number of AASR and AAR. African Religions group members and friends also attended.

Cynthia Hoehler-Fatton

University of Virginia

Out-going Co-Chair of the African Religions Group

2006 AAR ANNUAL MEETING NOVEMBER 18-21, 2006

SESSIONS SPONSORED BY THE AFRICAN RELIGIONS GROUP

There is an Ibo proverb that states, "When a man says yes his *chi* says yes also."² On November 18-21, it seemed that many participants in the AAR Annual Meeting were blessed by their *chi*, as months of work and preparation culminated in a very successful conference. The largest association of scholars of religion in the world, the American Academy of Religion strives to strengthen its international outreach by designating each year a different country or region as its 'international focus'. For the 2006 meeting in Washington, D.C., the focus was Africa. The objective was not only to highlight key

² Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* ([1959] New York: Anchor Books, 1994), 27.

themes and issues in the study of religion in Africa, but also to enhance AAR members' awareness of the work being produced by scholars in Africa. To that end, the International Connections Committee, along with many program units, joined forces with the association's leadership make the sponsorship of African scholars a priority. More than twenty scholars received support to travel from their home universities in Africa to present papers and exchange ideas with scholars of religion working in the U.S. and other parts of the world. The program featured nearly two dozen panels (referred to as 'paper sessions' at the AAR), roundtables, and forums devoted exclusively to Africa-related topics. More than ten papers on religion in Africa were incorporated into sessions devoted to comparative themes. In addition, there were at least six different cultural events – a performance by a West African dance troupe, films by Ousmane Sembene, a documentary by Jim Ault on charismatic Christianity in Ghana and Zimbabwe, and two museum tours – that highlighted various religious dimensions of Africa's diverse cultural and artistic landscape.

The AAR comprises over one hundred constituent program units: 'sections' correspond to major subfields in the study of religion; 'groups' and 'consultations' represent smaller fields as well as emergent and exploratory areas of interest. A number of these units, such as the Indigenous Religious Traditions Group, the Women and Religion Section, the Study of Islam Section, the Ecology and Religion Group, and the Law, Religions and Culture Group, to name a few, cooperated to design a wide array of stimulating sessions on religion in Africa. The remainder of this report will describe those sessions that were sponsored and co-sponsored by the African Religions Group (ARG).

ARG sessions

The African Religions Group sponsored two paper sessions of its own, and co-sponsored three more, in addition to a number of cultural events. The theme of its first session was *African Indigenous Religions in the Twentieth Century*. This session was chaired by Afe Adogame (University of Edinburgh) and featured a fascinating set of papers: Bolaji Bateye (Obafemi Awolowo University) spoke on women and the Ifa corpus in Yoruba Orature; Danoye Oguntola Laguda (Lagos State University) delivered a provocative paper on the impact of Pentecostalism on indigenous movements such as the *Ijo Orunmila Adulawo* in Lagos; Kip Elolia (Emmanuel School of Religion) gave a paper on *Mafuta Pole Dini Ya Africa* in Kenya; and Teresia Hinga (Santa Clara University) delivered a paper entitled, 'Beyond Totem and Taboo: Indigenous African Religions and the Quest for a Global Ethic'. These papers generated a lively and wide-ranging discussion. Of particular interest were people's observations about the extent to which various religions are adopting Pentecostal patterns of worship and organization, and whether the pervasiveness of this trend means that we need to rethink the meaning of the term 'Pentecostal'.

The theme of the African Religions Group's second session was *African Religions, Healing, and HIV/AIDS*. This session was co-sponsored by the Religions, Medicines and Healing Group, and was chaired by Simeon Ilesanmi (Wake Forest University). The issue of HIV/AIDS was prominent in this year's slate of sessions. If we heed theologian Musa Dube's comment that the pandemic represents the defining feature of our age, making this a decisive moment – 'our Kairos' – then it is indeed appropriate that such a wide array of AAR scholars sought to address the crisis in conjunction with this year's Africa Focus. To my mind, the contribution of this particular session was an attention to

specific cultural contexts, and how local realities influence the way the pandemic is being perceived and addressed. The presenters included Tapiwa Mucherera (Asbury Theological Seminary), who spoke about conflicted responses to the pandemic within his own home area; Jame Schaefer (Marquette University), who talked about the possible relationship between faith and medical treatment in East Africa; and Musa Adeniyi (Obafemi Awolowo University), who delivered a paper on Shehu Korkoroadua's healing practice. Isabel Phiri (University of KwaZulu-Natal) served as respondent, and offered thoughtful comments on each paper, despite the fact that she had not seen any of them in advance!

The African Religions Group sponsored three more sessions. Participants in *Religion and Public Life in Africa* were: Damaris M'mworia (Drew University, presiding), Edwin Gimode (Kenyatta University); Mary Nyangweso (Iowa State University), Nisbert Taringa (University of Zimbabwe), and Isabel Phiri (University of Kwa-Zulu Natal). The session entitled, *Making Again: Rites to Heal new Challenges in African Contexts* was co-sponsored with the Ritual Studies Group and featured Isabel Mukonyora (Western Kentucky State, presiding), Kara Ellis Skora (University of Virginia), Jone Salomonsen (University of Oslo), and Sidsel Roalkvam (Diakonhjemmet University College.) The final African Religions Group session was titled, simply *African Christianity* and was co-sponsored by the World Christianity Group. The participants were Akintunde Akinade (High Point University, presiding), Gay Byron (Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School), Mika Vähäkangas (University of Helsinki), David Ogungbile (Obafemo Awolowo University) and Frieder Ludwig (Luther Seminary). Elias Bongmba was the discussant. These last two sessions included a mix of stimulating papers written from historical, anthropological and history of religions perspectives. Of particular note was Vähäkangas' discussion of the way in which the Sonjo of Tanzania have recast their traditional trickster figure, Ghambageu, as a Christ-like miracle worker, and are gradually transforming him into a messianic savior. David Ogungbile gave an excellent—and entertaining—presentation on Nigerian Christian home videos that generated a fruitful discussion on the role of modern media in the ongoing development of African Christianity.

For members of the African Religions Group, the 2006 AAR Annual Meeting was in many ways a watershed. A relatively small program-unit within the AAR, we have been reaffirmed by the dynamic conversations that took place throughout the duration of the 2006 conference. We are excited by the possibilities these exchanges portend for future study of religion in Africa. We were honored by our African guests who came ready to share their scholarship, insights and concerns with AAR members who may or may not have had a prior interest in Africa. We encountered new perspectives, made new friends, and established professional ties that are bound to bear fruit for years to come. Kip Elolia, Co-Chair of the African Religions Group, put it best when he said: 'the Africa Focus has rejuvenated our group!'



Nisbert Taringa
University of Zimbabwe

THE 2006 AAR ANNUAL MEETING,
WASHINGTON DC, NOVEMBER 18-21:
A FOCUS ON THE AFRICAN RELIGIONS GROUP

The 2006 American Academy of Religion had as its international theme Africa and African scholarship in religion. The focus on Africa is part of an ongoing programme to dedicate between 2004 and 2009 to a particular international regional focus. As a result of this there was participation of a substantive number of scholars from Africa and of African scholars in Diaspora. Some scholars from Africa were either fully or partially sponsored by the AAR. As a result there were African scholars who were attending and presenting papers for the first time such as Dr Tabona Shoko and Mr. Nisbert Taringa both of the University of Zimbabwe in Harare. Overall the conference brought together more than 2000 scholars from all over the world including those participating in the SBL sessions.

The African Religions Group hosted five sessions in partnership with other programs and sections. The five groups are:

1. *African Indigenous Religions in the 21st century*. The paper presenters in this group were Bolaji Bataye (Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife), Danoye Oguntola Lagunda (Lagos State University, Ojo), Samuel (Kip) Eloia (Emmanuel School of Religion, Johnson City, Tennessee), and Teresia Hinga (Santa Clara University, California).
2. *Religion and Public Life in Africa: Politics, Human Rights and Peacemaking*. The paper presenters were Edwin Gimonde (Kenyatta University, Kenya), Mary Nyagweso (NYTS, NJ), Nisbert Taringa (University of Zimbabwe, Harare) and Isabel Phiri (University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg)
3. *Ritual and Contemporary Africa: Making Again: Rites to Heal; New Challenges in African Contexts*. The paper presenters were Kara Ellis Skora (Kent, Ohio), Jone Salomonsen (Oslo, Norway) and Sidsel Roalkvam (Oslo).
4. *Religion and Public Health in Africa: African Religions, Healing & HIV/AIDS*. The paper presenters were Tapiwa Mucherera (Asbury TS, KY), Jame Schaefer (Marquette, WI). Anna Chitando (Zimbabwe Open University, Harare) and Ezra Chitando (University of Zimbabwe, Harare) were not able to attend but sent their papers. Cythia Hoehler-Fatton read Anna's paper to the session and Ezra's paper was noted.
5. *The Church in Africa and Neo-Diaspora/African Christianity*. The paper presenters were Gay Byron (Colgate RC Divinity School, NY), and Frieder Ludwig (Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN).

There were other program units that embraced the focus on Africa. As a result some African scholars participated in the following program units:

1. *Religion and Ecology: Religions and Theological Reflections on Environmental Issues in Africa*. The paper presenters were Ben-Willie Kwaku Golo (Norwegian Uni-

versity of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway), Tabona Shoko (University of Zimbabwe, Harare) with Isabel Mukonyora (Western Kentucky) as the respondent;

2. *Women and Religion Section: African Religion and Women's Agency*
3. *Law, Religion and Culture Group: Religion and Human Rights in Africa*

There were some engaging reflections by African scholars on the study of religions and some empirically based examinations of how African religions are implicated in 21st century ethical issues related to among other issues HIV and aids, gender, the ritual power of women, environment, healing rituals, the quest for peace, good governance and ecological justice and human rights. Some of the sessions that had a focus on such issues are the discussion on HIV and aids in Africa by Dr Pauline Muchina, representing Dr. Peter Piot, the UN Secretary General on HIV&AIDS in Africa; African indigenous religions in the 21st century; Women speaking to religion and leadership: Honoring the work of Mercy Amba Oduyoye; African religions; Religious and environmental issues in Africa; Religion and politics; Human rights and peace making. What featured in most of these deliberations was a highlight on the ambivalent nature of religion.

Overall the African Religions group consisting mostly of members of the AASR succeeded in bringing to the attention of the AAR the meticulous empirically based research being done by African scholars of religion. In fact the group communicated to the international community the central themes, concerns and critical issues for African scholars working in the field of religious studies. As was already anticipated ties were strengthened between American and African scholars.

African Religions Group Business Meeting

In its business meeting the African Religions Group was engaged in self-criticism under the guidance of a presentation by the AASR President, Elom Dovlo with responses by Jacob Olupona and Mercy Amba Oduyoye to the presentation. Dovlo's presentation focused on the need to review courses in religious studies to make them relevant to national interests and job opportunities. People were urged to think about what the content is meant to produce in relation to religion as applied to issues such as health, NGOs, politics, development, human rights, HIV/AIDS, pluralism, gender, media, democracy; and issues such as religion and the diaspora, religion and law making, religion and the public community, etc.

Extension of deadline of the AASR Conference, 8-13 July 2007

Musa Dube reported that only 10 abstracts had been received for the AASR Conference on Health, Healing and the Study of the Religions of Africa, 8-13 July 2007, at Gaborone, Botswana. Because of the low response the deadline for receiving abstracts was extended to 15 January 2007.



Edwin Gimode
Kenya University

THE 2006 ANNUAL AAR CONFERENCE: AN APPRECIATION

This is a brief write-up of my experiences during the above conference.³ It is basically an appreciation to the AAR for work well done. The Conference was very well organised. This was reflected in the preparations right from the call for proposals, notification of successful applicants, and the overall communication on the progress of the arrangements throughout the year. The various persons assigned specific duties in the preparations did their work well – whether they were Chair-persons of Groups, facilitators of hotel accommodation, travel co-ordinator preparing travel itineraries to suit individual participants, and other areas.

The conference itself was a great experience. Conference materials – the program, abstracts, name tags, etc., were easily available to the participants. The primary venue of the Conference, the Washington Convention Centre, was within easy reach of the participants from their hotels. There were enough rooms for all the scheduled meetings. The interaction with a wide range of publishers of religious literature, and the availability of many books at subsidised rates, was a boon for me.

The infrastructure aside, the conference gave me an opportunity of a lifetime to meet scholars of religion from different institutions and to share different perspectives of our subject of study. This was reflected in the wide range of the program units that virtually covered the global religious experience of humankind. I feel intellectually sharpened and refreshed.

The Conference focused on the study of religion in Africa, making it especially significant for those of us who study religion in Africa. Quite a number of us (about twenty) who live and work in Africa made it to the conference only because of either partial or full sponsorship for air-travel, accommodation, and registration waiver by the AAR. Personally this sponsorship enabled me to network with other scholars and institutions in the USA. I was able to earn an invitation from the Department of Religious Studies, Grinnell College, Iowa, where I interacted with faculty, held two classes, and gave a public lecture on the Church and the State in Kenya. I was similarly invited by the Department of Religious Studies, University of Virginia, where I gave a lecture to a class on Kenyan Christianity.



³ Edwin Gimonde read a paper in the session on *Religion and Public Life in Africa*, organised by African Religions Group. See Nisbert Taringa's report.

Danoye Oguntola Laguda
Lagos State University
Focus on Africa Scholar

AAR/SBL, WASHINGTON DC,
18-22.11.2006

The annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion may have come and gone but it has left some indelible marks on my career as a teacher and researcher into religion. As a young scholar from Africa, the meeting provided a rare opportunity to interact with some of the best minds in the academic study of religion and also to present some research findings from my work on the growth of African religious movements in the 21st century. It provided an opportunity to share my experience on issues in teaching of, and research into, religions in Africa.

The Africa Religions Group in partnership with other programs organised some sessions as follows: 1. African Religion in the 21st Century; 2. Religion and Public Life in Africa; 3. Ritual and Contemporary Africa; 4. Religion and Public Health in Africa; and 5. The Church in Africa and Neo-Diaspora. All the sessions were stimulating and provided an insight to the practice and study of religion in Africa. It was an opportunity for some of us from the continent to correct some notions concerning African religion. The session on new African religious movements generated some debates and created awkward questions for scholars in this field. It was observed that groups are developing in large numbers all over the continent. The meeting was exposed to the Kenyan, Nigerian and Zimbabwean experiences in this regard. The five days meeting was a worthy experience for me. In my academic career I had not attended any meeting of this magnitude.

According to available information, about 12,000 delegates attended the Washington meeting. That in itself was a novelty. This made it imperative for me to reflect on the importance of religion as an academic discipline in my country Nigeria. In fact government policies are not in favour of religion as a course of study or area of research, so much so that there is now dearth of students applying for courses in religious studies. The sessions were well organized and plenary papers were adequately focused. The American Academy of Religion gathering is not only about meetings. It also provided a forum for scholars like me to make friends and establish contacts with academics from other parts of the globe. In fact at the breakfast for international members and new members, African scholars were most warmly welcomed as the focus of the 2006 meeting. There were also film shows and guided tours of the United States of America. Most Africans in the Diaspora who attended the meeting gave assistance to those of us from the continent. The role of African Association for the Study of Religions (AASR) was marvellous during the meeting. The dinner hosted by the North America branch of the Association is indeed commendable. The occasion provided an opportunity for us to interact socially while savouring West African cuisines and drinks. The book exhibition was the largest I had ever seen and it afforded me the privilege to update my library with recent publications.

John Omolafe
Olabisi Onabanjo University

REFLECTIONS OF A SCHOLAR OF RELIGION AFTER AAR/SBL 2006

The 2006 Annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion has come and gone but for me I am still relishing the wonderful experience of being part of the gathering of some of the best minds in the field of the study of religions. The long weekend before Thanksgiving, from Friday 17th–Tuesday 21st November 2006, proved to be a hectic but thoroughly enjoyable time. The arrangement of the evening programmes for the most part ensured that there were abundant opportunities to socialize and thoroughly enjoy the company.

Earlier in the year, Professor Olupona had casually urged me to attend the AAR meeting, assuring me that I might likely find it useful in view of the fact that I was considering coming back to full-time university teaching and research career. I came to the meeting with open mind but determined to enjoy meeting up, hopefully, with old colleagues who had relocated to the West in search of fulfilment in their careers and some of the great scholars that I had known only through their works. Of course, apart from renewing academic relationships I also wanted to look out for any possible job opportunities.

The AAR is a great professional organisation. I thoroughly enjoyed all the sessions I could attend. I would indeed have attended more of them but for the fact that many of the sessions I was interested in were held at the same time overlapping. I was interested in attending African Religions, Philosophy of Religion and World Christianity programmes as my academic focus straddles these three areas. I enjoyed, in particular, the sessions on indigenous religion and modernity. It was gratifying to discover that the study of indigenous religions was becoming not only much more interesting but also much more rigorous in analysis and presentation and relevant to contemporary life.

I studied at the Urban University, Rome, Italy, where I obtained a first degree in Philosophy and another in Theology. I hold a Diploma in Religious Studies, a Masters degree in Philosophy of Religion and a Ph.D. in African Studies from the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. I also successfully completed a course in Diploma studies in Teaching in Adult and Higher Education at Birkbeck College, University of London. My areas of specialisation are African Studies, Philosophy of Religion and Comparative Religion with emphasis on African Religions and Belief Systems, which I have taught, as an associate lecturer at the School of Oriental & African Studies, and as a Senior lecturer at the Ogun State University, Ago-Iwoye, and some neighbouring Universities in Nigeria for about fifteen years. I also have about ten years' teaching experience at the secondary school level both in the UK and in Nigeria. I am proficient in Yoruba, Italian, French and English Languages and has working knowledge of Latin and Biblical Greek. I have always been interested and involved in working in both inter- and multi-disciplinary contexts. While I have tried to explore specific areas in philosophy and sociology as well as African Traditional Religion, with the aim of opening up new subject areas, I have, over time, been much involved in es-

tablishing intellectual links with other disciplines in my researches. The responses of colleagues in the Departments of Philosophy, Sociology and Geography and Regional Planning to my presentations in this regard and their readiness to enter into collaborative researches, have been very encouraging. My current teaching and research interests include: transnational considerations and religious commitments; fieldwork on migrant adult learning and religious commitments in the workplace (a case study of Afro-Caribbean religious experience in the UK); human personality and African Christianity in the Diaspora; and African Religion in the twenty-first century.

Bolaji Olukemi Bateye
Obafemi Awolowo University

SOME REFLECTIONS AFTER THE AAR/SBL 2006

I lecture in the Department of Religious Studies, Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Ile-Ife, Nigeria. I am also a Resource Person at the OAU Centre for Gender and Social Policy Studies. I studied at the Obafemi Awolowo University where I obtained my Ph.D in 2001. My dissertation was entitled 'Female Leaders of New Generation Churches as Change Agents in Yorubaland'. My interest in contemporary and global issues in religion precipitated my involvement as a plenary youth participant at the World Council of Churches, Seventh Assembly, Canberra, Australia in 1991 and as a graduate student of the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, Switzerland. I have participated in a number of local and international conferences namely the First Conference on Women in Africa and the African Diaspora: Bridges across Activism and Feminism, University of Nigeria, Nsukka 1992; Winds of Change: Women and the Culture of Universities, University of Technology, Sydney, 1998; and the 10th Forum of the Association of Women's Rights in Development (AWID), Bangkok, Thailand 2005. I am currently on a three months' Leventis Nigerian postdoctoral Fellowship (previously Leventis Research Cooperation Programme) at the Centre of African Studies, University of London where I will be conducting a research on 'The Activities and Impact of Female Leaders of African Descent in the UK'. My special areas of research include Gender/Women in Religion and Society; New Generation Churches; and Research Methods in Religion. I am currently building a reputation as a scholar and a teacher.

As a sponsored delegate to the 2006 American Academy of Religions and Society for Biblical Literature annual meetings I received in conjunction with this invitations from Lafayette College, Easton PA to give a public lecture entitled *Okunrin l'ada, Obinrin l'agba* ('Men are Cutlasses, Women are Senior' [Superior]): Explorations on Women and Yoruba Religion', at the Kirby Hall of Civil Rights Auditorium on 9 November. While at Lafayette college I also gave a class presentation for Professor Robin Rinehart's and Asma Sayeed's students of West African Traditional Religion, Women in Religion and Society and World Religions, in the Department of Religious Studies on the various topics of Women and Identity and Syncretism in Yoruba religion with focus on interactions between Yoruba religion, Islam and Christianity. Invitations also came

from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, where I gave a public lecture entitled: 'From Shrines to Mega-Churches: Varieties of Yoruba Women's Religious Leadership'. There I attended Professor Rosalind Hackett's World Religions class and gave a class presentation to Professor Hackett's African Religions class. My trip to the US was rounded up by my participation in the 2006 American Academy of Religions and Society for Biblical Literature annual meetings in Washington DC 18-21 November, where I presented a paper entitled: '*Osa Eleiye* ('The Witches' Verse'): Yoruba Orature, the Babalawo, and Female Power' in the African Religions Group.

My involvement as a scholar in the United States is equally as involving in the UK. My scholarly activities were especially marked by my participation in seminars, public lectures and presentation of papers at seminars. One of these papers was entitled: "*Things Are No Longer What They Used To Be!*": The Yoruba Christian Woman and her Quest for Identity in a Changing World', at the Centre of African Studies' weekly seminar on 19 October, 2006. At the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World (CSCNWW), University of Edinburgh, I gave a paper entitled: 'Identity, Indigenous Women Power and Female Leaders of New Generation Churches: Solution or Stalemate?'. I also gave a seminar in the West Africa Seminar at the Dept. of Anthropology, University College of London (UCL), entitled 'Forging New Christian Communities and Identities in London: The Case of Lady Evangelist/Prophetess Lizzy Adedamola, also known as *Ahaja Jesu*, and Street Pastor/Evangelist Esther Wright'. This encapsulated findings based on my ten-week fieldwork in London sponsored by the Leventis fellowship.

I am currently compiling an anthology of African goddesses, female religious leaders and cultural heroines. Contributions to this volume are still being received and may be sent to bolaji66@yahoo.com, cc. tomtosinn@yahoo.com, or to the Department of Religious Studies, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria. Phone-numbers: +234.80.3408.4212 and/or +234.80.6285.0569.



AASR WEBSITE

Jan G. Platvoet
AASR WebMaster

www.a-asr.org

The AASR website (www.a-asr.org) is now divided in two parts. The one entitled 'Welcome to the AASR' is accessible to the general public. To the other, entitled 'Welcome AASR Member', only AASR Members can log in by means of a username and a password. As Webmaster I grant each AASR member access by entering his/her e-mail address, together with a password, into the document in the website's manager that governs access the Members-Only Area of the website. I can, therefore, grant access only to the members of whom I possess a working e-mail address. I grant it to new AASR members only after I have received their full registration particulars.

All 150 AASR members, of whom I have a functioning e-mail address, have meanwhile been informed by an e-mail message about this division and how they may access the Members-Only Area. In the system that I have adopted, a member's e-mail address serves as his or her Username for logging in into the Members-Only Area, for I can only inform them that they have been granted access and how they may log in, if I have their current e-mail address. It is therefore important that AASR members update me on changes in their e-mail address(es).

I could not, therefore, notify and grant access to the 41 registered AASR members whose current e-mail addresses I do not possess. Some have never added their e-mail address to their registration particulars. Others did add it but have since changed it and did not send me an update. In AASR Bulletin 23 (May 2005), pp. 6-8, is a list of the names of the 49 members of whom I did not have a (working) e-mail address in early 2005. I am happy to report that I have been able to shorten that list by 8 names now. The remaining 41 are requested to send me an e-mail at WebMaster@a-asr.org in order that I may grant them access to the Members-Only Area of the AASR website too.

The open and closed parts

The part of the AASR website accessible to the general public has now been termed 'Welcome to the AASR'. It contains the following folders and documents:

- AASR: Members, Meetings, Media, Membership
- AASR Aims
- AASR Constitution
- AASR Publications
- AASR History
- AASR Executive 05-10
- AASR Membership Application Form
- AASR Membership Dues
- Webpages of AASR Members

- AASR Conference on 'Health, Healing, and the Study of the Religions of Africa, University of Botswana, Gaborone, 8-13 July 2007
- Persons & Posts
- News
- Weblinks

The contents of the Members-Only Area are found, after logging in, on the 'Welcome AASR Member' page. It contains at present the following folders and documents:

- AASR Bulletin 24
- AASR Bulletin 25
- Calls for Papers and Contributions
- Requests
- Scholarships
- E-Publications

All future and past AASR Bulletins of which I have an electronic text will soon also be posted in the Members-Only Area, as will the AASR Register of Members. The latter should allow us also to build an extensive Electronic Archive of publications on the religions of Africa within the Members-Only Area, as I explain below.

Plans

An Executive-Only Area will soon be installed also. AASR Officers will log in to the Executive-Only Area by the same Username and Password as for logging in to the Members-Only Area. In the document governing access to the secluded parts of the AASR website, they have been granted access to both the Members-Only and the Executive-Only areas. I hope that AASR Officers will soon also install their office-bound AASR e-mails accounts. So far, apart from myself, only two did so: the AASR General Secretary and the AASR Representative for North America, as you may see on the inside cover of this bulletin.

The next important phase in the development of the AASR website will be the operationalisation of the Forums facility. It will enable AASR members to create platforms for worldwide on-line discussion of topics of common interest to AASR members in the wide field of the study of the religions of Africa, e.g. on Theology and HIV/AIDS, on Islam and Public Life in Africa, on the Pentecostalisation of the mainline Christian churches in Africa, on Jews in Africa, on religion and politics in Africa, AICs, NRMs, the methodology of the study of spirit possession, to name but a few of the numerous issues that may be discussed in forums. Forums may also be created for preparing a conference, for organising a research group, or for co-publishing a book. I hope to have mastered the technical side of the administration of forums before mid-2007 and to announce in AASR Bulletin 27 how they may be initiated.

Personal webpages

A visit to <http://www.a-asr.org/index.php?id=142>, 'Webpages of AASR Members', shows that so far only AASR members posted in universities in Europe, North America and South Africa have been able to divulge full pertinent academic information about themselves by means of a personal webpage because the websites of their universities offer them that facility. Personal webpages, after the model of my own personal webpage at <http://www.a-asr.org/index.php?id=162>, may be installed, however, on the

AASR website for all AASR members who wish to have one. Members interested in this option may contact me at WebMaster@a-asr.org. Personal webpages will normally be located in the area accessible to the general public, but may also be placed in the Members-Only Area if members so wish.

Electronic Archive

A large electronic archive of recent publications in the field of the study of the religions of Africa may also be gradually developed within the Members-Only Area through the linking facilities of the Content Management System (CMS) of this website.⁴ Members will not only have the option of referring to their publications under 10. in the AASR Register of Members, or in their personal webpages. They will also be offered the option to attach the publications themselves, in .pdf (Acrobat) format, to these and other bibliographic references (e.g. in the rubric Recent Publications in AASR Bulletins). I plan to gradually attach all my own publications to my personal AASR-webpage as a start of this electronic archive. The AASR will become a veritable knowledge-sharing community, if many AASR members will likewise store their articles and chapters in this electronic archive. As the texts will be accessible to AASR members only, I trust that the archive will not violate the copyrights of the journals in which, and publishing firms by which, these texts were published in printed form. Lastly, I should note that the AASR website has search facilities by means of which the publications stored can be ordered and retrieved through indexes of authors, societies and subjects.

Site statistics

As <http://www.a-asr.org/index.php?id=3>, Site Statistics, documents, close to twenty thousand distinct visitors have paid more than 22.000 visits to www.a-asr.org to date (2.01.07) and made over 35.000 page impressions.⁵ The AASR website has therefore been quite successful so far as a site accessible to both AASR members and the general public. However important these figures are in terms of the function of www.a-asr.org to inform the general public about the AASR and channel information more speedily to AASR Members than is possible through a printed bulletin, it should be remembered that these numbers are likely to grow less dramatically now that the Members-Only Area has been installed. For the greater part of the information contained by the site is accessible now to AASR members only. And that secluded part will increase exponentially in the years ahead. I therefore urge AASR members to regularly access it. Channeling privileged information to AASR members and fostering electronic communication between them should, in my view, be the primary functions of the AASR website in the years ahead.



⁴ E.g. visit <http://www.a-asr.org/>, select Webpages of AASR Members, navigate to Jan G. Platvoet, select his personal webpage (<http://www.a-asr.org/index.php?id=162>), navigate in his List of Publications to 1993c, 'Contexts, Concepts, & Contexts', and click on it and the text appears in .pdf format.

⁵ Not all of them are friendly visits. A number are for spamming purposes.

CALLS FOR PAPERS

Berliner Gesellschaft
für Missionsgeschichte⁶

CHRISTIAN MISSIONS IN 19TH & 20TH CENTURY SOUTHERN AFRICA: PASSING REVIEW & BREAKING NEW GROUND

Rhodes University, Grahamstown,
South Africa, 8-11 July 2007

Theme

Over the last 15 years, the study of Christian missions in 19th and 20th century Southern Africa has become a central theme through which to study issues of power and ideology. Work by researchers on Southern Africa has come to be regarded as seminal and frequently cited far beyond the confines of the region or the specific disciplines of engagement of their authors. This work has begun to challenge a series of boundaries.

1. **Disciplinary boundaries:** the first challenge was the critical and conscious rupturing of the boundary between history and anthropology, an engagement that is of particular importance both to accommodate the time depth of Christian missions in southern Africa as well as to approach the ideological and cultural aspects of what happened on the ground. A second disciplinary boundary being breached is that between studies located in the social sciences and those performed by researchers in Missiology and departments of religion.
2. **Gender studies:** a second challenge is located in gender studies. This has drawn extraordinarily on the approaches developed in gender studies all over the world and in particular in colonial spheres, and has led to women and gender relations being seen as critical for the understanding of mission and religion. This line of analysis still needs to be related to a study of masculinities within the mission sphere, one which has only recently been opened up in southern African anthropology and history.
3. **Nation and colonial power:** a third boundary, dealing with issues surrounding the relationship between nation and colonial power, has characterized the study of missions in Southern Africa. The need to determine the nation of origin, of individuals as well as of organizations, has been a critical theme in southern African politics from at least 1850 onwards. Yet too often research on mission in Southern Africa has assumed far too rigid and stereotypical a view of what influence the politics of nation had on mission work. Within this fall the rarely investigated relationships be-

⁶ Berlin Society for Mission History, www.bgm.de

tween mission societies of different national origins and the joint mission organizations they formed in an attempt to form a unified position.

4. Interpretation of written texts: a further boundary that is currently being breached, investigates the manner in which Africans who came into contact with missionaries and itinerant pastors understood the Christian message. Critical to this investigation is the question of how we can read mission documents, which are often the only written sources available in studying 19th and early 20th century mission societies, for African agency. These studies, taking the cue from work on colonial history and frontier studies, push the boundaries of interpretation of written texts beyond the obvious constriction of the intentions and cultural assumptions of the authors. They identify signs of debate, challenge, and dispute between the various parties that were engaged in mission, from the missionaries and converted Christians to the first evangelists and itinerant preachers, to political and traditional religious leaders, to people rejecting the Christian message. This investigation leads into the interest in communities of readers, pursued in particular in literary studies and the history of books. This focus opens up new possibilities for the study of missionary literature such as periodicals, schoolbooks and hymnals.
5. Changing identities: a fifth challenge in the study of mission has been posed by the study of changing identities, both of the missionaries as well as of the people they won over. Both sides experienced quite profound changes in their sense of selves and ways of relating to their 'home' societies. This challenge attempts to present in much more complexity and contrast both the changes undergone by the missionaries, in contrast to their often stereotypical presentation in popular (and also, frequently, in academic) literature; as well as the agency involved in the changes undergone by those who joined the mission.
6. Conversion: a last topic that has, in contrast, hardly been dealt with directly in Southern African mission studies is that of conversion. This has been debated far more strongly around Christian missions in the South-East Asian region.

Call for papers

We wish to announce a conference on 'Christian Missions in 19th and 20th Southern Africa: Passing Review and Breaking New Ground', from 8–11 July 2007, hosted by the History Department at Rhodes University in South Africa. We invite contributions from scholars, from a range of disciplines, who are currently doing research in the field of Christian mission studies in Southern Africa. We are particularly keen to invite contributions that reflect on and push forward cutting edge issues in the field of Christian missions, whether through theoretical interventions or through more detailed, specific studies. Papers should not be limited to Germany missionaries only.

Delegates who would like to participate in the conference should submit the registration form together with their abstract by 1 November 2006.⁷ Abstracts will be evaluated by the organizing committee and delegates will be informed of the result by the end of that month.

Full papers will be due in digital format by 1 May 2007, by which time the conference fee will have to be paid. The papers will be made available to all conference dele-

⁷ The organizers are, however, accepting late abstracts (e-mail message from Alan Kirkaldy, dd. 28.11.06).

gates by 15 May 2007. They will be assumed to have been read before the conference. Paper presenters will have 15 minutes to speak to their papers at the conference. The aim of the conference is to build up an active and lively discussion. We will request one or two conference delegates to report back on the proceedings at the final session, to reflect on the major themes that emerged and on future directions they see the work taking. We will later release a CD with all papers and the report back, and are aiming at a print publication of selected papers.

Accommodation at the conference will be provided at university rates in the student halls of Rhodes University. There are also numerous Bed and Breakfast establishments, and a number of hotels in Grahamstown. A conference fee will be charged which will provide for registration, teas and lunches, and the conference dinner. Details of costs will be announced at a later date. It is envisaged that they will be somewhere between SA Rand 700 and 900. As the conference will not have additional funding available to assist delegates with their travels and accommodation, we request that you immediately begin to identify your own sources of funding. Delegates who require a formal confirmation that their paper has been accepted should please contact the organizers. For further information, contact:

= Caroline Jeannerat (PhD Candidate, Program in Anthropology and History, University of Michigan, USA), 13 Eton Park, 6 Eton Road, Sandhurst, 2196, South Africa

E-mail: cjeanner@umich.edu

= Alan Kirkaldy, Department of History, Rhodes University, PO Box 94, Grahamstown 6140, South Africa. Phone: +27 (0)46-603-8925. E-mail: a.kirkaldy@ru.ac.za

How to register

Please return a form stating your name, address, phonenumber, E-mail, faxnumber, and institutional affiliation, together with your abstract, by email attachment no later than 31 October 2006⁸ to either Caroline Jeannerat (cjeanner@umich.edu) or Alan Kirkaldy (a.kirkaldy@ru.ac.za). You should also indicate whether you propose to read a paper, or present a poster, video, or slide show, and indicate its title. Lastly, if you wish to suggest a session a particular subject, you should indicate its title.



⁸ See note 3.

Nova Religio: The Journal of
Alternative and Emergent Religions

NEW, EMERGENT, OR ALTERNATIVE
EXPRESSIONS OF AFRICAN CHRISTIANITY

A special edition of *Nova Religio* will be dedicated to the theme of the changing nature of African Christianity. English-language articles of original research are invited on any expression of African Christianity that may be defined as new, emergent, or alternative. Submissions are invited across disciplines. The guest editor of this edition of *Nova Religio* is Dr. Joel E. Tishken. He may be contacted at < tishken_joel@colstate.edu >. Paper submissions via email will be due to Dr. Tishken by April 1, 2008. The preferred length of articles is around 8,000 words including endnotes. The maximum length for a submitted paper can be 10,000 words including endnotes. Submission of photographs or other graphics is encouraged when they can substantively enhance an article. Accepted manuscripts must follow the *Chicago Manual of Style* (14th ed., rev., sections 15.1 to 15.426) and should be submitted according to these style guidelines. All references should be in endnotes, numbered throughout the manuscript with the auto-numbering feature of the word processing program. The paper should be sent via email saved in a MS Word or rich text format file. Photographs should be sent as jpg files. If the paper is accepted for publication, the editors reserve the right to edit for length and clarity, with the agreement of the author. The editors also reserve the right to edit for usage and style. Each paper submitted will be subjected to peer review. Authors of papers accepted for publication will receive 10 off-prints and two free copies of the issue in which the article appears. Additional information on *Nova Religio* may be found at:
<http://www.ucpress.edu/journals/nr/>



SPATIALIZING THE MISSIONARY ENCOUNTER: THE INTERACTION BETWEEN MISSIONARY WORK AND SPACE IN COLONIAL SETTINGS

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Belgium)
22-24 November 2007

Scientific Committee

Prof. dr. Bruno De Meulder (Dept. of Architecture, Urbanism and Planning, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven)

Prof. dr. Jan De Maeyer (KADOC, Documentation and Research Center for Religion, Culture and Society, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven)

Prof. dr. Nicholas Bullock (Department of Architecture, University of Cambridge)

Dr. Sabine Cornelis (Department of History, Royal Museum of Central Africa)

Prof. dr. Johan Lagae (Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, Ghent University)

The theme

While research on colonial architecture and space has found a broad academic interest during the past several decades, research on the architectural staging and spatial implications of the worldwide expansion of religion has found much less concern. Nonetheless, the development of colonial empires in the nineteenth and twentieth century went hand in hand with a missionary revival sending Christian missionaries to every corner of the world. As those missionaries generally were in closer contact with the local population than colonial officials, studying their spatial practices and strategies offers high potential for analysing the dynamics of intercultural interaction in the imperial encounter.

However, up until today only a small number of the studies attempting to interpret these missionary spaces have fully realised this potential. First of all, missionary architecture is in general studied as an isolated phenomenon, ignoring the manifold ties it had in the nineteenth and twentieth century with colonial, and later national, regimes. Secondly, the analyses of this architecture often are based on rather obvious or one-sided interpretational schemes. Sometimes for example missionary spaces are merely read as products of the thoughtless export of Western models (neo-gothic, modern, etc.) Other researchers then have investigated how missionaries have formally adapted Christian art in an effort to open up a dialogue with the groups they tried to convert.

Yet, in both approaches, with their focus on the formal language and decoration of architecture, missionary space is only analysed as a décor for human action. With this workshop we want to explore the possible lines of a more nuanced analytical scheme to study this interaction between missionary work and space. Critical in this scheme is an approach to missionary architecture and space not so much as a backdrop for the missionary encounter, but as an essential part of this encounter in itself.

Moreover, we explicitly call for papers that explore the roles of the different actors involved in creating meaning and performing practices in these spaces. Instead, most studies up until today have almost exclusively attributed agency in these spaces to the missionaries. Only seldom are converts, converts-to-be or other 'non-missionaries' discussed as co-producers of this architecture.

More specifically, we see three main fields of enquiry:

- The first questions how and with what intent missionary work brought about spatial and architectural structures.
- The second focuses on the both everyday and extraordinary practices that missionary spaces dictated or made possible.
- The third will be concerned with the both received and contested meaning(s) revealed and created by missionary spaces.

In general, the scientific committee welcomes all papers that shed light on the complex and plural realities surrounding the interaction between missionary work and space in colonial settings. The workshop focuses on missionary work of all denominations in colonial settings between roughly 1800 and 1960. We aim at bringing both an overview of existing research and exploring new ways of studying this interaction. Papers exploring new methodologies are particularly encouraged. We explicitly strive to include research coming from a multitude of disciplines (architectural history, history, mission history, anthropology, geography, cultural studies). Based on the proceedings of this workshop a publication will be prepared.

Please submit a 250 words abstract with a c.v. by 31 December 2006 to:

Bram.Cleys@asro.kuleuven.be. If your proposal is accepted, final papers are due for pre-circulation on 31 October 2007.

Abel Ugba

Conference Convener

AFRICANS IN 21ST CENTURY IRELAND: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY ANALYSIS

Dublin, Trinity College, January 13, 2007

Introduction

People of sub-Saharan African descent have been present in Ireland since the 18th century. However, only since the last decade of the 20th century has there been a large-scale presence and the formation of communities based mostly on national, ethnic, religious and special interests. The increased presence of African immigrants in Ireland from the end of the 20th century must be viewed against the backdrop of the post Second World War increase in global migrations, especially from East to West and from South to North. Although the Irish state did not participate in the scramble for and the colonial domination of the African continent, interactions between Africans and the Irish date back many centuries. They have taken place through commerce, missionary

activities, anti-slave trade movements and the arrival of Irish people in Africa as participants in the British colonial enterprise.

Formation of African communities

One of the direct consequences of the larger-scale presence of Africans in Ireland is the formation of communities and special interest groups. Institutions set up by immigrants constitute vital links between the individual and the group and between the group and other groups in society. 'Ethnic' institutions are also signposts of the metamorphosis from an immigrant group to an 'ethnic' group. These institutions and immigrant participation in various civic activities often make the immigrant groups physically 'visible', offer opportunities for interaction with the dominant society, create channels for transnational exchanges and constitute strategies for articulating self-understanding and group orientation. On the other hand, immigrant institutions have been constructed as obstacles to integration, a throw-back to the past and sites of oppressive patriarchy and harmful traditions.

Though the size of Ireland's African population is small compared to bigger immigrant groups, Africans have arguably contributed to the evolution of Ireland into a multi-ethnic and multicultural nation through their socio-cultural, economic and, of recent, political activities. The development of African groups has taken place in the face of tremendous obstacles, some of them racially motivated. Some of the activities recent African immigrants in Ireland have been engaged in are a strategy of overcoming these obstacles, of survival and of creating safe and enduring places. Through these activities African immigrants are also asserting their presence and inviting the larger society to acknowledge, debate and cherish 'difference'.

Generally, there is a dearth of research and publications on Ireland's African communities. The majority of studies on the communities were initiated or sponsored by community groups or NGOs and they are mostly descriptive accounts of settlement or surveys of experiences of racism and discrimination. In recent years there have been concerted efforts to reverse the dearth of research on African communities as several post-graduate students in various universities in Ireland, the majority of them Africans, have embarked on research into different but interrelated themes. However, despite these positive developments much of the research that is being done remains hidden from the public domain and individuals/groups appear to be working in isolation. There also appears to be an unhealthy distance between activists/NGOs and 'African' academics/researchers. This conference aims to address these problems by:

1. Bringing to public domain recent and current studies on Ireland's African communities.
2. Establishing a framework for the publication of the first multidisciplinary volume on 'Africans in 21st Century Ireland'
3. Encouraging greater cooperation between individuals and groups involved in research related to African communities in Ireland
4. Providing a forum for activists and academics/researchers to interact, exchange views and establish links

Abstract

The central theme of the conference is 'African immigrants,' particularly those in Ireland. Researchers/activists involved with African immigrants in other countries are in-

vited to share their experiences. Participation is open and presenters can come from any ethnic/racial background. Please send a copy of your abstract to this email address: abel@uel.ac.uk. Abstract should be between 300 and 500 words and it should state the title, theme and format (paper, poster, slide etc) of the presentation. Deadline for receipt of abstracts is December 5, 2006.

Conference details

The conference will take place on January 13, 2007, beginning at 9am.

The venue is Trinity College, Dublin.

The conference organisers/supporters include:

- The Africa Centre, Dublin
- *Metro Eireann*, Ireland's multicultural newspaper
- Migration & Citizenship Research Initiative, Geary Institute, UCD
- Mphil in Ethnic & Racial Studies, Dept. of Sociology, Trinity College, Dublin.

IMPEREALITY: THEORIZING EMPIRE

Pretoria, 16-18 August 2007

'Not since Rome has one nation loomed so large above the others. Indeed, the word "empire" has come out of the closet,' Joseph Nye, dean of Harvard University Kennedy School of Government, *Washington Post*.

'Once there was Rome; now there is a new Rome. Once there were barbarians; now there are many barbarians who are the Saddams of this world,' Jim Wallis, *Sojourners*.

Concepts of empire have come to characterize not only the national political discourse of the United States of America giving rise to talk of a 'Pax Americana', but also characterize assessments of the current world order of perceived political, economic, and cultural hegemony of the Western world, with the proto-empires of China and India looming on the horizon. While it is, arguably, the current dominance of the Pax Americana that sensitized theorists to the imprint of empire on all domains of discourse, this is, of course, nothing new – empires from the Persian, Graeco-Macedonian, Roman, Muslim, Spanish, and British have exerted enormous influence on the way the world is constructed, and through their legacy continue to do so.

However, issues of empire have gained an urgency in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries perhaps lacking in older versions of empire. Concepts of 'othering', of invention of world religions, the invention of novelistic fiction, the invention of academic discourses such as anthropology and the human sciences in general, cultural, gender, race, and postcolonial studies, resource dominance in knowledge construction industries, politico-economic power alliances, globalized trade and cultural exchange with their in-built unequal distribution mechanisms, all testify to the imprint of empire. In fact, it can even be maintained that the way we now know reality is a product of empire – hence 'imperreality'.

Further, as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argued in their provocative book *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), the current empire is not sim-

ply a matter of singular domination, but rather a situation of multifariously structured and hierarchized dissipation of power and its effects, hybridized identities and ill-defined boundaries. Empire is, in effect, therefore even more pervasively present in human interchange and should consequently be conceptualized with far greater subtlety than simply as 'crude' political entity, also with greater complexity with past and present, and 'colonizer' and 'colonized' mutually implicating, constructing, and illuminating each other.

Whereas each aspect of imperial imprint on current reality has been explored in separate disciplinary contexts, *Impereality: Theorizing Empire* aims to provide a forum for investigating all these aspects in their interrelations, e.g., how religion and imperial politics mutually implicate each other; how knowledge construction is both an effect of and gives rise to unequal trade and cultural exchanges. And finally, *Impereality: Theorizing Empire* aims to attempt a look beyond empire to ask whether postimperality is possible, and how it should be thought and practised. To facilitate this kind of discourse, no parallel sessions are envisaged, but rather that presentations are made in full plenary seminar sessions, in order to arrive at an enriched, integrated multifaceted understanding of empire (arguably, itself an example of imperial consciousness!).

That this conference is arranged to take place in South Africa is very appropriate. The last of the African countries to emerge from empire and colonial domination, a significant role-player in the Non-Aligned Movement, yet caught as a developing economy between the combined might of the G8 and the rising giants of China and India, attempting the difficult path of integration into the global world of trade, knowledge and cultural production, and embarking on an ambitious project of constructing a new postcolonial identity, issues of global empire are especially relevant to this context. And situated geographically at an outpost of the world, we are in a unique position to analyze and theorize the imprint of empire.

Proposals for presentations are hereby invited. Although presenters will typically speak from a specific discipline, all presentations will be expected to engage the interrelations with other domains of discourse. Proposals can be offered for any of the following sections:

- *Imperial identities*: various aspects of imperial social formations and mythmaking; includes religion and the multifarious structuration of power and the dissipation of power and power-effects
- *Imperial exchanges*: various aspects of unequal exchange systems; theorizing positionality
- *Imperial cultures*: imprints of power differentials in symbolic production, culture making, and discourse making

Deadline for proposals: 30 April 2007

All correspondence and proposals to be submitted electronically via e-mail. Papers must be submitted on or before 15 July 2007 so as to be made available to all participants beforehand. The conference venue will be announced later.

Conference organizer/further information:

Dr. Gerhard van den Heever, Department of New Testament, University of South Africa
E-mail: vdheega@unisa.ac.za; gerhardvandenheever@yahoo.com

Omohundro Institute of Early
American History & Culture
PO Box 8781, Williamsburg, Virginia 23187-8781, USA

‘THE BLOODY WRITING IS FOR EVER TORN’:
DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL CONSEQUENCES
OF THE FRIST GOVERNMENTAL EFFORTS
TO ABOLISH THE ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

hosted by The Historical Society of Ghana
& the University of Cape Coast,
Elmina Beach Resort, Ghana,
August 8–12, 2007

The Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, in cooperation with the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition at Yale University, the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard University, The Reed Foundation, UNESCO, and the Wilberforce Institute for the Study of Slavery and Emancipation at the University of Hull, will convene a major international conference in Cape Coast, Ghana, West Africa, on August 8–12, 2007. The meeting will examine the national and international contexts of the transatlantic slave trade at the end of the eighteenth century, the circumstances that led to decisions by some of the trade’s original instigators and greatest beneficiaries to outlaw participation in it, and the social, political, economic, and cultural consequences for all the inhabitants – slave and free – of the kingdoms and nations involved, of actions that ultimately abolished one of the pillars of Atlantic commerce. The goals of the conference are twofold:

- to explicate the domestic and international forces in play when the first decisions to end the transatlantic slave trade were made
- to examine and illuminate the short- and long-term consequences for Africa, Europe, the Caribbean, Latin America, and North America of these initial attempts to end further transportation of captives from Africa.

The Institute is offering travel scholarships to support the attendance at the conference of African faculty and graduate students who are teaching or pursuing graduate work in sub-Saharan colleges and universities. Funding will cover travel and lodging expenses for persons whose applications to attend the conference are accepted. To apply for a scholarship to attend the August 2007 conference in Ghana, eligible faculty and graduate students are asked to submit a scholarship application by March 9, 2007. Members of the conference program committee will review the applications in early April. Scholarship recipients will be notified by May 1, 2007. If you have questions, please contact the Institute at mlsmit@wm.edu. Click below to learn more about the travel scholarship program:

<http://oieahc.wm.edu/conferences/ghana/travel.cfm>

PERSONS & POSTS

Henk van Rinsum, AASR Representative for Europe, delivered the 2006 Utrecht Lecture at Stellenbosch University, South Africa, on November 8, 2006, in commemoration of the 370th anniversary of Utrecht University (UU) at Stellenbosch. In his lecture, entitled 'Sol Iustitiae and the Cape, Halfway the Via Sacra: A Short History of Utrecht University's Ties with South Africa', he discussed the longstanding relationship between Utrecht University and Stellenbosch University. Even though that relationship became strained during the *apartheid* era, Utrecht University never took an outright ideological stance and was reluctant to take a firm line on any issue. It continued to adopt a down-to-earth, pragmatic, liberal-conservative approach towards its South African counterparts. Van Rinsum discussed two examples of this UU-attitude. One is that the founder of apartheid, D.F. Malan, who became Prime Minister of South Africa in 1948, was a student at Utrecht University who fitted in perfectly in its liberal-conservative tradition. The other was that unlike the other Dutch universities Utrecht University adopted a quite lenient position in the academic boycott of South Africa during *apartheid*. Van Rinsum concluded that Utrecht University adopted a conservative-liberal attitude throughout the history of its links with South Africa. Though his lecture touched on politically delicate issues. He called for an objective analysis of the past, without apology for the affront that the UU attitude actually constituted to many South Africans. One should not shy away from our history, for it is part of our heritage. But he noted that his own views had shifted. At the time of *apartheid*, he felt that it was the right move politically. Now, however, he believes that it also damaged the essence of a university, which is unfettered debate and exchange of ideas.

Matthew Karangi, AASR Member, obtained his PhD at SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies), University of London, on October 31st, 2005, on a thesis entitled: *The Sacred Mũgumo Tree: Revisiting the Roots of Gĩkũyũ Cosmology and Worship: A Case Study of the Gĩcũgũ Gĩkũyũ of Kĩrĩnyaga District in Kenya*. Its aim is to examine the Gĩkũyũ traditional cosmology and worship, taking the *Mũgumo* (*Ficus natalensis* / *Ficus thonningii*), a sacred tree among the Gĩkũyũ, as the key to understanding their cosmology. It explores in depth the Gĩkũyũ religio-philosophical world-view as an advent to preparing the ground for understanding why the sacred *Mũgumo* played a paramount role in the life of the Gĩkũyũ people. In the study of the sacred *Mũgumo* the thesis examines a three-tier relationship relevant and integral to understanding Gĩkũyũ cosmology: *Ngai* (God) as the *Mũmbi* (the creator) together with the *Ngoma* (ancestors); the Gĩkũyũ people, and finally with nature. The thesis focuses on the sacred *Mũgumo* tree, taken as the axis of the Gĩkũyũ religio-political configuration. Consequently, crucial questions are asked: what are the characteristics of this tree? What religious and political role does it play in Gĩkũyũ cosmology and worship? In other words, what are its religio-political functions? What ceremonies and rituals were conducted around it and how does this sacred tree and the rituals associated with it validate the Gĩkũyũ claim to land, political power, religious hegemony and identity? Using mainly the theories of V.Y Mudimbe, B. Berman, R. Horton, and an analysis of data collected in the Gĩcũgũ Division, Kenya, the thesis contends that the Colonial government, the Missionaries, the

African scholars and the Gikūyū elders collaborated in the forging and invention of the Gikūyū identity. Thus emerges the present image of *Ngai* and the Gikūyū as we know them today. The crucial question addressed is whether this conception is congruent to the original Gikūyū understanding of *Ngai*. The findings indicate that the sacred *Mūgumo* was mythically veiled both with religio-political power and used by the elders for social and religio-political control of the group. They also strongly indicate that it was this religio-political symbiosis which was celebrated, ritualised and revitalised around the sacred *Mūgumo* tree. Finally, following the research findings, the thesis shows that the sacred *Mūgumo* prepared the ground for the evangelisation in the Gikūyū land and the continuation of political hegemony based on power-knowledge and control. This critical analysis will lead us on the one hand to demythologise the colonial and missionary discourses based on epistemological dynamics about Gikūyū cosmology and worship which were in fact meant to create an identity of the oppositional “Other”, and on the other hand provide conceptual tools for a contextualised evangelisation and the study of local religions.

Abel Ugba, AASR member, recently defended his PhD thesis, entitled *Shades of Belonging: Identity Construction among Pentecostal Africans in 21st Century Ireland*. The thesis was submitted to Trinity College Dublin for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Sociology. Its content is set out in the following abstract: The birth and spread of African-led Pentecostal groups in Ireland has occurred against the backdrop both of the increased secularisation of Ireland and of dramatic changes in the country’s cultural and demographic landscapes. Although Africans were present in Ireland as far back as the 18th century, only since the last decade of the 20th century have there been a large-scale presence and the formation of communities based mostly on national, ethnic, religious and special interests. Triangulating several ethnographic methodologies, this thesis studies Pentecostal churches initiated, led and mostly populated by Africans, which occupy a unique and important place among the various social and cultural institutions newer African immigrants have established in Ireland. Whereas these churches have flourished and continue to do so, many other institutions set up by Africans have waxed and waned. Due to their rapid development and the pivotal role they play in facilitating interaction and communication, these churches have become dynamic community institutions and one of the foremost signifiers of the presence of Africans in 21st century Ireland. The findings of this research contribute to and derive from the sociology of religion and the social constructionist view of identity. Triangulating theories of religion, identity and immigrant institutions, this research identifies the specific uses of Pentecostalism in Ireland’s difficult immigration and socio-political circumstances. It problematises the connections between specific Pentecostal teachings and the social construction of self, ‘others’, boundaries and differences, and highlights the implications of identity and boundary construction for the place and participation of Pentecostal African immigrants in Irish society. The findings complexify concepts of belonging, boundaries and sameness/difference and contribute to the debates on social construction of commonality and groupness. While acknowledging that Pentecostalism has served practical, emotional and social purposes for African immigrants, this research demonstrates that the multiple and complex relationships African immigrants maintain with Pentecostalism can only be explained by triangulating functionalist, critical and substantive theories of religion and of identity.

Gerrie ter Haar and Stephen Ellis have been awarded the Research Prize 2006 of the European Journal of Development Research (EDJR) for their joint article 'The Role of Religion in Development: Towards a New Relationship between the European Union and Africa', in *European Journal of Development Research* 18, 3 (2006): 351-367.

Abstract: The resilience of religion in developing countries is now plain to see. In Africa, religion shows no sign of disappearing or diminishing in public importance, as development theorists have generally supposed. The European Union has normally excluded consideration of the religious dimension in formulating development policies towards Africa. This article explores the possible role of religion in Africa's development. It looks at a number of specific fields that are widely debated in the literature on development to consider ways in which religious ideas may be relevant to development thinking. It concludes with some general considerations on how policy makers might be able to encompass religion as a factor in their strategic outlook.

Gerrie ter Haar delivered the Cunningham Lectures 2006 in the University of Edinburgh, Faculty of Divinity in November 2006. The series of six public lectures was entitled: *How God Became African: Stories of Religious and Cultural Change*. The lectures will in due time be published. Their titles and summaries are the following:

= *How God became African: a continuing story*: Christianity has taken root in Africa with astonishing speed, to the point that Africa is now one of the heartlands of world Christianity. Africans bring with them their own spiritual ideas, in a process of inculturation. Europe in particular has been slow to accept the implications of this historical development.

= *The African spirit world: a journey into the unknown*: Africans generally believe that direct communication with the invisible world is possible. A common way of interacting with the spirit world in Africa is by means of spirit possession. Neurobiological research suggests that this is a universal human potential that is mediated through culture.

= *African religious experiences: from suffering to salvation*: Spiritual experiences are considered a source of power in Africa. Religious vocations often follow a standard pattern, beginning with illness, and ending in a miraculous salvation. When miracles are perceived to occur, the Church strives to domesticate them.

= *The problem of evil: religion and human rights in Africa*: Human rights are usually expressed in legal terms, without considering the religious or spiritual dimension of the concept. In Africa, human rights cannot be detached from a religious understanding of evil. This can notably be seen in witchcraft beliefs and accusations in Africa.

= *Abundant life in Africa: religion and development*: Effective development requires a mobilisation of a full range of human resources. It should start from people's own worldviews, which in many cases are religious. Little thought has been given to how religious resources can be used for development.

= *A valley of dry bones: African Christians going global*: In an age of international migration, African Christians are establishing congregations worldwide. They often consider Europe to be a spiritual desert, ripe for evangelisation in a reverse of the nineteenth-century missionary tradition.

BRIEF NEWS ITEMS

ASC Africa Thesis Awards 2006. The ASC (African Studies Centre at Leiden) Africa Thesis Award⁹ for 2006 has been awarded to Ms Mienke van der Brug for her thesis *World & Experiences of AIDS Orphans in North-Central Namibia*. Ms Van der Burg is a postgraduate in Cultural Anthropology and Developmental Psychology of Leiden University. The subject of her thesis is the notoriously difficult position of AIDS orphans in the North of Namibia. Their position in Namibian society is highly vulnerable, because traditional kinship structures have been greatly weakened by economic decline and have only sparingly been replaced by other institutions that care for these orphans. The plight of these orphans is worsened by the social stigma attached to AIDS, HIV-infection, and the poverty they invariably entail. Some orphans are looked after in schools and other forms of daycare; others live with distant relatives. The social and psychological care they receive is often far from adequate. The jury praised Ms Van der Burg for how she had broached the difficult subjects of sex, ignorance of teachers with these children, and their fears that their current caretakers might also desert them, and had enticed them into discussing them with her. The € 4000 award was presented to Ms Van der Burg by Bert Koenders, Member of Parliament and honorary chair of the ASC Thesis Award, at the festive Africa Study Night in Leiden on November 8, 2006. Ms. Van der Burg's thesis will be published by ASC. The Second Prize was awarded to Ms Janske van Eijck for her thesis *Transition towards *Jatropha* Biofuels in Tanzania: An Analysis with Strategic Niche Management*. The jury praised her research into alternative fuel sources as opportune because the price of crude oil is soaring. Ms van Eyck is a postgraduate of TU-Eindhoven and is now employed in Tanzania. ASC will publish her thesis too. For information on the ASC Thesis Awards visit:

<http://www.ascleiden.nl/Research/Award/MastersThesisAwardWinner2006.aspx>.

An interdisciplinary summer study programme is being organized by the Institute for Greco-Oriental and African Studies in Athens, the University of Johannesburg and UNISA at New York College in Kifissia, ten km north of Athens, from June 20 to July 4, 2007. Courses will be taught on Modern Greek by Ms. M. Triandafillou, University of Johannesburg; Byzantine Culture and Art by Prof V. Christides, Athens; Greek Mythology by Prof V. Christides, Athens; Ancient Near Eastern Religion and Archaeology by Dr. M. le Roux, University of South Africa; and Modern Greek Society by Dr. Christine McGuire, Athens. For further information and registration one may contact Dr. Magdel Le Roux at Lrouxm1@unisa.ac.za

The Remember me when I'm gone Project¹⁰ was selected out of 35 contestants to be one of the three nominees for the Yarden Award in September 2006. The Yarden Award has been founded in The Netherlands to award initiatives that create awareness for a topic related to the end of life in a large audience in a novel way (cf. www.yarden.nl). The jury judged the *Remember me when I'am gone* Project to be 'innovative, exception-

⁹ Cf. *AASR Bulletin* 24 (May 2005): 44-46.

¹⁰ Cf. *AASR Bulletin* 25 (May 2006): 26-27; and: <http://www.a-asr.org/index.php?id=154>

nal, wide reaching, [creating a] large social awareness. Never before have parents been called upon to build up memories for their children. The project has been set up in a very professional way and offers enormous service by providing the template free of charge in a large number of languages'. The Memory book template is now available in the following 88 languages: *Afrikaans, Akan Twi, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Bambara, Bemba, Brazilian Portuguese, Bulgarian, Burmese, Cantonese, Catalan, Chichewa, Chinese (Mandarin), Cebuano, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dholuo, Dutch, English, Esperanto, Estonian, Farsi, Finnish, French, Frisian, German, Greek, Gusii, Hadiya, Hausa, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Icelandic, Igbo, Indonesian, Irish, Italian, Japanese, Kimeru, Kinyarwanda, Korean, Latvian, Lithuanian, Luganda, Macedonian, Malay (Bahasa), Malayalam, Mandinka, Marathi, Mazandarani, Namwanga, Nigerian Pidgin English, Norwegian, Nyanja, Oromo, Papiamentu, Portuguese, Polish, Pulaar, Punjabi (Eastern), Quechua, Romanian, Ronga, Russian, Servo-Kroatian, Slovak, Slovenian, Sotho (Northern), Spanish, Sranan Tongo, Swahili, Swedish, Tajik, Tamil, Tigre, Tigrigna, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Ukrainian, Uzbek, Welsh, Wolof, Xhosa*. Translations in the making include: *Tamazight, Bengali, Bosnian, Ga, Kannada, Kaonda, Kikuyu, Ngoni, Shona, Spanish (Mexico), Thai, Tumbuka, Urdu, Yoruba*.



REVIEWS

Oyeronke Olajubu
University of Ilorin

SHARIA IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

Umar H. D. Danfulani 2005, *The Sharia Issue and Christian-Muslim Relations in Contemporary Nigeria*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 81 pp..

This book provides an insight into the diverse intricacies of exchanges and negotiations that characterizes inter-religious tension in contemporary Nigeria. It is a persuasive read for everyone interested in the historiography of contemporary Nigerian inter-religious relations, especially between Christians and Muslims. A major strength of the book stems from the vantage position of the author as an indigene of Northern Nigeria and a resident of a city in Northern Nigeria. Consequently, adequate exposure is accorded otherwise subsumed agendas which underlay the religious issue that are publicly displayed.

The book is divided into three sections; whereas section one examines the background factors to the sharia-inspired religious crisis in Kaduna in 2002, section two focuses on the Christian-Muslim responses to the implementation of sharia. In addition, section three considers thesis concerning the implementation of sharia in Northern Nigeria. These sections are followed by Notes, References and the List of papers contained in the *Studies on Inter-religious Relations 15*, edited by Ingvar Svanberg and David Westerlund.

Section one of the book presents the dual feature of Kaduna as a historical Muslim settlement on the one hand and a city with cosmopolitan nature on the other hand. Kaduna is described as 'the hot bed of political awareness and power in Northern Nigeria and a capital of the North'. The immediate events leading to the sharia crisis in Kaduna were enumerated as: the huge political gains from the sharia issue by governors of Northern States in Nigeria and the series of seminars and rallies held to examine the possibility of sharia in Nigeria. The book reports the different reactions to the introduction of sharia in Kaduna. These reactions were for and against the introduction of the sharia system in Nigeria. Both Muslims and Christians were represented in both divides of the reactions.

The second section analyzed the responses of Christians and Muslims to the implementation of sharia in Northern Nigeria. Christian reactions included mass migration, seeking refuge in military camps and the staging of a peaceful rally to the state house in Kaduna. However, the rally was hijacked and eventually resulted in a violent religious clash leading to killings on both Christian and Muslim sides for three consecutive days. Many lives and properties were destroyed during this religious crisis. The tense situation elicited reactions from the Pope and the federal government. A clear position by anti-sharia commentators is that it is a manipulation of religion for political ends. Some posit that the sharia issue is not religious but is an ethnic problem whereby the Hausa-Fulani want to hold on to political power in Nigeria forever. It is worth noting though that the rule of a Yoruba person (Olusegun Obasanjo) as the president of Nigeria in the

past seven years (1999-2006) would have attenuated this assumed ambition of the Hausa-Fulani significantly. According to this book, the opposition of Christians to sharia is based on past experiences of discrimination and maltreatment against Christians in Northern Nigeria. On the other hand, Muslims support sharia due to the conviction that it will supply them peace and tranquility in a crime free society. Muslims also believe sharia would eradicate unjust economic relationships and uproot moral decadence in the society.

Section three considers the promises of Governor Yerima Sanni to buy buses and rehabilitate prostitutes as suggestive of foreign investment by Islamic groups. Again, there is the thesis that the introduction of sharia is an attempt to return Islam to its pristine state, continue the reform of Usman Dan Fodio and part of the hidden agenda to Islamize Nigeria. The thesis that poverty is an instigating factor for the emergence of fanaticism is of profound import for me. I am persuaded that poverty is a crucial factor in the manipulation of people for political gains in any society. It is therefore plausible that poverty plays a significant role in the yearnings of Muslims for the sharia especially as political leaders promise a utopian world to the depressed masses through sharia. It is this same observation that could explain the clinging of Northern politicians in Nigeria to the sharia issue to ensure acceptability and popularity; this the author aptly describes as 'making political capital out of religion'. The book concludes with the observation that '... the sharia issue is a mere symptom of a more fundamental problem'. The fundamental problem in my opinion would be the ethnic issue in Nigerian polity.

Ezra Chitando

University of Zimbabwe

ARCHAIC REMNANTS OF AN ANCIENT TYPE OF RELIGION

Magdel le Roux 2003, *The Lemba: A Lost Tribe of Israel in Southern Africa?* Pretoria: University of South Africa, 328 pp., ISBN 1-86888-283-7 (pbk).

African theologians, scholars of religion, biblical scholars, anthropologists and other specialists have drawn attention to the close similarities between African religious beliefs and practices and those found in the Hebrew Bible or the Old Testament. Missiologists who have published on African Independent / Indigenous / Instituted / Initiated Churches (AICs) have also highlighted the extent to which the Hebrew Bible makes a special appeal to these churches. The Hebrew Bible has continued to inspire the African imagination. However, when some communities in Africa claim to be Jewish or practise Judaism, issues have become more complicated. Of particular interest to this review is the case of the Lemba. The Lemba/Varemba communities in Southern Africa (predominantly in South Africa and Zimbabwe) claim to be descendants of Abraham. Scholars remain divided over their identity.

The book

Magdel le Roux, who teaches at the University of South Africa, has written a well-researched, informative and balanced book on the Lemba. She undertakes a comparative study of Lemba religious beliefs and practices with those of early Israel (7). She is a very careful scholar. Faced with the critical question, 'Are the Lemba then a lost tribe of Israel?', she is unwilling to come up with a categorical response. She avers that the Lemba do have archaic remnants of an ancient type of religion. According to her, 'there are abundant echoes of ancient Judaism' (242). She straddles the 'middle path'; upholding the integrity of Lemba claims to be descendants of Abraham, while admitting that it is difficult to sustain the claim that they were/are one of the Ten Tribes taken into captivity by the Assyrians. She also asserts that her research has shown that '*there is at least a very strong indication of an earlier correlation between the culture of the Lemba and that of early Israel*' (236, italics original). Rather than close the debate on the identity of the Lemba, she has re-opened it.

Le Roux's book consists of ten chapters. Chapter one is the introduction. She states her methodology, alongside stating her central objectives. Her claim that the ambit within which the study operates is Old Testament Studies (8) might have to do more with academic politics than the focus of the study. She definitely grants more attention and space to the Lemba than to Old Testament theories/scholarly reflections. Chapter two has the title, 'Some ways in which the Old Testament was received in Africa.' This is misleading as this chapter tends to concentrate on different 'Judaising' movements in Africa. She briefly discusses the Khoikhoi, Zulus, Sotho-Tswana, Xhosa, Dutch-Boers and the Lemba. Chapter three wades into the problematic of the possible Semitic history and origin of the Lemba. It is a sober and critical chapter. She isolates the main theories that seek to account for the origin of the Lemba. These include a pre-Islamic-Judaic-Arabic origin; an Islamic-Arabic origin; and a Falasha-Abyssinian origin. She probes all these theories and highlights inherent weaknesses that characterise each one of them. She admits that there is no consensus regarding Lemba identity. However, she submits that:

What we can say is that the Lemba themselves, as well as all authors who studied them seriously, are in agreement that the Lemba constitute *a separate or distinct group* from the Bantu groups who are their hosts. The Lemba are especially distinguished from others by their customs, traditional religious practices, features, skills and aloofness. Many scholars hold that the Lemba have many customs with a Semitic or an Old Testament resonance (73, italics original).

Chapter four examines the social practices of the Lemba and early Israel. Chapter five focuses on religious experience among the Lemba and in early Israel. Chapter six concentrates on myth among the Lemba and in early Israel. Rites among the Lemba and in early Israel constitute the focus of chapter seven. In chapter eight, the author analyses law and ethics among the Lemba and in early Israel. Chapter nine examines the Lemba and early Israel as oral cultures. In all these chapters, the author illustrates close similarities between the Lemba and early Israel. She also draws attention to salient differences where she perceives them.

Critical Assessment

Magdel le Roux has added significant material to the study of the Lemba and the Hebrew Bible in Africa. She has highlighted the importance of a truly multi-disciplinary

approach to the study of religion in Africa. As she states, ‘anthropology, archaeology, education, history, missiology, comparative religion, Old Testament Studies, genetics and many other fields’ (236) have helped to clarify the (possible) relationship between the Lemba and early Israel. Where many scholars begin with the biblical text and move on to African cultural realities, she places emphasis on the Lemba and seeks parallels from the Bible. This is more convincing as it preserves the integrity of the community under study. She handles the work of previous scholars with utmost respect, even when she disagrees with them in a fundamental way. Her analysis of similarities and differences between Lemba beliefs and practices and those relating to early Israel is quite informative. The additional comparisons at the end of the book are equally helpful.

While the study provides valuable material on both the Lemba and early Israel, a number of issues come to the fore. The author’s reliance on Ninian Smart’s dimensions of religion is not sufficiently reflexive. Furthermore, she retains some debatable terms like ‘tribe’ and ‘tribesmen’ (268). Although she surmises that the Lemba might have taken on a ‘Jewish’ identity due to the influence of Christian missionaries, she does not illustrate when and how this might have occurred. Overall, this is a highly readable, scholarly and sensitive book. It demonstrates that ‘outsiders’ can provide valuable data on the history, religious beliefs and practices of others. Nonetheless, the question remains: Are the Lemba (really) a lost tribe of Israel in Southern Africa?¹¹

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GBT-NS, AKWAAB’OO!

The Ghana Bulletin of Theology (GBT) has awoken from three¹² decades of hibernation. In Akan tradition, the publication of *GBT New Series* 1, 1 (July 2006) merits a rousing *Akwaab’oo!*,¹³ ‘Welcome’ back among the academic journals in the field of the study of the religions of Africa. Congratulations are due to the Department for the Study of Religions of the University of Ghana for its rebirth. The reborn *GBT-NS* has an attractive, deep-blue cover, with the journal title in big, brightly yellow capitals on the front cover and a large *Adinkra* sign – *Nyame, biribi wô soro*¹⁴ – at its centre, and the table of contents on the rear cover in white characters. *GBT* also is a refereed journal. That will

¹¹ For another critical assessment of this book, cf. Jan G. Platvoet 2006, ‘Ethnogenesis as an Arena: Were the Lemba Black Jews’, in *Ghana Bulletin of Theology* 1, 2 (December 2006):

¹² The last issue to appear was 4, 9 (December 1975). It was published, however, in February 1979 only. *GBT*’s hibernation therefore lasted 27 years, 1979 to 2006.

¹³ *Akwaab’oo* is a contraction of *akwaaba*, ‘welcome’, and the exclamation *oo* by which visitors, and especially those returning home, are bidden welcome in Akan societies. It is all the more appropriate here in view of the etymology of *akwaaba* from *akô aba*, ‘to return after a temporary absence’, proposed by Christaller (1933: 277).

¹⁴ ‘Nyame [Akan name for God, JP], something is up there’ [i.e., in the sky, in heaven, JP]. Quarcoo (1972: 14) quotes also an extended version of it: *Nyame, biribi wô soro na me nsa nka*, ‘Nyame, something is up there, let my hand [me] obtain it’. He regards it as ‘a sign of the belief in God’s goodness and reliance on Him as one who answers prayers’. The *GBT* editors likewise regard it as ‘a symbol of prayer and hope’ (inside front cover).

hopefully be instrumental in *GBT-NS* achieving high standards of academic quality in the years ahead.

GBT, 1956-1979

As far as I have been able to reconstruct, the first issue of the bi-annual *The Ghana Bulletin of Theology* appeared at 'Michaelmas Term' (December) 1956, 'in mimeographed form', as was the second issue, published at 'Trinity Term' (June) 1957.¹⁵ Judging from the stock leftovers I was able to buy in 1980 when I was a visiting research fellow in the department for half a year, the *GBT* issues of vol. 1, and vol. 2, nos. 1 and 2, were quite small in size (A6, 40 to 42 pp.) with an unassuming chamois (pale yellow) cover and the journal's title, volume, issue number and date in small blue capitals on the front cover, and advertisements of new books, esp. New Testament studies, from British publishing firms on the other three cover pages. As the journal of a divinity department, *GBT* was distinctly a theological journal, with focuses on African Christian theology,¹⁶ the Bible and its translation,¹⁷ and Church History, esp. in Africa.¹⁸ A fourth, but distinctly minor focus was the other religions of Ghana.¹⁹

In 1961, however, the department's name was changed to Department for the Study of Religions. The change of name seems to have inspired confidence, for from vol. 2, 3 (December 1962) onwards, the size of *GBT* was increased to A5, the contents of each issue were displayed on the front cover, and the Editor and Editorial Board were mentioned on the front inside cover. And a new focus was added: Philosophy of Religion.²⁰ But the number of pages was kept around forty,²¹ and the name was retained, correctly so, for *GBT* remained primarily a theological journal serving the academic training of Christian ministers in the mainline Christian, mainly Protestant, churches of Ghana.²²

¹⁵ Letter from Esther Megill, dd. 10.02.1979.

¹⁶ Cf. e.g., D. Ferguson, 'The Cosmic Christ and African Culture', in *GBT* 1, 8: 1-12; K.A. Dickson, 'Relation between Religion and Culture', in *GBT* 1, 9: 18-22; J.V. Stewart, 'On Christian Unity', in *GBT* 1, 10: 2-8; L.H.S. Osae-Addo, 'The Christian and the Pouring of Libation', in *GBT* 1, 10: 8-18.

¹⁷ Cf. e.g., E. Damman, 'Some Problems of Translating the Bible in African Languages', in *GBT* 1, 8: 29-37; 1, 9: 1-6; Anonymous [K.A. Dickson?], 'The People of God in the Old Testament', in *GBT* 1, 10: 19-35.

¹⁸ E.g. A.H. May, 'Anglicanism', in *GBT* 1, 9: 22-33; Margaret Shinnie, 'The Church of Nubia', in *GBT* 1, 9: 34-41; J.V. Stewart, 'Anglicanism', in *GBT* 1, 10: 36-42; E. Ilogu, 'The Contribution of the Church to National Unity', in *GBT* 2, 2: 28-38.

¹⁹ E.g. [H. Debrunner, H.H.A. Fisher & H.F. Fisher], 'Early Fante Islam', in *GBT* 1, 7: ??-??; 1, 8: 13-29; J.H. Kwabena Nketia, 'Worship in African Religions' [on Ga *kple* spirit possession], in *GBT* 2, 2: 1-28.

²⁰ E.g., David C. Hicks, 'What is a Person', in *GBT* 2, 4: 11-18; 2, 5: 8-15; 2, 6: 8-16; J.A. Thrower, 'Karl Marx on Religion', in *GBT* 2, 8: 33-39; 2, 9/10: 44-49; J.A. Thrower, 'Secularisation, Secularism, and the Need for a Natural Theology', in *GBT* 3, 6: 11-18.

²¹ Except for 2, 9/10 (54 pp.), 4, 3 (59 pp.), 4, 6 (70 pp.), and 4, 9 (80 pp.), the very last issue. Therefore, the first ten issues (December 1956 to June 1961) were collected into vol. 1; the next ten, from December 1961 to December/June 1966, into vol. 2; the ten from December 1966 to June 1971 into vol. 3; and the last nine, from December 1971 to December 1975, into vol. 4.

²² Cf. J.K. Agbeti, 'Theological Education in Ghana: 1943-1993', in *GBT* 3, 10 (June 1971): 23-34, esp. 23, 29, 32-33; J.K. Agbeti, 'New Perspectives in Theological Education, with special reference to Ghana', in *GBT* 4, 6: 19-36, esp. 32-33. Agbeti, on the one hand, considered 'departments of religious studies in Ghana's universities [not] relevant' for the training of ministers because

Of the 113 articles in my incomplete *GBT* collection,²³ the great majority, 88, was devoted Christian theology, and only 25 to the remainder of the wide field of the religions of Ghana and Africa, to wit 1 to an early and long defunct AIC,²⁴ 6 to Islam,²⁵ and 18 to indigenous religions of (Southern) Ghana.²⁶

Included in 4, 9 (December 1975) was a letter from the *GBT* Business Manager, Esther Megill, dated 10 February, 1979, stating: 'We have been forced to cease publication of the *Ghana Bulletin of Theology*', because the problems of getting the printing done 'seem insurmountable'. She added that the manuscript for the combined 1976 issue had been at the printer's 'for about 18 months', but 'we still have hopes of eventually getting [it] from the press'. It never was published, nor was the combined 1977 issue which also had long been ready to publish, but for which no printer could be found.²⁷ By 1979, Ghana's economy had been devastated by the kleptocratic (*kalabule*) military NRC (National Redemption Committee) and SMC (Supreme Military Council) govern-

'Universities do not consider it their business to make pastors but to produce academics in the Study of Religions' (*GBT* 4, 6: 21). They care for their rational, but not for their 'divine' development (*GBT* 4, 6: 34). On the other hand, however, he regarded the Legon Department next doors to Trinity College as providing the University education of which Ghanaian pastors were sorely in need 'so that the pastor can confidently and meaningfully minister to the fast growing literate population of the Church and society [in Ghana]'. He also requested that 'a course in Practical Theology [...] be established in one of the Departments of Religion' in Ghana, and that Trinity College 'be made a College of that University' as a step in its transformation to a 'Religious University' (embracing all religions). But that, he admits, is 'a wild dream' (*GBT* 4: 33-36).

²³ I lack vol. 1: 1-7; vol. 2: 1, 3, 7; vol. 3: 9.

²⁴ K.A. Dickson, 'The "Methodist Society": A Sect', in *GBT* 2, 6: 1-7.

²⁵ S.A. Kamali, 'Islamic Views of Other Religious Communities', in *GBT* 2, 7: ??-??; 2, 8: 17-27; B.A.R. Braimah, 'The Concept of Islam', in *GBT* 4, 1: 31-40; B.A.R. Braimah, 'Morality in Islam', in *GBT* 4, 3: 45-53; B.A. R. Braimah, 'Islamic Education in Ghana', in *GBT* 4, 5: 1-16; L.O. Sanneh, 'The Muslim View of man: Its Basis in the Qur'an, Doctrine and tradition', in *GBT* 4, 9: 37-56; P.J. Ryan, 'The Descending Scroll: A Study of the Notion of Revelation as Apocalypse in the Bible and the Qur'ān *GBT* 4, 8: 24-39.

²⁶ More often for the sake of contextualising Ghanaian mainline Christianity than as objects of study in and for themselves. They were the following: J.H. Kwabena Nketia, 'Prayers at *Kple* Worship', in *GBT* 2, 4: 19-29; 2, 5: 1-7; J.C. Steemers, 'The *Kènèkra* Tradition of the Kratchis', in *GBT* 2, 7: 1-8; 2, 8: 1-10; J.C. Steemers, 'The *Òkra* Traditions among the Guangs of the Volta basin', in *GBT* 2, 9/10: 1-11; 3, 1: 1-9; O. Ampofo, 'The Traditional Concept of Disease, Health and Healing', in *GBT* 3, 2: 6-9; Christian Gaba, 'Contemporary Research in African Traditional Religion', in *GBT* 3, 4: 1-13; C.R. Gaba, 'Sacrifice in Anlò Religion', in *GBT* 3, 5: 13-19; 3, 7: 1-7; C.R. Gaba, 'An African People's Concept of the Soul', in *GBT* 3, 10: 1-8; C.G. Baeta, 'Some Aspects of Religious Change in Africa', in *GBT* 3, 10: 9-22; C.R. Gaba, 'Sin in African Traditional Religion', in *GBT* 4, 1: 21-30; Kofi Asare Opoku, 'Aspects of Akan Worship', in *GBT* 4, 2: 1-13; E.H. Mends, 'The Concept of *Mbusu* in the Ritual Ceremonies of the Fante', in *GBT* 4, 2: 14-24; Peter A. Sarpong, 'Aspects of Akan Ethics', in *GBT* 4, 3: 40-44; P.P. Dery, 'Traditional Healing and Spiritual Healing in Ghana: Christian Attitudes', in *GBT* 4, 4: 53-64; J.N. Kudadjie, 'Does Religion Determine Morality in African Societies?: A Viewpoint', in *GBT* 4, 5: 30-49; S.U. Eriwvo, 'The Concept of God among the Urhobo of the Niger Delta', in *GBT* 4, 6: 48-58; Peter A. Sarpong, 'African Worship and Theology', in *GBT* 4, 7: 1-9; N.K. Dzobo, 'Logical Demonology among the Ewe of West Africa', in *GBT* 4, 7: 10-30; Peter A. Sarpong, 'Media of Revelation in African Traditional Religion', in *GBT* 40-47.

²⁷ It seems to me a duty of filial piety that the editors of *GBT-NS* trace these 1976 and 1977 combined issues, document their contents and perhaps publish them, or some of them.

ments of Acheampong (1972-1978) and Akuffo (1978-1979) building a foreign debt of US\$ 1,35 billion and causing a roaring inflation of over 100% per annum. It caused the young army officer, J.J. ('Junior Jesus') Rawlings, to attempt his first coup d'état on 15 May 1979, to be tried publicly for it, to be freed by fellow officers, successfully to seize power again on 4 June 1979, and to put Acheampong, Akuffo and six other senior military officers before a firing squad on 16 and 26 June 1979.

GBT-NS 1,1

GBT 1, 1 is an enlarged A5 and has 127 pages, thrice the number of the average *GBT* issue. Its sparkling blue cover with big brightly yellow character and large *Nyame, biri-bi wô soro Adinkra* sign is impressive. These significant differences in size and external appearance aptly symbolise in my view the considerable political stability and improved economy that Ghana is enjoying. It has since long emerged from the economic despair and political turbulence of 1979.

More important, however, is the continuity of content. The contributions to *GBT-NS 1, 1* show that the journal has correctly retained theology in its title, not merely for historical sentiment and continuity, but because *GBT-NS 1, 1* has the same preponderance of Christian theological contributions as had *GBT*. Likewise it naturally is preoccupied with Ghanaian religious realities, but of a rather narrow circumscription. Despite its being part of a secular state university *GBT-NS 1, 1* is, like *GBT*, very much a journal of African Christian Theology of, and for, the mainline churches of Ghana, particularly the Protestant ones.²⁸ That is apparent from the fact that all contributions deal with subjects proper to a department of modern liberal mainline-church Christian theology rather than a department for the study of religions, as my survey below documents; and the fact that five of the seven members of the *GBT-NS* Editorial Board on the inside front cover are Reverends.

As for the contents: three of the eight articles in *GBT-NS* are on Christology. Abraham Akrong, Senior Research Fellow in the Institute of African Studies of the University of Ghana, presents an 'ancestral Christology' (20-26, esp. 29, 31) after having surveyed the several African Christologies developed in the past three decades. Emmanuel Martey, Associate Professor at the adjacent Trinity Theological Seminary, discusses the Christological foundations of the New Testament and of contemporary African Christology as well as their fluidity and plurality (83-94). The Rev. Father Dr. Osom Batsa, Lecturer in the Dept. for the Study of Religions of the University of Ghana, reviews how Muslims and Christians look at Jesus and examines whether Christian Christology is, or is not, a stumbling block for Muslim-Christian dialogue. He suggests that Jesus as the incarnated Word be equated with the Qur'an, and that both be viewed as part of 'God's progressive communication in history', however imperfect the analogy between Jesus and the Qur'an may be (95-101, 100).

The other article on Islam is by Abdul-Rahman Yakubu, currently a PhD student at the (Protestant) Theological University at Kampen, The Netherlands. He reviews the efforts of the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) and of the Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference (GCBC) to further the dialogue with Muslims for the purpose of fostering

²⁸ Since the mid-1960s, there has always been one Muslim and one RC scholar on the staff of the Dept. for the Study of Religions. The other five or six staffmembers belong to the mainline Protestant churches assembled in Christian Council of Ghana.

the peaceful co-existence of the two faiths in Ghana (102-117). The 'exceptional religious tolerance' that has prevailed in Ghana for decades contrasts starkly with the 'current global state of religious intolerance' (102, 117). Yakubu, however, deplors the absence of collaboration between CCG and GCBC in fostering tolerance and dialogue (117).

The *GBT* tradition of having articles on the Bible is continued by Eric Anum, Lecturer in the Dept. of Religious Studies at Cape Coast University. He reviews the use of the Bible in African missionary history (69-82). He criticises the ideological luggage hidden in that usage. It served as a basis for colonial ideology and provided 'imperialistic models of interpretation [...] incompatible with [...] enculturation models'. Anum is particularly interested in the role German *Kulturprotestantismus* ('Cultural Protestantism') played in colonial ideology and in biblical interpretation in Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries (69, 71). He concludes that very little research has been done on the legacy of the 'closed' Bible as a strange object of power [for ordinary Christians?]. He proposes as the solution to its persistence 'to dig out the pre-colonial and the pre-translation appropriation' of the Bible. That, however, has 'just barely begun' (82).

Of the three remaining articles, two deal with current Pentecostalism in Nigeria and Ghana. Deji Isaac Ayegboyin, Senior Lecturer in the Dept. of Religious Studies of Ibadan University, and Editor of *Orita*, is the only non-Ghanaian author to contribute. He discusses the 'borrowed robes' of the new Pentecostal churches of Nigeria. Though these churches are very critical of the older AICs, they exhibit noticeable similarities with them in at least eight different spheres: pneumatic emphasis; central place of prayer; and of life and healing; the externalisation of evil as demons and witches; contextualised worship and leadership; vigorous evangelism; and a communal ethos (37-54).

The two editors of *GBT-NS*, Cephas Omenyo and Abamfo Atiemo, Senior Lecturer and Lecturer in the Dept. for the Study of Religions of the University of Ghana, examine the 'neo-prophetic' strand in modern Pentecostalism in Ghana (55-68). It is a type marked by 'blunt, and sometimes vulgar language' by 'semi-literate or entirely illiterate pastors and evangelists' (60) from 'obscure and questionable backgrounds' (66). They exercise a ministry in which power and miracles are emphasized (60) that attracts numerous 'people of low socio-economic status' with a 'primal world view' who 'do not fit in well into the rather elitist Charismatic Churches' (56). In prayer meetings, they express their fear of 'the enemy' ritually by carrying canes for whipping or slapping him (63-64).

Lastly, *GBT-NS* 1, 1 is opened by Elom Dovlo, Associate Professor in the Dept. for the Study of Religions, with an examination of the role of religion in the 1992 and 1996 presidential election campaigns (3-19). After the Christian mainline churches had braved Rawlings in 1990-1992 by instituting platforms on which the people could speak their minds freely on the course the nation should take, and had issued booklets on democratic culture and human rights, they appealed to Ghanaians to elect a 'God fearing man' as their President in 1992 (4-5). That set in train the use of religion, especially the Christian religion for electioneering purposes, e.g. by three candidates of the National Independence Party: the 'born-again' Kwabena Darko, the Muslim Prof. Abdallah Botchway, and the RC Dr. George Hagan; and also by the mainline-Protestant nominee of the National Patriotic Party, Prof. Albert Adu Boahen. But Evangelicals refused to get involved in politics and denied their support to Darko. However, instead of the Christian candidates, Rawlings was elected who had declared publicly that he was neither a God fearing nor a God loving man (6-9). Dovlo further discusses the attempts to

discredit the religious credentials of contestants (10-12), the use of Christian tunes, and of publicity over sexual and financial scandals (12-15) in the two campaigns. The 1996 campaign was marked by a resurgence of traditional religion in the use of the 'great oath' (*ntam kèse*) for countering false allegations, and 'drinking [or eating] the god' (*abosomnom*) for securing the loyalty of voters (15-18).

Assessment

All of the eight articles are well-written, well-structured and well-documented but one. The exception is Anum's, the division of which jumps from (1) *History and Mission* (69-70) to (4) *Baur's usage of history as an ideological tool* (70-72), and consists for the remainder of a rambling and unstructured (5) *Comaroff's view of reception history of the Bible in Africa* (72-82). The referee of this article should have assessed it more critically and the editors should have spotted not only its lack of structure, but also that some of its quotations are not closed on p. 69, and that 'resistant theology' should have been 'resistance theology' (76, line 16). They should also have edited the incomprehensible lines 20-23 on p. 80. The article is also disappointing in that it does not deliver what it promises.

A few more matters for improvement may be noted. The page-lay out should be made uniform in respect of headers and margins. These are fine in Dovlo's article, but in all the other contributions the headers are too far removed from the pages, and the margins are too small causing the text to disappear into the binding, esp. on the even pages. That is also the case on the inside front and rear covers. The font used is quite small but just readable as long as the print is black and sharp. But that is not always the case in my copy, which makes for difficult reading at times. The List of Contributors also needs to be made uniform by the removal of bold and underscoring.

The Dept. for the Study of Religions of the University of Ghana is, however, most certainly to be congratulated with this splendid re-entry of *GBT* into the forum of scholarship on the religions of Africa. I do, however, hope that future issues will not only publish ecumenical Christian theology that 'promotes the encounter between people of different faith commitments', but will also attempt to cover the entire field of the religions of Ghana, Africa and Africans worldwide in interdisciplinary ways that produce a wide range of scholarly perspectives on these complex phenomena. By being less parochial in scope, *GBT-NS* may realise to some degree also the second of the two purposes that it has ambitiously staked out for itself on the inside front cover. That would also honour the name the department adopted in the early 1960s, and its place in a secular university.

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RELIGION'S AMBIGUITY: BARRIER OR BRIDGE TO PEACE?

Gerrie ter Haar & James J. Busuttill (eds.) 2005, *Bridge or Barrier: Religion, Violence, and Visions for Peace*. Leiden, etc.: Brill, xi + 392 pp., 1 map, bibliography, index, ISBN 9004139435 (pbk), Euro 48, US\$ 62 (= International Studies in Religion and Society, 1).

This volume is the outcome of a conference in May 2001 at the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague, The Netherlands, organised by Gerrie ter Haar shortly after she had been appointed at ISS as Professor of Religion, Social Change and Human Rights. Apart from the Preface, Notes on the contributors, the unified bibliography and an index, the volume has four parts: 'Religion, Conflict and Peace' (3-118), 'Religious Perspectives on Conflict and Peace' (119-200), 'Visions for Peace' (201-295), and 'Documentary Sources on Religion, Violence and Peace' (297-369).

Part one is analytical and studies religion primarily as generating violence, though it touches also on its constructive potential (32). It has four contributions, by Gerrie ter Haar, Marc Gopin, Chandra Muzaffar and Daniel Miguez. They probe when and why is religion a source of violence, and when a bridge to peace. Gerrie ter Haar's contribution (3-34) is a lucid introduction to the subject, and to the book. Against the simplistic view of religion as merely a source of conflict born from the fear of 'fundamentalism' of secularists, and from the romantic view of believers that religion always heals, she proposes to view it as a social fact. As such, it has been both a source of violence, and a resource for conciliation. Without denying or ignoring religion as a source of conflict (e.g. 20), the purpose of this volume is primarily to shed light on religion as a resource for peace, and also to encourage scholars of religions to take the position of 'caring critic' by actively engaging in initiatives that help increase religion's capacity for peace-building. When she discusses religion as a source of conflict (9-18), ter Haar emphasises that migration and the pressure to share resources, not religion, is worldwide the true source of conflict. The burning down of a mosque or a church is a violent attack, not on a migrant community's religion, but on that community as an out-group (15). In her examination of religion as a resource for peace, she proposes to view religion as consisting of ideas, practices, organisation and experiences (22) and examines how each of these may contribute to the furthering of conciliation (22-26). She emphasises the need for secularists to have a proper understanding of what religion means to people. The state, therefore, should take charge of education in religion, as in post-apartheid South Africa, while leaving religious education to the various faith communities (31).

Gopin criticises the various conflict resolution theories as too individualistic and secular: they are unable to comprehend the powerful nature of religious commitment and its sacralised violence and to include religious communities, particularly rejectionist ones, into their approaches to conflict resolution (36-43). Their defects may be remedied by introducing into them practices of empathy and pacifism, and the concept of the

sanctity of life, and the Eastern concepts and practices of *ahimsa* (non-violence), *metta* (loving kindness), and *karuna* (compassion) (43-48), as well as Gandhi's authentic religious pluralism (48-49) and the use of mythic imagination (49-52), e.g. by using the 'Abrahamic family metaphor' for reconciling 'monotheistic conflicts' between Jews, Christians and Muslims.

Muzaffar, detailing religion's contribution to conflict and conciliation in Asia (57-79), emphasises that religious conflicts are not between religions, but between some of their adherents who may actually be quite ignorant of the teachings of their religions (58-59). The causes of religious conflicts are mostly secular. Muzaffar discusses the following: competitive party politics (60-62); the religious majority identity which some modern nation states, particularly authoritarian ones, adopt and promote for political reasons, e.g. through religious education programmes (62-64); deeply entrenched cultural attitudes of enmity and exclusivism between religious communities in a nation (64); economic stagnation (64-65); migration upsetting the established order (65-66); the colonial factor (66); the self-interested manipulations of imperialist powers (66-67); and the distorted images that the powerful Western media create of religions, and in particular of Islam (67-68). These causes of religious strife must be remedied first of all by political and economic reforms (68-72), but also by religious reform through the fostering of a spirit of universal unity in religions (72-76), a more profound understanding of other faiths and inter-faith dialogue (76-78).

Miguez discusses the different roles religions – RC, mainline Protestant, Pentecostal, 'African', and Spiritist – played in Brazil, Chili and Argentina under the violent military dictatorships from the 1960s to the 1980s, and after the turn to democracy in the 1980s (81-118). In the repressive period, their roles were mainly 'institutional', i.e. directed at these violent governments. They were either confrontational by defending human rights when seeking to curb these dictatorships, or collusive by sanctioning them in order to use them for their own purposes: to restrict religious liberty and maintain their 'traditional' majority position, or as minority religions for obtaining more religious liberty for themselves and a larger share in the 'religious market' (84-90). After democracy had been restored and religious liberty had been established, causing an increase of religious pluralisation, the religions had to revise their roles. They had to replace their institutional, upwards approach with a grassroots, downwards approach of influencing the identities of common people in their everyday activities in order to win them, or to win them back, in the 'religious market'. They did this through the politics of symbolic confrontation between the religions (90-118). Miguez defines 'symbolic confrontation' as 'the struggle by which social groups try to impose their own understanding of reality as the true one' through the use of symbols (90-94). He presents examples how it was used by the poor (e.g. in Pentecostal 'spiritual warfare' theology that assigns spiritual causes to social problems) as a strategy for contesting the social order by demonising it when they suffered extreme exploitation. Or for partly contesting, partly accommodating the social order when symbolic confrontation enabled them to overcome the *anomie* of misery and to endure deprivation by the sense of coherence, which symbolic confrontation imparted to them, to recover their self-esteem by the sense of mission it instilled in them, and to improve their position in society, even through 'worldly' programmes of social assistance (94-109). Symbolic confrontation was used between the religions to establish that they were exclusively in possession of the one-and-only religious truth (109-113). Though such a claim is polemic by nature, it is, says Miguez, 'not very prob-

lematic' (82) as long as it remains a symbolic confrontation, as it usually does, and does not lead to open violence between religious communities or to the restriction of religious liberties (112-113). Miguez' advice to policymakers is, therefore, not to aim at a total elimination of religious conflict, but at keeping it within boundaries by allowing the discourse and rituals of symbolic condemnation. By maintaining a balance between tolerant groups promoting religious freedom, and intolerant groups restoring the dignity and social rights of the downtrodden, both will contribute in their own way towards diminishing the gap between the rich and the poor (117-118).

In part II (119-200) four 'Abrahamite' perspectives on conflict and peace are presented. In the first (121-152), Jan van Butselaar Van Butselaar examines the problem of the practice of the promise of the Kingdom of God in the history of Christianity. After discussing the violence Christians perpetrated during the crusades, the wars of religion in Europe and colonialism (123-130), he examines attempts at conflict resolution in Augustine's two cities theology and by Beza (130-134); in the modern ecumenical debate on violence and non-violence outside and inside the World Council of Churches which allows only exceptionally for limited and controlled counter-violence (134-145); and through recent Christian appeals and actions for peace, also in Africa (145-152).

In the second (153-167), Joseph Adero Ngala, Director of People for Peace in Africa (PPA) in Nairobi, Kenya, maintains that 'religion can only serve as an effective institution for peacemaking by forming rightly the consciences of its adherents' (154), as individuals and as groups. The first must do that by internalising a religion's beliefs and values; the second by socialisation (154-156). He delineates the methods and mechanisms of conscience formation by means of the psychological stability their cosmologies provide and through locating the self in a continuity of past, present and future (156-159). When discussing the role of religion in conflict and peace (159-162), he distinguishes between believers with a wrong conscience, with no conscience, and with a right conscience. The first justify violence perpetrated in the name of religion; the second are not able to do anything in the name of religion, be it good or bad; the third shun violence (159). Whereas 'peacemaking is a mandate for all Christians', the 'contemporary Church in Africa ... [has] failed in this effort almost entirely' (161), in part because the Bible and the Qur'an can be (ab)used for both hateful and peaceful purposes (161-162). He deplores that the social teaching of the churches has remained ineffective and that quite a number of churches, e.g. in Kenya, have become deeply involved in divisive party politics (162-166).

In the third (169-183), Yehiel Grenimann, past Chairperson of Rabbis for Human Rights (www.rhr.israel.net) at Jerusalem, surveys the 'largely negative' role of religion in the conflict over 'the land [of Israel]' between Jews and Palestinians. In his view, changes of attitudes are unlikely to come from the 'liberal peripheries of Judaism and Islam' but must come 'from the fanatics themselves' and 'from the very elements at the heart of the problem' (170-171), the issue of 'the land' (174-178). He sees glimmers of hope in that religious Jews and Muslims may find common ground in their critique of Western 'rampant materialism' and moral decadence; in the dialogue of apolitical liberal Jews with Muslims; in his own RHR, a coalition of some 100 rabbis 'struggling to impact on the public conscience'; two organisations in the Orthodox camp; and the Sefardi *Shas* party, which, however, abandoned its earlier stance on a possible territorial compromise (170-173). After a survey of Jewish 'theological passion for the land' and the intensely messianic hopes attached to it by uncompromising Orthodox nationalists

(176) because they believe that Jews are the chosen people of God (177-178), Grenimann proposes to emphasize *talmudic* teaching on the moral conditions of this covenant – keeping God’s commands, strict monotheism, no defilement of ‘the land’ by immoral behaviour – as the basis for a change of heart in the conflict and a hope for peace (178-182). But his hopes are dim and perhaps utopian, for ‘Judaism is not a pacifist tradition’ (181). Only in ‘some more distant future’ is there ‘room for cautious hope’. Meanwhile, ‘bloodshed and injustice continue’ (183).

In the fourth contribution (185-200), Ali Salman, an ISS graduate in development studies, investigates the ‘uneasy relationship between [...] Islam and human rights’, especially in Pakistan, by delineating points of cohesion and conflict between the two (185). Salman first uses Durkheim’s concept of ‘the sacred’ to forge an epistemological link, and point of cohesion, between religion and human rights that will find favour with Christians and Muslims. However, with the marginalisation of religion in the human rights discourse, a deep conflict was established between religion and human rights (185-187). Then he undoes three dichotomies: that religion is ‘collectivist’ and human rights ‘individualist’ – human rights are conditioned by duties and other restrictions; that human rights are ‘universal’ and religions ‘relative’ – dispensations have been granted and so the charter is not universally applied;²⁹ and that in Islam human rights should be replaced with its system of responsibilities: Salman argues that the two cannot be interchanged, for the duties of Muslims are towards Allah and fellowmen; they are no rights of the individual human person. The latter, moreover, are secular in nature, which is fortunate, for that allows Indian Muslims to appeal to them to urge their right to practise Islam in the predominantly Hindu society of India (187-192). He notes that Islamists tie human rights to the *shari’a* (192-193); that gender equality is likely to remain a bone of contention in Muslim societies for the foreseeable future (193-194); but also that neither secularism nor religion can be identified as either guarantor or oppressor in the practice of human rights (194-195). In his case study of Pakistan (195-199), he argues that the public order provides the state of Pakistan with a legitimate reason for declaring Ahmadis non-Muslims by law. This discrimination, as well as the exclusion of non-Muslims from high offices and the law on blasphemy, are offset by the abolition of the separate electoral systems for Muslims and non-Muslims in 2002 (195-197). If religions, by and large, teach tolerance, cultures usually do not, as the order by a village court in Pakistan that a girl be gang-raped for the alleged sexual crime of her twelve-year old brother, ‘honour-killings’ (two a day in Pakistan!), and other examples show. The weakness of the rule of law is the main impediment to the protection of human rights in Pakistan (197-199). Due to the universalist claims on behalf of human rights, the tension between them and Islam is inherent and permanent. Its advocates should not forget that they a 20th century phenomenon born from the devastations wrought on Western societies by the Western secular totalitarian ideologies of Nazism, Fascism and Marxism (192, 200).

In part III (201-295), three efforts at peace building by religions have been collected. The first two are localised and Christian; the third is Buddhist and global. Benny Giay discusses the history of West Papua (204-206); Indonesia’s use of development ideology to destroy West Papuan culture and identity (206-208); the human rights violations since 1990 (209-213); the role of the churches (213-218); and the initiatives to

²⁹ He adds that Muslims states forward the wrong arguments for not applying it, e.g. the Muslim religious rule against apostasy in stead of the demands of e.g. the public order.

convert Papua into a peace zone by Marthen Tanawane, so far unsuccessful because the Indonesian government and army refuse to get involved (218-223).

Maria Lorenza Palm-Dalupan discusses the positions of the RC Church and the Muslim community in the Philippines (227-230), details its complex history of religious violence (230-238), and the leading role of the 'religious sector' in the peace process through advocacy and constituency building; institution building; empowerment of the BECs (Basic Ecclesial Communities); the declaration of peace zones in areas torn by guerrilla warfare; interfaith dialogue at several levels; and mediation (238-267). She recommends that the justice sought in conciliation should be restorative rather than retributive and lead to structural reform that undoes historical inequities (270-271).

In the third contribution, Thanh-dam Truong seeks to illustrate how Buddhism may add a spiritual dimension to the debate on human security in the 21st century through 'interparadigmatic learning on ethics, rights and human interaction' (276). She argues that the Western, 'compartmentalised' view of human security, that ignores the role of religion in violence, must be complemented by an Eastern emphasis on its systemic interconnectedness with not only good governance and the rule of law, but also with economic (in)security and migration in a global political economy. The 'ontological insecurity' globalisation produces through the de- and re-traditionalisations that question self-identities is in need of a spiritual dimension by it being collectively protected and enhanced by the virtues of compassion, patience, modesty and respect for others. If these are absent, human rights cannot function (277-284). She proposes that 'ontological security' be found through the fourth, global 'vehicle' of Buddhism, *Lokayana*, in which socially constructed identities are renounced and which accepts that there can be a diversity of means to spirituality and peace (285). She divides human minds into those that are 'wholesome', that are 'neutral', and that are 'unwholesome'. The latter are 'guided by conceptual errors', 'misdirection of perception', and the inability 'to grasp the principle of interbeing', i.e. are full of *tanha*, 'craving'. They may be transformed into 'wholesome' by the practice of Buddhist meditation 'on the ethics of restraint, virtue and compassion' (286). The harm (*karma*) 'unwholesome minds' produce they may undo through the fountain of compassion, *prajna*, 'penetrating insight' (into the interconnectedness of all life forms) (287-288). 'Ontological security' is derived from perceiving oneself in relation to others as others (290). She concludes with an agenda 'towards a compassionate human security' (290-294).

In part IV (297-369), eleven important documents, drafted by secular as well as religious bodies, are presented in their historical order, from 1948 to 2003.

Appreciation

In the Brill tradition, this book has been beautifully produced and is a pleasure to read. It is also a paperback and so not superexpensive, as are bound Brill books, though still outside the range affordable to African university libraries. Co-publishing with African, Latin American and Asian publishers should remedy this.

The purpose of this volume is to highlight religion's potentialities as a bridge to peace. Actually, it is impressive, and disheartening, as an analysis of the power of religion to generate conflict, and of its history as a war machine, though the devastations wrought by secular ideologies surpass those by religion. But as a demonstration how religion has been, and will be, effective in conflict resolution, the book is weak. It is then utopian, at times messianic, and prescriptive rather than descriptive, full of 'if', 'when',

'can', 'might' and 'should'. If believers or the churches would opt to follow the 'right path' – the liberal-theological, elitist, enlightened one of tolerance and dialogue –, then they will generate peace. This is particularly so for the contributions by Gopin (43-56), Ngala (159-167) and Truong, but marks also the 'visions for peace' by Muzaffar (72-79), Grenimann (182), and Giay (223-224). The only article to show that 'intolerant' religion has itself a distinct contribution to make to conflict resolution by addressing – be it indirect – its roots through symbolic contestation (94-96, 9-103, 109-113) is that of Miguez. His is the most important contribution to this volume.

Despite this criticism, this book should be read and discussed critically by many scholars of religions, also those of Africa. But for scholars of religions in Africa, the price is, I fear, prohibitive.

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