

## Africa and the Future of Christianity: Pre-Christendom Faith in a Post-Christendom World

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*There is a natural assumption that maps offer objective depictions of the world. The message of this book is that they do not, and that the innumerable ways in which they do not, serve to place maps as central and significant products of their parent cultures.<sup>1</sup>*

*For [post-Columbus] cartographers, maps became ephemera, repeatedly redrawn to new information. The sea monsters and ornamental flourishes disappeared to make way for new landmasses of increasingly accurate shape.<sup>2</sup>*

*A people is defined and unified not by blood but by shared memory.... Deciding to remember, and what to remember, is how we decide who we are.<sup>3</sup>*

### A. Africa as *terra incognita* – Christian maps and the invisible continent<sup>4</sup>



Among the better-known medieval maps is the Hereford Mappa Mundi, c.1300 (above), a striking example of historical and theological projection onto an image of the physical world.<sup>5</sup>

The map provides an abundance of European and Mediterranean detail, and is congested with familiar towns and cities from Edinburgh and Oxford to Rome and Antioch. It is onto this familiar terrain that all of the significant historical and theological events are projected –

the fall of man, the crucifixion, and the apocalypse. As for the rest of the world, the greater part of Africa and Asia blurs into margins featuring elaborately grotesque illustrations of prevailing myths and savage demonic forces.<sup>6</sup>

The Catalan World Map almost two centuries later was likewise more revealing of European ignorance than of actual geography.<sup>7</sup> “The strangest geographical feature,” Whitfield notes, “is the shape of Africa: at the extremity of



the Gulf of Guinea, a river or strait connects the Atlantic with the Indian Ocean, while a huge land-mass swells to fill the base of the map. No place-names appear on it...<sup>8</sup>

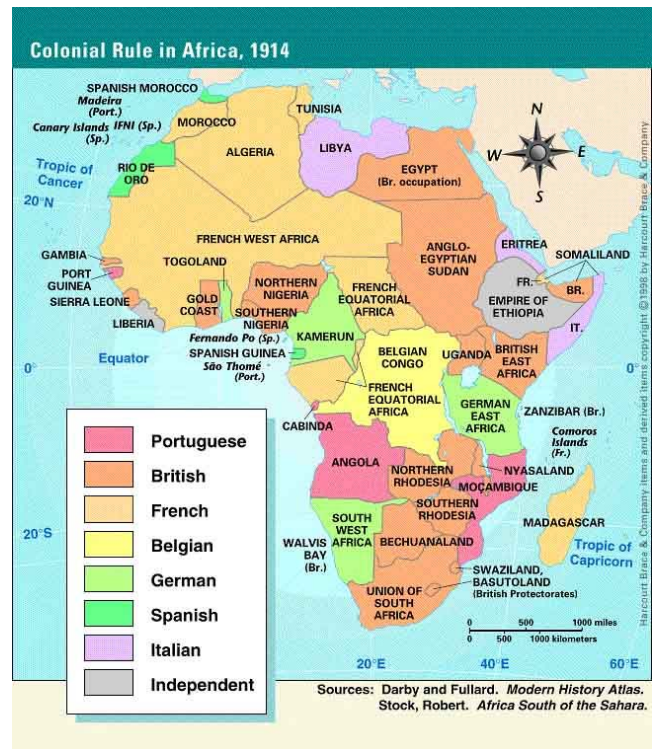
The continent is replete with dog-headed kings, and paradise is located in Ethiopia. Beyond the gates of Europe, the laws of God and nature were apparently suspended, and anything was possible. This map represented, in Whitfield’s words, “a powerful, dramatic but not a logical, coherent picture of the world.”<sup>9</sup> Drawn by Abraham Crepques, the map below depicts Mansa Musa, King of Mali from 1312–1337, holding a giant gold nugget as he is approached by a camel-mounted merchant.<sup>10</sup>



While considerable cartographic clarity has since been achieved by geographers and ethnographers, ecclesiastical “maps”, on the other hand, continue to badly misrepresent, under-represent, or simply ignore the actual state of affairs in much of the world, especially Africa. We are prone to silly generalizations about Africa, forgetting that it is geographically huge (next page), culturally complex, and linguistically diverse. The sheer immensity of the continent is belied by its projections onto our consciousness by maps such as the Gall Projection, where it assumes modest proportions, seemingly smaller than North America, its surface intersected with neatly drawn borders demarking fifty-three discrete nation states, six of these islands.

These trace their boundaries to a Berlin Conference in 1884 when—with nary an African present—European powers neatly carved up the entire continent among themselves (below).<sup>11</sup> The simplicity of the European scheme obscured *then*,

and acerbates *now*, more complex cultural, linguistic, and topographic realities on the ground.



This most polyglot of all continents—home to some 2,100 “mother tongues”—is notorious for its “vampire” states, savage civil wars, overwhelming pandemics, rickety civil, transportation, and communication infrastructures, and intractable poverty. Africa—in the words of Robert Guest, Africa editor of the *Economist* magazine—is *The Shackled Continent* (Smithsonian Books 2004). Despite decades of prodigious “development” efforts fueled by close to \$600 billion in aid since the 1960s, living conditions across the continent continue to decline. Of the forty countries at the bottom of the World Bank’s 174-nation human development index (HDI), 33 are African, with an estimated income per person less than 2 per cent that of Americans. With 20 percent of the world’s population, Africa generates something over 1 percent of its gross national product.

While the intersecting legacies of slavery, colonialism, and globalization tell part of the story, many of Africa's wounds—some say most of them—are self-inflicted. Exploited and





colonized by Arab and European outsiders who extracted as much as they could before moving on, the continent continues to be victimized by home-grown political predators whose kleptocratic rule, excessive self-indulgence, dysfunctional economic policies, pathological violence, and sheer incompetence have ensured that Africa is more impoverished today than it was fifty years ago.

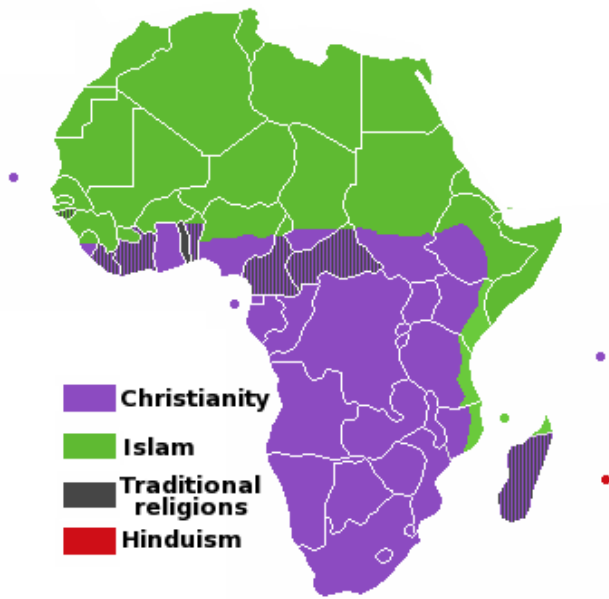
To popular Western consciousness, modern Africa is not far removed from Joseph Conrad's 1902 *Heart of Darkness*. What is seldom noted in the depressingly predictable reports and images from which we construct our understanding of the continent is the presence of its burgeoning Christian countercultures—churches and denominations that serve as oases of integrity and harbingers of hope—at their best, the antithesis of much that is wrong with Africa.

Among the most astonishing religious phenomena of the twentieth century has been the growth of Christianity in Africa. As Lamin Sanneh recently observed, “Muslims in 1900 outnumbered Christians by a ratio of nearly 4:1, with some 34.5 million, or 32 percent of the population. In 1962 when Africa had largely slipped out of colonial control, there were about 60 million Christians, with Muslims at about 145 million. Of the

Christians, 23 million were Protestants and 27 million were Catholics. The remaining 10 million were Coptic and Ethiopian Orthodox.”<sup>12</sup> Fifty years later, the number of Christians in Africa had multiplied by six to more than 423 million, to become the religion of a majority of Africans south of the Sahara.<sup>13</sup> Between 1900 and 2000, the Catholic population in Africa increased a phenomenal 6,708 per cent, from 1,909,812 to 130,018,400. Catholic membership has increased 708 per cent over the last fifty years.<sup>14</sup>

The religious scene in Africa is bewildering for most Westerners. Although a majority of Africans today regard themselves as “Christian,” standard definitions are hard pressed to accommodate on-the-ground realities. Frequently, comfortably established old Christendom formulations and practices have been displaced by much that is unfamiliar and even shocking. Scholarly observers such as Harold Turner, David Barrett, Bengt Sundkler, Kwame Bediako, and Marthinus Daneel have been pioneer chroniclers of the phenomenon variously referred to as *African Independent Churches*, *African Initiated Churches* or *African Instituted Churches*. Acronymically known as AICs, these unique expressions of Christian faith and life can be disconcertingly *pre-enlightenment* in their worldviews and *pre-Christendom* in their theologies. While churches elsewhere tend to stress Christology and individual salvation, the emphasis in AICs tends to be on the Holy Spirit and community. And the Holy Spirit is not simply some kind of ethereal sanctifier, but the power of God who heals, delivers, and persuades.

AIC names only hint at a religious epistemology and ontology more reminiscent of fourth century Edessa than of twenty-first century Geneva. Thousands of denominations not found in New Haven, their membership often numbering in the millions, include Propheying and Evangelizing Daughters of God, Celestial Church of Christ, Redeemed Christian Church of God, Church of the Lord Aladura, Sweet Heart Church of the Clouds, Musama Disco Christo Church, Spiritual Healing Church, Church of Christ on



Earth by the Prophet Simon Kimbangu, Church of the Cherubim and Seraphim, Ethiopian Christian Church in Zion, Holy Five Mission, Patmose Church, Star Gospel Church, and so on it goes.<sup>15</sup>

David Barrett first drew attention to the emergence and explosive profusion of AICs in his groundbreaking book, *Schism and Renewal in Africa: An Analysis of Six Thousand Contemporary Religious Movements* (OUP 1968). Matthew Ajuoga—an Anglican clergymen excommunicated by a missionary bishop in 1957 because of his affiliation with what the established church dismissed as ‘a bunch of disgruntled nut cases’—is today chairman of the Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC), an Africa-wide confession linking 92 national councils of independent churches, by conservative estimates now 85 millions strong.

Furthermore, while African countries currently host nearly 96,000 foreign missionaries, an estimated 18,400 African missionaries themselves served abroad in 2007.<sup>16</sup> Just how many African evangelists, catechists and missionaries are at work within their own countries is difficult to estimate, suffice to say that by all appearances, evangelistic and church-related organizations might possibly be the continent’s number one “growth industry.”

By Barrett’s estimates, there were some 247,000 Christian congregations across the entire continent in 1970. Twenty five years later, that

number had grown to an estimated 552,000 congregations in 11,500 denominations, a vast majority of which are completely unknown in the West, and whose ecclesiastical and theological roots skirt completely the story of European Christendom and its various reformations. Many of these churches are thoroughly pre-Christendom in their impulses, behavior, and beliefs. Of course many of them are “charismatic” or “Pentecostal,”—but not necessarily in any of the conventional Western understandings of such terms. On the whole, churches throughout Africa—even at times the Roman Catholic Church—may be said to be *evangelical*, insofar as they meet three of the four criteria posited by Bebbington in his groundbreaking study of evangelicalism: they are *conversionist*, *bibliocentric*, and *activist*. But while Western Christianities have tended to be *Christocentric*, much of African Christianity is *Pneumacentric*.

It is both surprising and troubling, then, that the most recent attempts by mainline church historians to help seminarians and church leaders locate themselves and find their way in the terra firma of contemporary world Christianity take scarcely any note of Africa. In 2002, for example, Westminster John Knox Press published Randall Balmer’s 654-page *Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism*. The author of this volume, far from apologizing for his conspicuous lack of reference to African or any other non-Western subject matter, “readily acknowledges” in his Preface that “the volume is weighted heavily toward North America.”<sup>17</sup> Africa is represented by a token smattering of Western mission agencies such as the Africa Inland Mission.

Equally unsatisfactory is the *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals*, published in late 2003.<sup>18</sup> This 789-page cornucopia of information on evangelical figures from the 1730s to the present indeed “brims with interest while providing reliable historical information,” as the inside flyleaf attests, yet only a single black African—Samuel Adjai Crowther—merits inclusion. “Geographically,” the Introduction explains, “the scope is the English-speaking

world, understood in its traditional sense as the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. A few figures from non-English speaking countries have also been included if their ministries or reputations made a significant impact upon English-speaking evangelicals.... [but] In general,” the editor continues, “my goal has been to include those figures that would be of interest to scholars, ministers, ordinands, students and others interested in the history of evangelicalism.”<sup>19</sup>

Since cartographic studies are as much the *cause* as the *result* of history, continued reliance on such antiquated maps ensures the ongoing confusion of Christian guides attempting to locate themselves and their protégés ecclesiastically. Thus, despite the very modest results accruing from the prodigious efforts of nineteenth century missionaries like David Livingstone, Robert Moffat, Mary Slessor, and C. T. Studd, these names are household words today. Contrarily, while Christian numerical growth in Africa has burgeoned from an estimated eight or nine millions in 1900 to some 471 millions in 2010,<sup>20</sup> scarcely anything is known about the persons chiefly responsible for this astonishing growth: African catechists and evangelists.<sup>21</sup>

That such a state of affairs should persist in spite of world Christianity’s quantum demographical, spiritual and intellectual shift from the North to the South and from the West to the East is partially explained by Andrew Walls in his 1991 essay, “Structural Problems in Mission Studies.” Despite the global transformation of Christianity, Walls notes, not only do Western syllabuses fail to adequately register this phenomenon, but they

“... have often been taken over in the Southern continents, as though they had some sort of universal status. Now they are out-of-date even for Western Christians. As a result, a large number of conventionally trained ministers have neither the intellectual materials nor even the outline knowledge for understanding the church as she is.”<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore, Walls reminds readers in the same essay, just as the implications of discoveries in other fields were resisted by those whose personally or institutionally vested conventional interests were threatened—one thinks of establishment reaction to such pathfinders as Copernicus or Louis Pasteur, for example—so today, Western Christendom’s dawning awareness that her old strength is gone, and that her once vitality is ebbing inexorably away is

“... intellectually threatening, requiring the abandonment of too many certainties, the acquisition of too many new ideas and skills, the modification of too many maxims, the sudden irrelevance of too many accepted authorities. It was [and is] easier to ignore them and carry on with the old intellectual maps (and often the old geographical ones too), even while accepting the fact of the discovery and profiting from the economic effects.”<sup>23</sup>

But this troubling lacuna in the existing reference corpus is also partially due to an absence of basic reference tools providing convenient access to non-Western Christian data that instructors, desperate to keep pace with ordinary teaching demands, require.

In a recent article appearing in the July/August 2010 issue of *Discover Magazine*, David Freedman examined the impact of what scientists refer to as “The Streetlight Effect” on medical and scientific theory and practice. “Researchers tend to look for answers where the looking is good, rather than where the answers are likely to be hiding”, he observed, just like the old drunk who was found on his hands and knees crawling around under a street light. Asked by a policeman what he was doing, he said that he was looking for his keys. “Are you sure this is where you lost them”, the policeman asked? “I lost them on the other side of the street,” the man replied. “Then why are you looking for them here” queried the puzzled officer? “Because”, responded the

man impatiently, “the light is better here. There is a streetlight.”<sup>1</sup>

The *streetlight effect* has its analogue in the study of church history. The difficulty of researching outside the beam of the streetlight—where Christianity is growing most rapidly and where theologies are proliferating as the Bible is brought to bear on questions and issues never anticipated by either its authors or its emissaries—is tedious, time consuming, and sometimes frustrating, so scholars go to the places where the streetlights shine: university and mission libraries, archives and materials in Western lands. And they produce more or less predictable Christendom and neo-Christendom histories and theologies. There is, of course, nothing wrong with such histories, except that they no longer tell the story of the global church. That story can only be found elsewhere, beyond the reassuring beam of the streetlight.

To return to our map analogy, since the new maps have not been created, the old maps must serve. The story of the church in Africa thus remains mere desiderata—a footnote to the story of European tribes—the religious expression of the West’s 500-year ascent to world military, economic and social hegemony. Africa remains *terra incognita*, a blur on the margins of world Christianity’s self-understanding.

Since the greatest surge in the history of Christianity occurred in Africa over the past one hundred years, and continues its breathtaking

trajectory into the twenty-first century, it is both disappointing and alarming that yet another generation of Christian leaders, scholars and their protégés, relying upon existing, “up-to-date” reference sources, will learn virtually nothing of this remarkable phenomenon, or of the men and women who served and who serve as the movement’s catalysts. Africa remains “the dark continent,” not due to an absence of light, but because the lenses through which the Christian religious academy peers are opaque, rendering Africa invisible.

From time to time, of course, well-meaning efforts are made to bring African Christianity into Western scholarly consciousness, but these are essentially desultory, marketing novelties, with no scholarly traction.<sup>24</sup> Given the realities of world Christianity in A.D. 2008, such scholarly tools and their perpetuation constitute disappointing proof that “Africa and Asia and Latin America and the Pacific and the Caribbean—now major centers of Christianity—are under represented in works that are meant to cover the entire field of Christian knowledge.”<sup>25</sup>

The editors of these otherwise useful reference tools are not entirely to blame for their failure to include African subjects. The fact is, information on Africa’s Christian founding fathers and mothers is often simply not *available*, and such information as *is* available is often *inaccessible* to any but the most intrepid and assiduous researcher.

Why this should be so is not surprising, given the challenges associated with documenting the lives of persons who, even if literate, leave scarcely any paper trail.<sup>26</sup> But it compounds the troubling tendency of the global Christian reference corpus to perpetuate the illusion of the West as the axis upon which the Christian world revolves. To the notion that it is otherwise, ecclesiastical cartographers today seem as impervious to the factual verities as was the Catholic Church to the once radically new—but correct—cosmology of Copernicus. The fact is, there *are* no base-line reference tools to which one



might turn for information on those whose lives and activities have produced in Africa a Christian revolution unprecedented in the history of our globe.

### **B. Ecclesiastical *terra incognita* and *The Dictionary of African Christian Biography***

From August 31 to September 2 of 1995, a scholarly consultation of modest proportions was sponsored by the Research Enablement Program (funded by Pew Charitable Trusts) and hosted by the Overseas Ministries Study Center in New Haven. It was convened to discuss the need for an *International Dictionary of Non-Western Christian Biography. Volume I: Africa, or An Oral History Christian Biography Register for Africa*. The official announcement issued by participants at the conclusion of consultation summarized the *raison d'être* and *modus operandi* of the envisaged *Dictionary*:

*A team of international scholars is planning a Dictionary of African Christian Biography. While the 20<sup>th</sup>-century growth and character of Christianity in Africa is without historical precedent, information on the major creative and innovative local figures most vitally involved is virtually absent from the standard scholarly reference works.*

*The Dictionary will cover the whole field of African Christianity from earliest times to the present and over the entire continent. Broadly inter-confessional, historically descriptive, and exploiting the full range of oral and written records, the Dictionary will be simultaneously produced electronically in English, French and Portuguese.*

*The Dictionary will not only stimulate local data gathering and input, but as a non-proprietary electronic database it will constitute a uniquely dynamic way to maintain, amend, expand, access and disseminate information vital to an under-*

*standing of African Christianity. Being non-proprietary, it will be possible for material within it to be freely reproduced locally in printed form. Being electronic, the material will be simultaneously accessible to readers around the world.*

*Contributors will be drawn from academic, church and mission communities in Africa and elsewhere. The Dictionary will not only fill important gaps in the current scholarly corpus, but will inform, challenge and enrich both church and academy by virtue of its dynamic and internationally collaborative character.<sup>27</sup>*

The prescience of this announcement has been born out by subsequent developments, for the enterprise has crept steadily forward since then, so that as of this writing some 173 research institutions, seminaries, and university departments in twenty African countries have formally joined the effort to produce a base-line, biographical memory base by formally identifying themselves as *DACB* Participating Institutions. Of these, 21 are active, and the rest are deemed inactive because they have not contributed stories in the past three years.<sup>28</sup> It is hoped that by 2012 an additional one hundred African educational and research institutions will officially join in the task of researching and recording the stories of their continent's Church fathers and mothers.<sup>29</sup>

### **C. The Contours of the *Dictionary***

**Chronologically**, the *Dictionary* spans twenty centuries of Christian faith on the African continent, thus counteracting the notion that Christianity in Africa is little more than the religious accretion of 19th and 20th century European influence. "Christianity in Africa," Fr. John Baur aptly reminds his readers, "is not a recent happening, nor it is a by-product of colonialism—its roots go back to the very time of the Apostles."<sup>30</sup> A significant proportion of the database features subjects who lived and died prior to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Some 378 names have been associated with the "Ancient Church" section



of the database, while some 160 of the over 500 subjects associated with “Ethiopia” lived prior to the twelfth century, as did a majority of the 226 Coptic subjects identified as Egyptian.

**Ecclesiastically**, likewise, since Christian expression in Africa does not readily lend itself to standard Euro-American tests of orthodoxy, the *Dictionary* aims at inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness.<sup>31</sup> As is customarily the case with encyclopedic works of any kind, exclusion is the prerogative of the user. Thus, for example, key figures associated with such heterodox organizations as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints or the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, as well as those in sometimes highly-controversial African-initiated churches, are included on the basis of their *self-definition* as Christians.<sup>32</sup>

**Inclusion criteria** are as broad and as flexible as possible. In general, those persons deemed at local, regional, national or denominational levels to have made a significant contribution to African Christianity, and whose stories are indispensable to an understanding of the church as it is, will be included. While main entries are generally restricted to subjects who are African either by birth or by immigration, non-African subjects such as foreign missionaries, whose contributions to African church history are regarded by Africans themselves to have been significant, are also included. Similarly, while a majority of the subjects will be confessed Christians, some non-Christians are included, if they are deemed to have played a direct and significant role in the regional or national development of Christianity.

**Linguistically**, dictionary entries now appear in English, with growing numbers of stories in French, Portuguese, and Swahili. The plan is for the database to be freely available in the four languages most broadly understood in those parts of Africa where the Christian presence is most notable. Since the material is non-proprietary, there is nothing to prevent a research institute, academic department or enterprising

individual from translating the stories into any language, but the intention is to receive stories in any one of these five working languages, and to have each story translated into the other four languages.<sup>33</sup>

A **data collection template** has been designed to ensure a measure of uniformity in the cognitive fields around which the details of each subject’s life are arranged.<sup>34</sup> Insofar as such data as birth dates are actually available, these are included. Otherwise, an attempt is made to link the birth of a subject to a particular period or an auspicious event. Wherever possible, published as well as oral sources of information are utilized. While documentation can pose a serious challenge, the standards commonly employed by those working in the field of oral history are utilized.<sup>35</sup>

The database is comprised of **two levels of information**: one, the *Dictionary* itself, is accessible on-line and on CD-ROM; the other, the *Dictionary's* working database, is accessible only to the editors. The former contains information on figures who, if not deceased, are advanced in years; while the latter stores information on still active subjects who are likely to merit inclusion in the database eventually.

The **choice and arrangement of African subject names** has always been a peculiar challenge, as Norbert C. Brockman points out in the foreword to his earlier *An African Biographical Dictionary*: “Names have symbolic and even descriptive meanings among many African groups, and a person may be known by several names, not to mention a wide variety of spellings.... The order of names familiar in the West is not always used, nor are ‘family names’ a universal custom in Africa.”<sup>36</sup>

But in the case of the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, this problem is ameliorated by the nature of the tool itself. Being an electronic database, *Dictionary* CD-ROM users are able to access the information in a variety of ways, including any of the subject’s names,



ecclesiastical affiliations, countries of residence and citizenship, languages, ethnic group, and so on. Similarly, the problem of evolving and changing country or region nomenclature is resolved by the medium itself, enabling one to access, say, the life of a first century subject by searching by name, by country (Egypt), or by category (Ancient Church). For those accessing the *Dictionary* on the World Wide Web, the process is even more efficient. Simply asking Google to search the name of the biographical subject—say, for example, Biru Dubalä, or Hakalla Amale, or Lydia Mengwelune—will take the browser, usually directly, to the story in the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*.

#### D. The Dictionary's *Modus Operandi*<sup>37</sup>

The database now contains more than 2,000 discrete biographies—a majority of these in English. An additional 930 English, French, and Portuguese biographies are in some stage of a process that will eventually incorporate them into the *Dictionary*. Approximately 3,100 additional names have been identified as potential subjects. There are alternative biographies of a number of subjects, representing the distinctive orientations of the contributors.

The project's **data collection network** is not hierarchical but lateral—a kind of 'spider's web', with the *DACB* office in New Haven as the nexus for as many data collection centers as might emerge. The web already extends to numerous points across Africa, as indicated earlier. The information is organized and written in conformity to standard *DACB* guidelines which are available in print or as downloadable PDF documents.<sup>38</sup> Duly designated liaison coordinators then send these stories either directly to the coordinating office in New Haven, or to one of four *DACB* offices in Ghana, Zambia, South Africa, and Nigeria.<sup>39</sup> The New Haven office is responsible for entering the stories into the database.

Both the legitimacy of the subject and the accuracy of the story are safeguarded by associating the names of the participating

institution, the liaison coordinator, and the author with each biographical entry. Once each year, participating institutions receive the updated CD-ROM version of the dictionary, whose contents can be freely used—with attribution—in the preparation of syllabi, supplementary readings, or booklets. No restriction is placed on making copies of the CD-ROM.

Biographical subjects are identified on the basis of their perceived local, regional, national, continental or denominational significance. No subject is excluded if, in the opinion of communities of local believers, his or her contribution is deemed singular. In addition, printed materials of all kinds—church and mission archives, church histories, mission histories, denominational histories, doctoral and masters' theses, in-house denominational and mission society magazines, as well as existing reference tools and biographical dictionaries—are routinely culled with a view to discovering the identities and stories of key African Christians.

#### E. Publication and Distribution

The *Dictionary* is fundamentally a web-based resource, although it is also distributed as a CD-ROM in its annually updated form to all African participating institutions. The advantages of electronic publishing are such that academic publications and reference works now routinely appear in digital form. This was the burden of an article by the director of Yale University's Center for Advanced Instructional Media nearly a decade ago, considering the organizational and technical implications of publishing on the World Wide Web:

Look what has happened to encyclopedias: sales of the digital CD-ROM versions have surpassed paper versions this year, and at the current rate, there may not be any paper encyclopedias in production two years from now (collectors take note). The cost advantages of Internet publishing or publishing

on CD-ROM are so great that the capital-starved, price-sensitive world of academic books and professional journal publishing will become primarily digital and networked long before the mainstream publishing giants convert most of their back lists to digital formats.<sup>40</sup>

But as an African proverb wryly observes, “the darkest place in the house is beneath the candle,” for another, darker side to the rosy inevitability of electronic publishing was likewise identified a decade ago. Information available only in digital form it can quickly find itself rendered passé, prisoner to a technology that is both expensive and doomed to rapid obsolescence. This point was eloquently made by Jeff Rothenberg, a senior computer scientist in the social department of the RAND corporation in Santa Monica, California:

Although digital information is theoretically invulnerable to the ravages of time, the physical media on which it is stored are far from eternal.... The contents of most digital media evaporate long before words written on high-quality paper. They often become obsolete even sooner, as media are superseded by new, incompatible formats – how many readers remember eight-inch floppy disks? It is only slightly facetious to say that digital information lasts forever – or five years, whichever comes first.<sup>41</sup>

Rothenberg goes on to remind readers that digital information requires sophisticated, expensive, and rapidly evolving hardware and software for its storage and retrieval.

If we need to view a complex document as its author viewed it, we have little choice but to run the software that generated it.

What chance will my grandchildren have of finding that software 50 years from now? If I include a copy of the program on the CD, they must still find the operating system that allows the program to run on some computer. Storing a copy of the operating system on the CD may help, but the computer hardware required to run it will have long since become obsolete. What kind of digital Rosetta Stone can I leave to provide the key to understanding the contents of my disk?<sup>42</sup>

Twenty-two centuries after its composition, the Rosetta Stone, he notes, is still readable; Shakespeare's first printed edition of Sonnet 18 (1609) is still legible nearly four hundred years later; digital media, on the other hand, becomes virtually unreadable within a decade. It is for reasons such as this that consideration is being given to producing a printed version of the dictionary, in abridged and rigorously edited form, to be distributed to all participating institutions sometime after 2012.

From the very beginning, the *DACB* has maintained that publishing rights should be freely granted to churches, denominations, national or international publishers wishing to produce a printed version of the entire electronic database or printed versions of any portion of the database deemed useful to them. Were the *Dictionary* to be conceived as a proprietary, profit-making venture, it is doubtful whether it could gain significant Africa-wide circulation. Purchasing such a database would be out of the question for most Africans, making their stories unavailable to Africans themselves. The cost of producing and distributing the *Dictionary* in its annually updated, non-proprietary CD-ROM form is borne by the project management office in New Haven.<sup>43</sup>

Awareness of the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* continues to grow as it is

increasingly utilized by instructors who require their students to get into the habit of using the database for their African Church History assignments. As virtually the only central source of information on African Christian biography, the *DACB* Web site is experiencing a modest but steadily growing volume of traffic, as the table below indicates:

<i>DACB</i> Web Site Traffic 2010	Daily Average Page Views	Daily Unique Visitors
January	2383	617
February	2023	670
March	2241	678
April	2157	647
May	2383	702
June	1839	639
July	2102	592
August	2891	642
September 8	2169	

The *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* has also become a modest stimulus for similar data gathering initiatives elsewhere. The Centre for the Study of Christianity in Asia (Trinity College, Singapore) is using the *DACB* as a model to produce an Asian Christian biographical database, as are The Don Bosco Centre in Shillong, India, and the Trinity Methodist Church in Selangor Dural Ehsan, Malaysia.

In September of 2003, I was notified that an editorial team comprised of members of the Contextual Theology Department of the Union Biblical Seminary and coordinated by Dr. Jacob Thomas, supported by an all-India Council of Advisors, had likewise embarked on a biographical project modeled after the *DACB*, but focusing on the Indian sub-continent. “The inspiration for this project,” reads the public announcement, “comes from ... the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* ([DACB@OMSC.org](mailto:DACB@OMSC.org)). The *DICB* project is

grateful for the partnership by which there is mutual encouragement and sharing of relevant ideas.”

The *DACB* also sparked the *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity (BDCC)*, playing a key consulting role in the consortia of church leaders and historians that serve on its board, and serving as project incubator while the managing director, Dr. Yading Li, spent two years getting the on-line memory base up and running.<sup>44</sup> This English-language database is now flourishing.

For several years now *Encyclopedia Britannica* has provided a link to the *DACB* website. On February 16, 2009, we received this heartening note from this venerable and highly respected source of reliable information on virtually every conceivable subject:

Hello.

Congratulations!

I’m writing with good news:

Your website, [http://www.dacb.org/stories/rwanda/kagame\\_alexis.html](http://www.dacb.org/stories/rwanda/kagame_alexis.html), has been selected by the editors here at *Encyclopaedia Britannica* as a Britannica iGuide site.

The Britannica iGuide is basically our directory of the Web’s best sites as determined by our editors. Each year, our editors review and then handpick websites that relate to one or more of our topics and are found to be of top quality. We then present links to these iGuide sites alongside our own content for that topic.

This means that when one of our members searches on a topic within our online encyclopedia that is also relevant to your site, we not only present Britannica information, but also provide a link to <http://www.dacb.org/stories/rwanda/kag>

[ame\\_alexis.html](#) for that topic. If you wish, you can promote the Britannica iGuide “Web’s Best Sites” recognition on your website by downloading a small iGuide button from [Britannica iGuide information page](#).

Thank you, and please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

J.C. Miller  
Director of Content Management<sup>45</sup>

To have the *DACB* so acknowledged is, of course, heartening news. In a similar vein just a week before (February 9) I had received an email from Steven Niven at Harvard University, soliciting our cooperation in the *Dictionary of African Biography* (DAB) to be published by the Oxford University Press in 2011.<sup>46</sup> “I am very impressed by your project and your website,” he wrote, and then proceeded to propose ways in which the two projects could collaborate.

On May 19, 2010, I received this encouraging email—typical of other similar offers of collaboration—from Professor Wendy Laura Belche, Department of Comparative Literature & Center for African American Studies at Princeton University:

Dear Jonathan J. Bonk,

I was perusing your excellent online *Dictionary of Christian Biography* today for references to Ethiopian women saints. I saw that you were missing quite a few saints and I thought I would send along the attachment listing over 200 indigenous saints and their biographies by Kinefe-Rige Zelleke. I imagine that Knife would have to be contacted, and perhaps the reason you don’t have any of his list posted is because he has not given permission, but just in case, here it is. I’ve given it to you in pdf and Word.

Sincerely,

Wendy Laura Belche  
Princeton University

## F. Current Initiatives Concerning the Future of the *DACB*

As I contemplate my own retirement in several years, I hope that the enterprise can find a home in Africa before I ride off into the sunset. I am in conversation with Dr. M. Douglas Carew, Vice Chancellor of the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology, who took part in the Christianity and African Society workshop hosted by OMSC from March.25 to 27, 2010.

NEGST, a premiere Protestant graduate school of theology in eastern Africa, is one of four constituent colleges comprising the newly chartered African International University. The *DACB* would most naturally affiliate with the Institute for the Study of African Realities.<sup>47</sup>

Work is now well underway to create a parallel *DACBopedia*, functioning along the lines of the Wikipedia. The growing list of potential subjects—now tallying more than 3,000 names—whose stories have yet to be told are being placed in an online registry. Persons who have some information on the subject would be invited to register and contribute what they know. Ongoing tests of the prototype are encouraging, and it is expected that the website will be fully functional early in 2011.

Among the ongoing challenges facing the *Dictionary*, an obvious one is the unevenness of its country, language, and denominational content. It is readily evident that while the numbers of stories in English are relatively plentiful, other-language entries still lag far behind.<sup>48</sup> This is due to neither oversight nor neglect, but to the linguistic limitations of the principals involved, to logistical and financial realities, and to the fact that the *Dictionary* reflects only those stories that have been submitted. Not *DACB* facilitators in



New Haven, but participating institutions and their duly designated liaison coordinators in Africa, are the key to selecting, researching and writing entries for the dictionary.

Added to this is the somewhat uneven quality of the stories. Anyone browsing the *DACB* will at once be struck by the patchiness of both the quality and consistency of the nearly one thousand biographies that currently make up the database. Some of the stories are a mere one or two sentences in length, while others run to several thousand words. While scholarly exactitude mark some of the entries, a large number have been contributed by persons who are neither scholars nor historians. But since this is a first generation memory base; and since the stories are non-proprietary, belonging to the people of Africa as a whole; and since, finally, it is assumed that *some* memory is better than *total amnesia*, the inchoate quality of some of the entries is to be expected, tolerated and even welcomed. This being an initial attempt to ensure that there is some kind of memory to which African Church historians and church leaders of subsequent generations will have access, it will remain for later generations to redress the weaknesses and deficiencies inherent in the present dictionary.<sup>49</sup>

There is also a cluster of questions relating to Africa and the Internet. The *DACB* exists as both a CD-ROM and as a web-based resource. The CD-ROM version is essential since, while many African educational and research institutions have access to computers, a relatively small proportion of them have reliable and affordable access to the worldwide web. But while African Internet users outside of South Africa are relatively few, the potential of the Internet in Africa is, according to the authors of an article in a 2002 issue of *Carnegie Reporter*, “staggering.”<sup>50</sup> The most recent data indicate that as of June 2008, there were 51,065,630 internet users in Africa, with 5.3% penetration rate.<sup>51</sup>

The stone scrapers and blades of our Paleolithic forbears, deemed to be functionally deficient in our age, were nevertheless the survival

tools of another. It is inevitable that any early tool should, by the standards of a later generation, be regarded as primitive and somewhat unsatisfactory. But lest this truism stifle the creative process, the reminder that it is often just such inadequacies that spark disgruntled users to develop better ones is reassuring.

The *DACB*'s approach to subject selection and story research, writing and publication is predicated upon the active cooperation of African participating institutions. Annual *DACB*-related trips to Africa since 1999 have taken me to scores of universities, seminaries, and research centers in Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Malawi, Uganda, Zambia, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa and Namibia. Ms. Michele Sigg, the project manager, is presently in the middle of a two-week junket to Rwanda and Uganda, where she will take part in a week-long oral history workshop cosponsored by the *Dictionary*. Such workshops have been conducted in Nigeria, Mozambique, Madagascar, Kenya, Zambia, and PDR Congo. These workshops have attracted university professors, seminary instructors and academic researchers from scores of African countries. Increasing numbers of African churches and academic institutions are cooperating by encouraging their members and students to research and produce the raw narratives for the enrichment of the database as a resource. Finally, the *DACB* is actively cooperating with the International Association of Mission Studies to circulate an archives manual designed specifically for non-Western institutions.<sup>52</sup>

Every effort is made to encourage incorporation of biographical research and writing assignments into the syllabi of appropriate university or seminary courses, utilizing the standards provided by the *DACB*.

### **G. Conclusion: Africa and the future of Christianity.**

It is clear that the Christian faith—albeit not the kind shaped and proscribed within the cocoon of either old Christendom or neo-Christendom

(USA)—has found a home in Africa, and that this church includes the raised-from-the-dead taxi driver in Lagos, the low flying witch in Cote d'Ivoire who crash lands on the roof of a church, the devout Hadiya teenager in Ethiopia who is kidnapped to become the third wife of a polygamist desperate for sons, becoming the catalyst for the conversion of an entire people, the Anglican bishop whose rapidly growing diocese in Western Tanzania struggles with the fact that education is available only for those willing to convert to Islam and give their children Muslim names, and the Orthodox Abuna whose 1,600-year-old church has more than survived all external attempts to destroy or subvert it.

What role will Africa play in the future of world Christianity? Demographic trends alone suggest that the future of Christianity does not lie in its old heartlands. There, and to a lesser extent here in neo-Christendom, Christianity has shriveled into a wrinkled, impotent vestige of its former self. Demographically, its fertility rates are well below that required for population replacement.

Christian proselytizing activity from the West peaked and then began to wane in the twentieth century. The Euro-American missionary movement was itself inseparable from a five-hundred-year global phenomenon referred to by Andrew Walls as the "Great European Migration.... [in which] first hundreds and then thousands and eventually millions of people left Europe for the lands beyond Europe. Some went under compulsion, as refugees, indentured laborers, or convicts, some under their conditions of employment as soldiers or officials, some from lust of wealth or power. Most, however, were simply seeking a better life or a more just society than they found in Europe."<sup>53</sup>

The missionary movement from the West, Walls goes on to observe, "... was always a semi-detached part of the Migration.... [arising] among the radicals of Christendom, and ... [remaining] the sphere of the radicals, the enthusiasts, people usually of minor significance in the church, rarely

the holders of ecclesiastical power or the leaders of ecclesiastical thought."<sup>54</sup> Today, Christianity is the major religion in Africa, and indeed, in the world. While it is no longer a *Western* religion, it is still the religion of a substantial proportion of the world's dislocated populations—many of them African. These figure no more prominently today than did their European predecessors against the prevailing standards of ecclesiastical or economic or political significance.

Whatever the particulars of its unique contributions turn out to be, it is clear that Africa has a distinctive and growing place in Christian history. Yet many parts of the African Christian story are too little known, not least within Africa itself, and in Western Christian consciousness still, the continent continues to be regarded as a forbidding and dangerous mass, known chiefly for its capacity to generate the stuff of which newspaper profits are assured: rampant corruption, political dysfunction, recurring famine, and genocidal civil wars. A parallel and more significant reality, comprised of a richly diverse and thriving range of Christian congregations whose churches serve as centers of human normalcy, integrity and hope, escapes notice.

Maverick economist E. F. Schumacher once stood on a street corner in Leningrad, trying to get his bearings from a map provided for him by his Russian hosts. He was confused, because while there was some correspondence between what the map registered and what he could see with his own eyes (e.g., the names of parks, intersecting streets, etc.), several enormous churches looming in front of him were nowhere indicated on his map. Coming to his assistance, his guide pointed out that while the map did indeed include some churches (pointing to one on the map), that was because they were actually museums. Those that were not museums were not shown. "It is only the 'living churches' we don't show," he explained.<sup>55</sup>

The *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, the fruit of inter-African and international cooperation, is offered as a modest

first step in bringing our ecclesiastical maps up to date.

<sup>1</sup> Peter Whitfield, *The Image of the World: 20 Centuries of World Maps* (San Francisco: Pomegranate Artbooks in association with the British Library, 1994), p. viii.

<sup>2</sup> David S. Landes, *The Wealth and the Poverty of Nations: Why Some are so Rich and Some are so Poor* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), p. 99.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Pinsky, "Poetry and American Memory," *The Atlantic Online* (October 1999), URL: <http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/99oct/9910pinsky.htm>

<sup>4</sup> An earlier abbreviated version of this material appeared in *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XXVII, No. 1 (January 1999), pp. 71–83, under the title, "The Dictionary of African Christian Biography: A Proposal for Revising Ecclesiastical Maps." An updated version was then published in the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (October 2004), pp. 153–158. The essay, once again updated and considerably expanded next appeared in *History in Africa*, Vol. 32 (2005), pp. 117–132 as "Ecclesiastical Cartography and the Problem of Africa." Another somewhat variant version of the article has been published this year in *Christianity in Africa and the African Diaspora: The Appropriation of a Shattered Heritage*, a volume edited by Afe Adogame, Roswith Gerloff and Klaus Hock (London, UK: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008), Pp. 20–32. Finally, parts of this paper appeared in "Africa Unbound", *Christianity Today* (November 2007), pp. 47–51. The Dictionary's URL is: [www.dacb.org](http://www.dacb.org).

<sup>5</sup> URL [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Hereford\\_Mappa\\_Mundi\\_detail\\_Britain.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Hereford_Mappa_Mundi_detail_Britain.jpg)

<sup>6</sup> Peter Whitfield, *The Image of the World*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>7</sup> URL <http://www.henry-davis.com/MAPS/LMimages/246.jpg>

<sup>8</sup> Whitfield, *The Image of the World*, p. 26.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> From the 1375 Catalan Atlas. [http://www.sfusd.k12.ca.us/schwwww/sch618/Travelers/Islamic\\_Travelers\\_and\\_Mapm.html](http://www.sfusd.k12.ca.us/schwwww/sch618/Travelers/Islamic_Travelers_and_Mapm.html)

<sup>11</sup> See the URL: [www.sc4geography.net/.../berlin.html](http://www.sc4geography.net/.../berlin.html)

<sup>12</sup> Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2003), p. 16.

<sup>13</sup> See "Profiles of the 270 largest of the 10,000 distinct religions worldwide," in *The World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comprehensive Survey of Church and Religions in the Modern World*, ed. David B. Barrett, George T. Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), vol. 2, pp. 3–12. Every January, the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* publishes

annually updated statistical tables on world Christianity. See David B. Barrett, Todd M. Johnson, and Peter F. Crossing, "Missiometrics 2008: Reality Checks for Christian World Communion," in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (January 2008), pp. 27–30.

<sup>14</sup> Bryan T. Froehle and Mary L. Gautier, *Global Catholicism: Portrait of a World Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> *Missionalia* provides a partial register of distinctively African denominational names, see the URL:

<http://www.geocities.com/missionalia/aic.htm> The bewildering profusion of new denominations in Africa is typified in the partial listing of churches in Lesotho appearing on pp. 944–949 of Craig W. Hincks; massive *Quest for Peace: An Ecumenical History of the Church in Lesotho* (Moriya, Lesotho: The Heads of Churches in Lesotho and The Christian Council of Lesotho, 2009).

<sup>16</sup> David B. Barrett, Todd M. Johnson, and Peter F. Crossing, "Missiometrics 2007: Creating Your Own Analysis of Global Data," in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (January 2007), pp. 25–32.

<sup>17</sup> Randall Balmer, *Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism* (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), p. vii. Balmer is the Ann Whitney Olin Professor of American Religion at Barnard College, Columbia University.

<sup>18</sup> Timothy Larsen, editor, with consulting editors D. W. Bebbington and Mark A. Noll, and organizing editor Steve Carter, *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals* (Leicester, UK, and Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

<sup>19</sup> Larsen, et al., *Biographical Dictionary*, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Todd M. Johnson, David B. Barrett and Peter F. Crossing, "Christianity 2010: A View from the new *Atlas of Global Christianity*", *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (January 2010), p. 36..

<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth A. Isichei, *History of Christianity in Africa: From Antiquity to the Present* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, and Lawrenceville: Africa World Press, 1995), pp. 98-99). It is only recently that the compilers of standard reference works have begun to include African subjects. *The New Westminster Dictionary of Church History*, volume I of which focuses on *The Early, Medieval, and Reformation Eras*, promises to include figures from the great continent. Volume I of *The Westminster Dictionary* is edited by Robert Benedetto and published by Westminster John Knox Press, 2008.

<sup>22</sup> Andrew F Walls, "Structural Problems in Mission Studies." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (October 1991), p. 147.

<sup>23</sup> Walls, "Structural Problems . . .," p. 150.

<sup>24</sup> One example is *Christian History*, Issue 79, Vol. XXII, No. 3 (September 2003). The subtitle of this 48-page issue

is: “The African Apostles: The untold stories of the black evangelists who converted their continent.” Information on the journal is available online at [www.christianhistory.net](http://www.christianhistory.net).

<sup>25</sup> Andrew F. Walls, “Structural Problems . . .,” p. 151.

<sup>26</sup> Even a figure as significant as William Wadé Harris, hailed in 1926 as ‘Africa’s most successful evangelist’ in consequence of his astounding impact upon the establishing of the Christian faith among the peoples of the Ivory Coast “... left no writings except half-a-dozen short dictated messages . . .” See David A. Shank, “The Legacy of William Wadé Harris,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (October 1986), p. 170.

<sup>27</sup> The consultation, hosted by the Overseas Ministries Study Center in New Haven, Connecticut, was underwritten by the Pew Charitable Trusts’ Research Enablement Program (REP).

<sup>28</sup> URL: [http://www.dacb.org/particip\\_inst.html](http://www.dacb.org/particip_inst.html)

<sup>29</sup> As of this writing, active participating institutions include the following:

Archbishop Janani Luwum Theological College  
Babcock University  
Bishop Allison Theological College  
Catholic Diocese of Warri and Diocese of Benin City  
Centre National des Archives FJKM  
Centre de Formation Biblique de Sarh  
Centre of African Christian Studies  
Christ International Divinity College (CINDICO)  
Evangelical Theological Seminary, Cairo  
Faculté de Théologie Évangélique du Cameroun  
Global South Institute at Uganda Christian University  
Good News Theological College and Seminary  
Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology  
Ndejje University  
Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary  
Teofilo Kisanji University  
University of Ibadan  
Université Chrétienne de Kinshasa  
University of Johannesburg  
University of Port Harcourt

<sup>30</sup> John Bauer, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 1994), p. 17.

<sup>31</sup> As Professor J. F. Ade Ajayi (former vice-chancellor of the University of Lagos) observed in a personal letter dated April 9, 1998, the issue of just who is and who is not a “Christian” is not always so clear cut in Africa as it is in some parts of the world. He mentioned as an example a well-educated woman, a devout Christian, “who moved from the Christ Apostolic Church to Jehovah Witness without necessarily realizing that she had thereby lost her initial focus on Christ.” It seems better to err on the side of inclusion rather than exclusion, allowing end users to exercise their own judgment regarding the appropriateness or inappropriateness of subjects.

<sup>32</sup> A. F. Walls identifies six persisting continuities within the varied emphases characteristic of Christianity across time: (1) worship of the God of Israel; (2) the ultimate significance of Jesus Nazareth; (3) the activity of God where Christians are; (4) Christian membership in a community which transcends time and space; (5) use of a common body of Scriptures; and (6) the special uses of bread, wine and water. In instances where a subject's ecclesiastical orthodoxy might be doubtful, these criteria will be employed. See Andrew F. Walls, “Conversion and Christian Continuity,” *Mission Focus*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (1990), pp. 17-21.

<sup>33</sup> Since professional translation costs are prohibitive, the rendering of all biographical entries into the five stipulated languages must be voluntary – perhaps undertaken by religious studies or history departments.

<sup>34</sup> These simple guidelines have gradually evolved into *Dictionary of African Christian Biography: An Instructional Manual for Researchers and Writers* (New Haven: *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, 2004), an 84-page booklet that elaborates the essential techniques of oral history as well as providing examples of a range of stories already appearing in the dictionary. This booklet is available in Swahili—*Kamusi Ya Wasifu wa Wakristo wa Kifika: Kijitabu cha Maelezo kwa Watafiti na Waandishi*; French—*Dictionnaire Biographique des Chrétiens d’Afrique: Manuel d’instructions pour chercheurs et rédacteurs*; and Portuguese—*Dicionário de Biografias Cristãs da África: Manual de Instruções para Pesquisadores e Autores*. See the URL: <http://www.dacb.org/guidelines-writers.html>

<sup>35</sup> While there are no major problems in academia with research into oral tradition, a number of standard, common-sense guidelines need to be observed: (1) Oral data needs to be collected openly in an open forum where it can be challenged or augmented; (2) what it told to the researcher must be told and repeated to others in the same area for cross-checking; (3) oral traditions may provide a variety of points-of-view on the subject; (4) oral tradition will be used to augment written sources, and vice-versa. One of the advantages of an electronic database over a published volume is the possibility of including a field for unsubstantiated complimentary (or even contradictory) anecdotes relating to the subject. Such anecdotal information provides texture and depth-of-insight into the subject, or at least into peoples’ perceptions of the subject.

<sup>36</sup> Norbert C. Brockman, *An African Biographical Dictionary* (Santa Barbara, Denver and Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 1994). Brockman’s dictionary “... provides sketches for 549 prominent sub-Saharan Africans from all periods of history” (p. vii).

<sup>37</sup> Failure to secure a grant in the early stages of the enterprise was fortuitous, although it meant that the project has necessarily evolved more slowly than originally envisioned. Instead of being whisked to its destination in a



Mercedes Benz, the *Dictionary* has trudged its way slowly but steadily on foot. Walking requires more effort than does being a passenger, to be sure, but the three-mile-an-hour pace is more conducive to contact with fellow pedestrians, and the requisite exercise ensures that it will be better shape when it gets to where it is going. And because the dictionary is not money-driven but idea-driven, it truly belongs to Africa and Africans. Its stories are the result of African ingenuity and enterprise, rather than a questionable byproduct of foreign funds.

<sup>38</sup> See the URL: <http://www.dacb.org/resources.html>

<sup>39</sup> The *DACB* initially explored setting up an Arabic language coordination office in conjunction with the Global Institute South at Uganda Christian University, but now anticipates locating the facility in Khartoum – the heart of Christian Arabic-speaking Africa.

<sup>40</sup> Patrick J. Lynch, “Publishing on the World Wide Web: Organization and Design,” *Syllabus*, Vol. 8, No. 9 (1995), p. 9.

<sup>41</sup> Jeff Rothenberg, “Ensuring the Longevity of Digital Documents,” *Scientific American*, Vol. 272, No. 1 (1995), p. 42. According to the National Media Lab ([www.nml.org](http://www.nml.org)), “CD-ROMs have a certified lifetime of 10 years.... [while] magnetic tape is good for 5 to 20 years, conventional CDs up to 50 years, and archival microfilm for 200 years. The longevity champ.... [is] acid-free paper... [which] should last for 500 years.” Furthermore, “Print ... avoids what University of Michigan data expert John Gray calls ‘the problem of unstable technology’—the likelihood that media will outlive the devices that can read them.” See Stephen H. Wildstrom, “Bulletin Board: Data Life Span,” *Business Week* (June 17, 1996), p. 22.

<sup>42</sup> Rothenberg, “Ensuring the Longevity of Digital Documents,” p. 45. Stuart Lipoff’s response to a query (appearing in the November 13, 2003 issue of on-line edition of *Scientific American*) regarding the life expectancy of a CD-ROM is pertinent here:

[http://www.sciam.com/askexpert\\_question.cfm?](http://www.sciam.com/askexpert_question.cfm?)

<sup>43</sup> Assistance is sometimes provided by groups with special interest in certain segments of the African Church. For example, the Church Missions Publishing Company (Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut) provided a modest one-time grant to cover the cost of making available to all ANITEPAM-related institutions a copy of the CD-ROM version of the *DACB*, together with a copy of the *DACB Procedural Manual* referred to in note 26 above.

<sup>44</sup> The *DACB News Link* (Issue No. 5, Fall 2006) carried a report by Professor Yading Li, “Introducing the *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity*. See the URL: <http://www.bdconline.net/en>

<sup>45</sup> From: Miller, J.C. [<mailto:JCMiller@eb.com>]  
Sent: Monday, February 16, 2009 12:42 PM  
To: 'DACB@OMSC.org'

Subject: Your site has been selected by Britannica's editors as a Web's Best Site.

<sup>46</sup>The Editors in Chief of this project are Dr. Henry Louis Gates and Dr. Emmanuel K. Akyeampong (W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research, Harvard University). “In the spirit of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, the *American National Biography*, and the *African American National Biography*, all three published by Oxford University Press, the DAB will be a major biographical dictionary covering the lives and legacies of notable African men and women from all eras and walks of life. This groundbreaking resource will tell the full story of the African continent through the lives of its people. The Encyclopedia is intended for scholars, college and university students, high school students, and general readers.

<sup>47</sup> ISAR <http://www.africanrealitiesinstitute.com/>

<sup>49</sup> Some of the stories that have been submitted are entirely inadequate. In November of 2003, for example, of some fifty stories received from Nigeria, only five or six were usable. The rest had to be returned for further work. Such experience has resulted in a more robustly directive procedural manual that anticipates the inadequacies in scholarship and documentation that are to be expected from researchers who frequently lack even the most meager formal training in research and writing.

<sup>50</sup> See Daniel Akst and Mike Jensen, “Africa goes Online,” in *Carnegie Reporter*, Vol. 1, No 2 (Spring 2001), pp. 3–9. [[http://www.Carnegie.org/reporter/02/Africa/index\\_low.htm](http://www.Carnegie.org/reporter/02/Africa/index_low.htm)]. *World Press Review* (February 2004, pp. 22-25) carried three reports on the U.N. World Summit on the Information society convened in December 2003, “aimed at democratizing the digital world.” 174 countries pledged universal internet access by 2015, but the challenges associated with financing the technology and ensuring the free flow of information are daunting. See also Milinda B. Robins and Robert L. Hilliard, eds., *Beyond Boundaries: Cyberspace in Africa* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2002). For the “first and most comprehensive assessment of the networked readiness of countries,” see *The global information technology report 2002-2003: readiness for the networked world*, edited by Soumitra Dutta, Bruno Lanvin, Fiona Paua (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). The report is published by the World Economic Forum where it is a special project within the framework of the Global Competitiveness Programme. The *GITR* is the result of collaboration between the World Economic Forum and INSEAD, France. It is 355 pages in length, and can be viewed online at: [[www.oup-usa.org/reports](http://www.oup-usa.org/reports)]. Chapter six (by Mike Jensen) is entitled “ICT in Africa: A Status Report” (pp. 86–100).

<sup>51</sup> This compares with 248,241,969 users in North America, and a penetration rate of 73.6%. These figures are from the

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Internet World Stats Web site:

<http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm>

<sup>52</sup> Martha Lund Smalley and Rosemary Seton, compilers, *Rescuing the Memory of our Peoples: Archives Manual* (New Haven: IAMS, 2003). Copies of the manual, in English or French, are available for \$10.00 U.S. from: OMSC, 490 Prospect Street, New Haven, CT 06511). A free PDF version of the manual—in English, French, Portuguese, Swahili, Mandarin, Spanish, and Korean—can be downloaded from YDS, OMSC, and IAMS Web sites. See the URL: <http://www.omsc.org/Links.htm>

<sup>53</sup> Andrew F. Walls, “Christian Mission in a Five-hundred-year Context”, in Andrew Walls and Cathy Ross, eds., *Mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), p. 193.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>55</sup> E. F. Schumacher, *A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1977), p. 1.