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Beyond Christendom:
African Migration and Transformations
in Global Christianity

We live on a religious planet. Our world is as inundated by religious novelty, flux, and dynamism as it has ever been; and the rate of religious upsurge appears to be intensifying. These observations are less contested today by Western intellectuals than, say, three decades ago when the secularisation thesis appeared to have almost unassailable influence. In its classic form this thesis – propounded by a relatively small group of very powerful western intelligentsia (mainly Europeans) extrapolating from an assessment of trends in Western Europe and North America – maintained that modernisation and the inexorable spread of scientific rationality will inevitably cause an irreversible decline in religious belief and practice (at both the institutional and the individual level) throughout the world. Fulfilment of this prediction never really entered the realms of possibility in non-Western societies. More importantly, its most vigorous critics, many of whom are former advocates, have declared its falsification even in the case of the Western world.[1]

Perversely, from a secular rationalist point of view, it is precisely those religious movements that refuse to adapt to secularism that are growing the fastest. Far from undermining religious beliefs, the global spread of economic and social modernisation has actually triggered 'a global revival of religion' on every continent (Huntington, 1996: 97). There are strong indications that Islamism increases with modernisation. Certainly, Islamic fundamentalist movements have been strong in the more advanced and seemingly more secular Muslim societies, such as Algeria, Iran, Egypt, Lebanon, and Tunisia.[2] Christianity, also, is experiencing explosive growth in non-Western societies, often in contexts of abject poverty, but also drawing considerable stimulus from increased middle-class participation. Folk religion and traditional faiths are also thriving in rapidly Western-

ising Asian countries like Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Malaysia (Stark and Finke, 2000: 75f.). In truth, all the major religions – Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism – are resurgent and have all produced renewal movements. Clearly, the gods have not retired in the face of scientific modernity.

This article focuses on the potential impact of migrant movement on the fortunes and configuration of global Christianity in coming decades. The processes of globalisation – in particular, the unprecedented magnitude of transregional people movement and the speeding up of global interactions through the development of worldwide systems of transport and communication – continue to have a profound impact on both religious upsurge and a heightened awareness of its pervasiveness. Far less obvious and little examined, perhaps, is the fact that migration movement has always been a prime factor in religious expansion and that current patterns of migration will potentially have an incalculable impact on religious interactions in the course of the twenty-first century.

In the case of global Christianity, two issues potentially cloud analysis. The first has to do with the nature and reality of Christianity's decline in its erstwhile heartlands, Europe and North America; the second, which we will examine later in the paper, relates to an enduring perception of Christian mission as a function of empire (at least of economic and political dominance).

CHRISTIANITY IN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA

It is now a commonplace that in the last five decades or so massive and profound demographic shifts have taken place within global Christianity which have falsified the traditional notion that it is a Western religion. The statistical data is bandied about with sufficient frequency to make the details of the case tedious. Ultimately, however, the fact of a dramatic shift in global Christianity's centre of gravity is axiomatic. Currently, more than two of every three Christians (65–70 per cent) live outside the West, compared to less than 10 per cent two centuries ago. By 2025, according to one estimate, Africa and Latin America together will account for more than 50 per cent of the world total (Brierley, 2001: 14). Philip Jenkins, in *The Next Christendom*, notes simply that 'the era of Western Christianity has passed within our lifetimes, and the day of Southern Christianity is dawning' and that by 2050, only about one-fifth of the world's Christians will be white Caucasian (2002: 2, 3).

Meanwhile, studies indicate that church attendance in Europe and

North America has collapsed spectacularly and continues to dwindle at an estimated rate of 6,000 church members a day (Barrett *et al.*, 2001: 5). In April 2002, for instance, the governing body of the Church of Scotland declared that the church is losing 17,000 members a year and 'could cease to exist within 50 years unless urgent action is taken to curb falling membership' (Womersley, 2002: 4). In England, more Muslims are apparently attending a mosque every week than Anglicans are attending church. Such trends have invited the conclusion that Western Europe, the birthplace of most major Protestant faiths, has largely turned its back on the Christian faith (Reid, 2001: AO1). Scholarly analysis reveals a more variegated, but not substantially altered, picture. Weekly church attendance in Europe varies considerably from country to county, ranging from a high of 56.9 per cent in Ireland to a low of 2.7 per cent in Denmark, with a European average of 20.5 per cent (Davie, 2002: 6).

In America, where average church attendance has remained much higher – around 40 per cent – for over two centuries, the notion of American religious exceptionalism has long been taken for granted. This claim, however, has come under great scrutiny in recent years from sceptic sociologists and fervent Christians alike. More careful surveys indicate that Americans over-report their actual church attendance by a marked degree. Actual participation in organised forms of worship attendance is estimated to be closer to 24 per cent and 'falling slowly' (Putman, 2000: 65–79; Sine, 2000: 134). Indeed, some researchers now predict that if present trends continue, '60 per cent of all existing Christian congregations in America will disappear before the year 2050' (Gibbs and Coffey, 2002: 20; Miller, 1999: 161).[3]

Such dry statistics are often scorned or viewed with considerable suspicion by some scholars, particularly critics of the secularisation theory anxious to deflect claims that these trends fulfil the theory's central prediction. Quite obviously, the theory's prediction is not limited to Christianity, but encompasses all forms of religious life and expression. And it would take a lot more than sheer numerical decline in church membership or affiliation – aspects that are difficult to measure with absolute certainty – to satisfy the theory's core assumptions. Moreover, even though the general trend of Christian recession seems clear, enormous variations persist between denominations, regions, or countries, and even ethnic groups.

Grace Davie makes the crucial point that it is misleading to account for religious belief solely in terms of church attendance or institutional allegiance; in her words, 'an unwillingness to attend a religious institution

on a regular basis ... does not mean necessarily a parallel abdication in religious belief' (Davie, 2002: 41). From a different analytical starting-point, John Drane argues that it is the church which (captive to the world-view of modernity) has become secularised in a society that remains very spiritual (Drane, 2001: 59–61). Less compelling is the 'mythical age of faith' argument which asserts that 'claims about a major decline in religious participation in Europe are based in part on very exaggerated perceptions of past religiousness' (Stark, 1998: 17; Stark and Finke, 2000: 68). In my view, this argument misconceives the nature of Christian identity in societies where the reality of Christendom and principles of allegiance render regular church attendance a problematic index of faith commitment. It is noteworthy that low church attendance did not prevent participation in bloody religious wars that devastated much of Europe in the wake of the Protestant Reformations.[4]

Emerging trends in religious behaviour within Western societies remain enormously complex, and no conclusive assessment is intended here. But there are indications that the erosion of Christianity in the West, generally speaking, involves a massive depreciation not only of the church's privi-leged position in society but also of the ability of Christian institutions to influence individual lifestyles and values. Recently, the head of the Catholic Church in England and Wales declared that Christianity has been 'all but eliminated' as a source of moral guidance in people's lives.[5] In the United States, levels of overt Christian religiosity remain much higher. But it is telling that much of what passes as Christianity has been described as 'Christo-paganism', a form of civil religion blending patriotism, morality, materialism, contemporary wisdom, idolatry of culture, and so on (Hunter, 1992: 24). Precisely because Western societies once claimed the label 'Christian', the new reality is widely described as 'post-Christian'.

This combination of factors – precipitous decline in the West and phenomenal growth in the non-West – has transformed Christianity into a non-Western religion. It has also transformed the face of global Christianity into one of poverty and powerlessness (in geo-political terms), with profound implications for the nature of missionary enterprise or religious encounter. No evaluation of the future of global Christianity will make sense unless these factors are taken into account; and it is my strong conviction that migrant movement (in this case from the 'global South' to the industrial North) will play an increasingly decisive role in reshaping the Western religious landscape.

Already, Western societies are confronted with the growing presence of immigrants, the rise of new religious movements, and the challenge of

religious plurality. Davie, one of the few scholars who have taken this migrant factor into account, notes that

> at precisely the moment when the historic religions in Europe are losing control of both the belief systems and lifestyles of many modern Europeans, there ... arrive[d] in Europe representatives of religious communities from diverse (mostly pre-colonial) parts of the world whose religious lives are more tightly controlled ... than those of the average European. (Davie, 2002: 38f.)

In America, where the influx of immigrants is far greater, the religious impact is equally significant. It is most palpably evident within the Roman Catholic Church, which has been significantly boosted by Hispanic immigrants. In major cities throughout the country, immigrant religion is stimulating 'a remarkable and exuberant expansion of churches, mosques, Buddhist temples, and synagogues, many of them designed to serve growing orthodox populations and new immigrants' (Kotkin and Speicher, 2003: 35).

THE MIGRANT FACTOR

Migration has been a prime factor in the global spread of world religions, notably Islam and Christianity. Immigrants travel with their religion. It is central to their way of life and a crucial means of preserving identity as well as homeland connections. Even those who are casual about matters of religious devotion often renew or revive their religious commitment as a vital part of dealing with uprootedness and alienation. It is therefore of utmost significance that in recent decades international transfers of population and associated displacements have increased to unprecedented levels, fostering the claim that we are living in 'the age of migration' (Castles and Miller, 1998: 94–119).

The data on the number of international migrants in the world today inevitably involves educated guesses. By the early 1990s there were an estimated 17 million refugees and asylum-seekers in the world, 20 million internally displaced people, 30 million 'regular' migrants, and another 30 million migrants with an 'irregular status' (Ferris, 1993: 10). The combined total signifies a doubling of the global migrant population in the space of five years (Mittelman, 2000: 59). A more recent survey puts the number of migrants – defined as people who have lived outside their homeland for one year or more – at 150 million.[6]

International migrants are also unevenly spread across the globe. Sub-Saharan Africa, with an estimated 35 million migrants, has the largest

numbers of any continent (followed by Asia and the Middle East). For all the media hype surrounding migrants and refugees, the majority of them stay in the region of origin, and international migration movement is predominantly a South–South movement. That said, interregional transfers occur mainly from South to North, and it is conjectured that many movements that start as South–South transfers end up as South-to-North flows.

Undoubtedly, the widening economic gap between the highly industrialised countries of the North and the 'developing' or 'under-developed' countries of the South has transformed the former into a magnet for migrant movement. The overwhelming majority of contemporary international migrations are economically driven – though this was also true of the massive migrations of Europeans which accompanied the age of exploration and colonial expansion. Frustratingly for Western governments, the general trend towards increasing global interchange and communication is at odds with the amount of effort needed to control and provide surveillance of borders. They have erected ever higher barriers to stem this flow, but the impulses stimulating mass migration movement are often too strong for restrictions to be fully effective.

As mentioned earlier, the forces of globalisation shape contemporary migration in significant ways. This is particularly true of current patterns of migrant identity formation and assimilation. The common notion of immigrants as individuals who uproot themselves from their home country to start a completely new life in a new land is no longer valid in many cases. While contemporary migrants invest socially, economically, and politically in their new society, most continue to participate to some extent in the life of their society of origin (cf. Schiller, 1999: 94–119). This dynamic has led some scholars to argue that the contemporary phenomenon is best conceptualised in terms of 'transnational migration' or 'transmigration'. Transmigrants are often bilingual, able to lead dual lives, move easily between cultures, frequently maintain a home in two countries, and are incorporated as social actors in both (Portes, 1999: 29). They help to link the fate of distant communities.

MIGRATION AND CHRISTIAN EXPANSION

None of the other major religions has quite matched Christianity's expansionism and missionary mobilisation. Somewhat surprisingly, the critical role which migration has played in this process has received little attention in historical accounts. In a recently published article, however, Andrew Walls has provided a fascinating periscope of the links between

migration and mission in Christian history (2002b). The Old Testament, he points out, provides examples of every known form of migration – indeed, the book of Genesis might almost readily have been named the book of 'Migrations'. In his analysis, the biblical record, broadly speaking, presents two somewhat conflicting models of migration: the *Adamic* model, signifying disaster, deprivation, and loss, and the *Abrahamic* model, indicative of escape to a superlatively better future.

Walls indicates that because these two models often overlap it is difficult to provide a straightforward answer to the question of whether or not migrant movement is conducive to Christian expansion. He explains that from a historical perspective migrant movement has been a causative factor in both Christian advance and Christian decline. While migration has often and most conspicuously advanced the spread of the faith, it has also in notable instances inhibited or reversed Christian expansion. The latter experience is evident, for example, in the impact hordes of pagan or Muslim migrants had on pre-existing Christian communities in Europe and elsewhere.

I would argue, however, that migration movement which is inhibitive to Christian growth typically involves aggressive non-Christian groups. Except for instances where uprootedness or forced migration results from the actions of Christians, it is difficult to think of instances where Christian migrant movement has resulted in a decline of the Christian faith. In what follows, it is the link between Christian migrant movement and the spread of the Christian faith that provides the focus. My central argument is that Christianity is a migratory religion and migration movements have been a functional element in its expansion. Every missionary, as Walls correctly observes, is a migrant in some sense. But, even more importantly, every Christian migrant is a potential missionary.

From the outset, the spread of the gospel was linked to migrant networks. The very inception of the gentile mission – at least as intentional initiative – was marked by the actions of unnamed migrant refugees in Antioch (Acts 11: 19–20). In the centuries which immediately followed, the Christian faith spread mainly through kinship and commercial networks, migrant movements (some stimulated by persecution), and other informal means. The thousand years from AD 500 to AD 1500, which saw Christianity's entrenchment as the faith of Western Europe, were marked, writes Kenneth Latourette, 'by vast movements of peoples' (1970: 3). During this period also, a vast network of trade routes by land and sea provided a vital outlet for Christian migrant movement – traders as well as missionaries – which saw the emergence of Christian communities

across the Asian land mass and in South Arabia (Walls, 2002b: 6).

The end of this thousand-year period witnessed the beginning of that momentous migration of Europeans from the heartlands of Christianity to other parts of the world. From 1815 to 1914, the great century of Western missionary enterprise, up to 60 million Europeans left for the Americas, Oceania, East and South Africa. It is hardly an accident of history that this, the most remarkable of all migrations of mankind, coincided with the greatest Christian expansion of all time, culminating in an epochal transformation of global Christianity.

The Great Reversal: Understanding the Non-Western Missionary Movement

The Western Christian encounter with non-European peoples left a lasting legacy, but the forms of Christianity which now prevail in the non-Western world are largely shaped by indigenous factors (among these religious plurality and a primal spiritual universe) and contextual preoccupations.[7] This fact is of tremendous importance. The dramatic shift that has transformed global Christianity into a non-Western religion calls for radically new conceptual tools (including a new vocabulary)[8] and invites new missiological perspectives, not least because the missionary movement emerging out of non-Western societies is framed by radically different understandings and assumptions from those which characterised the earlier Western missionary movement. Unfortunately, the dominance of Western scholarship means that all too often Western concepts and theoretical assumptions are projected onto new realities, distorting images and befogging understanding.

A case in point is Philip Jenkins' critically acclaimed study, *The Next Christendom* (2002). In this study, Jenkins actually notes with refreshing candour that 'Northerners rarely give the South anything like the attention it deserves, [and] when they do notice it, they tend to project onto it their own familiar realities and desires' (2002: 13). He then goes on to fulfil his own assessment by providing an account that implicitly imprisons the study of the recent reconfigurations of global Christianity within a Western conceptual (theological) framework. By adopting the 'Christendom' construct for his analysis of the emerging Southern Christianities, Jenkins effectively makes the Western historical (Christian) experience a definitive template or roadmap for understanding the radically different phenomena and transformations unfolding in the non-Western world.

The propensity for such an approach to inhibit understanding as much

as to illuminate crucial insights must not be underestimated. In the Christendom construct, Christianity was defined in territorial terms and the church became identified with an entire society/nation. Inevitably, the faith became strongly associated with the structures of political power and dominance – the ruler was 'defender of the faith' – and coercion became an accepted means of regulating faith and securing its expansion. Christendom's overarching vision of religious unity also engendered complete intolerance of religious dissent (or religious plurality).

This Western Christendom ideal informed European missionary enterprise and provided the ideological framework for mission in the service of empire. But the 'Christendom' concept holds little value for understanding burgeoning non-Western Christianities.[9] With the possible exception of Latin American, where entire societies were incorporated into a single, monolithic, Iberian Catholicism, the European vision of a Christian nation was impossible to replicate in the vastly different and pluralistic contexts of non-Western societies. Moreover, the ideal itself was invalidated by Western missions and bankrupted by colonialism.[10]

Yet another element that inhibits a full assessment of the non-Western missionary movement is the enduring 'metropolitan' outlook of mission studies. This outlook favours a top-down view of history which emphasises Western actions and initiatives and perpetuates an understanding of mission that remains wedded to notions of Christendom and empire. Thus, even while many missiologists and Western missionary agencies acknowledge the southward shift of global Christianity's centre of gravity, they appear to be wrong-footed by it and by the revolutionary sea-change in world missions which has seen the upsurge of non-Western initiatives (structured and unstructured).

The Western missionary movement was an epoch-making event without which the current transformations in global Christianity would be inconceivable. For this reason it is terribly inconsistent to celebrate the vibrancy of non-Western Christianities while at the same time expressing profound regret for the movement that brought it about. Equally, self-indulgent contrition about the Western missionary enterprise implicitly devalues the non-Western Christian experience to which it is irrevocably linked. For all that, the entrenched notion of 'mission' as a one-directional, territorially distinctive enterprise remains one of the most problematic legacies of Western Christian missions. Allied with this legacy is the enduring perception that Christian mission enterprise is well nigh inconceivable without political and economic dominance (in other words, without *imperium*).

Consider the facts of the case. The term 'mission', in the sense of *sending* ecclesiastical agents to distant territories, was first used in the sixteenth century by Jesuits, whose activities outside Europe benefited from the powerful alliance forged between the (pre-Reformation) Roman Catholic Church and the expansionist-minded Iberian monarchies. Western Protestant missions were no different. With singular exceptions like the Moravians and Anabaptists, missionary effort went hand in hand with colonial expansion – admittedly in a very complex relationship. The fact that Britain was the world's premier missionary-sending nation from the early nineteenth to the early twentieth century had a lot to do with its status as the world's economic superpower. Similarly, American dominance replaced British pre-eminence in global mission enterprise (by the first World War), in large measure because the US, itself a colonial power, also succeeded Britain as the world's new superpower.[11]

In sum, the Western missionary movement, which lasted for well over 450 years, preserved the intimate association between missionary expansion and imperial dominance, and the European concept of 'mission' comes down to us packaged with strong ideological elements which countenance the projection of political power. Yet this powerful historical legacy has lost its cogency – notwithstanding the myth prevalent today in some sections of American evangelicalism that the projection of American powers is compatible with the spread of the gospel (Snider and Hickey, 2003: 10) and notwithstanding also the fact that some non-Western missionary initiatives ape and perpetuate Western missionary models. The case which will be made here is that while the non-Western missionary movement, broadly speaking, is inchoate and remains largely undocumented, it embodies radically distinctive elements and that the Western movement which preceded it provides a fairly limited basis or framework for analysis of its dynamic and possible impact.

To underscore the point, it is necessary to point out that missionary initiatives from the old heartlands of Europe and North America are arguably diminishing in significance. A major reversal (and diffusion) of missionary enterprise is underway, one significantly tied to the fact that the direction of global migratory flows is now primarily south to north and east to west, where it was once primarily north to south. Whereas, before 1925, 85 per cent of all international migrants originated from Europe, since 1960 Europe has contributed an increasingly small fraction of emigrants to world emigration flows as emigration from Africa, Asia, and Latin America has increased dramatically (Massey, 1999: 35). Once again, the possibilities for Christian expansion and migratory movement are

forcibly and intimately intertwined. The African element provides a prominent example.

AFRICAN MIGRATIONS AND THE RESHAPING
OF GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY

Few areas of the world demonstrate the recent dramatic shift within global Christianity more forcibly than Africa. For one thing, sub-Saharan Africa is held to be 'experiencing the fastest church growth of any region' in the world (Siewert and Valdez, 1997: 34). While much of this increase is surely linked to population growth, it is significant that the percentage of Christians grew from 9.2 per cent in 1900 to 45 per cent by 2000 (Jaffarian, 2000: 19). The *World Christian Encyclopedia* of 2001 also estimates that African Christians are increasing at a rate of 23,000 new Christians a day (or 8.5 million a year). Significantly, Africa is also a major source and centre of migrant flows. It has more migrants than any other continent and is home to about a third of the world's refugees and asylum seekers (Ferris, 1993: 94). It also generates significant outflows of intercontinental migrants not only to Western Europe, but also to North America and the Middle East. This movement from the new heartlands of Christianity to the old centres, where the faith is experiencing dramatic erosion and marginalisation, has critical implications for global Christian witness.

Predictably, South to North movements draw on established links between ex-colonies and ex-colonial states. In Britain, the European country with the longest ties to modern African Christianity, the establishment of African immigrant churches dates to the early 1920s and accelerated from the 1960s. In one estimate, these churches now account for up to 3,000 congregations (ter Haar, 1998: 92). African immigrant churches (AICs) are also mushrooming in unprecedented fashion throughout Europe, where the number of African Christians is thought to be in excess of three million (quoted in Gerloff, 2001: 277). From the 1980s, the volume of African migrants to Europe rose dramatically as, convulsed by escalating conflicts and crises, the continent spewed out a steady flow of economic refugees and asylum seekers.

African migration to the United States in any significant numbers is a more recent phenomenon. But here too the number of African immigrants is rising steadily – from 1 per cent of all legally admitted immigrants in the 1960s to 3 per cent by the 1990s. One observer notes that in sheer numbers 'more Africans are landing annually [in America] at the end of the 20th century than at any other time [even] during the height of the

slave trade' (Millman, 1997: 179). The vast majority come from English-
and French-speaking West Africa, with Nigerians forming the majority
(Arthur, 2000: 2; Millman, 1997: 179).

For the most part, this practically unstoppable South-to-North move-
ment incorporates both the *Adamic* and *Abrahamic* models of migration
that Walls identifies. In the African experience, however, these two models
overlap more often than not. Ferris rightly questions the commonplace
distinction between *migrants* (applied to those who 'choose' to go to
another country for primarily economic or personal reasons) and *refugees*
(applied to those 'forced' to leave their countries for primarily political
reasons). She stresses that 'the patterns of South–North migration make it
clear that most people leave their countries not because they want a *better*
job, but because they simply cannot survive at home' (Ferris, 1993: 10).

Two basic interconnected patterns of missionary engagement are
evident in the African Christian movement. The first can be termed
Abrahamic because it embodies predicament and promise and points to
spontaneous movement, usually by individuals. The second can be
described as *Macedonian*. This model draws on the biblical account (Acts
16: 9–10) of Paul's vision in which the apostle received a memorable plea
from a man of Macedonia, 'Come over ... and help us.' This latter model
embodies planned or structured official initiatives or responses, typically
involving institutions acting on a conviction that God has called them to
proclaim the gospel in a particular place.

A. The Abrahamic Model

Informal (mainly individual) initiatives are by far the most common and
yet the most difficult to track. These involve the movement of individual
African Christian migrants who, failing to find meaningful Christian
fellowship or avenues for ministry within Western churches, start bible
study groups or worship services in their homes in connection with other
Africans. Ever so often, such groups grow into vibrant, worshipping multi-
cultural communities or churches. The earliest such African initiative on
record is the establishment of the African Churches Mission in Liverpool
by Daniel Ekaete (from the Scottish Mission in Calabar, Nigeria) in 1922.
That singular example is now eclipsed by innumerable efforts.

Perhaps the most spectacular instance is that of the young Nigerian
pastor, Apostle Sunday Adelaja, who left his home country in 1986 (about
the age of twenty) to study journalism in the former Soviet Union. Much
later, he would describe his original move to Russia in terms of a divine
call which came in the form of an Abrahamic commission (Genesis 12: 1):

'Leave your country ... and go to a land I will show you' (Adelaja, 2004).[12] In Belarus, Adelaja became part of an underground church and embarked on an active Christian ministry which intensified with the fall of communism. He survived repeated clashes with KGB officials until his official deportation from Russia opened the way for a new life and ministry in Kyiv, Ukraine. There, in November 1993, he started a bible study group in his apartment with seven people. Within three months, and with only forty-nine members, he registered this body as a church, which later adopted the name Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for all Nations.

From the outset, Adelaja's vision was to establish a missionary church that would 'send missionaries into the world, especially into China and the Arab countries'. Conflicts with Ukrainian government authorities, including several attempted deportations and numerous lawsuits aimed at closing down the church, dogged the young pastor's steps. But over the next ten years the church grew spectacularly. By 2002, it had 20,000 members, making it the largest church in Europe – plans for a 50,000 capacity building are currently under way. It also established over 200 churches outside Ukraine in the countries of the former Soviet Union, the United States, United Arab Emirates, Israel, Germany, and Holland. Boasting numerous ministries (including soup kitchens and drug rehabilitation centres), radio and television programmes, and other forms of media production, the Embassy is now a significant presence in Kyiv. Over one million Ukrainians have reportedly been converted to Christianity as a result of its ministry.

The majority of African immigrant churches established in Europe and North America reflect the Abrahamic model. They originate as individual efforts, typically by students or others on long-term job-related assignments (like diplomatic service). As the Dutch scholar Gerrie ter Haar comments, 'Many African Christians who have recently migrated to Europe, generally to find work, consider that God has given them a unique opportunity to spread the good news among those who have gone astray' (ter Haar, 1998: 82; also 1995). My own research among African Christian leaders confirms a widespread consciousness among African Christians and churches that they have much to offer, in spiritual terms, to the materially prosperous, post-Christian West.

But not all African Christian migrants establish separate centres of worship. Countless thousands become members of, or take up ministry within, established denominations and churches where their presence or contribution influences styles of worship and witness, or contributes to spiritual renewal in some meaningful way. As Andrew Davey notes, the

mere fact of 'a diversity of cultures within a congregation often leads to fresh understandings of the ... practice of community as personal stories of migration and pilgrimage are retold against the backdrop of the biblical narrative' (1999: 386). In these and numerous other ways, beyond the scrutiny of scholarly assessment, African migrants represent change agents in the Western Christian landscape.

B. The Macedonian Model

This second form of (intercontinental) African missionary engagement involves official initiatives by churches or church-related ministries (rather than individuals) that are in response to perceived missionary need. The two patterns are strongly interrelated. Typically, it is the migration of individual members that provides the primary stimulus for international missionary efforts by African churches and ministries within, and certainly beyond, Africa itself. In effect, 'official initiatives' are usually prompted by, or dependent on, 'spontaneous movements'. The churches and ministries in question are almost invariably the new Pentecostal or Charismatic types (as opposed to the Western-mission established denominations). When 'mainline' denominations like the Ethiopian Orthodox Church establish churches in the West, the intention is usually less self-expansion than self-preservation. Others, like the Anglican or Methodist, focus on 'partnerships' which are limited to interactions among the ordained leadership.

Emerging in the 1970s, these Pentecostal/Charismatic movements (including a number of the older traditional Pentecostal churches which have reinvented themselves) draw a considerable portion of their membership from among the educated, the youth, and upwardly mobile groups – the type of people most likely to migrate.[13] Despite suggestions that they are essentially satellites (consumers and purveyors) of American Christian fundamentalist models, most are decidedly African in their leadership, ministry, theology, and worship. Most place supreme emphasis on personal faith and the 'power' of the gospel, not only to save, but also to heal, deliver, prosper, and transform the socio-political order. Their ministries reflect conscious appropriation of the implements of modernity (including advanced media and internet technologies) and great openness to global flows or networks. The most gifted among their leaders inevitably internationalise their ministries and often adopt a vision for the evangelisation of the West.

One such movement is the Ghana-based Church of Pentecost. Established in 1937 through the ministry of the Irish-born Rev. James McKeown

(originally of the Bradford Apostolic Church in Britain), Church of Pentecost began as a hugely grassroots movement. Today, it is the largest Protestant church in Ghana. It has modernised its operations without divesting itself completely of its lowly social heritage and now enjoys a worldwide presence, dating from the 1980s when Ghana's massive economic collapse triggered a diaspora movement. Strongly mission conscious – ordinary members are schooled in discipleship and effective ministry – its migrant members quickly founded new congregations in Western cities. The same members sent home for pastoral help as soon as inchoate bible study groups grew into solid worshipping communities.

Currently, with missions in forty-seven countries (nineteen outside Africa), the Church of Pentecost is spearheading one of the most dynamic missionary movements from and within Africa. In addition to providing pastoral assistance for the congregations established by its church members in the West, the church has officially commissioned and sent missionaries to Australia, South America, Asia, and the Far East. In the case of Australia, the first Church of Pentecost missionary was sent out (in 1998/9) with no contacts and a simple mandate – to familiarise himself with Australian life and win at least one family.[14] Within two months the missionary, Rev. Kwesi Ansah, had established two worshiping communities in Sydney and Melbourne. Two years later, there were seven Church of Pentecost churches in Australia: the main church in Sydney has about 160 worshippers.

The Church of Pentecost's main missionary strategy, consonant with a 'Macedonian' model, is to set up congregations headed by nationals (indispensable in countries like Italy, where Africans are viewed with resentment and disdain) and conform to local culture as closely as possible. This emphasis on the use of nationals means that not every initiative starts with an African. The story of James Raj is illustrative. In 1994, James S. Raj, an Indian, came to Ghana as a business executive for a pharmaceutical company and joined a Church of Pentecost assembly. After working in Ghana for three years, Raj went back to India as the church's ambassador. By 2002 there were twenty-two Church of Pentecost assemblies in India, with a total of 1,300 members. Some of these churches have organised their own outreach to Nepal.

MISSION STRATEGIES AND METHODS

One of the chief lessons of the history of Christian missions is that more often than not theoretical formulation and formal strategy lag behind actual missionary enterprise. The full extent to which this non-Western

missionary movement will break new ground in its vision, strategies, and even choice of scriptural texts (which will define its assumptions) remains to be seen. Questions about the assumptions, models, and even theology that will characterise the emerging non-Western missionary movement may not be fully answered for some time. But it is already evident that in its strategies, methods, and structures (or lack thereof), this non-Western missionary movement bears significant distinctions from the Western missionary movement that preceded it. This is partly because a good many African Christian leaders are developing theological (and missiological) insights that are informed by the African experience and owe little to Western thinking.

Like the Western missionary movement preceding it, its self-understanding is shaped by evangelicalism, and it will almost certainly evolve into a complex, multi-centred, variegated movement shaped by, and contributing to, global forces of change. At the same time, several broad areas of distinctiveness, in comparison to the earlier Western missionary movement, are becoming evident. We have space only to highlight the most salient.

Basically, the factors and considerations which framed the Western missionary movement – including the idea of Christendom, imperialism, political and economic dominance, and technological supremacy – are largely absent from the newer movement. Where Enlightenment thinking and the Christendom construct framed the Western movement, it is the experience of colonial domination and an intensely spiritual worldview that will provide the defining elements in the non-Western movement.[15] Where the Old Testament-based notion of 'divine providence' informed the Western movement, the New Testament emphasis on 'weak things of the world' (1 Corinthians 1: 27) will likely frame the thinking and outlook of non-Western missionaries.

Within the African migrant-missionary movement, relative economic poverty and political powerlessness rule out structures of dominance or control and make accommodation (not to be understood as total assimilation) to the host culture imperative. This necessarily stimulates faster patterns of indigenisation. It is noteworthy that within European initiatives, the 'three-selfs' strategy – of self-support, self-propagation, and self-governance[16] – has proven intensely problematic to implement, due in large measure to the attitudes of paternalism engendered by economic and political superiority. African immigrant churches (certainly those in the West) are self-supporting from the start; and some actually become sources of revenue for their home churches! Also, self-propagation is a

major preoccupation; irrepressible religiosity and deep spirituality invariably translate into evangelistic zeal.[17] Most also emphasise the importance of indigenous leadership and oversight. In cases where the individual church functions as a satellite of the main (Africa-based) body, autonomy can be restricted. But most African immigrant churches operate as autonomous entities.

Informed by notions of Christendom, the Western missionary movement conceived of Christian faith in territorial terms and fostered an understanding of Christian mission in which the world is (territorially or geographically) divided into church and 'mission field'. This approach engendered a unidirectional flow of resources and ideas in which the West was the sender and the non-West the receiver. Within the emergent non-Western movement, however, each nation sends as well as receives missionaries. African Christians conceive of the whole world (including Africa itself) as a mission field. Additionally, the African missionary movement is a church-based initiative which promotes church-centred engagement. This emphasis diverges sharply from the European missionary movement, which emerged outside the existing church structures, operated almost exclusively through extra-ecclesial missionary orders or voluntary societies, and produced an entrenched church–mission dichotomy in both missiology and mission praxis.

The newer movement also exemplifies New Testament patterns and models of mission far more closely, with accompanying manifestations, such as an emphasis on demonstrations of (spiritual) power rather than eloquent rhetoric, use of house churches, tent-making ministries, lay apostolate, informal and invisible structures combined with clandestine activities, prominent charismatic leadership, a consciousness of weakness and marginality.

For all this, it is much too early to provide conclusive answers to the question of what the nature and impact of African immigrant churches on Western societies will be. It is quite obvious, for now, that the majority act as veritable conservatories of African culture and values (Watkin, 2004: 1). Evangelistic efforts primarily target other Africans, often with great success. The loss of dignity, experience of marginality and hostility, not to mention innumerable other predicaments characteristic of international migration, often make migrants more inclined to religious commitment and appreciative of the caring community (and prospects of integration) that comes with it. The widespread use of English or French in Africa means that these African immigrant churches are often multicultural and fully international. Their ability to reach out to the wider host

society, however, varies considerably, and much still depends on how settled the particular worship community is in its host environment.

For now, these churches are often among the fastest growing precisely because they reproduce or exhibit the same vitality and dynamism present in the homelands of immigrant members and because they draw on a widening base of immigrants hungry for religious involvement. Typically urban-based and dependent on social networks, immigrant-initiated churches are veritable centres of transmigration or transnationalism, with enormous potential for bridging North and South Christianities. There can be little doubt that these churches and the missionary initiatives they represent will play a unique role in the shaping of global Christianity in coming decades. The foregoing suggests that the African element will be consequential.

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NOTES

1. Among these, see Berger, 1999; Stark and Finke, 2000; Stark, 1998; Davie, 2002; also, Brooks, 2003.

2. Islamism, adds Daniel Pipes, has often surged in countries experiencing rapid economic growth – including Jordan, Tunisia, and Morocco (Pipes, 2001/02: 14).

3. The contention that newer, typically suburban based, Pentecostal or Charismatic (or 'new paradigm') churches more than make up for the decline in mainline denominations is no longer persuasive. Miller concluded that much of the former's membership increase is transfer growth or a 'circulation of the saints' – meaning that new members are not new converts to the faith, but Christians transferring membership or attendance from other churches.

4. Davie's observation about the modern European propensity for 'vicarious religion' – induced by latent notions of a Christian nation – is germane (Davie, 2002: 19f.).

5. 'Christianity almost vanquished in the UK', BBC News, 6 September 2001 (web version).

6. [Special Report], 2002: 5.

7. These new Christianities, observes Joel Carpenter, 'will push theologians to address the faith to poverty and social justice; to political violence, corruption and the meltdown of law and order; and to Christianity's witness amidst religious plurality. They will be dealing with the need of Christian communities to make sense of God's self-revelation to their pre-Christian ancestors' (Carpenter, 2004: 3).

8. Many terms which derive their freight of meaning from the Western experience and view of the world, like fundamentalist, conservative, liberal, and post-modern, have limited applicability and often distort understanding when applied to non-Western realities.

9. Rejecting Jenkins' Christendom analysis, Timothy S. Shah also affirms that 'for reasons deeply rooted in its belief and identity, evangelicalism does not constitute a single monolithic movement in the Third World but a multitude of movements that divide and sub-divide in an endless ecclesiastical mitosis' (Shah, 2003: 28).

10. For instance, the nature of colonial governance meant that not only Christian subjects, but also vast numbers of Muslims, Hindus, etc. were granted the protection of the British flag, a protection which, in Africa at least, often made it expedient to prohibit missionary activity in certain areas for fear of destabilising traditional structures (see Walls, 2002a: 219).

11. In 1900, there were 10,000 British missionaries overseas; by 1940, America had the lead with over 12,000 missionaries, and 35,000 by 1980.

12. See also the Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for all Nations website, www.godembassy.org

13. Studies indicate that the earliest migrants tend to be the relatively well-educated, skilled, productive, and highly motivated.

14. Interview with Apostle Ntumy, 27 May 2003.

15. Jenkins (2002: 123) notes that the 'single key area of faith and practice that divides Northern and Southern Christians' is the matter of spiritual forces and their effects on the everyday human world.

16. This formula is generally attributed to the thinking of Henry Venn (secretary of the England-based Church Missionary Society from 1841 to 1872) and Rufus Anderson (foreign secretary of the American Board of Commissions for Foreign Missions from 1832 to 1866); cf. Shenk, 1981.

17. It is now common, reports ter Haar (1998: 2), to see African missionaries preaching in public places in the big cities of Europe.

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