There are many ways to study the history of Christianity in Africa. Demographers look at numbers; they point out that Christianity on the continent has greatly expanded in the past century from roughly 10 percent to nearly 50 percent of the total population. Others study the anthropological and social dimensions of various groups, analyzing ethnicity, class, gender, and power dynamics. Still others take a theological perspective, asking where the cultures, philosophies, and/or struggles of Africa meet the Christian tradition. Yet behind the numbers, the movements, and the ideas are individuals whose unique biographies give historians access to intimate and nuanced dimensions of Christianity in Africa. They show how individuals respond to, react against, and wrestle with the bigger social forces around them. (Continued on page 3).
The Fruitful Summer Gatherings of the American Society of Missiology and the Yale-Edinburgh Group

It has become something of a tradition for scholars of world Christianity and mission to gather as the spring fades into summer. This year was no exception. Both the American Society of Missiology (ASM) and the Yale-Edinburgh Group hosted their meetings in late June, allowing for scholars from around the United States and the world to gather and explore questions about the history, theory, and practices of mission and world Christianity.

The ASM conference, *Missio-logoi: The Many Languages of Mission*, took place from June 19 to 21 at Wheaton College. It took an expansive view of language, asking how people communicate the Christian message through various forms of expression, including words, images, music, etc. It also asked how missionaries are portrayed in the secular media and academy. Plenary speakers included Yale University’s Lamin Sanneh, Leeds Trinity University’s Kirsteen Kim, Terry C. Muck of the Louisville Institute, and Stanley H. Skreslet of Union Presbyterian Seminary. CGCM student Laura Chevalier brought questions of spirituality to the fore in her paper, “Mission Spirituality: Trends and Developments Since 1980.”

Less than a week later, the Yale-Edinburgh group held its meeting from June 25 to 27 at Yale Divinity School. The theme of this meeting was religion and religions in the history of missions and world Christianity. Scholars not only asked how missionaries interpreted non-Christian religions, but they also probed how non-Christian religions affected the teachings and practices of Christianity. A

Ultimately, this summer proved very fruitful for scholars of world Christianity and missions. Scholars and students associated with leading centers were able to meet each other, talk about new ideas, and plan future projects.

*(Continued from page 1)* This fall, the CGCM will be hosting the conference “African Christian Biography: Narratives, Beliefs, and Boundaries” from October 29-31. More than 30 scholars will be presenting on a rich mosaic of topics. From the work of Michael Glerup, who studies ancient North African Christianity, to that of Nimi Wariboko, who studies contemporary Nigerian Pentecostalism, the conference will address a wide array of time periods. Likewise, the gathered scholars expertise comes from a wide variety of geographic areas. Wendy Belcher studies seventeenth century Ethiopia, John Thornton examines Catholicism in the former Kingdom of Kongo, Richard Elphick works on missions and race in South Africa, Timothy Longman wrote a history of Christianity and the Rwandan genocide, Ethan Sanders studies Central and East Africa, and Paul Grant analyzes the interactions between Germans and Africans in Ghana. Diana Wylie’s work spans the continent with concentrations in South Africa and Morocco. The conference boundaries even go beyond the African continent, as Jacob Olupona and Linda Heywood both study religion and culture in the African diaspora and Mark Noll has noted the rise of African Christianity within the United States.

Scholars have also become increasingly interested in the history of women and African Christianity. Dana Robert studied both American women missionaries to Africa as well as practices of independent Christian women in Zimbabwe. Deborah Gaitskell, Kathleen Sheldon, Heather Hughes,
and Barbara Mahamba have also done considerable work on a number of topics surrounding gender, ranging from the education of young women to the practices of women evangelists and pastors. Philomena Mwaura studies contemporary African feminist issues.

The conference will also include Joel Carpenter, who has written extensively on Christian higher education around the world, the Rt. Rev. Graham Kings, who is serving as Mission Theologian in the Anglican Communion, and the Most Rev. Emmanuel Egbutu, who is an archbishop in the Anglican Communion in Nigeria. While the conference participants will come from a wide variety of perspectives, each will have something to contribute about the nature and role of biography, and how it shapes their understanding of African Christianity.

The conference on African Christian biography will be only one of several exciting events this fall. On September 25, Liz Parsons will be delivering a lunch lecture on her new book about missions and education, The Greatest Work in the World at a lunch meeting.


Nov 20. John Kapya Kaoma on Christianity and Ecology in Africa

Upcoming Events


Sept 17. Alumni Panel with Orthodox missiologist, Alex Veronis, addressing “The Three Greatest Challenges Facing Us.”


Nov 20. John Kapya Kaoma on Christianity and Ecology in Africa