

CGCM NEWS

Center for Global Christianity and Mission

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The Center for Global Christianity and Mission Presents a Conference on

AFRICAN CHRISTIAN BIOGRAPHY: NARRATIVES, BELIEFS, AND BOUNDARIES October 29-31, 2015, Boston University

Presenters include:

Andrew Barnes
Wendy Belcher
Jonathan Bonk
Joel Carpenter
Joanne Davis
Most Rev. E. A. S. Egbunu
Richard Elphick
Chris Evans
Deborah Gaitskell
Michael Glerup
Paul Grant
Linda Heywood
Heather Hughes
Maureen Iheanacho
Rt. Rev. Graham Kings
Roger Levine
Timothy Longman
Barbara Mahamba
Philomena Mwaura
Mark Noll
Jacob Olupona
Dana Robert
Ethan Sanders
Lamin Sanneh
Kathleen Sheldon
Michèle Sigg
John Thornton
Wendy Urban Mead
Andrew Walls
Nimi Wariboko
Diana Wylie



Africanists to Discuss Christian Biography at Upcoming Conference

And other events this Fall

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 gives 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).



Sponsored by the Center for Global Christianity and Mission, the African Studies Center, and the African Studies Library on the occasion of the 20th year anniversary of the Dictionary of African Christian Biography (www.DACB.org)

For more information see www.dacb.org/dacb-conference2015.html

**BOSTON
UNIVERSITY**

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Participants at the meeting of the Yale-Edinburgh Group gather for a group photo in the historic Day Missions Library at Yale Divinity School. The senior scholars sitting in the front participated in the founding conference in 1992. Left to right: Robert Frykenberg, Gerald Anderson, Dana Robert, Brian Stanley, Lamin Sanneh, Martha Smalley

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

handful of CGCM students made key contributions to this conference; viz., Soojin Chung, “Shamanism’s Impact on Korean Christianity”; Michèle Sigg, “The Contribution of Maurice Leenhardt (1878-1954), Missionary-Anthropologist, to the Founding and Growth of French Protestant Missiology”; Stephen Lloyd, “A Bridge to Heathendom? M.L. Daneel, Afrikaans Missiology, and Traditional African Religion”; and Eva Pascal, “Christian Friars and Buddhist Monks: The Making of Buddhism as a Rival ‘Religion.’” Michèle Sigg updated listeners on the “African Dictionary of Christian Biography,” Gina Zurlo

announced exciting changes to the forthcoming new edition of the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, while Eva Pascal and Stephen Lloyd previewed the “Old and New in Shona Religion” web project.

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.



Laura Chevalier delivers her paper at the ASM Conference.

(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,

Upcoming Events

Sept 16. Digital *motive* Magazine presentation.

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

Sept 25. Liz Parsons discusses her new book on mission education, *The Greatest Work in the World* at a lunch meeting.

Oct 7-8. Bill Mefford: UMC Director of Civil and Human Rights.

Oct 21. Joel Robbins delivers Peter Berger Lecture.

Oct 22. Glory Dharmaraj on Equipping Asian Bible Women.

Oct 29-31. African Christian Biography Conference.

Nov 6-7. American Society of Missiology Eastern Fellowship Meeting. Maryknoll Center, Ossining, New York.

Nov 14. Religious Diversity: Conflict, Cooperation, and Creolization Conference.

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

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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 Egbunu, 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 with a response by doctoral student Jeremy Hegi. Anthropologist Joel Robbins will be delivering the Peter Berger Lecture, “What is the Matter with Transcendence?” on Wednesday, October 21. The very next day, Glory Dharmaraj will talk about how “Bible Women” in Asia are trained and what their roles are in their respective communities. On November 14, there will be the graduate student conference, “Religious Diversity: Conflict, Cooperation, and Creolization” with a keynote address by Harvard Religious Studies Professor Diana L. Eck. This conference seeks to understand the kinds of relationships that develop between various groups in situations of religious diversity. Finally, on November 20, John Kapya Kaoma will discuss Christianity and ecological issues in Africa. The offerings this fall will shed light on our ever-present guiding question: “What is world Christianity?”



Left: John Kapya Kaoma. Right (standing): Glory Dharmaraj