

EXCERPT



A Multitude of All Peoples *Engaging Ancient Christianity's Global Identity*

Available March 10, 2020 | \$35, 256 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5107-2

Christianity is not becoming a global religion—it has always been one. Vince Bantu surveys the geographic range of the early church's history, investigating the historical roots of the Western cultural captivity of the church and the concurrent development of diverse expressions of Christianity across Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

The First Christians of Egypt

The preceding historical survey of the first millennium of Western Christianity has provided a basic understanding of the development of Eurocentric Christian identity politics. Attention will now be given to the development of Christianity in the non-Western world and the contextualized/ enculturated theological expression that developed in precolonial Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

Beginning in the fifteenth century, Christianity encountered new territories in Africa, Asia, and the Americas as a result of Western colonialism. Many people today think that Christianity began for people of color only five-hundred years ago through this colonial enterprise. It is for this reason that the following survey will focus on Christian history in the non-Western world preceding the fifteenth century. By focusing on precolonial Christianity in the non-Western world, the myth of a Eurocentric origin of the gospel message will become all the more untenable. Western Christian history will be discussed in its relationship to the African and Asian theological developments that both preceded and continued concurrently with Western Christianity. Specific attention will be given to how Western Christianity developed in conflict and contact with different African and Asian Christian communities. Various regions will be briefly introduced with attention to notable examples of how Christianity was enculturated in these cultural contexts.

Alexandria and Egypt represent the gateway for Christianity on the continent of Africa. To this day, the Egyptian, or Coptic, Orthodox Church understands the introduction of Christianity to Egypt to have taken place through the missionary efforts of the apostle Mark. The *Acts of Mark* is the story written in the late fourth century that narrates the tradition of Mark traveling to Alexandria and establishing Egypt's earliest Christian church. According to this story, Mark went to Alexandria from Cyrene at the leading of God and converted a local cobbler named Anianus, whom Mark later anointed as Egypt's first bishop. Before ultimately being arrested and martyred by Egyptian pagans, Mark ordained many priests across Upper Egypt.

There are several Christian manuscripts found in Egypt that antedate 200 CE, including copies of Irenaeus's *Against Heresies*, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, a fragment of the *Gospel of Thomas*, and several biblical manuscripts. Among the biblical fragments from second-century Egypt is a fragment of the Gospel of John, which is the earliest material evidence of a canonical New Testament text. Such Christian literature, which constituted the foundation of dominant, orthodox Christianity in subsequent centuries, proved useful for the early church in Egypt in its interaction with early Gnostic figures such as Basilides and Valentinus. Such heresies were combated by Patriarch Demetrius who oversaw the Catechetical School of Alexandria during its administration by Clement of Alexandria and his successor, Origen.

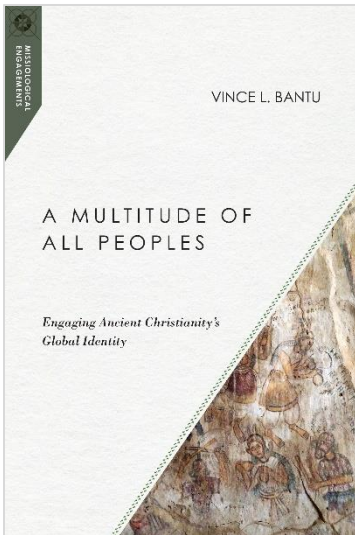
Clement and Origen are two of the earliest Christian apologists who were also prolific theologians, incorporating much Hellenistic philosophy into Christian theology and exegesis. Alexandria was one of the largest and most cosmopolitan cities of the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity—a meeting point of Hellenistic, Jewish, native Egyptian, and other influences. Although not an Egyptian, Clement came to Alexandria as a student of the catechetical school's first teacher, Pantaenus, and wrote the majority of his theological treatises during his tenure as head of the school. At the beginning of



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the third century, Origen assumed control of the school and expanded its curriculum to include both elementary catechetical instruction and a more advanced level of theological education. Origen eventually came into conflict with Patriarch Demetrius, who wanted to bring the school more closely under the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical authority. After Origen left Alexandria, Demetrius appointed a new head of school who would be closely supervised by the patriarch of Alexandria, a tradition that would continue for centuries to come.

During the mid-third century, severe persecutions systematically targeting Christians were enacted by Emperor Decius, in contrast to the more sporadic persecutions that preceded. In Egypt, Christian persecution resulted in the beginning of a pattern of Egyptian patriarchs being exiled from their office and produced an overall Egyptian Christian narrative of persecution and martyrdom. This began with Patriarch Dionysius, the first Christian bishop to use the term *pope*, who fled Alexandria due to persecution. Dionysius's flight brought home to Egypt a debate that raged across the third-century church: whether Christians ought to flee in the face of persecution. Much like Cyprian in Carthage, Dionysius defended his actions as necessary for the continuity of church leadership. And like the Novatian opposition to Cyprian in Carthage, an Egyptian bishop named Melitius would later give voice to a more radical perspective in Egypt that opposed the flight of the early fourth-century patriarch Peter I. Like the Donatists of North Africa, the followers of Meletius—the Meletians—held stricter views on the readmittance of Christians who apostatized under persecution (the *lapsi*, or "lapsed") while Peter of Alexandria exercised a more lenient attitude. While the issue of readmitting the *lapsi* was significantly diffused after the time of Constantine, the theme of martyrdom would continue to profoundly shape Egyptian Christian identity. This is most evident in the orientation of the Coptic Orthodox calendar, which to this day begins at 283 with the great persecution of Diocletian.

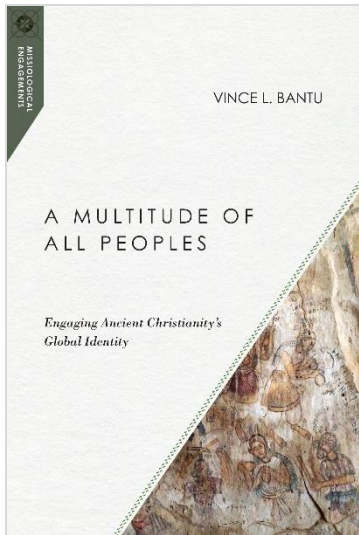
—Taken from chapter two, "The First Christians of Africa"



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DETAILS



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Missiological Engagements

Missiological Engagements: Church, Theology, and Culture in Global Contexts charts interdisciplinary and innovative trajectories in the history, theology, and practice of Christian mission at the beginning of the third millennium.

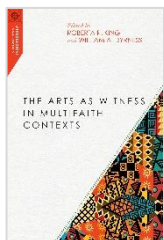
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In addition to this new release, *A Multitude of All Peoples*, recent Missiological Engagement titles include:



The Arts as Witness in Multifaith Contexts edited by Roberta R. King and William A. Dyrness
November 5, 2019, 256 pages, 978-0-8308-5106-5

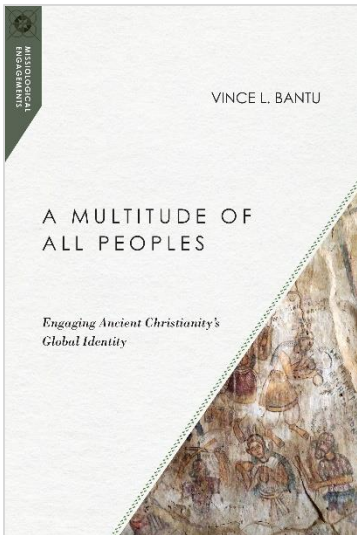
In search of holistic Christian witness, we must cultivate new approaches for integrating the arts into mission praxis. Written by missiologists, art critics, ethnodoxologists, and theologians from around the world, these essays present historical and contemporary case studies while calling Christians to understand the power of art for expressing cultural and religious identity, opening spaces for transformative encounters, and resisting injustice.



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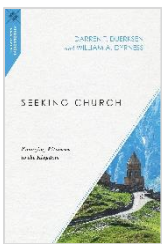


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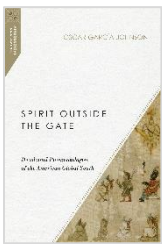
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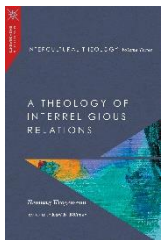
Seeking Church: Emerging Witnesses to the Kingdom by Darren T. Duerksen and William A. Dyrness
October 1, 2019, 224 pages, 978-0-8308-5105-8

New expressions of church, including so-called insider movements, are proliferating among non-Christian religious communities worldwide. Drawing on the growing social-scientific work on emergent theory, Darren Duerksen and William Dyrness explore how *all* Christian movements have been and are engaged in a “reverse hermeneutic,” where the gospel is read and interpreted through existing cultural and religious norms.



Spirit Outside the Gate: Decolonial Pneumatologies of the American Global South by Oscar García-Johnson
July 23, 2019, 328 pages, 978-0-8308-5240-6

Oscar García-Johnson explores a new grammar for the study of theology and mission in global Christianity, especially in Latin America. Moving to recover important elements in ancestral traditions of the Americas, he discerns pneumatological continuity between the pre-Columbian and post-Columbian communities. With an interdisciplinary, narrative approach, this work offers a constructive theology of mission for the church in global contexts.



Intercultural Theology, Volume Three: A Theology of Interreligious Relations by Henning Wrogemann
February 19, 2019, 528 pages, 978-0-8308-5099-0

Christianity is not only a global but also an *intercultural* phenomenon. In this third volume of his three-volume *Intercultural Theology*, Henning Wrogemann proposes that we need to go beyond currently trending theologies of mission to formulate both a *theory of interreligious relations* and a related but methodologically independent *theology of interreligious relations*.



Can “White” People Be Saved?: Triangulating Race, Theology, and Mission Edited by Love L. Sechrest, Johnny Ramírez-Johnson, and Amos Yong
November 6, 2018, 352 pages, 978-0-8308-5104-1

White normativity as a way of being in the world has been parasitically joined to Christianity, and this is the ground of many of our problems today. Written by a world-class roster of scholars, this volume develops language to describe the current realities of race and racism, challenging evangelical Christianity to think more critically and constructively about race, ethnicity, migration, and mission in relation to white supremacy.



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