

Book Reviews

Mark J. Cartledge, *Encountering the Spirit: The Charismatic Tradition* (Traditions of Christian Spirituality Series), London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2006, 152pp.

reviewed by Arnd Bünker

Encountering the Spirit is part of a series of introductions into different traditions of Christian spirituality. It is addressed to a contemporary readership as a help to become aware of the richness of Christian spiritual traditions, as the editor Philip Sheldrake remarks (9-11).

The volume at issue focuses on the charismatic tradition. The author, Mark J. Cartledge, calls himself an “insider”, as a charismatic Anglican” (136). This information is important to understand the decisions made on behalf of the guidelines of the introduction. Cartledge does not present the pentecostal/charismatic tradition with regard to different contextual situations in history and presence nor does he reflect on Pentecostalism/charismatic tradition in its ability to establish itself within different cultural settings nor about its breakthrough in global Christianity during the last few decades. Instead, he presents a broad and systematic overview about the “architecture” of Pentecostal/charismatic spirituality, including biblical aspects, historical roots throughout the history of Christianity and Christian theology and – most of all – a twofold systematic perspective: On the one hand Cartledge uses the concept of “process” (16). This includes the way of experience or the steps of spiritual development that charismatic Christians share. On the other hand the author uses the concept of “framework” (16), which pays attention to the structure of the charismatic tradition. Coming from these systematic viewpoints, the book focuses on key topics to open an understanding of charismatic spirituality.

The first chapter starts with a short overview about Pentecostal and charismatic movements during the 20th century towards the present. A systematic approach to Pentecostal/charismatic spirituality follows – an approach that would easily fit to other forms of Christian spirituality, as the author underlines. Cartledge introduces the concept of “process”, including the elements “search” for God, “encounter” with the Spirit of God, and “transformation”, as well as the concept

“framework” with attention to “narrative” (biblical stories as points of reference for interpreting life, “symbols” (e.g. speaking in tongues, rituals), and “praxis” (e.g. prayer).

The second chapter gives an overview about the charismatic stream within Christian tradition and theology during the whole church history. Cartledge lists a great sample of testimonies to illustrate the permanent reference to the Spirit from the very beginning of the church until the rise of the Holiness Movement as the historical context of the classical Pentecostal movement in the early 20th century, the following Renewal und the current charismatic movement, called Third Wave.

The following chapters deal with single thematic issues that are central for charismatic spirituality: praise and worship (chapter 3), inspired speech (chapter 4), the sanctified life (chapter 5), empowered kingdom witness (chapter 6), and the community of interpreters (chapter 7). Each chapter presents biblical and historical roots of the respective issue before it is described and explained in the context of present charismatic spirituality and its development during the last century. In so doing, each chapter refers to the systematic guidelines of the introduction, that is the “process” and “framework” of charismatic spirituality.

The book at issue offers a good overview about the self-understanding of the charismatic tradition as a vibrant stream in Christian spiritualities. It is written from an almost Western perspective, taking up predominantly British and North American references and only slightly indicating the global relevance and dynamic of this spiritual tradition. This limitation is easy to understand, for an interested readership is expected in the Western world and it is this group that the explanation of the spiritual richness within Christianity aims at. In particular the choice of the thematic issues and the application of the concepts “process” and “framework” enable the readership to “enter” the charismatic world and find relevant keys for understanding.

André Droogers, Cornelis van der Laan, & Wout van Laar (eds), *Fruitful in this Land*. Zoetermeer (The Netherlands), Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 2006, 173 pp.
reviewed by Jan-Åke Alvarsson

This book deals with migrant churches in the Netherlands, Germany and Great Britain. Nevertheless, this book is also about Pentecostal theology of religions, ecumenical relations, healing, and much more. It is surprisingly rich in scope and with few flaws.

For the uninitiated reader, the first chapter provides a brief overview of the changing direction of “missions”. In an observation that keeps coming back in this volume, Wout van Laar claims that “World Christianity today is a variety of indigenous responses to the Gospel that do not per se need the European Enlightenment frame.” He claims that in the 19th century many Dutch missionaries left the country for distant, exotic lands from Rotterdam harbor. Today, that very city holds a great number of migrant churches. At the same time he declares the end of conventional, North-to-South missionary endeavor, contrasting this to “In the present-day world, international migration plays an important albeit often unacknowledged role.” In the Netherlands this has dramatically transformed the ecclesiastical landscape. Today, a vast majority of the church-goers in the country are of a non-Dutch origin.

Van Laar’s chapter also initiates a streak of theological self-criticism, something that is a recurrent theme in a good part of the volume. A revealing comment is that “‘conservative’ migrant churches should first be upgraded theologically before they are acceptable in the ‘progressive’ ecumenical movement”. This places the guilt of often faltering ecumenical dialogue on the local churches, accusing them of ethnocentrism and triumphalism; in fact a clear remnant of our colonialist and imperialist past.

Allan Anderson repeats a series of well-known facts about Pentecostalism. Just like many other scholars, he emphasizes that its strengths “lie especially in an ability to adjust and ‘incarnate’ in any culture’. He tries to sum up varieties of this movement in Latin America, in Africa, which he

personally knows best, and in Asia. His most important contribution may be the reflection that Pentecostalism poses a challenge to conventional theology. He calls for “enacted theology” that could respond to, and represent what is found in “preaching, rituals and practices of churches that have contextualized Christianity in such a way as to make it really meaningful to ordinary people”.

Claudia Währisch-Oblau follows up van Laar’s self-criticism by stating that the situation of the migrant churches is very “fluid” and thus escapes conventional analysis. Our established categories are just not effective enough. She even claims that “the ecclesiological categories we have been schooled to think in are a hindrance rather than a help in understanding the changes in the European church scene today.” To remedy this somewhat, she proposes a series of new categories that may help us to think productively about these churches.

In her description of these churches, she provides a characteristic of the “holistic” approach that they offer. “The unemployed find work; migrants receive their residence permit; their children bring home good marks from school; salaries are raised; and racism in the workplace overcome.” A detail that I found noteworthy was that in an African migrant church in Germany no prayer-meeting was complete “without an exorcism of the ‘territorial demon’ of racism”. The members all shared first-hand knowledge of the effects of this force.

In his article, Cornelis van der Laan provides an overview of migrant churches in the Netherlands. He concludes that they demonstrate “significant growth and vitality” especially in urban areas. He also notes, however, that their missionary zeal is often thwarted. The native Dutch “do not respond to their evangelistic efforts” — an observation that is reiterated by several authors in this volume. In a later contribution, one of the thought-provoking “intermezzos”, he tells of an African church where the members pray to God to “remove the allergy of the Dutch against the Gospel”.

The second section of the book is dedicated to “Dialogue”. Hubert van Beek starts up by noting that the 20th century was dominated by two ecclesiastical movements: The birth and growth of Pentecostalism and the rise of Ecumenism. He attempts at discussing why the interchange between the two has been so meager. The problem is attributed, among other things, to mutual misinterpretations and lack of knowledge about each other. Cheryl Bridges Jones follows up by

discussing what mainline churches can learn from Pentecostals about Pentecost. Paul van der Laan provides us with very practical advice about how to carry out a dialogue with Pentecostals. Cornelis van der Kooi warns us of the fact that Western theologians rapidly are losing their preferential right of interpretation. The existing colonialist attitudes “must be prevented”.

Walter Hollenweger is the author of a second “intermezzo”, chiefly dedicated to a contribution to the theology of religions, based on Matthew and Luke. His approach is a bold challenge to a conventional missiological approach, and centers on the contributions from non-Christian religions that we can detect in these Gospels. He also concludes that Christianity is fluid. It is always influenced by the religious encounters. No variety is the same after a trans-cultural or trans-religious encounter. In spite of the few pages that Hollenweger uses, this may be the most important contribution of the whole book.

The third and the last part is dedicated to “Ministry of Healing”, something that is on the agenda in many European countries of today. Van Laar suggests that we can learn a holistic approach to healing from the migrant churches and that the Enlightenment has actually darkened our conception of healing: “Jesus’ healing ministry is much closer to the daily life of non-Western Christians”. This point is reiterated also by subsequent chapters.

Hermione Harris, *Yoruba in Diaspora: An African Church in London*, New York, Macmillan, 2006, 304pp.

reviewed by Richard Burgess

Hermione Harris' anthropological study of the Yoruba-initiated Cherubim and Seraphim (C&S) in London, a revision of her doctoral thesis, is a convincing and evocative account of an African migrant church. The C&S is one of the most popular Aladura churches in Nigeria and one of the first to establish branches in Britain. Harris' analysis is based on extensive participant observation, made possible by her membership of the C&S over thirty years, as well as interviews, personal records kept by church members, and an elders' questionnaire survey. It contains some fascinating descriptions of church services, including transcriptions of prayers and prophetic revelations.

Harris' study focuses on the first major wave of Nigerian settlement in Britain during the 1960s, comprising mainly Yoruba 'worker-students' with aspirations to return to Nigeria following their studies and join the middle ranks of the Nigerian elite. When they arrived in Britain, they encountered a nation in economic decline and found themselves relegated to the position of a 'black immigrant proletariat'. Membership of the C&S helped to resolve the tensions created by financial difficulties, frustrated personal ambitions and the loss of professional identities.

Harris identifies spiritual power as the key concept in C&S epistemology and religious praxis. The church's popularity lay not just in its provision of a 'network of social support', but more importantly in its 'application of Yoruba cosmological principles in the management of life events' (p. 55). Through an analysis of C&S ritual actions, such as prayer, divination and Spirit possession, Harris unpacks the meaning of spiritual power from the point of view of the participants themselves. She identifies the experience of possession by the Holy Spirit, linked to prophetic revelation, as the *sine qua non* of C&S religious practice.

Harris finds close affinities between the C&S and Yoruba indigenous piety in relation to their concepts and management of spiritual power. Despite the rejection of the Yoruba *orisa* and Ifa

divination, the C&S has retained the belief in the existence of invisible forces and the efficacy of prayer to manage them. In fact, Harris finds as much resonance between C&S and Yoruba traditional cults as she does between Aladura and orthodox Pentecostalism, especially in relation to spirit possession. Here she distinguishes between the Pentecostal experience of the Spirit, which she considers largely expressive in nature, and the C&S, where possession is instrumental and linked to the reception of prophecy. Harris is right to point out functional similarities between the C&S and Yoruba possession cults. Both are concerned with divining spiritual causes behind life events and prescribing remedial actions. But many Pentecostals would also regard the experience of Spirit baptism as having instrumental as well as expressive value, both in terms of personal edification and missionary empowerment. However, Harris also finds elements of rupture between Aladura and traditional piety. In Yoruba cults it was the lesser deities, rather than the Supreme Being, who possessed the priests. What C&S did was to associate the reception of revelation with the possessing power of God himself, and thus fuse traditional ideas of spirit possession with Biblical concepts.

The appeal of the C&S for Yoruba worker-students in London lay in its practical, problem-solving approach, which Harris links to the enduring belief in the power of prayer and ritual action to influence the causative factors behind human experience. Again she finds similarities between Aladura and Ifa. Despite different means, both are active, rather than passive, systems of divination, requiring clients to make personal decisions based on revelations received. Thus the C&S was an attractive option for Yoruba migrants, enabling them to have a handle on their problems without recourse to political action.

Because of the historical scope of her study, Harris is able to make comparisons with later contexts and with more recent expressions of African Christianity. In the concluding chapter, she considers how the C&S is responding to the challenge of catering for a different set of Nigerian migrants. This new generation join a Yoruba community in London that is more confident and significantly larger than 30 years previously. In contrast to their parents, who expected to return to Nigeria, they are more oriented towards absorption into British culture. Yet they face similar problems, and seek similar redress through religious means. It is the newer Pentecostal churches, or Born-Agains, with their more modern and international outlook, which seem better equipped to cater for these needs. However, like Aladura, the Born-again churches are still engaged in the

‘ubiquitous Yoruba search for spiritual power’ and regard the Spirit as the ‘ultimate source of worldly success’ (p. 233-34). The main sticking point for the Born-Agains, according to Harris, is the Aladura divinatory practice of trance-inspired prophecy, which remains an important, if less public, component of C&S spirituality and practice in London. However, despite its fissiparous tendency, the C&S continues to expand, even if somewhat overshadowed by the newer churches. As a study of the religious life of the African Diaspora, this book is an important contribution both to the growing literature on migrant communities in Europe as well as global Pentecostal Christianity.

Matthews A. Ojo, *The end-time army: Charismatic movements in modern Nigeria*. Trenton, NJ, Africa World Press, 2006, 292 pp.
reviewed by Anna Quaas

The end-time army, written by Matthews Ojo and based on his PhD thesis (1987), is the first monograph to deal with the Charismatic movements in modern Nigeria. Matthews Ojo, Associate Professor in the Department of Religious Studies in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, has already published widely on Pentecostalism in Nigeria and is therefore rightly portrayed as the „pioneer of the study of Charismatic Christianity in Nigeria“(VII).

Although the title „end-time army“ may lead to the assumption that the book examines the millennial orientation of Charismatic Christianity in Nigeria, eschatology is mentioned only briefly. Instead, Ojo pays special attention to the role the Nigerian educated elite played in promoting Charismatic Christianity in the country. He sees the rise of the Charismatic revival on the university campuses in the early 1970s as the main reason for the growth and contextualisation of Christianity in Nigeria. In contrast to the existing churches, where most students were brought up, Charismatic Christianity was able to adequately meet the needs of the young educated elite.

Nevertheless, Ojo embeds the developments in the 1970s in a broader historical context. The roots of the Pentecostal movement in Nigeria are to be situated in the indigenous religious movement, which began in the 1910s. Thereafter, he argues, a revival between 1952 and 1954 initiated a second wave of Pentecostalism. This revival was led by S.G. Elton, a missionary from the British Apostolic Church. Finally, the evangelistic meetings conducted by North American evangelists in the 1960s provoked a third wave.

Ojo then relates the emergence and growth of Charismatic movements to the instability and political uncertainties of the 1970s. In the following decades the churches were similarly responsive to people's needs: „In their search for messianic intervention, Charismatic organizations proliferated greatly in the 1980s and 1990s as Nigerians searched for personal and collective salvation“ (72).

Taking the Deeper Life Bible Church as an example, Ojo enumerates four internal reasons for the church's appeal in the 1970s and 1980s. Firstly, it relied in an early stage on the influence of literature for spreading its doctrine. Secondly, the Deeper Life camps attracted many people by virtue of free food and accommodation. Thirdly, its interdenominational character allowed new converts to remain members of their previous churches while attending Deeper Life Bible classes. And lastly, from the mid-1970s onwards the Deeper Life Bible Church was very involved in active evangelism.

Being mainly an urban movement, Charismatic Churches gained acceptance in areas that had witnessed great social change because they addressed their message to current problems such as loss of tradition, unemployment, loneliness, inadequate health care and anxiety about the future.

Apart from giving an historical overview of the development of Nigerian Charismatic Christianity, Ojo also describes the main characteristics of current Nigerian Pentecostalism such as the preaching of the Word of God and the new birth of its members as *nota ecclesiae*, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and Speaking in Tongues, Sanctification and Holiness, Healing, Prosperity, Restitution, Evangelism and Mission.

By describing general developments over decades the monograph sometimes neglects detailed historical analysis. Nevertheless, it provides a useful outline of the wide range of Nigerian Charismatic movements. „The end-time-army“ is essential reading for any study of Nigerian Pentecostalism inside and outside Nigeria.