

Mark R. Gornik, *Word Made Global: Stories of African Christianity in New York City* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2011).

In *Word Made Global*, Mark Gornik contributes to global Christianity research by focusing on African Christians in New York City. The book's significance is achieved by combining ethnographic methods and theological perspectives, and by emphasizing international migrations and urban realities. Gornik points out that as New York is a major hub in the flow of financial capital it is also a major hub in the global flow of African Christianity.

In chapter one Gornik surveys 150 African churches, describes various types, and then introduces three churches which are his focus. Each of the three churches has African origins (and ongoing connections with African cities): 1) the Presbyterian Church of Ghana in Harlem (Accra, Ghana), 2) the Church of the Lord (Aladura) in the Bronx (Monrovia, Liberia), and 3) the Redeemed Christian Church of God International Chapel in Brooklyn (Lagos, Nigeria). All of these churches have Pentecostal-charismatic influence. Beyond sharing evangelical characteristics (conversion, Bible centric, and crucifixion) these churches emphasize resurrection, Holy Spirit, and power (24).

The roles of the pastors of these three churches as spiritual directors, agents of healing, institution builders, and cultural intermediaries are reviewed in chapter two. Chapter three focuses on the liturgy and life of the three churches touching on their historical developments. For example, the Presbyterian Church

of Ghana is influenced by the pietism of the Basel Evangelical Missionary Society, the polity of the Scottish Presbyterians, and the Pentecostalism of the African Charismatic movement. Each member of the church carries a yellow "Certificate of Membership" which is kept current by paying tithes. The certificate serves as a passport not only good for being welcomed to other churches, but also for earthly celebrations of eternal transitions. Passport-bearing members receive a celebratory funeral. Gornik describes one funeral that included a deejay, loud (conversation-stifling) music, and dancing (until 3:00 a.m.), followed by member-supported body transport and another funeral in Accra.

Chapter four describes prayer as lived theology embodied in postures, actions, intensities, and durations that shape participant's practices and perspectives. "Prayer is at least as much a bodily exercise as it is a discursive activity" (144). Prayer is participation in power. It involves the whole body sometimes prostrate on the floor, sometimes dancing in the aisles. It involves linguistic rhythm and style, kinetic movement and tongues of utterance, all-night tarrying and praise shouts, testifying and thanksgivings, fasting and feasting. By its diverse conjunctions African Christian prayer creates connections between the spiritual world and social world by sanctified imagination and material engagement. African Christian prayer is highly spiritual but not otherworldly. It relates simultaneously to God, creation-cosmos, power(s), and community.

The African use of the Bible in chapter five reveals that the contemporary message is emphasized by

these churches as the Spirit inspires congregations to imagine, materialize, and embody the Word in New York City. Chapter six reviews mission strategies and statements, but cross-cultural missional engagement is thin in this chapter. Toward the end of the author's research one of the pastors of the three highlighted churches), Nimi Wariboko, was hired as Professor of Ethics at Andover Newton Theological School. If seminary professors constructively contribute to the critical education of future church leaders, then this development calls for further reflection (along with Wariboko's several books which are not in an otherwise extensive and inclusive bibliography).

Chapter seven describes pilgrimages such as the Annual Convention of the Redeemed Christian Church of God headquarters, which was held with thousands in Madison Square Garden in June of 2005. The event drew members from other cities, nations, and other Nigerian Pentecostal churches and culminated in the Holy Ghost service with the intention to "heal America, to heal Nigeria, to heal Africa" (224). General Overseer, E.A. Adeboye began to speak at about 1:30 a.m. accompanied by large screens that projected video images of him speaking to a large crowd at Redemption Camp in Lagos. The Madison Square Garden room was filled with people clapping on the video screens with Adeboye "holding forth in both worlds simultaneously" (227) declaring victory over pharaohs. The other two churches also held NYC pilgrimages with blessed cloth, and Mount Taborar convocations involving thirteen days of prayer and fasting.

Chapter eight describes youth in the African Christian churches. The Presbyterian youth group does

not associate much with each others during the week. The Aladura church had only one ten-year-old youth in 2007, while the eight member youth group of Redeemed Christian Church of God International Chapel “was a religiously intense and personally committed group” (252). Among the latter group faith was important in daily lives, beginning with family devotions, and rooted in Pentecostal identity and tradition.

Gornik concludes with a review of gifts that the African churches contribute to New York City and global Christianity. Gifts include inviting global Christians to name themselves by the Pentecost event, to engage sacramental imagination and embodied spirituality, to engage the Lord’s/Word’s living power, to practice mission with a comprehensive theology of salvation—with its earthly and material dimensions, and to reposition the concept of citizenship by a vision of Christ’s international body. Gornik challenges the African churches to theologize about the relationship between the resurrection and the cross (power and suffering), to think about the relationship between African immigrants and African Americans (ritual and cosmology parallels with African American Pentecostalism are certainly striking), and to explore relationship with Christian history and catholicity. This chapter represents Gornik’s encouragement toward mission that he seems to see as not-yet fruitful (based on my interpretation of chapter five).

By participating in and reflecting on three African churches in New York City Mark Gornik has opened the door to a crucial perspective on global Christianity that includes the missionary engagement

from the global south in the North (and West). Mission involves passing the faith to the next generation and to other cultures, and Gornik has noted the differences between, and constructive engagements of these churches. Now the implicit challenges bear further attention and ecumenical cooperation as global Christianity seeks to pass on its faith to the next generation. As New York City is a central hub in the flow of global capitalism and Christianity, it is also a central hub in the production of (youthful) global music (rap). Might (African) Pentecostals (and others with active imaginations) receive discernment, dreams, and visions of what the Spirit is working among city-dwellers who seek justice, art, and embodied Jesus-devotion (as in Occupy, rap, and African Christianity)?

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