

# *Intra-Christian Violence and the Problematism of the World Christian Paradigm*

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*Violence is a crucial lens for inquiring historically into Christianity worldwide. The field of World Christianity, however, has been oriented by a paradigm of growth, success and Christian converts' creative agency. This article establishes the need for a historiographical intervention in the literature on World Christianity through a critical analysis of texts that have formed the field, followed by examinations of anti-Evangelical violence in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Mexico, and Catholic-Protestant conflicts in colonial East Africa. These case studies identify lacunae in the field and suggest that violence has often been a constitutive part of the contextual formation of World Christianity.*

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For many scholars of contemporary Christianity, it has become commonplace to state that Christianity is undergoing dramatic global shifts—a transformation that has been a century in the making. What these changes constitute has often been captured in optimistic and future-oriented phrases: ‘the next Christendom’, a ‘spreading fire’ or a ‘new center of gravity’.<sup>1</sup> The cultural and demographic transformations of Christianity worldwide have not only shaped the subfield of World

ABS=American Bible Society; JEC = Joe Church papers, Centre for the Study of Christianity Worldwide, Cambridge; UCU = Bishop Tucker School of Theology archives, Uganda Christian University, Mukono

<sup>1</sup> P. Jenkins, *The next Christendom: the coming of global Christianity*, New York 2002; A. Anderson, *Spreading fires: the missionary nature of early Pentecostalism*, Maryknoll, NY 2007; D. Robert, ‘Shifting southward: global Christianity since 1945’, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* xxiv (April 2000), 50–8.

Christianity, but also popular perceptions of what these new expressions of the Christian faith mean. The election of Pope Francis as the first pope from Latin America, for example, was described as reflecting the reality that the so-called Global South is home to a majority of the world's Roman Catholics. In East Asia, even when coverage of South Korean megachurches notes the challenges they are facing, their buildings are still compared to sports arenas that can hold as many as 15,000 people at a time.<sup>2</sup> Such images and anecdotes substantiate demographic claims that describe the tectonic shifts in global religious identity, and form both scholarly and public perception of important new global religious trends. In perhaps no other region are these changes as clearly marked as in Sub-Saharan Africa, where images of megachurches in Nigeria show them meeting in repurposed airplane hangars that are overflowing with worshippers.<sup>3</sup> The World Christian Database estimates that while Africa contained merely ten million Christians in the year 1900, it was home to 360 million by the year 2000.<sup>4</sup> In these ways, the field of World Christianity has largely positioned itself as accounting for the ascendancy of these new expressions of the faith and their global spread and impact. The field has been closely linked to the history of Christian missions and arose during an era of decolonisation, where the agency of local Christians and their distinctive expressions of the Christian faith became increasingly important.<sup>5</sup> Yet, another perception of Christianity worldwide has spread nearly simultaneously. Open Doors, an organisation that tracks Christian persecution worldwide, rated eighteen countries in Sub-Saharan Africa as experiencing 'high' levels of persecution against Christians (more severe levels include 'very high' and 'extreme').<sup>6</sup> These include countries such as Nigeria, Uganda and Kenya, which have figured prominently within World Christianity literature due to the apparent success of Christianity there. One narrative highlights growth and success, while the other identifies Christianity as experiencing severe duress. Neither of these narratives can be factored in without remainder.

In this article, we seek to ask why issues around violence and religious persecution, particularly intra-Christian violence, have not been featured within the field of World Christianity. We give a historiographical accounting of that *lacuna*, accompanied by two case studies—from Latin America and East Africa, respectively—that illuminate important dynamics that have largely

<sup>2</sup> M. Bell, 'The biggest megachurch on earth and South Korea's "crisis of evangelism"', *Public Radio International*, 1 May 2017.

<sup>3</sup> A. Esiebo, 'The mega churches of Lagos: huge hangars hold hundreds of thousands', *Guardian*, 24 Feb. 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Jenkins, *The next Christendom*, 49.

<sup>5</sup> M. Frederiks, 'World Christianity: contours of an approach', in M. Frederiks and D. Nagy (eds), *World Christianity: methodological considerations*, Leiden 2021, 12–16.

<sup>6</sup> 'World watch list 2019', Open Doors International, <[https://www.opendoorsusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/WWL2019\\_FullBooklet.pdf](https://www.opendoorsusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/WWL2019_FullBooklet.pdf)>, accessed 20 August 2021.

been occluded within the field. We note that Area Studies scholarship on Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America has engaged with topics related to structural and physical violence as they pertain to Christians. (Area Studies is an historical and anthropological approach from below often underpinned by knowledge of local languages, which produces deeply contextualised studies of local societies.) We ultimately conclude that the inclusion of the historical and contemporary reality of intra-Christian violence represents a challenge to the ecumenical impulses of the field of World Christianity and stands with related subjects, such as international religious freedom and religious persecution, that should be more fully explored in relation to the changing demographics of Christianity worldwide. Our engagement with World Christianity scholarship in this article makes two moves. In the first part of this article, we seek to account for a gap within the scholarly literature, while the latter sections seek to model a way of including material pertaining to violence within the subfield of World Christianity.

As a distinctive field of inquiry, World Christianity emerged in the second half of the twentieth century in the era of decolonisation. Scholars in the field have come to predict Christianity's global demographic primacy for the foreseeable future. Their research compellingly argues that the demographic centre of gravity has shifted dramatically from the Global North to Global South over the course of the twentieth century. These contributions were insightful, timely and often against the grain of other fields of inquiry, illuminating dynamics that would, in the early twenty-first century, come to be regarded as tectonic changes within Christianity worldwide. Yet, scholars writing within the field can also take on a celebratory, even triumphalistic tone, a narrational framing that remains imbued within the field. If this tone can be found in early historians of World Christianity such as Kenneth Scott Latourette, it is equally present in more recent scholarship.<sup>7</sup> Lamin Sanneh's description is representative of the literature's tone: 'With unflagging momentum, Christianity has become, or is fast becoming, the principal religion of the peoples of the world.'<sup>8</sup> By the 1990s World Christianity scholarship gloried in the inaccuracies of earlier secularisation theses, but its associations with the colonial history of missionary work also meant that World Christianity as an object of study was sometimes oriented by 'postcolonial guilt'.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps

<sup>7</sup> K. Latourette, *A history of the expansion of Christianity*, VII: *Advance through storm: A.D. 1914 and after, with concluding generalizations*, New York 1945, 504.

<sup>8</sup> L. O. Sanneh, 'Introducing the Oxford series', in *Disciples of all nations: pillars of World Christianity*, p. xix.

<sup>9</sup> J. Cabrita and D. Maxwell, 'Relocating World Christianity', in J. Cabrita, D. Maxwell and E. Wild-Wood (eds), *Relocating World Christianity: interdisciplinary studies in universal and local expressions of the Christian faith*, Leiden 2017, 14. Maxwell and Cabrita also note broader issues in the field that we identify here, including triumphalism and a fixation on growth. See also K. Bediako, 'The emergence of World Christianity and the remaking

as one byproduct, World Christianity has struggled to fully incorporate regions where Christianity has declined or been replaced by other religions (the Middle East and North Africa), has long-been saturated by Christianity (Latin America), or has already been indigenised for a millennium or more (Eastern Europe). As a result, these regions remain peripheral to this literature, though this has begun to change.<sup>10</sup>

For scholars of World Christianity, the expansion of the faith signifies more than simple demographic dominance. Rather, many argue that Christianity empowered individuals as it embodied dynamic localised expressions of Christianity, which then voiced powerful critiques of a secularising West (or, Global North), including its colonial histories and legacies.<sup>11</sup> As a field, World Christianity strongly emphasised religion as a dimension of life in which one can observe agentive work amidst colonialism's cultural and physical destructiveness.<sup>12</sup> Its scholarship analytically centres the non-western Christian converts who developed new expressions of Christianity—often prioritising those that are pneumatic and charismatic, and which scholars then associated with the early Christian Church as described in the New Testament book of Acts. Others have seen in these younger Churches a hope for a millennial return to an ecumenical Christian unity.<sup>13</sup> The rise of the field of World Christianity, then, was the result of scholars who identified it as an object in need of analysis, but even this was also an expression of postcolonial hopes and biblical imaginaries.<sup>14</sup> As a result, World Christianity, as constituted as a field of study by those scholars (and others) cited in this section, can be viewed as having a distinctive approach to analysing Christianity that distinguishes it from historical and social scientific scholarship on particular regions that engages with Christianity.<sup>15</sup>

While the field of World Christianity tends to foreground dynamic growth and the flourishing of new Christian communities in Sub-Saharan

of theology', in W. R. Burrows, M. R. Gornik and J. A. McLean (eds), *Understanding World Christianity: the vision and work of Andrew F. Walls*, Maryknoll, NY 2011, 242–55.

<sup>10</sup> Some representative examples include T. Carroll, *Orthodox Christian material culture: of people and things in the making of heaven*, London 2018; D. Womack, *Protestants, gender, and the Arab renaissance in late Ottoman Syria*, Edinburgh 2019; C. Burlacoiu, 'Russian Orthodox religion as a global diaspora after 1918', *Studies in World Christianity* xxiv (2018), 4–24.

<sup>11</sup> P. Phan, 'Doing theology in World Christianities: old tasks, new ways', in Cabrita, Maxwell and Wild-Wood, *Relocating World Christianity*, 115–42.

<sup>12</sup> J. Bruner, *Living salvation in the East African Revival in Uganda*, Rochester, NY 2017.

<sup>13</sup> D. Robert, 'Historiographic foundations from Latourette and Van Dusen to Andrew F. Walls', in Burrows, Gornik, and McLean, *Understanding World Christianity*, 141–54.

<sup>14</sup> Anderson, *Spreading fires*, 291; K. Koschorke, F. Ludwig and M. Delgado (eds), *A history of Christianity in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, 1450–1990: a documentary sourcebook*, Grand Rapids, MI 2007, p. xxix; Sanneh, *Disciples of all nations*, p. xix; Robert, 'Shifting southward'.

<sup>15</sup> Frederiks, 'World Christianity'.

Africa and South and East Asia specifically, it has not meaningfully incorporated violence within its analyses of Christian faith outside of the West. By violence here we refer primarily to three forms: the physically, culturally and spiritually destructive violence of Western colonialism across the Global South; the socio-economic and physical precarity that is a constitutive part of life for many people living in post-colonial contexts; and intra-Christian violence. Careful attention to violence not only illuminates these constitutive contextual factors that shape Christianity's expressions globally, but also provides new methodological avenues for research into regional nuances. Violence, therefore, not only provides a wedge in the literature, but also an important analytical connection between disparate regions of world Christianity.

Furthermore, the field's preoccupation with a reified notion of 'Christianity' often occludes distinctions among Christian traditions even as it privileges Protestant sensibilities, dynamics and concerns.<sup>16</sup> In the case of Latin America, the field's Protestant-leaning framing contributed to overlooking a massive swath of the world's Christians, in Latin American Catholics, who were neither Protestant nor new to the continent or the Christian faith. Violence also provoked Protestants (such as some in the American Bible Society, discussed below) to question long-standing convictions around religious freedom. Many argued that Catholics enjoyed freedom of religion provided by a Protestant majority in the United States while denying that very freedom to Protestants in Latin America, including missionaries. This stereotype, while including degrees of truth, became abstracted and applied to religious minorities in the United States. Intra-Christian violence and discrimination, thus, shaped political convictions and religious coalitions across borders.

Historical attention to violence and Christianity in the Global South throws into question simple categories of religious violence (such as Muslim-Christian conflicts). It also lays bare the struggle for World Christianity to make sense of intra-Christian violence even as it troubles simplistic narratives that still have traction within the field.<sup>17</sup> Our analyses of the literature and the historical case studies suggest four conclusions. First, the religious growth, dynamism and inculturation that are the celebrated foci of World Christianity likewise carry within them dynamics which can undermine that same narrative by fomenting conflict among Christians and others. For example, the growth of independent Christian Churches can often come at the expense of other more established traditions (Catholicism or mainline Protestantism such as Presbyterian or

<sup>16</sup> Cabrita and Maxwell, 'Relocating World Christianity'.

<sup>17</sup> There has been discussion of the singularity of the concept within the literature. See, for example, Phan, 'Doing theology in World Christianities', and Frederiks, 'World Christianity'.

Methodist Churches, for example). Second, the ecumenical impulses of the literature can obscure the realities of the endurance of other Christian identities in particular contexts. Pentecostalism is a lucid example here, with the tensions these churches often create with Anglicans and Catholics, but in other cases the distinctions may be more due to language, ethnicity or class rather than confession. Thus, third, we think scholars should give greater historical and social context to places in which confessional identity matters, especially as these identities intersect with ethnic, racial, tribal and/or national identities. Finally, careful attention to intra-Christian violence calls into question the ecumenical assumptions of the World Christianity paradigm. In the case of Latin America, violence between Catholics and Protestants runs alongside the supposed explosion of Evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity in the region, illuminating contexts and dynamics that require more analysis. In Sub-Saharan Africa, many independent Christian churches and movements formed as a result of colonial violence as well as discrimination within mission churches, alongside their occasional suppression by the colonial state. In both regions, we argue that World Christianity scholarship has tended to make peripheral such dynamics in its analysis of what counts as being constitutive of 'World Christianity'.

### *Violence, geography and the historiography of World Christianity*

The emergence of the field of World Christianity in the second half of the twentieth century, the most prominent voices of which were Lamin Sanneh, Andrew Walls, Kwame Bediako, Brian Stanley, Dale Irwin, Peter Phan, Dana Robert and Ogbu Kalu, created a distinctive synthesis of mission history, a theology of mission and colonial history.<sup>18</sup> In general, their analytical emphasis was upon the expansion of new Christians and Churches in late colonial and early independent Africa and Asia—a reality created and driven by local converts, who translated the faith to accord with local social structures, languages, beliefs and practices. While missionaries and mission Christianity remained important, World Christianity's historiographical predilection was for independent, charismatic expressions of the faith, usually focusing upon the dynamic

<sup>18</sup> L. Sanneh, *West African Christianity: the religious impact*, Maryknoll, NY 1995; A. Walls, *The missionary movement in Christian history: studies in the transmission of the faith*, Maryknoll, NY 1996; K. Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: the renewal of a non-Western religion*, Edinburgh 1997; B. Stanley, *Christianity in the twentieth century: a world history*, Princeton 2018; D. Robert, *Christian mission: how Christianity became a world religion*, Oxford 2009; O. Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: global discourses, migrations, exchanges and connections*, Trenton, NJ 2011.

Christian growth and the agency of non-Western converts. Scholarship on World Christianity rightly assumes that the broader story of the development of Christianity should not be understood exclusively or even primarily with respect to Western missionaries' actions and intentions. The actions, beliefs and motivations of those who converted are often weighted more heavily, including especially their creation of new theologies, religious practices and institutions in the process. This literature has often referred to these acts as the 'indigenisation' or 'enculturation' of the Christian Gospel, processes which were made possible through translation, dissension and the development of new or independent Churches.<sup>19</sup> While the literature cited above has brought insight and expanded our understanding of religion, conversion, cultural change and colonialism, the net results of these processes tend to be framed in highly optimistic terms. The reality of Christian growth is largely based upon demographic statistics, with the exponential expansion of Christians in Sub-Saharan Africa over the past century seemingly serving as a synecdoche for much of the Global South. Against celebratory narratives of Christianity's expansion stands Tharcisse Gatwa's critique, in which he observed 'the absence of theological reflection on the tragic African history as compared to the triumph of statistics of churchgoers'.<sup>20</sup> What Gatwa refers to here as 'the tragic African history' includes not only events such as the horrific Rwandan genocide and the related wars in Congo, but also widespread poverty, weak state infrastructures and the enduring legacies of colonialism. Such processes are either directly violent, in and of themselves, or are related historically or contextually to the multiple forms of violence that Christians have been confronted with. This reality is also compounded by extremely high church attendance and Christian identification in Rwanda from the colonial era to the present. While not claiming that any region's history can or should only be understood as 'tragic', we argue that Gatwa's concern is relevant to those living outside Africa as well, and that the violence that in varying ways was a constitutive contextual dynamic for the growth of Christianity in Africa and elsewhere has been historiographically marginalised within World Christianity.<sup>21</sup>

The processes that formed new Christian communities and traditions in the Global South were not just about creativity and generation, but also about destruction, violence and power, in both the colonial and

<sup>19</sup> D. Bosch, *Transforming mission: paradigm shifts in theology of mission*, Maryknoll, NY 1991; S. B. Bevans and R. P. Schroeder, *Constants in context: a theology of missions for today*, Maryknoll, NY 2004.

<sup>20</sup> T. Gatwa, 'African theologies: issues that matter to world Christianity', in H. Bedford-Strohm, T. Gatwa, T. Jähnichen and E. Musemakweli (eds), *African Christian theologies and the impact of the Reformation*, Zurich 2017, 39.

<sup>21</sup> The topic has been treated by scholars working in African studies and African religion, such as in N. Kastfelt (ed.), *Religion and African civil wars*, New York 2005.

independent eras in which these developments took place. Scholars have acknowledged this reality across the twentieth century. Throughout the latter volumes in his seven-part *A history of the expansion of Christianity*, Kenneth Scott Latourette frequently cited the ‘disintegration’ of ‘primitive’ societies under the onslaught of colonialism as providing the occasion for the appeal of Christianity, which then ‘partly allayed the agony and eventually abolished or reduced some of the more palpable evils [of colonial expansion]. It did not succeed in making the coming of the white man an unmixed blessing’.<sup>22</sup> This same point – of mission Christianity’s often inextricable relationship with Western empires, and of the role of colonial violence as facilitating the spread of Christianity – would be echoed by a number of historians of African missions in particular, and serve as a primary point of critique in the post-colonial era, producing an extensive debate on the relationships between Christian missions and European imperialism.<sup>23</sup> In response to the critiques of missions from anthropologists and scholars writing in the era of decolonisation, scholars who were central to the shaping of the field of World Christianity in the late twentieth century set an important trajectory that has endured. Instead of focusing upon a collusive dynamic between missions and empire, they centred the ways in which Christianity and its related practices and technologies empowered converts and provided a significant field for their agency.<sup>24</sup> The groundbreaking work of early scholars of African Christianity in the late colonial and early independence eras highlighted trends that would only be noted decades later by other fields.<sup>25</sup> This work allowed the field of World Christianity to coalesce in the late twentieth century, providing a narrative that connected these largely disparate stories of Christian growth and transformation across regions in the twentieth century.

A component of World Christianity scholarship that has received substantial attention over the past decade describes how the migration of Christians from the Global South is affecting societies and churches in North America and Europe.<sup>26</sup> Portions of this phenomenon have been

<sup>22</sup> K. Latourette, *A history of the expansion of Christianity*, VI: *The great century in Africa and Asia, 1800–1914*, London 1940, 468–9.

<sup>23</sup> R. Oliver, *The missionary factor in East Africa*, New York 1952, 244–7; A. Porter, *Religion versus empire? British Protestant missions and overseas expansion, 1700–1914*, Manchester 2005; J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff, *Of revelation and revolution, I: Christianity, colonialism, and consciousness in South Africa*, Chicago 1991; N. Etherington (ed.), *Missions and empire*, Oxford 2005.

<sup>24</sup> Sanneh, *West African Christianity*; B. Stanley, *The Bible and the flag: Protestant missions and British imperialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries*, Leicester 1990.

<sup>25</sup> F. B. Welbourn and B. A. Ogot, *A place to feel at home: a study of two independent churches in western Kenya*, London 1966.

<sup>26</sup> J. J. Hanciles, ‘Migration and the globalization of Christianity’, in Burrows, Gornik and McLean, *Understanding world Christianity*, 227–41; F. Ludwig and J. K. Asamoah-



termed ‘reverse mission’ since they arise out of explicit missionary interests on the part of Christians from Churches located in countries like Korea, Brazil and Nigeria to take their Christian faith back to a secularising ‘West’. This scholarship has expanded World Christianity scholarship in important ways, including critiquing previous conceptualisations of World Christianity.<sup>27</sup> This literature on migration also made clear that World Christianity was not simply ‘over there’ (i.e. outside of the ‘West’), but that any full accounting of Christianity worldwide ought not to bifurcate the world simplistically. The overwhelming focus of this literature, however, has been to reinforce the basic narrative and analytical priorities common to World Christianity scholarship. For example, missiological and theological motivations have often been fronted at the expense of structural causes that occasion migration, including within the waves of Christians seeking asylum in Europe and/or North America from the Middle East and South and Central America, respectively. Physical violence and structural precarity often have profound effects upon the shape of Christian faith in these regions.<sup>28</sup>

The history of Christianity in Africa is deeply intertwined with the emergence of the field of World Christianity; the latter is scarcely recognisable without the former. This also means that many of the analytical and historiographical tendencies and *lacunae* present in the literature on African Christianity have likewise found their way into the field of World Christianity. Historians of Christianity in Africa have generally found more interesting the development of independent churches in both the colonial and independent eras.<sup>29</sup> That is to say, that while the Western missionary movement was part of these histories, Western missionaries did not provide the assumed historiographical starting-point for understanding the faith and practice of non-Western Christians.

In a recent critical appraisal of the field, Joel Cabrita and David Maxwell rightly observe that ‘the notion of “World Christianity” tends to be a predominantly Protestant preoccupation’.<sup>30</sup> In this sense, the term is imbued with ecumenical assumptions even as it has not prioritised Orthodoxy or Catholicism analytically in the same ways it has

Gyadu (eds), *African Christian presence in the West: new immigrant congregations and transnational networks in North America and Europe*, Trenton, NJ 2011.

<sup>27</sup> J. J. Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: globalization, African migration, and the transformation of the West*, Maryknoll, NY 2008.

<sup>28</sup> L. Sarat, *Fire in the canyon: religion, migration, and the Mexican dream*, New York 2013; K. Kingsbury, ‘Danger, distress, disease, and death: Santa Muerte and her female followers’, in J. Bruner and D. C. Kirkpatrick (eds.), *Global visions of violence: agency and persecution in world Christianity*, New Brunswick, NJ 2022.

<sup>29</sup> B. Sundkler, *Bantu prophets*, London 1961; D. Barrett, *Schism and renewal: an analysis of six thousand contemporary religious movements*, Nairobi 1970.

<sup>30</sup> Cabrita and Maxwell, ‘Relocating world Christianity’, 14.

Protestantism and Pentecostalism. Similarly, while scholars (both within and outside of World Christianity) subsume Catholics and Protestants collectively under a common ‘African Christianity’, there is often a generally ‘Protestant’ leaning which also can marginalise the histories of African Orthodoxy and Catholicism from the literature’s central narrative. African Christianity, in many cases, arises as an ecumenical notion imbued with a Protestant ethos. This, despite the fact that Catholicism especially has grown exponentially on the African continent from the nineteenth century to the present. These historiographical proclivities have meant that, especially within the field of World Christianity, intra-Christian competition, conflict and even violence have largely been occluded.

Where earlier scholarship on African Christianity (along with scholarship on African religion that is outside the field of World Christianity) differs from World Christianity is with respect to the inclusion of violence. For example, David Barrett’s analysis of Christian independency in Africa included the physical violence that could accompany the establishment of independent churches. Barrett’s *Schism and renewal* begins with an example of a confrontation among East African revivalist sects in western Kenya – a conflict which ultimately resulted in the burning of dozens of Anglican churches and the secession of several thousand members from the Anglican Church.<sup>31</sup> Barrett shows not only the potential for violent conflict among independent Christian movements, but also how these movements were part of a complex colonial context, which often persecuted them with the apparatus of the colonial state. Such dynamics were not exclusive to one European nation’s colonies but could be found across the continent, particularly where these dynamics met with existing tribal politics in the late colonial period. For relevant examples, one might consider the case of Simon Kimbangu’s treatment in the Belgian Congo, or of the suppression of the Watchtower movement in Central Africa.<sup>32</sup> What this suggests is that, far from being the result of Christianity’s ‘translatibility’ or capacity for ‘inculturation’, an analytical point that would be primed in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century on World Christianity, these dynamic new expressions of the faith were often contextually related to both the violence of colonialism as well as violent conflicts within particular communities.<sup>33</sup> Here we want to make clear that colonial violence could refer to both the use of the power of colonial states to suppress movements they deemed threatening,

<sup>31</sup> Barrett, *Schism and renewal*.

<sup>32</sup> D. Gordon, *Invisible agents: spirits in a Central African history*, Athens, OH 2012; M. Martin, *Kimbangu: an African prophet and his church*, Oxford 1975.

<sup>33</sup> Barrett, *Schism and renewal*, 72; H. Kwiyani, ‘Mission after George Floyd: on white supremacy, colonialism, and world Christianity’, ANVIL xxxvi (2020), 7–13.

as well as the general destruction of ways of life under colonial expansion and rule.<sup>34</sup>

Still, these forms of violence were often presented as being peripheral to the larger story of Christian growth. Following a series of short profiles of prominent African Christians who were killed for political reasons in the 1960s and 1970s, Adrian Hastings observed, 'Nevertheless the dominant impression of these years is not one of persecution and martyrdom. It is rather one of growth, success, increasing self-confidence, and often rather friendly relations between church and state.'<sup>35</sup> Writing in the mid-1980s, Stephen Neill ultimately concluded that 'Latin America and Africa both gave grounds for encouragement' due to the growth of Christian Churches there, though this expansion was 'accompanied by every sort of political trouble, by martyrdom and murder'.<sup>36</sup> In Africa, Neill's enduring optimism was due to a 'Christian consolidation' as well as a general sense of its perceived exponential growth; in Latin America, this was due to the 'awakening' of the Catholic Church in the form of social engagement and liberation theology, as well as the emergence of Evangelical Churches. While Sub-Saharan Africa has been central to the World Christianity paradigm and Latin America peripheral to it, one can see in the literature how narratives of violence and explosive Christian growth have occasionally connected them in a shared analysis. The field of World Christianity, which was slowly finding its footing in the 1980s and 1990s, became increasingly organised around accounting for the global demographic transformation that the faith was undergoing due to its purportedly explosive growth in Africa, Asia and Latin America.<sup>37</sup>

While the field of World Christianity largely emerged from scholarship on Christianity and colonialism in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, European colonial legacies are no less significant in Latin America, where Spanish colonial structures linger and oppress. Unlike most regions in Sub-Saharan Africa, Christianity is neither recently ascendant nor recently culturally dominant; it has been the central cultural expression in the region for over 400 years. In Latin America, Protestants have almost always represented the cultural periphery throughout their history, recent Pentecostal advances notwithstanding. Even significant changes in government structure struggled to shift longstanding colonial

<sup>34</sup> J. Bruner, 'Imperialism and the question of genocide in colonial-era Africa', in V. Benkert and M. Meyer (eds.), *Terrortimes, terrortimes? Probing spacial, temporal, and memory continuities of war and genocide in the twentieth century*, West Lafayette, IN 2022.

<sup>35</sup> A. Hastings, *A history of African Christianity, 1950-1975*, Cambridge 1979, 15.

<sup>36</sup> S. Neill, *A history of Christian missions*, London 1986, 476.

<sup>37</sup> W. R. Shenk, 'Challenging the academy, breaking barriers', in Burrows, Gornik and McLean, *Understanding world Christianity*, 35-50.

preferences, which favoured the Roman Catholic Church. From a Latin American perspective, Protestantism seemed to represent the margins of Christendom, and American and British missionaries to the region found that it was the Protestant faith that was labelled heretical and cult-like, mostly due to their rejection of papal authority, the Virgin Mary's role in salvation and cultural Catholic markers such as processions. But colonialism could also invert the relationship between power and perception. In the case of the British Empire, and the Edinburgh conference of 1910, Catholics were a central missionary question since Protestants often suspected the veracity of their Christian faith. As borders and colonial power switched, so too the parameters of how Christian faith was imagined. In the case of the Protestant-dominated Edinburgh conference in 1910, however, the overwhelmingly Catholic Latin America came to be regarded as 'Christian'.<sup>38</sup>

Prior to the twentieth century, Latin American Protestantism was primarily confined to ethnic pockets of European immigrants. Two significant events accelerated growth and transformation in Latin American Protestant Christianity, one external and one internal: the independence of Latin American nations from the colonial powers of Spain and Portugal, and the legacy of the Second Great Awakening in the United States, a Protestant revival movement that flourished from the 1790s to the 1830s. Those factors gave rise to new missionary initiatives from the North, and an influx of Protestant missionaries from the United States into Latin America.<sup>39</sup> While on paper many of these Latin American countries embraced religious freedom, the reality on the ground was fiercely contested – a lucid example of how violence cuts across broader narratives of growth and vitality. Mexico in the 1920s to 1940s reflects this reality. Mexico provides important data due to its proximity to the United States, generally conservative forms of Catholicism (due to many factors, but especially including Porfirio Díaz's seven terms as president) and fraught implementation of religious freedom. The 1917 Mexican Constitution enshrined freedom of religion in one form but outlawed religious influence on teaching or curriculum, regulated worship and even prohibited priests from criticising the government. Passionate enforcement did not arrive until the Mexican president Plutarco Elías Calles (1924–8). Calles pushed anticlerical aspects of the Mexican Constitution with increasing fervour. His efforts also provoked the so-called Cristero Wars: tensions came to a head in 1926, as Catholic authorities suspended all religious service activities on 31 July of that year, and pockets of violence broke

<sup>38</sup> Stanley, *Christianity in the twentieth century*.

<sup>39</sup> O. González and J. González, *Christianity in Latin America: a history*, Cambridge 2008, 206–7.

out against Catholic clerics and adherents.<sup>40</sup> When these broader conflicts between Church and State were resolved, especially under the administrations of Ávila Camacho (1940–6) and Alemán (1946–52), scholars have often taken this as *de facto* peace between religion and state. But political shifts in fact produced the opposite effect for Protestant minorities. According to the historian Todd Hartch, ‘The regime’s decision to pursue better relationships with the Roman Catholic Church ... opened the door for a widespread pattern of Anti-Protestant violence and intimidation.’<sup>41</sup> Protestants found themselves caught in the crossfire between radical anticlericalism and Catholic religious fervour.<sup>42</sup> Protestant schools, churches and pastors were especially targeted, and both administrations failed to protect a Protestant minority during persecution. Both administrations also denied Protestant requests to open new churches.<sup>43</sup> This is simply one example of many where broader scholarly narratives overshadow the grassroots reality for religious minority communities and relegated violence to the periphery.

Violence cuts across narratives of growth and vitality that exist so widely in World Christianity scholarship. But in a double-bind for Latin American Protestantism, scholars of Catholicism often downplayed or overlooked violence against these religious minorities, especially as they began to gain a real foothold in the region after the Second World War. Brazil has provided a notable exception in scholarly focus across multiple decades, including more recently.<sup>44</sup> Spanish-speaking Latin America remains in need of systematic coverage. As Latin America is examined within the wider context of World Christianity, violence – and its absence – becomes clearer. The region’s post-war Catholic demographic decline would also seem to present a counter-example to World Christianity’s focus on growth and vitality, or at least an opportunity for focusing upon the decline of certain Christian influence. Yet, here there is a continued and heavy emphasis on growth and revitalisation from Pentecostalism. Edward Cleary’s *How Latin America saved the soul of the Catholic Church* and Todd Hartch’s *Rebirth of Latin American Christianity* both argued that Pentecostalism’s demographic dominance primarily revitalised rather than threatened or weakened institutional

<sup>40</sup> J. Young, ‘Cristero diaspora: Mexican immigrants, the US Catholic Church, and Mexico’s Cristero War, 1926–29’, *Catholic Historical Review* xcvi (2012), 274.

<sup>41</sup> T. Hartch, *Missionaries of the state: the Summer Institute of Linguistics, state formation, and indigenous Mexico, 1935–1985*, Tuscaloosa, AL 2006, 62–3.

<sup>42</sup> A. Metz, ‘Protestantism in Mexico: contemporary contextual developments’, *Journal of Church and State* xxxvi (1994), 10.

<sup>43</sup> Hartch, *Missionaries of the state*, 62–3.

<sup>44</sup> E. Helgen, *Religious conflict in Brazil: Protestants, Catholics, and the rise of religious pluralism*, New Haven 2020.

Catholicism.<sup>45</sup> The narrational power of World Christianity could shape even trajectories of decline into stories of growth or vitality.

Violence has operated simultaneously as central to the story of Latin American Christianity and as a widely overlooked phenomenon. The violence of conquest and colonialism has been thoroughly noted and examined, while intra-Christian violence – that is, Catholic-Protestant violence – has not gained pride of place even in the tellings of Protestantism. In short, it did not fit the historical narratives generated by Catholic or World Christianity scholars. At times, the telling of the history of Christianity was written by those with a particular constructive goal (either theological or otherwise) and, in the case of some Catholic narratives, violence challenged their perception of the culturally destructive and invasive nature of Protestantism. In other words, a Catholic conviction of Protestant cultural violence precluded the inclusion of physical violence against them. This is a point of departure from narratives of African religion, but also a point of convergence. If the centrality of Catholicism departs from much of African and World Christianity scholarship, there is a convergence in seeking to understand the histories of Christian communities in these regions with respect to the dynamics of violence, which often constituted them and which have enduring historical legacies.

### *Latin America and the World Christian paradigm*

Latin America provides a crucial test case for the limits of World Christianity. Challenges came to a head in the early twentieth century, centring upon power imbalances among mission-sending Western Christians and Christians whose lands were being newly missionised. In June 1910, 1,200 representatives of 160 Protestant mission societies from around the world gathered in Edinburgh. For our purposes, the epochal 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh represents the long-standing difficulty of placing Latin America within the story of World Christianity. The region has been dominated by Christianity for over 400 years, in stark contrast to Africa and Asia, where Christianity remained marginal for much of their history. But for Protestant observers, the nature of Roman Catholic Christianity called into question its inclusion within the boundaries of an imagined World Christianity. In other words, Latin America did not fit neatly within the Protestant assumptions of a globalising view of Christianity.

<sup>45</sup> E. Cleary, *How Latin America saved the soul of the Catholic Church*, New York 2009; T. Hartch, *The rebirth of Latin American Christianity*, New York 2014. A somewhat similar argument can be found in C. Omenyo, *Pentecost outside Pentecostalism: a study of the development of charismatic renewal in the mainline churches in Ghana*, Zoetermeer 2006.

The majority of delegates at Edinburgh 1910 conceptually divided the world into Christian and non-Christian. According to the historian Brian Stanley, 'Such a territorial understanding of Christendom was a deeply ingrained feature of their understanding of the world.'<sup>46</sup> But in the planning stages, fierce disagreement erupted over whether or how to include Latin America in relation to mission work. Since Latin America was thoroughly Roman Catholic, was it off-limits to Protestant evangelisation? Anglo-Catholics argued it was already Christianised, and bitterly contested the work of Protestant Evangelicals in the region. As a result, nearly all Protestant statistics in Latin America were excluded from consideration at the conference.<sup>47</sup> This exclusion of Latin American Protestantism and missionary activity only served to motivate US missionary efforts in the region.

In direct response to the oversight of Edinburgh 1910, six years later North American and Latin American Protestants launched the Congress on Christian Work in Latin America (the Panama Congress), which in hindsight was a turning-point in the history of Christianity in the region. The 1916 congress spurred missionary activity, historiography and even Protestant political visibility as the president of Panama, Belisario Porras, planned to speak at the congress in the face of significant Roman Catholic opposition.<sup>48</sup> But these missionary and historiographical advances took place within a wider atmosphere of growing anti-Protestant sentiment and anti-American backlash in the region.<sup>49</sup> The Panama Canal had also recently been completed and broader US interventionism heightened the backlash against Americans and with it Protestant advances. For example, Catholic bishops at the Constitutional Assembly in Mexico of 1917 equated national identity with Catholicism and questioned the identity, Mexicanness and even Latin Americanness of Protestants.<sup>50</sup> In reality, none of this was new.

Violence had erupted against Protestantism since its emergence and spread in the mid-nineteenth century (early, sporadic, colonial mission communities notwithstanding) – a widespread reality that is often not reflected in the historiography.<sup>51</sup> From the first accounts of religious violence against Protestants in Latin America, nearly every incident included

<sup>46</sup> B. Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910*, Grand Rapids, MI 2009, 303.

<sup>48</sup> 'Porras overrides bishop', *New York Times*, 10 Feb. 1916, 4.

<sup>49</sup> R. Bruno-Jofre, 'Social gospel, the Committee on Cooperation in Latin America, and the APRA: the case of the American Methodist Mission, 1920–1930', *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* ix (1984), 80.

<sup>50</sup> C. Mondragón, *Leaven in the dough: Protestant social thought in Latin America, 1920–1950*, Vancouver, BC 2010, 114.

<sup>51</sup> Of course, we see Protestants in Latin America as early as the Inquisition. But their numbers remained minuscule until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

two ingredients: reference to the Bible and an angry ‘mob’ spurred on by a local priest. This ‘mob’ language was a common stereotype against Catholics.<sup>52</sup> But the widespread nature of accounts, and diversity of archival material and oral history, suggests a wider reality even where specific details could be exaggerated. Even while religious freedom laws swept over Latin America in the mid to late nineteenth century, the cultural structure of priest-church-school-neighbourhood remained of central cultural and social importance.

The colonial structure – everything from the division of the calendar with processions and celebrations, to the architecture of the city around a cathedral – favoured Catholicism. Within periods of liberal political reforms, Protestants often sided with liberal reform governments who sought to loosen the control of conservative Catholic hegemony. The language of ‘religious freedom’ was often synonymous with political reform, such as in the presidency of Porfirio Díaz in Mexico, which was marked by significant modernising impulses (Díaz led the country through seven terms as president 1876–80, 1884–1911). Díaz’s government introduced wider religious toleration and religious freedom across Mexico.<sup>53</sup> The Díaz period, though, also provoked unintended anti-American sentiment as the US began to dominate certain sectors of the Mexican economy. Seen on paper, Protestants often experienced a sea change of freedom in similar government reforms. On the ground, however, advances were almost always muted, small and cyclical.

Religious violence often erupted against the arrival and spread of Protestantism in mid nineteenth-century Latin America – a pattern of firebombing, lynching, stoning, kidnapping, assassinations and ‘mob’ violence. But American missionaries and local co-religionists curated this violence in prayer letters and religious print media, painting a picture of Latin Americans and Catholicism writ large. To the North, these tropes were often grounded in actual violence but sought to broaden their application to essentialise immigrants and religious minorities of all kinds. These dynamics are evident in a handful of representative examples.

On 2 March 1874 a jarring telegram crossed the desk of the US ambassador to Mexico John W. Foster: an American missionary had been assassinated in the state of Jalisco. Two days later, the gruesome details arrived: the body of the missionary, John Stephens, was ‘badly mutilated, and his head cut into several pieces and his house plundered’.<sup>54</sup> Stephens was a

<sup>52</sup> For more on the language and perception of mobs see G. Le Bon, *The crowd: a study of the popular mind*, West Valley City, UT 2009.

<sup>53</sup> J. Fea, *The Bible cause: a history of the American Bible Society*, New York 2016, 123.

<sup>54</sup> J. Foster, ‘Protection of American citizens in Mexico’, in *United States congressional serial set*, Washington, DC 1878, 347. See also *The Missionary Herald at Home and Abroad* lxx (May 1874), 137–8.



missionary with the American Bible Society Foreign Mission (ABS), reportedly killed by an angry crowd in response to a fiery anti-Protestant sermon by the local Catholic curate. ‘Long live the curate! Death to the Protestants!’, they reportedly chanted. Two weeks later, the story reached the American public through the *New York Times*, which ran the bold headline ‘THE MEXICAN TRAGEDY: The Murder of Rev. John. L. Stephens’.<sup>55</sup> The Mexican government arrested ‘twelve to fifteen’ persons, including the Catholic curate of the local parish, and a number of priests from Ahualulco and Teschitan. At least one priest was later exonerated.<sup>56</sup> The Mexican government explicitly denied that Stephens’s death represented a wider pattern.

The year after Stephens’s death, on 6 February 1875, ‘Rev. Hutchinson’, a Presbyterian superintendent in Acapulco, was reportedly attacked by a ‘mob’ with machetes and rifles. Hutchinson managed to flee, while the military quickly clashed with the surging mob. After the dust settled, four Mexicans and one American lay dead. Two days later, the *New York Times* would write ‘not a month passes without conflict occurring between Catholic and Protestant’.<sup>57</sup> The ABS accounts seem to belie their cultural influence in the United States. Indeed, the reach and influence of ABS was significant, drawn especially from its early leadership. Its founding president, Elias Boudinot, was president of the Continental Congress from 1782 to 1783, while a later president, John Jay (1821), was the first Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court. On ABS’s 100th anniversary, President Woodrow Wilson called its agents and Bible salesmen the ‘shuttles in a great loom that is weaving the spirits of men together’.<sup>58</sup> While connected to institutions of power in the North, this did not isolate ABS agents from explicit religious violence in Latin America. Given there were less than a hundred Protestant missionaries in the whole of Mexico, the persistence of religious violence is noteworthy.<sup>59</sup>

The ABS often curated these stories for a watching American public. In one particular example, when news came that same year of Catholics carrying off pieces of a ‘terribly mutilated’ Protestant martyr, the ABS editorialised, ‘Such a thing does not seem possible’, leaving the conclusion to the reader. But the account was sure of the final words of the martyr: ‘If they want to kill me, I am ready to die for Christ; I will wait for you in heaven.’<sup>60</sup> The curation, shared

<sup>55</sup> ‘The Mexican tragedy: the murder of Rev. John L. Stevens’, *New York Times*, 19 Mar. 1874, 2.

<sup>56</sup> Foster, ‘Protection of American citizens’, 347.

<sup>57</sup> D. Baldwin, *Protestants and the Mexican Revolution: missionaries, ministers, and social change*, Champaign, IL 1990, 25.

<sup>58</sup> D. Dunlap, ‘Bible Society departs and so does its building’, *New York Times*, 22 Oct. 2015, A27, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/22/nyregion/new-york-says-farewell-to-american-bible-society-and-its-building.html>>.

<sup>59</sup> Baldwin, *Protestants and the Mexican Revolution*, 24.

<sup>60</sup> *Annual report of the American Bible Society*, New York 1924, 179.

language and widespread perception of violence in ‘Catholic lands’ had manifest implications for the views of Catholics in the American public square. The ABS president, John Cotton Smith, warned that Catholics were using religious freedom laws in the US to weaken the advance of modernity.<sup>61</sup> These views accelerated as the Catholic population surged in the United States. Many argued that Catholics enjoyed freedom of religion provided by a Protestant majority in the United States while denying that very freedom to Protestants, including missionaries, in Latin America. Violence, thus, took on an agentive character here, shaping how Protestants viewed themselves and the world.

Between 1880 and 1925 Mexican Methodists reported lynchings, firebombings, assassinations and mob beatings – on top of pervasive daily discrimination. As late as 1925 stores in Querétaro reportedly would not sell even ‘a grain of salt’ to Protestants there.<sup>62</sup> Official government and ecclesial statements again denied that violence represented a pattern. Yet, when events became too public to deny, they argued they were the result of random individuals, rather than endorsed religious violence.<sup>63</sup> Scholarship on the history of Latin American religions, though, has not meaningfully incorporated these incidents into a sustained analysis of religion in the region. Together, these overlapping paths of violence helped create an imagined community of global Christianity and an internal conversation of who belonged in the United States. This narrative wielded violence to draw lines of worldwide spiritual affiliation based on the perception of a shared religious and political identity. Anti-Protestant violence facilitated the imagination of a global Christianity where American Evangelicals played an outsize role, as well. American Protestants have long wielded anti-Catholic rhetoric. In colonial America, for example, Puritans wrung their hands over the threat of Catholics abroad and perceived encroachment on their shores. In this story, as the twentieth century dawned, US imperialistic efforts expanded alongside a growing worldwide missionary reach. As a result, anti-Catholicism cast an increasingly global shadow. But how these intra-religious dynamics have affected the relationship between the United States and their closest neighbours – Latin America – has been widely understated or overlooked. Mexico, which is not exceptional when compared to other Latin American countries with small Protestant communities, provides an important focus due to its

<sup>61</sup> Fea, *The Bible cause*, 67.

<sup>62</sup> R. Guerra, *Hombres nuevos: Metodismo y modernización, 1873–1930*, Mexico City 1992, 17.

<sup>63</sup> Report of the Secretary of Finance of the United States of Mexico, On the Actual Condition of Mexico, and the Increase of Commerce with the United States, Rectifying the Report of the Hon. John W. Foster, 9 October 1878. To Mr. Carlisle Mason, President of the Manufacturers’ Association of the City of Chicago, in the State of Illinois, of the United States of America, New York 1880.

proximity to the US and also the importance of its political relations with North America.

Violence followed the Protestant missionary entry into Latin America in the mid-nineteenth century and persisted into the twentieth. It cut across denominational lines imported from the North, failing to distinguish between Episcopalians, Baptists, Methodists and Pentecostals.<sup>64</sup> The historian Erika Helgen has even observed promotion within the Roman Catholic hierarchy being tied to the success of anti-Protestant campaigns, including those that used violence.<sup>65</sup> This violence, of course, was in addition to widespread discrimination in business, local schools and everyday life for Latin American Protestants, especially in rural regions. Even while factoring in complex regional politics to contextualise the violence, patterns and similarities remain. There are wide chronological and geographical gaps between, for example, anticlerical reforms in Mexico or *la violencia* in Colombia, but both provoked widespread violence against Protestants, for disparate yet also similar reasons. Thus, hyperlocalisation – that is avoiding wider conclusions due to a desire for local nuance – risks overlooking important trans-regional methodological insights.

In the case of Latin American Protestantism, it is worth asking why it was subject to such widespread and sustained violence and why it has been so widely overlooked in the literature on World Christianity and Latin American religions more broadly. At a scholarly level, anti-Protestant violence in Latin America has been downplayed or overlooked in part due to the desire to avoid earlier exaggerations or unverifiable accounts from missionaries and practitioners. But at a grassroots level, three factors probably account for this omission. First, Protestantism threatened the structure of Latin American life by challenging authority, and in particular the authority of local clergy over everyday life. (This element of Protestantism may indeed have dovetailed with the anticlericalism of Latin American political regimes and movements.) Second, Protestantism threatened the widely established orality of Latin American culture in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Early Protestant expansion methods focused on the reading, understanding and application of a text – the Protestant Bible. By necessity, this intersected with class, power and authority, as well. Thirdly, Protestantism upended local conceptions of the deity, and in particular the veneration of the Virgin Mary (Aparecida, Guadalupe, Candelaria) and her role in salvation. This aimed at reversing supernaturalist tendencies in the Global South in

<sup>64</sup> Annual report of the Methodist Episcopal Church Archives (1890), New York Public Library, Archives and Manuscripts, 40.

<sup>65</sup> E. Helgen, 'Holy wars: Protestants, Catholics, and the struggle for Brazilian national identity, 1916–1945', unpubl. PhD diss. New Haven 2015, 161, 188.

favour of a rationalist reading of a text.<sup>66</sup> This threefold violent rejection of and reaction against Protestantism sheds light on the nature of Protestantism and its relationship to power structures in Latin American life. But it also invites further inquiry into why it was overlooked in the literature. In reality, the two are deeply connected.

In Latin America, some Protestant communities have also utilised the past to draw lines excluding Catholics. Latin American Pentecostals have seen tremendous growth in recent years, and many have imagined conceptions of the past where Catholics play a limited role, and their own religious communities play an outsized one. For example, this is why prominent Pentecostal communities, such as the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (which has many branches throughout Africa, as well), utilise Jewish symbols such as the shofar and prayer shawls to invoke the past in worship services or public evangelistic events. Even while experiencing past discrimination and violence, other Pentecostal communities have used a particularly anti-Catholic conception of history to construct their own forms of power – even violent ones.<sup>67</sup>

A sustained view of violence is essential to developing new methodological insights and challenging broader narratives prevalent within the field of World Christianity. The above discussion of anti-Evangelical violence in Latin America suggests the need for a new historiographical paradigm for Protestantism in Latin America. Rather than simply amplifying muted or suppressed accounts of violence, a more sustained engagement with the enduring constitutive effects of intra-Christian violence has the potential to fundamentally reframe how Protestantism is studied in Latin America and the US diaspora. As the following account of intra-Christian violence and conflict from colonial East Africa shows, such a historiographical intervention is not limited to Latin American religious history.

### *Anti-Catholicism and the East African Revival*

The East African Revival emerged as a movement among Evangelical Anglican mission stations in southern Uganda and northern Rwanda in the 1930s. Many histories trace the movement to one station at Gahini, in north-central Rwanda, where missionaries reported a nascent movement

<sup>66</sup> M. McAlister, *The kingdom of God has no borders: a global history of American Evangelicals*, Oxford 2018, 9–10.

<sup>67</sup> T. McCoy, “Soldiers of Jesus”: armed neo-Pentecostals torment Brazil’s religious minorities’, *Washington Post*, 8 Dec. 2019, <[https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the\\_americas/soldiers-of-jesus-armed-neo-pentecostals-torment-brazils-religious-minorities/2019/12/08/fd74de6e-fffo-11e9-8501-2a7123a38c58\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/soldiers-of-jesus-armed-neo-pentecostals-torment-brazils-religious-minorities/2019/12/08/fd74de6e-fffo-11e9-8501-2a7123a38c58_story.html)>.

of spiritual awakening among some of their school and hospital staff.<sup>68</sup> This new spiritual life was characterised by the public confession of sins, the restoration of items and money that revivalists believed they had acquired sinfully and banding together into intimate fellowship groups that met for prayer, bible study and spiritual discernment. Those who confessed their sins and joined the movement testified that they experienced a radical new spiritual intimacy with God and one another. They believed that they had found a way to salvation that was more immediate than the time-consuming and ineffectual methods of colonial mission churches, which often required long periods of catechisation before baptism. For these reasons, it is understandable why the revival has been characterised by its association with an emerging global Evangelicalism in the mid-twentieth century.<sup>69</sup>

Derek Peterson's work on the revival has convincingly centred the cultural and political tensions the movement produced, and his perspicacious use of interviews, colonial archives, vernacular literature and oral histories has established a new trajectory of scholarship on the relationship between religion and politics in colonial Africa. Yet, historical analyses within World Christianity scholarship have tended to marginalise its violent and anti-Catholic history in the colonial period. Within the field of World Christianity, the revival has largely been celebrated for its conversionary impulse, pan-ethnic inclusivity and inculturated style of African Christian faith.<sup>70</sup> Various forms of violence, however, were constitutive of the movement across East Africa. Revivalists purged anything that they deemed to be 'heathen' from their lives, often burning objects like amulets publicly. They also flouted traditional norms of discourse and comportment, which provoked conflicts with neighbours, elders and non-revivalist family members, and they deliberately antagonised colonial and ecclesiastical authorities, which, in southern and eastern Uganda and northern Rwanda, evinced an intense anti-Catholicism that led to altercations and imprisonments. In this section, we argue not only that such forms of conflict and intra-Christian violence were important dynamics of the early revival, but also that accounts of religious change ought not to reify

<sup>68</sup> J. E. Church, *Quest for the highest: an autobiographical account of the East African revival*, Exeter 1981; R. MacMaster and D. Jacobs, *A gentle wind of God: the influence of the East African Revival*, Scottsdale, PA 2006.

<sup>69</sup> B. Stanley, *The global diffusion of Evangelicalism: the age of Billy Graham and John Stott*, Downers Grove, IL 2013, 81–5; M. Noll, *The new shape of World Christianity: how American experience reflects global faith*, Downers Grove, IL 2009, 169–88.

<sup>70</sup> B. Stanley, 'The East African revival: African initiative within a European tradition', *Churchman* xcii (1978), 1–22; M. Shaw, *Global awakening: how 20th-century revivals triggered a Christian revolution*, Downers Grove, IL 2010; Noll, *The new shape of world Christianity*.

the 'religious' so as to extricate it from the complex colonial politics involving economics, race and ethnicity.

East African revivalists claimed to make those who converted to the movement 'all one in Christ Jesus', regardless of their national, tribal or ethnic identities. Early missionary accounts highlighted this dimension, and often presented the movement as an expression of the Early Church as described in the Book of Acts. Revivalists testified to a new kind of unity that they experienced within fellowship groups, which were composed of fellow revivalists and were usually set up as supplementary to regular Sunday worship in mission churches. Revivalists – especially those in southern Uganda and Rwanda – generally maintained that they should be spiritual leaven within mission churches.<sup>71</sup> In Uganda and Rwanda, that was the Anglican Church, while in Kenya, Congo and Tanganyika, there was a wider array of denominations, along with a higher incidence of discord within those Churches regarding the revival movement.<sup>72</sup> This conviction only applied if the mission church was Protestant, because many early revivalists also tended to be virulently anti-Catholic, coining phrases like, 'To be Catholic is worse than pagan.'<sup>73</sup> In the early decades of the revival movement, when a Catholic converted to revivalist Christianity, that person was expected to leave the Catholic Church.

By the end of the 1930s, revivalists had dispersed across East and Central Africa. As the peripatetic revivalists preached, they quickly encountered various types of opposition: from chiefs and indigenous rulers, from parents and elders, colonial administrations, missionaries, bishops, teachers and employers.<sup>74</sup> To revivalists, only those who had confessed their sins publicly were saved and could live in the light of salvation; everyone else was in spiritual darkness – even Anglican priests, who might find their Sunday sermons interrupted by boisterous revivalists' denunciations.<sup>75</sup> But it is clear from a variety of historical sources surrounding the emergence of the revival movement, particularly in Rwanda and south-western Uganda (Kigezi and Ankole), that the roots of the antagonism between East African revivalist Protestants and Catholics went deeper than mere confessional difference.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Erica Sabiti, East Africa Revival interviews, 7 Mar. 1972, UCU, folder 1, p. 6.

<sup>72</sup> J. Karanja, *Founding an African faith: Kikuyu Anglican Christianity, 1900–1945*, Nairobi 1999; Welbourn and Ogot, *A place to feel at home*.

<sup>73</sup> P. Turner, East Africa Revival interviews, 24 Sept. 1971, UCU, folder 1, p. 1.

<sup>74</sup> D. Peterson, 'Wordy women: gender trouble and the oral politics of the East African revival in northern Gikuyuland', *Journal of African History* xlii (2001), 469–89.

<sup>75</sup> E. Wild, "'Walking in the light": the liturgy of fellowship in the East African revival', in R. N. Swanson (ed.), *Continuity and change in Christian worship*, Woodbridge 1999, 419–31.

<sup>76</sup> Church, *Quest for the highest*; A. C. Stanley Smith, *Road to revival: the story of the Ruanda Mission*, London 1946; J. E. Church, 'Needs spiritual and temporal at Gahini:

Take, for example, the Anglican mission stations in northern Rwanda, where some of the earliest traces of the movement emerged.<sup>77</sup> The British Evangelical missionaries here especially celebrated the conversion of ‘chiefs’, whom they termed ‘Batutsi’.<sup>78</sup> These instances, which made for good support letter updates, were the exception to the rule that they had relatively few converts of political importance associated with their missions. The revival spread in the immediate wake of ‘*le tornade*’ – the rapid conversion and baptism of Rwandans in the mid-1930s, when Catholic Church membership went from 81,000 to 232,000 in only four years.<sup>79</sup> With the recent Catholicisation of much of the Rwandan courtly hierarchy, small bands of youthful, ethnically-diverse revivalists associated with Protestant missions proclaiming that others were living in spiritual darkness did not earn an eager hearing. One revivalist in south-western Uganda remembered reactions to their early preaching:

When we went on teams, sometimes we preached in market places or in people’s homes ... The Catholics used to attend very much but it hurt their priests to see them come to listen to the words of the Protestants because they called them Batwa ... They said that this religion is not an old one and that it was not Jesus’s ... Because the Batutsi loathed the Bahutu, they called [the revival] the religion of the Bahutu, useless – that one of the Batwa.<sup>80</sup>

From this quotation, it is apparent that the revival developed along ethnic lines, and that ethnic lines denoted Catholic/Protestant confessional lines. In fact, ethnic categories were used to critique religious change, with the politically powerful Catholic Tutsi deriding the predominantly Hutu revival movement as being more appropriately characteristic of the minoritised Twa, who were often pejoratively called ‘Pygmies’. (In colonial Rwanda and Burundi’s concentration of political power in a Catholic ruling elite, alongside an incipient band of Protestants contesting that power, one might observe somewhat similar dynamics to those described with respect to Latin America.) The new cosmopolitan ethics that revivalists insisted upon, including the rejection of traditional food taboos, were opposed by many Catholics, who also tended to be regarded as ‘Tutsi’.<sup>81</sup>

Dr. Church’s letter’, *Ruanda Notes*, no. 37 (July 1931), 17–19; P. Ngolgoza, *Kigezi and its peoples*, Kampala 1998.

<sup>77</sup> Church, *Quest for the highest*; Stanley Smith, *Road to revival*.

<sup>78</sup> J. E. Church, ‘Dr. Church’s “honeymoon letter” which arrived too late for the July number’, *Ruanda Notes*, no. 34 (Oct. 1930), 14.

<sup>79</sup> I. Linden and J. Linden, *Church and revolution in Rwanda*, Manchester 1977, 190.

<sup>80</sup> Z. Mikekemo, East Africa Revival interviews, 18 Sept. 1971, UCU, folder 2, p. 2; J. J. Carney, *Rwanda before the genocide: Catholic politics and ethnic discourse in late colonial Rwanda*, Oxford 2013.

<sup>81</sup> D. Peterson, *Ethnic patriotism and the East African revival: a history of dissent, c. 1935–1972*, Cambridge 2012.

Many Catholic Tutsi chiefs used their authority to deny revivalist Anglicans the ability to build churches on their land.<sup>82</sup> While British Anglicans sometimes lamented what they perceived as unfair treatment by Belgian Catholic officials, some revivalists occasionally mitigated bureaucratic opposition to the movement by appealing to notions of the freedom of religion. In one case, in which a Belgian official opposed a Rwandan revivalist's preaching because it was 'British', the revivalist responded: 'You have in this country many heathen but they are free to practice their religion ... there are Roman Catholics and Seventh Day Adventists, and they too are free to worship God. May I also not worship God in my way?'<sup>83</sup> Such distinctions, which often had to do with how threatening a movement might become to the colonial state, could make the difference between religious toleration and suppression.<sup>84</sup> (They also suggest the need for a historical inquiry into ideas of religious freedom in colonial contexts.) The religio-ethnic divisions are by no means historically incidental even without reference to the genocide of 1994, as colonial authorities, especially the British in south-western Uganda, had engaged in military campaigns in the early twentieth century to eradicate *Nyabingi*, an *emandwa* possession cult dating to the eighteenth century that, by the late nineteenth century, was associated with contesting the royalist claims of the Rwandan court. Protestant revivalists re-embodied the contestational spirit of *Nyabingi* after it had been forcibly suppressed by the colonial state in the 1920s.<sup>85</sup> Colonial violence is, therefore, relevant here in several senses. One is the use of military force to suppress a previous movement, while another is the related destruction or disintegration of indigenous traditions, practices and objects through the changes induced by colonial society as well as from within, including the violence perpetrated by revivalist converts.

Moving north from Rwanda into south-western Uganda, one still finds a deeply antagonistic relationship between revivalist Protestants and Roman Catholics. In the kingdom of Ankole, for example, the majority of those who converted to the revival movement were Hima, who comprised the vast majority of Anglicans in the kingdom but a minority of the total population, though they held most of the powerful positions due to the British policy of indirect rule. The majority of those who were Catholic, on the other hand, were regarded as Iru, who comprised the majority of the population (maybe 80%–85% in the late colonial era). In a kind of demographic inversion of the situation in Rwanda, when Anglican Hima

<sup>82</sup> 'Article by ACSS', clipping, Aug. 1937, JEC 9/2/4.

<sup>83</sup> A. C. Stanley Smith, 'Dr Stanley Smith's letter', *Ruanda Notes*, no. 31 (Jan. 1930),

11.

<sup>84</sup> Bruner, *Living salvation*.  
<sup>85</sup> Linden, *Church and revolution in Rwanda*, 202; E. Hopkins, 'The Nyabingi cult of Southwestern Uganda', in R. Rotberg and A. Mazrui (ed.), *Protest and power in Black Africa*, New York 1970, 258–336.



revivalists denounced Catholicism, they were also asserting a new cosmopolitan Anglican hegemony that was largely rejected by both non-revivalist Hima Anglicans as well as the predominantly Catholic Iru. The changes revivalists insisted upon, such as European-style houses and clothing, as well as vaccinating their cattle, conflicted with the re-assertion of ethnic particularity among these groups in the late colonial period.<sup>86</sup>

Ankole revivalists' talk of being 'one in Christ Jesus' was more easily realised in their hospitality towards fellow revivalists from outside of Ankole, rather than those who were their immediate neighbours.<sup>87</sup> Some of these revivalists even composed derogatory songs that they used to attempt to drown out Catholic priests saying mass.<sup>88</sup> Similar provocations occurred in nearby Kigezi, which is on the Uganda/Rwanda border. In response to such disorderliness, a British district commissioner in Kigezi banned singing 'outside of normal church hours' and repeatedly had unruly revivalists jailed.<sup>89</sup> Even so, a group of revivalists in this region had their houses set on fire after a large revival meeting in 1945.<sup>90</sup> And some chiefs in the region had revivalists beaten for their insolence and disobedience, which sympathetic European missionaries interpreted as 'wild persecution'.<sup>91</sup> Revivalists responded in song: 'We were beaten with sticks / But you will be beaten with whips / When Jesus comes / ... We are going to leave you / In ignorance.'<sup>92</sup> The 'ignorance' referred to here is ignorance about how one might truly receive salvation and, therefore, avoid being eternally damned. Revivalists believed that salvation could only be entered into by confessing one's sins publicly. In practice, this became a critique of the formalism and ritualism of colonial mission Churches, both Catholic and Protestant.<sup>93</sup> Trusting in sacraments, especially baptism, or in being a communicant was insufficient in revivalists' estimation (critiques that can also be found in Latin America with Protestant perceptions of devotion to the Virgin Mary). Revivalists' anti-Catholic sentiments and, at times, physically violent confrontations with Catholics were not simply copied from Low-Church Evangelical

<sup>86</sup> Bruner, *Living salvation*.

<sup>87</sup> Peterson, *Ethnic patriotism*, ch. 1, 2, 4; D. Stenning, 'Salvation in Ankole', in M. Fortes and G. Dieterlan (eds), *African systems of thought*, London 1965, 258–75; Derek Stenning papers, Cambridge University Library, 'People', box 2/f. C 2/doc. C1.

<sup>88</sup> Y. Kaboroga, East Africa Revival interviews, 21 Sept. 1971, UCU, folder 2, p. 3.

<sup>89</sup> 'Wallie' to Church, n.d., JEC 5/1/6; Erica Bugaare, East Africa Revival interviews, 6 July 1971, folder 3, pp. 3–4.

<sup>90</sup> Erica Sabiti to Church, 27 July 1945, JEC 5/3/17.

<sup>91</sup> Church circular letter, 27 Nov. 1938, JEC 1/4/1.

<sup>92</sup> Mutanga, East Africa Revival interviews, 23 Sept. 1971, UCU, folder 2, pp. 10–11.

<sup>93</sup> K. Ward, 'Revival, mission and Church in Kigezi, Ruanda, and Burundi: a complex relationship', in K. Ward and E. Wild-Wood (eds), *The East African revival: history and legacies*, Kampala 2010.

missionaries. Rather, they stemmed more from revivalists' egalitarian politics, which directly confronted seniority and hierarchy.

Revivalists preached against 'bakuluship' and they denounced '*bakulu*', a word found in multiple interlacustrine Bantu languages that could refer to seniority, status or a chief or elder.<sup>94</sup> In the colonial context, it could refer to a school's headmaster or a bishop. Kevin Ward offered a more colloquial definition of the word as revivalists used it: *bukulu* was 'the oppressive weight of ecclesiastical leadership'.<sup>95</sup> While it seems that revivalists genuinely thought that a reformation of the Anglican or other mission church hierarchies was possible, that of the Roman Catholic Church simply was not. They criticised how both 'pagans' and Catholics similarly regarded their priests as having 'magical powers'.<sup>96</sup> One Anglican canon from Ankole recalled that revivalists would harass Catholic priests by singing a chorus that proclaimed how trusting in their ordination and ecclesiastical seniority ('*bukulu*') meant that the entire leadership of the Church (also '*bukulu*') would only 'bind hearts'.<sup>97</sup>

Revivalists critiqued Roman Catholicism within a context in which ethnic identities mapped closely onto religious ones. This is particularly obvious in this region at this time because there were essentially two primary options if one were to be Christian in late colonial Uganda and Rwanda: Anglican or Catholic. Insisting upon revival converts' leaving the Catholic Church, therefore, was a call for them to break with colonial ethno-religious delineations and join a new kind of community. The ideals of this community were largely formed in the cosmopolitan sites of towns, cities, mission stations and colonial schools. In these locations, revivalists hoped to remake social structures and colonial authorities by insisting upon a democratic ethos, developing fellowship practices that realised those values, and using vocabulary that intentionally sought to challenge social, political and ecclesiastical hierarchies.

While for historians of World Christianity, the revival has understandably become an example of a pan-Protestant, African-initiated Christian movement, the analysis in this section calls for the continued need to place these 'religious' developments in the broader context of the colonial politics of ethnicity and race.<sup>98</sup> Not only are the confessional dynamics of different European colonial systems historically impactful, but the development of the notion of religious freedom as applied and practised (or not) within

<sup>94</sup> P. Ngologozo, *Kigezi and its peoples*, Dar-es-Salaam 1969, 22; J. Murphy, *Luganda-English dictionary*, Washington 1972, 38. 'Bakuluship' is an Anglicisation of the Luganda term.

<sup>95</sup> Ward, 'Revival, mission and Church', 41.  
<sup>96</sup> S. Smith, 'A summary of answers to questions at the council meeting, January 15, 1945', JEC 5/3/1.

<sup>97</sup> Translated with the help of Joan Hall, 21 Jan. 2012, Mbarara, Uganda.

<sup>98</sup> Peterson, *Ethnic patriotism*.

colonial contexts is an important historical factor which has seldom been addressed by scholars of World Christianity.

While supportive British and American missionaries tended to present the revival movement as being a true work of the Holy Spirit, they were often at pains to account for the movement's unruly, disruptive and occasionally violent effects. Many did so by emphasising the general peacefulness of revivalists, drawing upon ancient Christian theologies of martyrdom to present them as righteous and innocent. But the revival movement's first decades were by no means peaceful. Revivalists in western Kenya broke away from the Anglican Church in a move towards independence that resulted in the destruction of dozens of church buildings in the region.<sup>99</sup> Such occurrences were often described by revivalists as not being representative of the movement, and greater attention was given to the suffering of Kenyan revivalists as a result of the Mau Mau movement, or, in Uganda, under Idi Amin's dictatorship, both of which revivalists opposed.<sup>100</sup> In these ways, the historiography of the East African Revival and the historiography of African Christianity seem to reproduce a similar blind spot. When Andrew Walls wrote about African martyrdom, he moved characteristically from early Roman persecutions on the North African coast, to Egypt, medieval Ethiopia and late nineteenth-century Uganda before ending with the persecution of Christians in South Sudan.<sup>101</sup> In all of these instances, the perpetrators of violence were religious 'others': pagans, heathens and Muslims. With the revival movement, as with African Christianity more broadly, such narratives perpetuate a sensibility that Christians are more frequently the victims than the perpetrators and that violence among Christians is less worthy of historical analysis or theological reflection than violent acts committed by those who are not Christian. Both assumptions need to be examined.

Violence is a crucial lens for understanding Christianity as a world religion. Broadly conceptualised, it can provide an analytical bridge for studying Christianity across regions in ways that illuminate historiographically neglected dimensions of Christian history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Our analyses historically contextualise instances of intra-Christian violence and conflict, focusing upon historical literature that is central to the field of World Christianity. This literature has often been oriented by a paradigm of growth, success and Christian converts' creative agency. While the topic of inter-religious violence and conflict has received attention within Area Studies literature in both Africa and Latin America,

<sup>99</sup> Barrett, *Schism and renewal*.

<sup>100</sup> D. Smoker, *Ambushed by love: God's triumph in Kenya's terror*, Fort Washington, PA 1994.

<sup>101</sup> A. Walls, 'The cost of discipleship: the witness of the African Church', *Word & World* xxv (2005), 433–43.

violence among Christians is an enduring, complex and neglected topic within the subfield of World Christianity. We also argue that divisions of denominations and/or traditions have enduring contextual relevance in both Africa and Latin America. Intra-Christian violence – including violence along confessional lines – is a recurring feature of Christian history in these regions. Such violence is not simply an expression of reified theological propositions or doctrinal beliefs, but rather that these conflicts should be placed within histories of cultural change, local and regional political formations, and the politics of ethnicity and race. These dynamics are fully part of how Martha Frederiks has recently defined a World Christianity approach, which entails a ‘discernment and recognition of the entanglements of the Christian tradition(s) with political, economic, social, and cultural contexts as well as of Christian and other faith traditions and the subsequent range of Christianities this has produced’.<sup>102</sup>

In light of this call to refocus and reexamine the field in light of intra-Christian violence, what is the way forward? We suggest a historiographical focus on not simply the translation of the Bible and liturgies or the development of new Churches that resulted in the production of new expressions of Christianity, but also upon the ways in which violence has often been a constitutive part of the contextual formation of these expressions. This is not an either/or proposition. That is, we are not suggesting that the refocus and recovery of World Christianity was necessarily errant in whole. On the contrary, the emphasis on Global South agency, demographic transformation and shifts in power balance have been important and enduring contributions to our understanding of the history of Christianity. Rather, we are arguing that we must interrogate the ways in which these constructive goals may benefit and hinder our telling of these important histories. Scholars should pay more attention to transformative spaces within these contexts, while grappling with the nature of violence in all its forms.

<sup>102</sup> Frederiks, ‘World Christianity’, 11.