

2010

Revitalization 17:2

Center for the Study of World Christian Revitalization Movements

Follow this and additional works at: <http://place.asburyseminary.edu/revitalizationrevitalization>



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Missions and World Christianity Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Center for the Study of World Christian Revitalization Movements, "Revitalization 17:2" (2010). *Revitalization*. Book 3.
<http://place.asburyseminary.edu/revitalizationrevitalization/3>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Newsletters at ePLACE: preserving, learning, and creative exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Revitalization by an authorized administrator of ePLACE: preserving, learning, and creative exchange. For more information, please contact thad.horner@asburyseminary.edu.



CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WORLD CHRISTIAN REVITALIZATION MOVEMENTS

REVITALIZATION

Asbury Theological Seminary
Willmore, KY 40390

Volume 17, No. 2
July/August 2010

Inside this issue

From the Editor.....	1
Consultation Two: Looking Back and Ahead - Steve O'Malley.....	1
Reflections on the Edinburgh Consultation: "Exploring the Dialectic between Revitalization and the Church" - Mark Lewis.....	2

The Center for the Study of World Christian Revitalization Movements contributes to the vitality of Christian mission and local congregations by synthesizing learnings from past and present revitalization movements worldwide. Its approach is interdisciplinary, combining biblical studies, theology, history, anthropology, and sociology.

Revitalization is the twice-yearly bulletin of the Center for the Study of World Christian Revitalization Movements. Center Director: J. Steven O'Malley. Editor: Michael Pasquarello; Associate Editor, Chris Kiesling; Book Review Editor, Mark Lewis. The cost is \$6.00/year by mail, or \$5.00 on our website. Sample copies sent free. Send correspondence or change of address to *Revitalization*, Asbury Theological Seminary, Willmore, KY 40390 or email revitalization@asburyseminary.edu. Feedback, letters to the editor, and brief articles are welcome.

FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Friends,

We are pleased to present this issue of *Revitalization* to keep you informed about the work of the Center for the Study of World Christian Revitalization Movements. In it you will find a brief summary of the second of three annual consultations, funded by the Luce Foundation, that aim to make known, interpret, and understand better some of the marks of revitalization movements in our time. Dr. Mark Lewis, a Methodist pastor in Copenhagen, Denmark and a trained missiologist, served as our "on the ground" correspondent in Edinburgh, Scotland. In addition, Dr. Steve O'Malley, the Center's Director, offers his assessment of the Edinburgh consultation and its importance for our ongoing work.

We will return in early 2011 with a more detailed analysis of the Edinburgh gathering and a preview of our third consultation, which will be held in Toronto. ■

Peace, Michael Pasquarello III

*Granger E. and Anna A. Fisher Professor of Preaching
Asbury Theological Seminary*

CONSULTATION TWO: LOOKING BACK AND AHEAD

To highlight a leading impression received by participants in consultation two, it may best be described as "synergy beyond expectations". Our theme was "Exploring the Dialectic Between Revitalization and Church," building on the descriptive data gathered at consultation one in 2009.

Most participants arrived a day early, to catch their breath from travel and to become oriented to our engaging context at the New College of the University of Edinburgh. That orientation was provided by Dean Larry Hurtado. The three-day consultation was launched by a keynote presentation from Professor Andrew Walls, arguably the most influential voice of Christian mission in our time, who focused on the mission of St. Anthony of Egypt as a model for perceiving Christianity in its engagement of culture as a revitalization movement.

Forty participants gathered from five continents and seventeen nations, and represented a wide spectrum of church ranging from Catholic to Anglican, Lutheran, and Methodist to indigenous Celtic, Pentecostal and a wide spectrum of the non-Western and newly emerging expressions of church embodying the Global South. With such a mix, the heart of the consultation was in the way these participants engaged in table discussions. The mix of participants had been designed to ensure each had distinctive theoretical disciplines, and had practical experience within representative cultural and ecclesial contexts.

Each table team was asked to do three tasks: provide a definition of revitalization, construct or reconstruct a model of church for revitalization,

and explain what revitalization means for the internal and external life of the church. Three resources were brought to bear upon this discussion: (1) the data from consultation one, transcribed in over 700 pages and sent in advance to each team member, (2) the experience and training of our participants, and (3) presentations of four key models of church deemed critical for discussions of forms of revitalization.

We heard exposition of a sacramental model from a leading Catholic liturgist, an evangelical model from the dean of a Malaysian Lutheran seminary, a model reflecting revitalized "communities of the converted" in the secular setting of contemporary Kiev, and a Ugandan Pentecostal model that interfaced with indigenous African Christianity. The definitive demographic study of global Pentecostalism, a five-year project headed by Todd Johnson of Gordon Conwell's Center for Global Christianity that was unveiled at Edinburgh 2010, provided depth and breadth to the shape of global Pentecostalism in relation to other world religions. Participants also engaged in presentations on two ancillary themes related to the larger theme of the consultation: the role of catechesis in revitalization (Professor William Abraham) and the lessons of our host culture. The latter consisted of presentations on Celtic monastic communities by living representatives of those communities: Professor Ian Bradley of St. Andrews and Graham Booth of the Holy Island of Hildeshaerne (the Community of Aidan and Hilda).

continued on page 2

CONSULTATION TWO: LOOKING BACK AND AHEAD cont'd.

Each day began and ended with vibrant worship and preaching, led by Professor Swee Hong Lim of Singapore, and the noted Scottish lyricist John Bell.

Our teams completed their monumental tasks in a grand way, completing their reports on the last day and identifying key contemporary revitalization movements that embody aspects of the criteria for revitalized communities of faith developed in this consultation. The substance of these reports will be delineated in a forthcoming publication. The third consultation at Toronto (October 2011) will be oriented to engage a cluster of contemporary expressions of culturally-significant and transformative revitalization movements. They will be interpreted and facilitated using the criteria developed in this second consultation.

I am grateful to our hosts at the University of Edinburgh for making this event possible.

It was encouraging to observe the interest generated in this consultation among members of the Edinburgh 2010 Centenary Conference, which followed our event. All of us who participated are enormously grateful to the support of the Henry Luce Foundation for this remarkable gathering and the larger project of which it is a critical part. Those of us responsible for the project and who have been able to see it unfold from the beginning are all the more grateful. ●

Steve O'Malley, Director

Center for the Study of World Christian Revitalization Movements

Asbury Theological Seminary

REFLECTIONS ON THE EDINBURGH CONSULTATION: "EXPLORING THE DIALECTIC BETWEEN REVITALIZATION AND THE CHURCH"

From May 29 – June 2 the Center for the Study of World Christian Revitalization Movements held a consultation in the historic city of Edinburgh, Scotland. Thirty-eight representatives from across the globe convened as a follow-up to the October 2009 meeting on Revitalization held on the campus of Asbury Theological Seminary. The topic of the current consultation focused on "Exploring the Dialectic between Revitalization and Church," and thus provided a timely precursor to the centennial celebration of the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh, which commenced on June 2.

Following a brief introduction of the participants and a video report from the first consultation, project director Dr. Steve O'Malley recounted the background for the discussion on revitalization.

Two lectures followed, featuring Dr. Howard Snyder, currently professor from Tyndale Seminary, Toronto, and Dr. Michael Rynkiewicz, retiring professor from Asbury Theological Seminary. Their reflections alone indicate the diversity involved, not only in the revitalization movements themselves, but in the manner in which reflection on them is taking place. Snyder's lecture presented a models-based approach, arguing that revitalization can be interpreted in accordance with

the synthesis of various ecclesiological strains, such as the Catholic/Orthodox, Evangelical, Pentecostal/Charismatic, and Anabaptist traditions.

Rynkiewicz focused on the concept of revitalization from a social science vantage point. Citing the work of Anthony F. C. Wallace and the patterns of renewal according to categories of steady state, increased individual stress, cultural distortion/breakdown, and the ensuing periods of revitalization, he suggests that new categories are needed to understand social movements in a context that Wallace could not have imagined a half-century ago. While nuancing certain aspects of the models-based approach, Rynkiewicz likened the problem to a GPS navigational system, pointing out that the tendency to get lost or misguided increases the closer one gets to the destination. In this sense, maps/models can often be confused with the terrain, and since the terrain is constantly changing, they cannot always predict in advance what one will find.

The Sunday evening program featured a lecture by one of Scotland's pioneer missiologists and elder statesman – Professor Andrew Walls. Dr. Walls is considered one of the leading authorities on the transformation of Christianity from a Western to global move-

ment, and his eloquence was only surpassed by his gracious presence and humor throughout the consultation. His address focused on the life of Desert Father, Anthony the Coptic, who is acknowledged for spreading the concept of monasticism during the time when the Christian faith was transitioning from a counter-cultural movement to the religious guardian of the Roman Empire. In an age where Christian alliance with political power was altering the DNA of the church, Anthony's flight (not retreat!) to the desert inaugurated a movement that would maintain spiritual encounter and vitality as the true life-signs of Christian living. As Europe became coterminous with Christendom, the seeds of authentic faith were proliferated by remnant movements that often were at odds with the wider culture, such as monasticism, and their legacy inspired subsequent revitalization movements, such as the Wesleyan revival with its emphasis on both personal and social holiness. It is the memory of the revitalization movements of the past that influence ensuing movements – a point that Walls connected with the centennial celebration of the Edinburgh Missionary conference, which likewise was indebted to the life and work of the desert missionary and evangelist, Anthony.

During the following days, a variety of lec-

continued on page 3

tures were held on topics considered ancillary to revitalization study. Professor William Abraham, from Southern Methodist University, Dallas, challenged listeners to understand revitalization as an issue of spiritual formation. His address linked the lack of vitality among primarily mainline churches with the breakdown of catechesis. Noting shifts in educational strategy that have moved away from memory learning in favor of a child-centered approach, Abraham provocatively asserted that the results have been disastrous. Without internalization of the basic doctrines and central concepts of the church, there is a knowledge deficiency which impedes spiritual development. His primary statement, "some things can be said only after other things have been said," struck at the heart of formation as an important prerequisite to renewed vitality in the church.

Professor Judith Kubicki, Fordham University, New York, honed in on the sacramental life of the church – or more correctly, "the church as sacrament." The idea of sacramentality implies openness to mystery and imagination – to being attuned to the presence of God in the mundane experiences of ordinary life. As a living sacrament, the church should understand itself as a sign pointing to that which it fully participates, that is, the presence of God within the mundane and ordinary. Professor Song Mee Chung, Sabah Theological Seminary, Malaysia followed Dr. Kubicki with a report on revitalization within the Lutheran Church of Malaysia. Her presentation was particularly enlightening, given the widespread assumption that renewed vitality among church gatherings is noticeably scarce among mainline denominations. The strength of Lutheran ecclesiology, according to Dr. Chung, resides in the freedom it allows for contextual expressions and needs-oriented ministry, as well as the church's unity on a global level. The depiction of Lutheranism in a non-Christendom setting as a vibrant and growing entity provides an intriguing contrast to the state and national church contexts of Western Europe, thus demonstrating the role of social location in the process of revitalization.

Other lectures provided a concrete nexus between Christian vitality and the church's reaction to socio-political malaise, including oppression. Professor Catherine Wanner, cultural anthropologist from Pennsylvania State University provided a detailed glimpse into Christian renewal movements in the Ukraine. In a country that experienced decades of coercive attempts to eradicate religious expression, followed by the onslaught of secularism, Christian revitalization is currently having a profound impact on the larger society by confronting social problems, such as rampant addiction, and then framing them as spiritual crises. Wanner noted that this strategy is giving the church a widespread sense of relevance, which in turn is reversing the pejorative perceptions of Christianity from recent history. Noteworthy examples include the ministry of Nigerian pastor Sunday Adonijah, who has amassed thousands of converts through the healing of addictions; Hillsong churches, which continue to reach younger congregants through the use of contemporary music forms in English; and an intentional missionary strategy that sends missionaries abroad to more affluent countries whose converts pledge financial support back to Ukraine in order to facilitate evangelistic efforts where financial resources otherwise are scarce. Professor Johnson Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, from Trinity Theological Seminary,

Accra, Ghana, presented an equally compelling account of the growth of indigenous Charismatic Churches. The astounding growth of congregations throughout much of the continent and the rise of Africa as a major force in worldwide Christian renewal is, according to Dr. Asamoah-Gyadu, attributable to none other than the work of the Holy Spirit. Against the backdrop of colonialism and subsequent Western missionary ventures into the continent that largely disregarded the spiritual worldview of sub-Saharan Africans, indigenous church expressions reintroduced the importance of religious experience, including "signs and wonders." This emphasis had often been subverted by the more cognitive approach of Westerners, and the recovery of emotion and experience in worship, as well as the legitimization of itinerant charismatic evangelists has been a catalyst in attracting Africans of all walks of life into a more vibrant and contextual Christian expression.

The consultation was intrigued by the presentation of Dr. Todd Johnson, from Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, who provided a detailed quantitative analysis of the spread of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements into the global South. His graphic depiction of Christian growth beyond the Western world cogently illustrated how much the religious landscape has changed in the 100 years following the Edinburgh Conference. We were also graced by presentations from our host culture on Celtic monastic communities. Professor Ian Bradley, from the University of St. Andrews, and Graham Booth, from the Holy Island of Lindisfarne, in turn offered deep insights into the nature of pilgrimage and monastic life.

Much of our time was also spent on table discussions. Consultation participants were divided into four groups, according to fields of study, and the criteria for discussion centered on three specific topics: 1) models of the church, 2) extant models of revitalization, and 3) what revitalization means in the context of our discipline. The summaries of each group reflected creativity and intensity, and though various metaphors were employed, the groups were in agreement on a number of key issues. Each group, for example, maintained a certain optimism regarding the possibility for revitalization in all ecclesial structures. Group D captured the sentiment of all with a quote from St. Irenaeus: "Where the church is there is the Spirit, and where the Spirit is, there is the church and all Grace." There was likewise consensus regarding the likelihood of opposition by institutional elements in the church and in society. Revitalization presupposes its absence, and resistance to change and threat to power often result in efforts to stonewall the work of the Spirit. This is profoundly true in areas of the world where Christian congregants have experienced oppression and persecution – issues that several consultation participants were uniquely equipped to address. Conversely, each group expressed concern that all revitalization movements not be uncritically sanctioned and that discernment is always needed.

Group B worked out three models for church revitalization, expressing them in terms of the metaphors "body" (each part working for the good of the whole), "tree" (interconnectedness, concern for societal ills, persecution, etc.), and "family" (community, concern for youth and all age groups, and leadership), which work together to promote renewed life on personal, communal, and societal levels. Group A's contribution was very succinct, defining a model for church revitalization as: "... making a collectivity of

continued on page 4

REFLECTIONS ON THE EDINBURGH CONSULTATION cont'd.

people (i.e. a congregation) more the corporate locus of God's presence in the world (i.e. the body of Christ) than it had been." Group C, worked with the concept of revitalization according social science theory, adding that the interplay of the call to radical discipleship, dissatisfaction with the church/society in their current states, and the capacity to adapt renewal forms and innovations are determinative in the process toward new vitality. Group D contextualized the notion of "dissatisfaction" by stating: "An authentic revitalization movement will bring the Church to acknowledge its own poverty." It is the power of the Holy Spirit that engenders surprising and refreshing impulses that bring the reconciling presence of Christ to people who experience brokenness and spiritual hunger – a point that achieved consensus among the body of consultation participants. The work conducted around the four tables will hopefully add to the roadmap that is under construction for future consultations.

Besides lectures and discussions, the gathering in Edinburgh will be remembered for informal conversations, networking, worship, and laughter. Morning worship was conducted by Dr. Swee Hong Lim, and the worship songs were often reflective of developments in another form of revitaliza-

tion - the global praise movement. The relevance of music and mission was well-represented by the presence of Dr. Roberta King, Dr. Jeremy Begbie, and several others, who were able to bring unique perspectives to the impact of music and musicology on renewal studies. Participants were energized by personal conversations held during meals, on breaks, and during informal walks through the city of Edinburgh. The gathering dispersed with the general sense that the consultation successfully addressed issues vital to the global Christian movement, and that the byproducts of our meetings will constitute both benchmarks and signposts for subsequent deliberations surrounding the transformative and revitalizing work of the Triune God. ■

Mark W. Lewis, correspondent