

# Introduction

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## I

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each one of us, in our own native language?'<sup>1</sup>

This archetypal depiction of the divine, Pentecostal solution to the challenge posed by linguistic diversity to the spread of Christianity lies at the heart of this volume. How was the curse placed on the citizens of monolingual Babel, who had the temerity to attempt to build a tower that reached heaven (Gen. 11: 1–9), so that God made their speech mutually incomprehensible and scattered them to the winds, to be exorcised, or at least best coped with?

It is well known that early translations of the Bible furnish evidence for the linguistic diversity of an expanding Christian world, involving the invention by missionaries of entirely new alphabets, such as the Armenian, Georgian and Cyrillic. Indeed, it has been observed that Christians were manifestly more 'open-minded' than their pagan (especially Greek and Roman) predecessors vis-à-vis their interest in foreign languages.<sup>2</sup> Tessa Rajak has gone so far as to argue that, at an earlier stage, translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek (mid-third to mid-second centuries BCE), in the form of the Septuagint, made the survival of the first Jewish diaspora possible (indeed, the very word 'diaspora' was coined by the translators) and thereby laid the foundations for the subsequent spread of the

<sup>1</sup> Acts 2: 4–8 NRSV.

<sup>2</sup> James Clackson, *Language and Society in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge, 2015), ch. 6, to which the following account is indebted.

Jewish sect that became Christianity.<sup>3</sup> In this multilingual environment St Paul told his listeners to focus not on the medium but the message: ‘My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power’ (1 Cor. 2: 4 NRSV). Moreover, no less a person than Augustine of Hippo (354–430) in a sermon assumed that his North African listeners would be familiar with a Punic proverb.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, to the best of our knowledge the Bible was never translated into a ‘minority’ language (such as Punic, Phrygian or Gaulish) within the boundaries of the Roman Empire. Coptic and Syriac (a Christian dialect of Aramaic), into which the Bible was translated, were both spoken on the margins of a linguistic zone that was dominated by Latin in the West and Greek in the East; both had their cultural epicentres outside it.<sup>5</sup> Greek was of course the written language of choice for the evangelists and other authors of the books of the New Testament, and even Christ himself, although primarily an Aramaic speaker, appears to have been able to speak Greek when necessary (as can be seen particularly in the Gospel according to Mark).<sup>6</sup> However, as Christianity came to establish itself amongst the elites of the Roman Empire, we can see evidence of a certain defensiveness on the part of writers such as Origen (d. c.254), though, as the father of modern biblical criticism, the Oratorian Richard Simon (1638–1712), noted, the early Christian commentator stressed that: ‘in his preaching the Holy Apostle [Paul] made known the worth and excellence of the Gospel, not the sapience of human beings, so that the peoples’ conversion would be seen as coming from the power of God and not from worldly wisdom’.<sup>7</sup> Further west, Peter Brown has even speculated that Latin, in becoming the marker of the universal Church, delivered the ‘knock-out blow to the minority languages of the

<sup>3</sup> Tessa Rajak, *Translation and Survival: The Greek Bible of the Ancient Jewish Diaspora* (Oxford, 2009). For a compelling account of why the Septuagint subsequently lost out to the Hebrew Bible, which Jerome used as the basis for the Old Testament of his Latin (Vulgate) translation, see Timothy Law, *When God spoke Greek: The Septuagint and the Making of the Christian Bible* (Oxford, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> Clackson, *Language and Society*, 147. The sermon in question was no. 167: see John E. Rotelle, ed., *The Works of St Augustine: The Sermons, III/5 (148–183), on the New Testament*, transl. Edmund Hill (New York, 1992), 212 for the Punic proverb.

<sup>5</sup> Clackson, *Language and Society*, 148–9.

<sup>6</sup> Maurice Casey, *Aramaic Sources of Mark’s Gospel* (Cambridge, 1998).

<sup>7</sup> Richard Simon, *Critical History of the Text of the New Testament wherein is established the Truth of the Acts on which it is based*, ed. and transl. Andrew Hunwick (Leiden, 2013), 264; cf. *The Philocalia of Origen*, ed. J. Armitage Robinson (Cambridge, 1893), 42.

Roman Empire' and that had the empire fallen in the second century CE rather than the fifth, 'Latin would have vanished along with the Empire in much of Western Europe'.<sup>8</sup>

## II

The starting point for the idea of the conference theme lay with the work of the Gambian, Muslim-born Roman Catholic scholar, Lamin Sanneh (b. 1942) whose book *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (1989) famously identified the distinctiveness of Christian Scripture, unlike that of Judaism or Islam, as lying in its translatability.<sup>9</sup> As Sanneh put it in a later work, 'Christianity is a translated religion without a revealed language. The issue is not whether Christians translated their Scripture well or willingly, but that without translation there would be no Christianity or Christians. Translation is the church's birthmark as well as its missionary benchmark.'<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, he argued, much scope has been given by Christianity to local agents who have indigenized their faith by translating it into their local idioms. This unique capacity of Christianity to particularize the universal has given rise not to 'global Christianity' – which Sanneh regards as a mere counterpart to Western, colonial hegemony – but to 'world Christianity': a 'laboratory of pluralism and diversity where instead of faith and trust being missing or compromised, they remain intrinsic'.<sup>11</sup> However, as Joel Cabrita points out in her contribution to this volume, such a focus 'runs the risk of neglecting the other side of the story: that local Christians across the world have prized highly contact with Christians in the so-called Global North, as well as sustained exchanges with believers in other parts of the southern hemisphere, choosing to stress not only their regional credentials, but also their universalist affiliations'.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, if Christianity's success as a world religion is to be so closely attributed to its linguistic

<sup>8</sup> Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, AD 200–1000*, 10th anniversary rev. edn (Oxford, 2013), 232; Clackson, *Language and Society*, 168.

<sup>9</sup> Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, 2nd edn (Maryknoll, NY, 2009).

<sup>10</sup> Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity: The Gospel beyond the West* (Grand Rapids MI, and Cambridge, 2003), 97.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* 75.

<sup>12</sup> Joel Cabrita, 'Empire of Healing: South Africa, the United States and the Transatlantic Zionist Movement', 448–75, at 453; cf. eadem, *Text and Authority in the South African Nazareth Church* (Cambridge, 2014).

translatability, how do we explain the success of Islam, a religion whose holy book is written in the language of its revelation, classical Arabic, which is far from the demotic of Arab speakers? Richard Bulliet has calculated that more than half of the world Muslim community today is composed of descendants of people who converted to Islam between 1500 and 1900. By contrast, under 20 per cent of this planet's present-day Protestants and Catholics have ancestors who converted during the same time period.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, as I observe in my own contribution, after initial, unfortunate experiments, missionaries such as Francis Xavier and José de Acosta recognized the perils of mistranslation and came to insist on the 'untranslatability' of such key concepts as God and the Trinity. Such considerations of the limits of translatability, rather than its triumph, underlie the decision taken in this volume to understand 'translation' in its broader sense: incorporating not only linguistic translation but also the physical movement of sacred objects and even the mental, as well as material, reimagining of holy places and images.<sup>14</sup>

### III

The limits of translation are central to Scott Johnson's contribution to this volume. As he puts it, 'the complexity of acculturation is primary, and the degree to which historical cultures are bound by modern preconceptions of their essentials should be made as transparent as possible. This is especially true given the incredible amount of cultural exchange and cross-pollination that went on in Late Antiquity.'<sup>15</sup> However, also core to his argument is the extraordinary resilience and resourcefulness which Christians, in his case Syriac Christians, displayed in the carvings on the so-called Nestorian stele, a 270-cm-high limestone block now on display in the north-western

<sup>13</sup> The lands which converted to Islam during the period included much of the territory covered by the modern-day states of Bangladesh, Malaysia and Indonesia, as well as large groups of sub-Saharan Africans and most of the Muslims of Pakistan, India and China. In addition, one should factor into calculations the substantial populations of south-east Europe and central Asia: Richard Bulliet, *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization* (New York, 2004), 40–1.

<sup>14</sup> For a stimulating recent discussion of the contextual significance of the visual dimension to Ignatian spirituality touched upon in this article, see David Morgan, *The Forge of Vision: A Visual History of Modern Christianity* (Oakland, CA, 2015), 35–41.

<sup>15</sup> Scott F. Johnson, 'Silk Road Christians and the Translation of Culture in Tang China', 15–38, at 16.

Chinese city of Xi'an, which was erected in 781 to record the first 150 years or so of Christian history in China. On it these Syriac-Chinese Christians displayed their Middle Eastern heritage through the use of several languages, including the Eastern Iranian language of Sogdian, which inflects several Syriac words carved onto the stele, including *z̄ynst'n* for China (when the more usual Syriac alternative was *Beth Tsinaye*).

On the other side of the globe, in eighth-century Anglo-Saxon England, linguistic resilience of another kind was on display. By means of a careful reading of Bede and Boniface in conjunction with conciliar and liturgical sources, Miriam Adan Jones argues convincingly for the use of the vernacular Old English in baptismal ceremonies. This discovery shows the continued importance, in what was still a relatively young and 'Christianizing' Church, of the need to engage the understanding and compliance of new Christian converts. Translation of a different – physical – kind is the subject of Mark Laynesmith's account of the spread of the cult of St Alban, protomartyr of the English Church, to Merovingian Gaul, where veneration to him was far more widespread than in England itself. Eventually there came to be nearly a hundred churches dedicated to him in France, which may be found as far south as Provence and as far west as Brittany. A key figure in the spread of this cult – made possible also by the spread of Alban's relics – was Germanus, bishop of Auxerre (378–448). Marie-Thérèse Champagne takes us back to the Bible and its translation, specifically to the presence of Jewish scholars in twelfth-century Rome and their influence on translations such as Latin versions of the Book of Psalms.

Anne Lester's refreshingly radical retelling of the story of the translation and appropriation of the numerous relics from Constantinople which entered Western Europe in the aftermath of the sack of the capital of the Eastern Empire in 1204 is less of a stark contrast with Champagne's picture of a community of scholars who shared a common interest than might be expected. This is because Lester is able to demonstrate the degree to which there existed a communication network based on a community of interest in these sacred objects, which circulated openly as gifts, complete with certificates of authentication, over several decades, rather than furtively as booty stolen by the Crusaders and distributed randomly in the West. Arguing that the reason why we know so much about these relics was precisely because they were such 'demanding things', which 'needed to be enshrined,

venerated, described and contextualized', she concludes that in the longer-term importation of so many holy objects which were directly associated with Christ had the effect of encouraging trends toward the *vita Apostolica* and *imitatio Christi* that were to shape late medieval devotion. Such approaches to devotion collapsed not only distance but also time, as was to happen again in late sixteenth-century Rome, when the catacombs, that mine of sanctity, came on stream as a seemingly inexhaustible source of relics and, in so doing, brought the early Church back to life for pilgrims to the Eternal City.<sup>16</sup>

Morgan Ring returns our attention to textual translation in her illuminating discussion of the English version of Jacopo de Voragine's thirteenth-century collection of saints' lives, the *Legenda aurea*, published by William Caxton with the collaboration of Wynken de Worde. Together they produced what was, in important respects, a 'new' work that made available in English both Bible stories and Bible paraphrase to priests and laity for whom the legacy of the Lollards had rendered the vernacular Scriptures out of bounds. Lucy Wooding continues the theme of translated language by looking at the various uses to which English translations of Erasmus were put in Henrician England. In short, Wooding shows how the Dutch humanist was 'good to think with': several English authors used their translations of his work to position themselves in relation to the early Reformation.<sup>17</sup> For example, the Bible translator William Tyndale's famous declaration that the 'boy that driveth the plough shall know more scripture than thou dost' was lifted from Erasmus's preface to his Latin translation of the Greek New Testament (based on the text of the fifteenth-century Italian humanist, Lorenzo Valla), the *Novum Instrumentum* of 1517. However, of far greater interest – and significance – for the influence of Christian humanism on the course of the English Reformation, were Erasmus's *Paraphrases* of the New Testament, which the Elizabethan Injunctions instructed must be placed in English parish churches next to the Bible. This article is

<sup>16</sup> See now an important survey of the circulation of catacomb relics throughout the Roman Catholic world from the late sixteenth to the nineteenth century: Stéphane Baciocchi and Christophe Duhamelle, eds, *Reliques romaines. Invention et circulation des corps saints des catacombes à l'époque moderne* (Rome, 2016).

<sup>17</sup> This quotation has its origins in the following anthropological context: 'We can understand, too, that natural species [animals] are chosen not because they are "good to eat" [*bonnes à manger*] but because they are "good to think" [*bonnes à penser*]: Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism* (London, 1964), 89.

complemented by Charlotte Methuen's examination of Luther's *Open Letter on Translation*, as it related to his translation of such key passages as Romans 3: 28, which he saw as central to his doctrine of justification by faith alone. Methuen makes the important point that 'translation was not only a question of textual accuracy but also of defining orthodoxy and heresy'.<sup>18</sup> Luther's translation of this key passage from Romans, among others, was clearly designed to inspire new ways of reading and appreciating the source texts, to paraphrase the American translation theorist, Lawrence Venuti, whose campaign against the invisibility – or illusory transparency – of translation is helpful in reminding not only historians of the Reformation of the necessarily creative and interpretative role of such cultural work.<sup>19</sup>

My own article argues that the age of the Protestant and Catholic Reformations and the global spread of the latter brought with it the challenge that not only was it necessary to learn new languages in order to communicate the Christian message to non-European peoples encountered during the so-called 'Age of Discovery', but some kind of control had to be exercised over the new, global circulation of sacred images and relics. The latter facilitated the visual (and virtual) translation of such holy sites as Jerusalem and Rome and its specific holy treasures in the mental prayers of the faithful. The essay concludes that it was less Lamin Sanneh's 'triumph of [linguistic] translatability' and more the physical translatability of the sacred that made possible the emergence of Roman Catholicism as this planet's first world religion.

This creative dimension is also found in Silvia Manzi's case study of the translation into the vernacular of official instructions – either originally written or conceived in Latin – which were given by Roman Catholic bishops to their clergy and flock in the Italian peninsula. In view of the fierce hostility of the Counter-Reformation Church to the use of the vernacular in worship, this might seem counter-intuitive, but it demonstrates the value placed by post-Reformation Rome on the observance of papal instructions in the form of its official pronouncements – or bulls – as well as the decrees of the Council of Trent, which required the comprehension of those whom the directives were aimed at. However, as Manzi shows, individual bishops

<sup>18</sup> Charlotte Methuen, "'These four letters *s o l a* are not there": Language and Theology in Luther's Translation of the New Testament', 146–63, at 147.

<sup>19</sup> Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, 2nd edn (London and New York, 2008).

used their discretion in how they translated the Latin directives from Rome to modify (and often moderate) this top-down pressure.

With Aislinn Muller's account of the distribution of the bull of excommunication directed at Queen Elizabeth I, *Regnans in excelsis*, we return to the world of things as well as words. Muller usefully reminds us that communication, including that of such dramatic acts to the intended parties, was far from straightforward even in the age of printing. The audience included not only the queen herself but also all those who had dealings with her, including those who traded with England. This explains why the earliest copies of the bull were distributed to the Spanish Netherlands and Poland, both of which were contiguous to regions or cities that had trade or diplomatic links, or both, with England. However, attempts were also made to distribute translations of the bull. Both Jesuits and seminary priests were involved in this dangerous task when the bull was renewed in 1580. Yet ironically it was Protestant reactions to the bull that contributed as much as any other factor to disseminating knowledge of its contents, as can be seen in the English translation of Heinrich Bullinger's reply, which summarized the original bull at some length.

Andrea Radošević makes a compelling case for the argument that translators of biblical passages from Latin performative texts into Croatian used archaisms derived from Croatian Church Slavonic in order to make their text more persuasive. This was because their audience would have been familiar with this kind of language from its place in the liturgy. In this way they adjusted the Latin text not only for lay people but also for priests with limited education. Alena Fidlerová, in her acute analysis of a translation into Czech of a late seventeenth-century German life of the Antichrist by the Capuchin preacher, Dionysius of Luxemburg, reminds us of the linguistic diversity of early modern Moravia and Bohemia; however, as a consequence of the re-Catholicization of the area after the defeat of Catholic forces at the Battle of White Mountain in 1620, Czech subsequently lost out to German. Nevertheless, in testimony to the enduring significance of the Czech language, despite its lesser prestige, there were at least three entirely separate Czech translations of this German work, which have remained largely invisible since they circulated in manuscript.

The demanding or 'needy' nature of relics described by Anne Lester is also encountered in Jennifer Hillman's article on the seventeenth-century fate of the finger of the third-century noble

virgin martyr, St Pience. Here we see that by the early modern period the capacity of relics to generate a paper trail had in no way diminished, whether it be passages in visitation records that confirmed their legitimate translation to the private chapel of the duke and duchess of Liancourt at La Roche-Guyon or the 1628 *vita* authored by Nicolas Davanne. Hillman argues that such relics were evidence of the capacity of local post-Tridentine devotion to preserve such particular cults, but also that, in this particular case, the deployment of this cult in such a way confirmed the owners' 'deviant' form of rigorist, Jansenist sympathies.

In his wide-ranging and thought-provoking survey of the many ways in which missionaries attempted to understand non-European peoples in order better to convert them, Joan-Pau Rubiés makes an eloquent case for the need to consider not only their frequently impressive empiricism and systematic nature, but also their essential contribution to the early modern Republic of Letters. In particular, the evidence of cultural diversity that the missionaries brought back and disseminated in print came to be deployed as propaganda in favour of what were not only Christian but also colonial enterprises; moreover, it also offered evidence to use against the attempts of sceptical and atheist freethinkers to undermine the 'Christian project'. It would, however, be anachronistic to view the missionaries simply as 'proto-ethnographers', for, as Rubiés points out, we need to acknowledge fully the religious (specifically soteriological) purpose of their endeavours. We must also be aware of the role of local mediators in such cultural translation, whose contributions make it facile of us to insist on any sharp dichotomies between the Old and New Worlds, traditional and modern, or East and West. Rubiés leaves us with the provocative thought that perhaps an even greater act of translation was that carried out by those attempting to apply the implications of their discoveries to the religious challenges of the Old World.

Michael Smith takes the case study of uses of the Bible in post-Restoration England to argue that Holy Scripture was deployed to manage and foster feelings according to biblical precedent. By demonstrating how biblical citations were appropriated for their readers' own prayers and to frame their devotional activity, a practice which crossed lines of conformity, Smith takes issue with the commonly held view that the period saw both a cooling off in spiritual engagement and increasing religious division.

The next three articles, by Andrew Finch, James Grayson and Kirsteen Kim, all address the various ways in which Christianity was translated – both linguistically and culturally – by missions to east Asia. Finch focuses on the work of two missionaries to Burma – the Italian Barnabite, Vincenzo Sangermano (*fl.* 1783–1806), and the French vicar apostolic of the Missions étrangères de Paris, Paul Ambrose Bigandet (*fl.* 1838–94) – to show how the first stage in missionary translation was the challenge of understanding the dominant faith of the society being proselytized, in this particular case Theravāda Buddhism. Finch shows how the translation strategies adopted by Sangermano and Bigandet involved complex linguistic journeys: in the case of Bigandet, from Burmese or Pali to (probably) French, then English and then once more back into French. Moreover, for this French missionary, as for many of Rubiés’s missionaries in a slightly earlier period, translations of texts from a non-European faith were informed not only by the desire to understand better ‘the enemy’ in order to defeat them in the missionary field, but also by the wish to demonstrate to those in Europe that such non-Christian texts were defective and ‘wrong’. As Finch puts it at the close of his article: ‘Implicit in Bigandet’s interpretation of Burmese Buddhism is a defence of Christianity in Europe.’<sup>20</sup> For John Ross (1842–1915), the protagonist of Grayson’s compelling account of the first translation of the New Testament into Korean, China remained the chief preoccupation of his career and energies as a missionary in north-east Asia. Indeed, because Korea was a ‘closed’ country, Ross was unable to penetrate the country in person (only briefly visiting it on a single occasion in 1887), and so his mission *was* his translation. Furthermore, it was one that also ‘spread literacy [in Korea], promoted a sense of nationalism in difficult times [particularly under Japanese occupation], and left an important linguistic record of a regional dialect for use as a resource for scholars’.<sup>21</sup> In a contrasting approach to the Korean Christian Church in a later period, 1895–1910, that of its most rapid growth, Kirsteen Kim argues that in order to understand fully this phenomenon we need to move beyond Sanneh’s translation theory, which Kim convincingly critiques, and consider instead the ‘reinvention of the Church’ in the sense inspired by John Parratt’s

<sup>20</sup> Andrew J. Finch, ‘Translating Christianity and Buddhism: Catholic Missionaries in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Burma’, 324–37, at 337.

<sup>21</sup> James H. Grayson, ‘John Ross and Cultural Encounter: Translating Christianity in an East Asian Context’, 338–58, at 358.

work on Christian theology in Africa.<sup>22</sup> This alternative approach, she argues, gives more space to the agency of those on the receiving end of missionaries' efforts. Viewed from this perspective, as Kim concludes, 'Christianity was not so much *translated* into the Korean vernacular as it was *reinvented* to serve the need for the independence and modernization of the nation in its darkest hour.'<sup>23</sup>

Esther Liu looks at the work of the French Protestant missionary to Africa, François Coillard (1834–1904), to argue that such missionary-translators still have something to say to translation theory today. Echoing Venuti's preoccupation, cited above, that translators should keep their work 'visible' to the eyes (and ears) of their audiences, Coillard evidently believed that they should be both visible and invisible. On the one hand, he carefully presented his own (not inconsiderable) public profile as Christian missionary and translator, but on the other, he equally consciously tried to withdraw from centre stage in his own field work. As he put it in his account of his own work in Lesotho, echoing Christ's own sacrifice: 'It is [the] gospel and not the preacher which is the power of God'.<sup>24</sup> In addition, the entirely collaborative nature of Coillard's translation practice has a contribution to make to current translation theory, in which the translators' craft is still often (mis)understood as taking place in isolation.

Building on the idea of translation as rewriting and thus as reinterpretation in terms of the categories and values of the target language, as theorized by the Belgian André Lefevere (1945–96), Jenny Wong considers the translation and reception of Shakespeare in China in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and specifically at *The Merchant of Venice*. She notes how, traditionally, Chinese translations excised religious references in the play, but asks whether, with the economic and cultural 'opening' of China from the 1980s, such untranslatability might be overturned. The degree to which the very notion of enforced religious conversion is alien to Confucianism and Taoism, which champion social harmony and order, suggests otherwise.

<sup>22</sup> In a pioneering study, John Parratt, *Reinventing Christianity: African Theology Today* (Grand Rapids MI, 1995).

<sup>23</sup> Kirsteen Kim, 'The Evangelization of Korea, c.1895–1910: Translation of the Gospel or Reinvention of the Church?', 359–75, at 375 (emphasis added).

<sup>24</sup> Edouard Favre, *François Coillard. Missionnaire au Lesotto (1861–1882)* (Paris, 1912), 147; see Esther Ruth Liu, 'The Nineteenth-Century Missionary-Translator: Reflecting on Translation Theory through the Work of François Coillard (1834–1904)', 376–88, at 383.

Margaret Wiedemann Hunt considers the translation work undertaken in 1941 by Dorothy L. Sayers (1893–1957) from the Greek New Testament for her twelve-part radio dramatization of the life of Christ for the BBC, *The Man Born to be King*. Sayers is undoubtedly better known as the creator of the fictional protagonist of the popular series of detective novels, Lord Peter Wimsey, published in the 1920s and early 1930s, and then, at the end of her career, as the translator of the widely distributed Penguin edition of Dante's *Divina Commedia* (1949–62). Hunt places Sayers's radio adaptation of the life of Christ, which reached over two million listeners, in the wider context of her role as a lay Christian apologist. This included Sayers's idea for what she referred to as her 'Oecumenical Penguin', which was to be an accessible one-volume presentation of the ideas shared by the mainstream Christian denominations. Although this particular project never came to fruition, *The Man Born to be King* was clearly intended to fulfil a similar need for a translation of the theology into terms that were comprehensible to the 'general reader'. How better to do this than to dramatize the life of Christ? As Hunt shows, although the words Sayers gave to Christ himself were close to the New Testament text, she did take imaginative liberties in the dialogue she wrote for other protagonists, including the apostles. Hunt concludes with a plea for more work to be done on Sayers's role as a leading practitioner of the literary arts in the name of Christianity in the middle decades of the twentieth century.

In what is in many ways a complementary article exploring the use of modern audio technology in translating Christianity to reach unprecedentedly numerous audiences, Darin Lenz looks at the work of the missionary Joy Ridderhof (1903–84). Unable to continue her work in the field owing to illness, Ridderhof sought to fulfil her ambitions to communicate the gospel to those who otherwise would not hear it by having recourse to the still-new technology of the phonograph, founding Gospel Recordings in 1939.<sup>25</sup> Ridderhof began by producing recordings in Spanish, but soon branched out into making recordings in many of the indigenous languages of central and south America, which facilitated access to 'primitive peoples' (for which read 'illiterate') who had not yet been exposed in any sustained

<sup>25</sup> Gospel Recordings is now referred to as Global Recordings Network and offers recordings in more than 6,000 languages: 'Global Recordings Network', <<http://globalrecordings.net/en/>>, accessed 22 October 2016.

fashion to stories from the gospels. After first using non-native speakers to record the stories and prayers, Ridderhof later took great care to employ indigenous speakers of the tongues being recorded so that her project has, inadvertently, become something of an archive of minority languages which have subsequently died out. Finally, Lenz leaves us with the subversive possibility that many of those who heard these recordings were actually ‘converted’ to the medium – which by the 1960s included ingenious hand-cranked phonographs made cheaply of cardboard – rather than to the gospel message itself.

R. J. W. Shiner also addresses the matching of medium to message in his illuminating article on how Donald Robinson rose to the challenge of translating the faith in Australia and helping Australians ‘speak to God’ by bringing sensitivity and principle to the drafting of the 1978 *Australian Prayer Book*. Shiner makes the important point that Robinson’s failure to reverse the tide of secularism should not be conflated with a failure in either the conception or implementation of the prayer book, but must rather be viewed in the wider context of the ‘death of Christian Australia’ (at least the white Western mainstream), which arguably reached its high watermark precisely in the 1970s.<sup>26</sup>

The volume closes with Joel Cabrita’s thoughtful and richly satisfying discussion of the nineteenth-century religious movement founded by a Scottish immigrant to Illinois, the Edinburgh-born John Alexander Dowie (1847–1907), who founded the city of Zion as part of a Protestant divine healing movement. This first took root in Illinois before being exported to South Africa where it was reimagined by Isaiah Shembe (1870–1935). In 1910 Shembe in turn founded the Nazareth Baptist Church in a very different context of Southern African territorial dispossession and racial segregation. Despite its transatlantic origins, this Church has been viewed by scholars, including the missionary historian Bengt Sundkler and the anthropologist Jean Comaroff, as an expression of Afro-Christian indigeneity.<sup>27</sup> By

<sup>26</sup> For an example of this explanatory paradigm as applied to Britain, see Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Secularisation 1800–2000* (London and New York, 2001). However, the near-contemporary publication of Grace Davie, *Europe: The Exceptional Case. Parameters of Faith in the Modern World* (London, 2002) is a reminder that the secularization paradigm was – and remains – only of limited application.

<sup>27</sup> See Jacob Olupona, *African Religions: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2014), 101, where there is a photograph with the following caption: ‘A Shembe Church ceremony on Palm Sunday, near Durban, South Africa. The Shembe Church, also known as the Nazareth Baptist Church, is an indigenous African Church that borrows from both indigenous Zulu traditions and Christianity.’

contrast, Cabrita argues compellingly that both Churches should be understood as responses to the common challenges of the demand for cheap labour by industrialization and of its impact on health, whether these be located in the railroad and commodity hub that was Chicago or in the consequences of the actions of the gold-hungry mine owners of the Transvaal. This has implications, she argues, for how we should go about understanding the ways in which Christianity was ‘translated’ to sub-Saharan Africa. In contrast to the still widely influential paradigm framed by Sanneh with which I opened this introduction, Cabrita highlights the potential dangers of African essentialism and the need to be open to the ways in which localization of Christian belief was achieved by means of transnational reception and reinterpretation.

Such a picture of cosmopolitan localism is an appropriate point at which to bring to a close this introduction to a volume devoted to the translation of Christianity and circulation of the sacred. If, as has been recently restated by Charles Taylor, language does not merely describe but constitutes meaning and shapes human experience, and linguistic capacity is not something that we innately possess, then it follows that we first learn our language from others, so that our separate selves emerge out of the conversation.<sup>28</sup> We ourselves come into being through a process of translation. These articles are intended to be contributions to that ongoing conversation: long may it continue.

Simon Ditchfield

<sup>28</sup> Charles Taylor, *The Language Animal: The Full Shape of the Human Linguistic Capacity* (Cambridge, MA, 2016).