Editorial

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This year, 2020 marks four hundred years since the Pilgrims landed from their wooden ship, *The Mayflower* on the coast of what is now the US American state of Massachusetts after a perilous journey across the Atlantic. Last year was the quadricentenary of the landfall of another ship which disembarked a different group of passengers further south: the first slaves from Africa brought to the British colonies who came ashore near Jamestown, Virginia. Both groups were vulnerable. The slaves were brought in shackles from Angola. The Pilgrims had sponsorship and a land grant but about half of them died within the first year. However, the destinies of the two groups would be very different.

The Dissenters from England established Plymouth Colony. They were to leave a lasting impression on the political system of what became the USA through their insistence on the separation of church and state. Their perseverance in the pursuit of liberty has been celebrated and their heroic endurance through the privations of their first winter is remembered every year by the annual Thanksgiving holiday. The Mayflower Society keeps the memory alive for descendants and there are many centenary celebrations taking place this year.

The Angolans, who had been destined for slavery in Mexico, were kept in Virginia not as slaves but as indentured servants. The Anglican settlers of the period believed that they could not enslave the Angolans because they had been baptized. However, by 1640 racist attitudes were hardening and the colony passed the first law in the British colonies discriminating against people of African descent. The Angolans would soon be caught in the system of discrimination and institutionalized slavery of Black people. Until recently the arrival of these migrants was forgotten. However, last year's anniversary was marked by "The 1619 Project," sponsored by the *New York Times*.

The juxtaposition of these two anniversaries raises many difficult questions about race, colonization, and migration which impinge on the study of world Christianity and Christian mission. The Pilgrims set sail for North America with a clear sense of mission. They planned to evangelize the heathen but their main concern was to liberate themselves from the Antichrist, whom they

identified with the Church of England (Winship 2012: 111–119). The Angolans came as prisoners, yet they were baptized and so belonged to an African Christian diaspora that would contribute to the creation of the “Black Atlantic” (Gilroy 1993).

The International Association for Mission Studies had its own discussion of migration at the 2012 assembly in Toronto, which resulted in a special issue of *Mission Studies* (volume 30, issue 1) and several articles in later issues as well. This year migration seems to have penetrated mainstream theology too. In my part of the world, the Anglophone Protestant West, several leading theology conferences have taken migration as a theme this year, including Wheaton College, the Society for the Study of Theology, and the Tyndale Fellowship. My own institution, Fuller Theological Seminary is hosting two conferences on migration. The first, on “The Bible and Migration,” was led by Dr. Carly Crouch and held on campus and online in English and Spanish in January 2020. In October 2020, the annual Missiology Lectures will address (through online modality) the theme of “Migration, Transnationalism, and Faith in Missiological Perspective” by focusing on “Los Angeles as a Global Crossroads.”

Thanks to recent research, we now see world mission as a form of migration and also more generally appreciate that migration is a part of the human condition. We have even noticed that “One can justifiably speak of the Bible as collection of texts written by migrants to other migrants, often dealing with the issue of migration” (Strine 2017: 106). But this begs the question why migration does not seem to have been a significant theological topic before, except perhaps under the heading of “pilgrimage.” After the Second World War, the churches made a significant contribution to dealing with massive refugee crises, yet there was little biblical or theological reflection on the topic. That it has come to the fore today suggests to me, first, that there was little or no contemporary academic study of migration to engage with then as there is now. Second, that today it is more likely that theologians themselves are also migrants, and from all continents. Third, it indicates that, 75 years ago the world was expected to settle into a new order, as implied by the theme of the inaugural assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1948: “Man’s Disorder and God’s Design.” Therefore, the focus was on relief, hospitality, and creating a tolerant society (Chiba 2016). However, in the age of globalization and global cities, migration, displacement, and transnationalism have become more accepted as a way of being. In the meantime, although to some extent theology has responded to migrants as “the poor” and “the marginalized,” until now, it has not considered them as people, and churches, on the move.

This issue of *Mission Studies* begins with an obituary for Reverend Professor John S. Pobee, a distinguished African leader and a life member of the

International Association for Mission Studies. This is followed by five articles. In the first, Dwight Anthony Radcliff, Jr., “Black-ish Missiology” describes the way in which African American perspectives are ostensibly included in mission studies, since it aims to be global and inclusive of diverse cultures, yet “missiology done specifically by, in, and on African American contexts is scarce.” He probes the reasons for this and challenges the discipline to re-think its boundaries in light of African-American thought. In the next, highly original contribution, Xiaoli Yang examines the poetry which was used by the post-1989 generation in China to express themselves in light of the fact that at the same time there was rapid growth in Christian conversions among them. Including her own verse, she suggests that there is a dynamic relationship between this poetry and Christian theology, especially in their shared sense of wandering and journeying. In “Mission, Empire and the Ultimate Good,” Gary McKee analyzes the motives of a colonial government leader and a missionary of the Church Missionary Society who took part in a “Mission of Help” to the Syrian Orthodox Church in what is now Kerala, India in the early nineteenth century. His research raises significant questions for contemporary mission from the way their mission dealt with issues of the scope and politicization of mission in that setting. In an article that emerges from a larger project, Robert Lilleaasen and Ingebjørg Nandrup detail their research on what motivates participants in short-term mission from Norway and how the experience influences them. They conclude that this mission practice is formative for those travelling as they become subjects in a global culture and within “the sub-culture of mission-minded Christians.” Finally, Sung Bauta considers an example of transformational development in which Christian widows in Northern Nigeria are being empowered economically and socially. Drawing on his fieldwork investigation of their situation, Bauta argues that their spiritual empowerment is even more important, especially considering that the widows’ marginalization is for reasons of traditions that are expressed religiously. Thirteen book reviews and IAMS Notices conclude this issue.

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