

# cgcm News

Center for Global Christianity & Mission

Number 11, Winter 2012

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## Alumni News

Sung-Deuk Oak is given tenure at UCLA in the department of Asian languages and cultures

Page 2

## Opening Lecture

The first Peter Berger Lecture in Religion was co-sponsored by the CGCM

Page 2

## CGCM Vision

Read the new vision statement of the Center for Global Christianity & Mission

Page 2

## Dictionary of African Christian Biography

Boston University will host the innovative website, designed to capture the stories of the Africans who spread the gospel across the continent

The growth and character of Christianity in Africa is without historical precedent, but information about the thousands of creative local leaders—the force behind this growth—is lacking in standard historical and biographical works. In 1997 a team of international scholars and church leaders, primarily of African citizenship, developed a novel approach to filling the void. The *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* was launched as an electronic database focused on recovering the stories of local African evangelists, pastors, catechists, saints and martyrs. Stimulating local research, the *DACB* quickly became a dynamic way to maintain, amend, expand, access and disseminate information vital to understanding African Christianity online.

In 2012 Boston University will include the *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* in its expanding collection of digital resources. The *DACB* will join the Center for Global Christianity & Mission's Library of Classic Texts in Missiology ([digilib.bu.edu/mission](http://digilib.bu.edu/mission)), the Digital Archive of Russian Methodist History ([digilib.bu.edu/russianmethodism](http://digilib.bu.edu/russianmethodism)), and the photo archive of African Initiated Churches ([bu.edu/cgcm/projects/aic-photo-archive](http://bu.edu/cgcm/projects/aic-photo-archive)). BU will not alter the structure or aims of the dictionary, but will provide the technological resources to maintain the *DACB* as the leading biographical resource on African Christianity.



Continued on page 4

## Spring Calendar

2/8 - Costas Consultation I: Mission in a Multi-Faith World (Andover-Newton Theological Seminary, 2:30 - 8:30)

2/17 - Costas Consultation II: Mission in 1812 and Today (Old Church, Salem, MA, 1:00 - 8:00)

4/3 - Spring Seminar: Making Connections in Malaysia (STH 325, 12:30-2:00)

4/17 - Spring Seminar: Love, Sex, and Marriage in the Global Mission of Walter and Ingrid Trobisch (STH 325, 12:30 - 2:00)

4/19,20 - African Americans and the Abrahamic Religions Symposium (Photonics Building, 8 St. Mary's Street, Room 901, Th., 9:00 - 6:00, and Fri., 9:00 - 3:45)

# Alumni Interview: Sung-Deuk Oak

Former student at the School of Theology, current Associate Professor of Korean Christianity at UCLA, was recently rewarded tenure

**cgcm (Gun Cheol Kim):** Would you introduce yourself? What have you taught at UCLA?

**Oak:** I am a Korean Christian historian at an American secular university located in Southern California. I arrived here as a post-doctoral fellow in 2002. My present title is Dongsoon Im and Mija Im Endowment Chair Scholar Associate Professor of Korean Christianity at the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures, University of California Los Angeles. The chair position was created in 2007 and I was appointed as its first holder, and promoted to associate professor with tenure this year. I've taught "Korean Christianity," "Korean Religions," and "Modern Korean Thought," and plan to teach "Korea Encountering West" and

"Christianity in East Asia."

**cgcm:** What is the Korean study program at UCLA?

**Oak:** About 10% of the 40,000 students of UCLA are Korean Americans or Koreans. Every year it offers about 40 classes focusing on Korea, and about 2,000 students take them. The department of ALC has 30 professors and 20 full-time lecturers in six programs (Asian Religions and Buddhist Studies, Asian Linguistics, Chinese Studies, Japanese Studies, Korean Studies, South and Southeast Asian Studies). The Korean Studies program has eight professors (some more are affiliated to other departments) and four lecturers. It is the most prestigious Korean Studies

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Dana Robert and Peter Berger

## Inaugural Peter Berger Lecture

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The First Annual Peter Berger Lecture and Celebration was held at the School of Theology on November 11<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Berger, a professor at Boston University since 1981 (now emeritus) and one of the world's most eminent sociologists of religion, attended. The Center for Global Christianity and

Mission was one of the co-sponsors of this special event.

The lecture was delivered by Dr. David Martin, a professor emeritus of sociology at the London School of Economics and the author of *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (1990), one of the earliest and most important books on the rise of evangelicalism in Latin America and the result of research conducted at the behest of Dr. Berger and funded by the Institute for Culture, Religion, and World Affairs that he founded at B.U. in 1985.

In her introductory remarks, Dr. Dana Robert listed the titles of some of Dr. Berger's books—*The Sacred Canopy*, *The Heretical Imperative*, *A Rumor of Angels*, *The Social Construction of Reality*—and noted that they became so central to how scholars came to think about the sociology of religion over the last fifty years that the phrases themselves have taken on a life of their own. That is the mark of a scholar of exceptional importance.

After the lecture, faculty colleagues honored Peter Berger's many contributions at a reception.



David Martin

The Center for Global Christianity & Mission is a community of learners, researches and doers who live out their missional callings through critical reflection, faithful witness, and thoughtful engagement with multiple cultures around the world.

program in the USA. My teaching focuses on the history of Christianity and other religions (shamanism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, and new religions) in Korea. The average size of my undergraduate classes is 30, and my graduate classes usually involve three students. Now I plan to accept doctoral students.

**cgcm:** As an alumnus, what do you think is the benefit of studying at BU?

My ThD study from 1994 to 2001 was blessed with a full scholarship and the guidance of three renowned professors—Dr. Dana L. Robert (mission history), Dr. Carter Lindberg (European Reformations), and Dr. Chai-sik Chung (Korean society and religions). Professor Robert, a leading scholar of the history of "World Christianity," a newly emerging field, guided my study and dissertation on the early history of Protestant missionaries' encounters with Korean religions. When I applied for BUSTH in 1993, I did not know that it would be the consummate place to study the history of Korean Christianity in the West. I feel that God led me there and under the excellent tutelage of Professor Robert I was able to strengthen my calling as a Christian historian and hone my academic skills.

**cgcm:** What is the significance of studying Korea including Korean Christianity in the American context? And what do you believe is the legacy of Korean Christianity in relation to Global Christianity?

Oak: Korea is relatively a small country in its geographical and political vicinity—China, Japan, Russia, and the US—yet it is a keystone nation in understanding East Asia, and East Asia as poised to be the future of world Christianity. And multiple religions—shamanism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, and new religions—have coexisted in Korea for centuries. Hence the relationship between Christianity and other religions is an essential question. Korea has experienced almost everything that modernity produced—international wars, colonialism, the Cold War, the North-South division of the nation, rapid economic growth, democratization, massive migration, and globalization—in rapid succession over merely a century. As Christianity has been a vital factor in these social antagonisms and shifts, its historical experience can be shared with the rest of the two-thirds world as theological sources. Modern Korea cannot be fully grasped without understanding Korean Christianity, a faith that one third of the 50 million people of South Korea identify with. There are more Presbyterians in Korea

"I did not know [BU] would be the consummate place to study the history of Korean Christianity."



Sung-Deuk Oak

than in the US. Korean Christians are actively engaging in the sociopolitical issues like the reunification movement, and are sending the second largest number of missionaries to the many mission fields. Another important influence is the diaspora of Korean Christians. There are about 4,200 Korean American churches in the US, and about 60% of Korean Americans are evangelical Christians. Here in Southern California alone there are about 1,000 Korean American or Asian American churches.

**cgcm:** Would you share about the research interests and goals as a scholar?

My long-term goal is to build up the study of "The History of Korean Christianity" as an academic field in the West, i.e. one of the legitimate fields of Korean studies at prestigious universities like UCLA, and make the UCLA Korean Christianity program an academic hub for the field. There are many scholars in Korean Buddhism and Korean Confucianism in the US, but only a few professors teach Korean Christianity. I want to help connect Korean scholars and Korean American/American scholars, support junior scholars by organizing the Im Conference of Korean Christianity annually; and make my website "Online Archives of Korean Christianity" a virtual presence for the academic community in the field. My short-term goal is to publish two monographs—*The Making of Korean Christianity: Protestant Encounters with Korean Religions, 1876-1915* as the first volume of the World Christianity studies series of Baylor University Press in 2013, and *History of the Korean Bible Society, volume 3, 1945-2010* (in Korean) in 2013.





More than two thousand pages of the *Dictionary of African Christianity* are viewed every day—proving itself to be an invaluable resource on the history of Christianity in Africa, and yet it remains free for users.

The *DACB* covers the whole field of African Christianity, ranging from the first century until the present, and welcomes entries on any person in the continent perceived as making a singular contribution to local, regional, national, or continental bodies of believers. The biographies are recorded in English, Portuguese, French or Swahili. Some 152 research institutions, seminaries, and university departments in twenty African countries have formally joined in the project to produce a base-line, biographical memory of African Christianity.

The dictionary aims at inclusiveness, and therefore attempts to represent the breadth of the Christian presence in Africa—from Aladura churches to Zionists, as well as the various Coptic, independent, Orthodox, Protestant, and Roman Catholic churches in between.

Despite its diversity, the *DACB* is able to maintain a level of unity in its material. Authors work

with a shared data collection template—whether working with archival material or in conducting oral interviews.

With new biographies being added almost every month to the approximately two thousand histories already online, the *DACB* has become an important tool in the study of African Christianity. More than two thousand pages are viewed every day as the website has become the primary resource for excavating the important roles Africans have played in the rapid expansion of Christianity in the continent.

The Center for Global Christianity & Mission is pleased to welcome the *Dictionary of African Christianity* to Boston University, and is delighted to maintain this rich resource so that it can remain free and accessible to all. Please visit the dictionary at: [www.dacb.org](http://www.dacb.org)