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## From Orphan to Child of God: Pentecostal Theologizing as a Channel of Social Transformation in Mozambique

Jeremy Bone

*Asbury Theological Seminary*, [jeremy.bone@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:jeremy.bone@asburyseminary.edu)

Samuel Lee

*Asbury Theological Seminary*, [samuel.lee@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:samuel.lee@asburyseminary.edu)

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# FROM ORPHAN TO CHILD OF GOD

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JEREMY BONE  
SAMUEL LEE

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## Abstract

Heidi and Rolland Baker, founders of Mozambican-based Iris Global, have been influential in developing a distinctively pentecostal framework for holistic mission.<sup>1</sup> While evangelism and social work are now widely seen as integrated processes, pentecostalism demands attention also to the supernatural. This article posits that the theological convictions of the Bakers have served as a launching pad for their holistic care of orphans in Mozambique. Because pentecostal movements are rooted in experience, pneumatic theologizing presupposes praxis. This article will initially examine three theological impulses at the core of Iris Global: pentecostalism, revivalism, and incarnational love. These theological impulses are then weaved into a chronological narrative examining holistic ministry efforts in Mozambique. By examining the place of dreams and visions among the orphans served by Iris Global, this article applies sociological insights from Arjun Appadurai's concept of the social imaginary in order

to understand the role of identity transformation in holistic mission.

## Introduction

The integration of evangelism with social justice has long been problematic for Western Christians. The First Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in 1974 began to chip away at this dualistic tension when a group of radical evangelicals advocated for the combination of word and deed in order to reach a world in need of holistic transformation.<sup>2</sup> This new commitment was also partially birthed out of evangelical contact with non-Western Christians, many of whom did not have the same compartmentalized dualistic understandings of the gospel shared by their Western brothers and sisters.<sup>3</sup> These non-Western voices were also indicators that perhaps Western secularization theorists were misguided in assertions about the decline of global Christian expression. In Africa, Christianity actually grew at an unprecedented rate in the aftermath of decolonization.<sup>4</sup> The swelling of Christianity in Africa not only impacted the spiritual dimension of converts, but it has also been a force of social change and transformation. One mission organization committed to holistic ministry in an African context is Iris Global.

Founded by Heidi and Rolland Baker, Iris Global has sought to demonstrate an incarnational ministry that encapsulates both word and deed as demonstrated by Jesus in the gospel accounts. Following the lead of radical Pentecostals, the Bakers have also added “wonder” into the missionary ethos of Iris Global. Iris integrates these three elements—word, work, and wonder—into a single missionary agenda of transformation.<sup>5</sup> This unique combination has resulted in a massive revival that swept Mozambique in the late 1990s into the 2000s, and the effects are still being documented today. Over 10,000 churches have been planted in Mozambique under Iris Global since the Bakers arrived. While Iris Global is committed to several development, relief, and religious projects, this article specifically explores the relationship between the Bakers’ theology and holistic orphan care. Because theology is so closely related to the ministry of Iris, it is first necessary to explore the theological impulses of Heidi and Rolland Baker before examination

of social transformation in Mozambique. These briefly explored theological themes will be further weaved into the overall narrative in order to demonstrate the relationship between the Bakers' theology and their commitment to holistic ministry. Iris Global is creating multidimensional transformation in the area of Mozambican orphan care based upon an incarnational model of ministry that seeks to imitate the pneumatically empowered Jesus in service to the least of these.

## **A Preliminary Word on Social Transformation**

While this article assumes that theological impulses directly contributed to social transformation in Mozambique, it is necessary to provide a brief definitional excursus regarding developmental terminology. Dena Freeman notes that development studies, initially resistant to religion, has now shifted to an “increasing appreciation for the importance of non-material matters—such as beliefs, values and morality—in the development process.”<sup>6</sup> This burgeoning interest in multifaceted development was partially the result of the growth of pentecostalism in Africa. Freeman writes, “This movement does not separate religion from development, and for the most part does not set up development wings or FBOs.”<sup>7</sup> Rather than defining social transformation on a strictly material level, pentecostals tend to ask the question: What does God want for Africa?<sup>8</sup>

This interpretive shift in development studies has resulted in reflection among pentecostals regarding the nature of transformation. Though revivalist interest in dramatic crisis experiences has at times resulted in an individualized spirituality, personal agency driven by pneumatic encounters has also been a channel of social transformation. Freeman notes African pentecostal concerns for a “dramatic restructuring” of family dynamics, gender relations, power structures, and social organization.<sup>9</sup> In this way, pentecostalism contributes to development by means of a holistic ontology that refuses to bifurcate spiritual and material change. Thus, transformation, from a pentecostal lens, involves multifaceted change that is both personal and communal, spiritual and material, and ecclesial and public. At the root of pentecostal notions on transformation is the Christocentric pneumatic encounter;

transformation, while affecting the physical, originates with the spiritual presence of Jesus Christ. Keith Warrington writes, “One experience with God can be more life changing than an encyclopedic knowledge of God. . . . Thus, Pentecostals value experience-based encounters with God because they have the potential to transform believers. They believe that if God initiates an experience, it must be in order to positively transform the individual concerned.”<sup>10</sup>

Pentecostal focus on holistic transformation through divine encounter directly corresponds to its understanding of mission. If transformation is multifaceted, then the church’s mission in the world must also reflect the full gospel of Jesus Christ. Holistic transformation necessitates holistic mission, and pentecostals echo David Bosch’s emphasis on the need for both orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Bosch writes, “Since faith and life are inseparable, this is a liberation that is to be effected at three different levels: from social situations of oppression and marginalization, from every kind of personal servitude, and from sin, which is the breaking of friendship with God and with other human beings.”<sup>11</sup> The ministry of Heidi and Rolland Baker reflects a distinctively pentecostal commitment to multifaceted transformation through its orphan-care initiatives in Mozambique. Whether it is economic advancement or spiritual renewal, at the core of transformation is a Spirit-driven encounter with Jesus Christ, the great and holistic transformer. It is to the theological impulses of the Bakers that we now turn.

## **Theological Impulses**

### **Pentecostalism**

Heidi and Rolland Baker were both theologically shaped in a Pentecostal milieu. Heidi converted at age sixteen while attending a revival meeting at a Holiness-Pentecostal church on a Navajo Reservation; Rolland was a missionary kid from an Assemblies of God family. The two of them were married in 1980, and then they swiftly left to Indonesia on a one-way ticket.<sup>12</sup> Before departing for Indonesia, though, both of them were theologically educated at the Masters level while attending Vanguard University, an Assemblies of God university

in Costa Mesa, California. Thus, both their family and educational backgrounds demonstrate the treasured place of the classical Pentecostal tradition for their theological formation.

While pentecostalism is a broad movement, and it is perhaps better to speak of pentecostals, “the movement does have family resemblances.”<sup>13</sup> J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu suggests that pentecostal Christianity “promotes radical conversions, baptism of the Spirit with speaking in tongues, healing, deliverance, prophetic ministries, and other such pneumatic phenomena including miracles and supernatural interventions in general.”<sup>14</sup> He also suggests that a strong emphasis on the Holy Spirit is the primary reason for the expansion of Christianity in the non-Western world.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps the embrace of pentecostal phenomena by Iris Global can partially explain the mission organization’s dramatic success in Mozambique. Pentecostal Christianity has uniquely cultivated an intercultural theology that is “global and multicultural, inclusive of voices from the Eastern and especially Southern Hemispheres” by promoting dialogue between Western and indigenous pentecostal expressions.<sup>16</sup>

The question must also be asked, how does pentecostalism contribute to Iris Global’s commitment to holistic ministry? Classical Pentecostals understood salvation to be multidimensional; they experimented with two primary soteriological configurations. Pentecostals emerging from Baptist circles spoke of the four-fold gospel (Jesus as Savior, baptizer, healer, and coming king), while Wesleyan Holiness Pentecostals articulated a five-fold gospel (adding Jesus as sanctifier).<sup>17</sup> This multifaceted salvation was bursting with possibilities that Jesus could dramatically empower believers to transform the world around them. Though Jesus was the coming king, he was also the healer who specifically cared for the poor and marginalized. Thus, contemporary believers were also flowing with this same energy from the Holy Spirit to transform society dynamically for the glory of God.

## **Revivalism**

While pentecostalism has contributed much to Iris Global’s theological imagination, a second spiritual impulse at the forefront of their Mozambican efforts is revivalism. Though the revivalist emphasis in

global evangelization has been etched into the collective pentecostal consciousness, Allan Anderson traces the historical development of revivalism to both evangelical revivals in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as well as the work of missionary pioneers such as William Carey.<sup>18</sup> The Methodist movement, as well as its Holiness offshoots, were of particular importance in introducing “a new method of evangelism characterized by emotion . . . that brought evangelical faith and often profound moral change to communities.”<sup>19</sup> Revivalism from the eighteenth to twentieth centuries tended to be framed according to a holistic two-phase movement; first, participants were encouraged to encounter Jesus Christ through crisis experiences, and then the converted would in turn become agents of social transformation and activism, including mission. Many participants in these revivals, including A. B. Simpson from the Christian and Missionary Alliance, formed communities of radical evangelicals that expected “the restoration of the gift of tongues for the speedy and effective preaching to the nations.”<sup>20</sup> Following the actualization of these expectations through the nascent pentecostal movement at the turn of the twentieth century, revivalist patterns of emotionalism, mission, lay participation, and miracles became guiding principles for this revivalist pneumatic family. Though much has been made of the Azusa Street revival of 1906, there were many other global revivalist expressions stirring concurrently. Examples include the Welsh Revival (1904–1905), the Mukti Mission Revival in India (1905), and the Korean Pentecost (1907–1908). While countless historians and sociologists have examined what revival entails, I have allowed the self-understanding of revival by the Bakers to guide this brief analysis. Rolland Baker defines revival in this way: “By ‘revival’ we are not referring to particular church meetings, but to a major restoration of relationship with God in the church, accompanied by mass conversions, intense conviction of sin, major transformation of lives and often many signs and wonders.”<sup>21</sup>

Thus, revival is multifaceted wide-scale transformation that is holistic in nature. The Bakers were influenced by several major revivals in contemporary Christian history; these include the Chinese Children’s Revival in Yunnan Province, China, the Jesus People Movement of the 1970s in the United States, and the Indonesian Revival of West

Timor. While all of these were vital for the Bakers' ministry efforts in Mozambique, the revival most influential for the vision of Iris Global was the Toronto Blessing of the 1990s.

The Toronto Blessing was a highly controversial revival originating at the Toronto Airport Vineyard Church in 1994. Ecstatic worship and charismatic manifestations characterized the Toronto church pastored by John and Carol Arnott. While traditional Pentecostal practices of tongues and prophecy were present, newer manifestations of crying, being slain in the Spirit, and holy laughter also emerged. The Toronto revival could be characterized as a trend in pentecostalism to resist routinization. Stephen Hunt argues that the "Charismatic movement was turning back on its self to rediscover Pentecostalism's initial impetus and with greater measure in terms of its pneumatological phenomena."<sup>22</sup> At the height of the revival's popularity, the Bakers were burnt-out missionaries seeking a fresh touch from God to reinvigorate their ministry in Mozambique. It was in this context that Heidi flew to Toronto in 1996.

When Heidi Baker arrived in Toronto, she was warned by doctors that the flight could kill her; her body was weak from pneumonia, various other infections, and tuberculosis. She records that she was completely healed the first night of her attendance at the Canadian revival.<sup>23</sup> During her stay at Toronto, she had several visions that propelled Iris Global forward into holistic initiatives revolving around orphan care. One vision is recorded below in length due to its importance for Iris Global's holistic ministries:

One night I was groaning in intercession for the children of Mozambique. There were thousands coming toward me, and I was crying, "No, Lord. There are too many!" Then I had a dramatic, clear vision of Jesus. I was with Him, and thousands and thousands of children surrounded me. . . . The Lord spoke to my heart and said, "There will always be enough, because I died."<sup>24</sup>

It was also during her time at Toronto that Randy Clark, one of the key leaders of the revival, prophesied over Heidi Baker; he told her that

miraculous healings would begin to manifest themselves in abundance in Mozambique.<sup>25</sup> Thus, Heidi returned to Mozambique inspired and empowered to live out the visions she received in Toronto. Donald Kantel writes, “Iris Ministries today is a reflection in an African context of the highest ministry values and Kingdom principles of the Toronto Blessing Revival.”<sup>26</sup> It could be effectively argued that Iris Global has actually contextualized the theology of the Toronto Blessing for Mozambique in partnership with indigenous missionaries, like Surprise Sithole, national director of Iris Global, who were open to the pneumatic impulses of the revival.

### **Incarnational Love**

A final theological impulse that has shaped the holistic ministry of Iris Global is the concept of incarnational (or godly) love. This spiritual framework has been well documented by Margaret Poloma and Matthew T. Lee, and I will be building upon their foundation here. According to Poloma and Lee, godly love is “a model that embodies the interactive ritual chains between Spirit and humans lying behind pentecostalism’s reticulate organization.”<sup>27</sup> In other words, godly love is the cooperative relationship between heavenly and anthropological love that results in amplified compassion.<sup>28</sup> Theologically, heavenly love flows from God to the human agent resulting in an empowered love toward others. For Iris Global, the use of prophecy in ministry is an example of the interactive nature of godly love. We may again turn to Heidi Baker’s prophecy given by Randy Clark at Toronto for further exemplification. During the Toronto revival, Clark asked her if she wanted the nation of Mozambique; if she responded yes, God would use Iris Global to initiate a massive charismatic revival across that nation. According to Poloma and Lee, “Heidi had to say ‘yes’ to this and then partner with God and other people . . . in interactions we have labeled ‘godly love’ in order to translate the prophetic words into lived reality.”<sup>29</sup> In prophecy, humans must cooperate with God in order to activate the divine message.

The interactive nature of godly love also directly impacts the Bakers’ holistic service in Mozambique. For the Bakers, intimacy with God is understood naturally to produce fruit for Christian service.

William K. Kay writes, “Indeed any spiritual experience with mystical overtones centering on feelings of unity with God will allow those feelings to ripple out to the rest of the universe, both material and human.”<sup>30</sup> This intimacy with God is not mechanical; one does not simply become intimate in order to get something. Rather, the Bakers understand intimacy with God to be amorous, and fruitfulness flows instinctively from this divine-human romance.<sup>31</sup> Jesus is understood to have incarnated perfectly this cosmic relationship, and the Bakers have articulated Iris Global’s vision for ministry in incarnational terms. Just as God incarnated himself in the form of Jesus to save and serve humanity, missionaries working for Iris Global are encouraged to incarnate love through actions that demonstrate God’s benevolence. Heidi Baker writes, “Ministry looks like servanthood manifested through love. Your job description is to be the fragrance of Christ, the beauty of Jesus, and the very anointing of Him on Earth.”<sup>32</sup>

Incarnational love also includes a willingness to suffer for the cause of Christ. Just as Jesus laid down his life for his friends, Iris Global missionaries are also taught to be laid-down lovers. Rolland Baker writes, “A powerful, positive, victorious theology of suffering has been necessary all through our experience in Africa. Godly suffering means learning to love when faced with evil opposition.”<sup>33</sup> Thus, godly love flows from the heart of the Father and produces fruit leading to an incarnational love that results in transformation even in the face of suffering.

## **Social Transformation in Mozambique**

Now that we have explored several theological themes (pentecostalism, revivalism, incarnational love) from which the holistic efforts of Iris Global flow, our story is now transposed to Mozambique proper. The rest of this article invites the reader to examine social transformation and its relationship to the Bakers’ theology. This will be accomplished in a narrative format that chronologically follows Iris Global’s orphan ministry in Mozambique from its origins to its current position; thus, readers will find themselves situated in two locations on this journey: 1) beginnings at Chihango; and 2) rise to prominence

at Maputo and beyond. Along this investigative trail, several theorists will show up periodically to help in the quest to understand how social transformation might be occurring in Mozambique. Primary literature from the Bakers will be at the forefront of this exploration, especially the autobiographical *Always Enough: God's Miraculous Provision among the Poorest Children on Earth* (2002) and Rolland Baker's dissertation "A Biblical Strategy of Mission" (2013). While Iris Global is committed to a variety of transformative projects, the specific arena of change addressed here is orphan care. Iris Global started in Mozambique as a ministry to war-torn orphans, and it is from this ministry that all other Iris Global ventures flow.

## **Beginnings at Chihango**

In *Always Enough*, Heidi reports that during her teenage years God had called her to be a missionary to Africa, but by 1994, she and Rolland had yet to fulfill that part of her vision.<sup>34</sup> In 1995, the Bakers finally got their chance when they were offered an orphanage in Chihango, Mozambique. In 1994, the African nation of Mozambique had just emerged out of a fifteen-year-long civil war that had devastated the nation. Poverty was widespread, and hundreds of children roamed violent streets in the wake of massive casualties amassed from the turmoil.<sup>35</sup> When the Bakers arrived at the orphanage, the situation was worse than expected. Abandoned children, many of them thieves, lived collectively in an overcrowded and rundown facility. Rolland describes the situation in this way: "There were about eighty of them, living like animals. They defecated on bare floors and sat there warming tin cans over wood fires. There were no beds, no mattresses, no sheets, no pillows."<sup>36</sup> Social conditions such as these at Chihango contributed to the Bakers' holistic ministry of word, work, and wonder. While Western missionaries have debated and continue to wrestle with the tension between proclamation and social action, the realities of poverty and human rights violations have forced a more holistic picture of salvation and reconciliation, especially amongst missionaries in decolonized states.<sup>37</sup>

The Bakers had been accustomed to holistic ministry long before arriving in Mozambique. While in Indonesia, they had started a job

program targeting Muslim women.<sup>38</sup> Heidi Baker has consistently suggested that love looks like something, and at the beginning of their Mozambican ministry, love looked like addressing the issue of food insecurity. Rolland Baker articulates a vision that connects their theology to orphan ministry in Chihango. He writes, “We became more and more holistic in our approach to missions. . . . When people are thirsty and starving, the holiest thing we can do is offer a cold drink of water and fresh bread.”<sup>39</sup> Thus, the theological impulse of incarnational love is at play here. Just as Jesus stopped and addressed the specific needs of those he encountered, the Bakers have enunciated a vision of stopping and meeting the needs of the one placed in front of them every day.

In the early days of their Chihango outreach, the Bakers would walk through Mozambique looking for street children to invite into their orphanage. For example, one day an Iris Global worker came across a young girl named Beatrice nearly dead lying under a tree. Despite her bloated belly and scabies, Heidi records that she saw Jesus in the eyes of Beatrice. She writes, “I held Beatrice in my arms, and I loved her. Jesus looked back at me through that little girl. He said, ‘Whatever you do for this little one, you do for Me.’ Ministry . . . is simply about loving the person in front of you.”<sup>40</sup> This again points to the theological impulse of incarnational love, and out of this love flowed the transformative power of hope. Beatrice’s health was restored, and she was later baptized. Another example of “stopping for the one” is the story of Everista. He was found starving to death on the street with sores all over his body. Heidi gave him some bread, and then he opened up about the trauma he had experienced. Heidi writes, “He knew his parents were dead, and he was alone and hungry. . . . I asked Everista if he wanted to come and live with us. His eyes brightened. We hugged him and prayed for him and let him know he was loved.”<sup>41</sup> Chihango emerged out of the desperation of the civil war to become a sanctuary of hope for the orphaned children in Mozambique. By 1996, 350 children were living at the orphanage, and most of them had become Christians through the communal love of the Bakers and the Iris Global team.<sup>42</sup>

Theologically the Bakers identify themselves as orthodox<sup>43</sup> Christians, and several biblical themes were foundational for Iris

Global's understanding of mission at Chihango.<sup>44</sup> Both Heidi and Rolland have received extensive theological education. Heidi has a Ph.D. in Systematic Theology from King's College, London, and Rolland has a D. Min. from United Theological Seminary. Their theological training is seen most vividly in scriptural application of biblical themes in Mozambican orphan care. In the Chihango years, the Bakers repeatedly used the biblical text of Isaiah in framing their ministry. Based around Isaiah 61:3, the Bakers had a vision of orphan transformation in which God would "bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes."<sup>45</sup> In Rolland Baker's dissertation, he cites Isaiah 58:10–11 as their inspiration for holistic mission; in this chapter, the prophet Isaiah promises provision and safety to those who "spend [themselves] in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed."<sup>46</sup>

Holistic mission would not truly be inclusive if it did not include the element of gospel proclamation, and prayer, worship, and preaching were at the center of Iris Global's Chihango base. Heidi focused her preaching on indigenous empowerment of the orphans. Rolland writes, "Heidi preached her heart out to them, telling them they cannot wait for Westerners. God will use them to repair Chihango."<sup>47</sup> Also, in a 1996 newsletter, the Bakers reported that the children at the orphanage had been radically transformed by the power of the Gospel. They engaged in regular collective prayer and worship, and the children also felt enabled to be "part of the answer" in healing the wounds of post-war Mozambique.<sup>48</sup> In April 1996, the Bakers recorded that almost two hundred children were baptized at Chihango during an Easter service.<sup>49</sup> Rolland writes, "Chihango has changed. The orphaned and abandoned children here are tasting the goodness and favor of their heavenly Father."<sup>50</sup> Thus, the Gospel message was the central focus at Chihango, and it remained so after Iris Global's forced migration to Maputo.

One core partnership that emerged during this phase of the Bakers' ministry was with Surprise Sithole, currently international director of pastors for Iris Global. Born to an animist household in Mozambique, Sithole fled as a teenager upon hearing a voice that commanded him to depart from his family of origin. After hearing the gospel from a man

who anticipated Sithole's arrival in a dream, he became a travelling evangelist and missionary in southern Africa. The destruction left in the wake of the Mozambican Civil War propelled Sithole into active ministry in his home country, where he met Heidi Baker in 1995. Though initially meeting briefly at a conference, Sithole had a series of dreams in which Heidi beckoned him to join Iris Global.<sup>51</sup> His arrival coincided with the eviction of the Bakers from Chihango, stemming from their refusal to stop evangelizing the children at the shelter. Sithole initially attempted to convince government officials to reconsider the eviction notice. He writes, "I thought the fact that I was one of them—not an 'outsider' from America or the United Kingdom—would give me a bit of influence."<sup>52</sup> Though his efforts failed to persuade authorities, Sithole's actions reveal an intentional commitment to indigenization on the part of Iris Global. Serving as a church planter before joining Iris Global, Sithole took steps to consolidate his previous churches under the Iris Global banner in the mid-1990s.<sup>53</sup>

## Rise to Prominence at Maputo and Beyond

While the Bakers had hoped that they would spend many years in Chihango, their ministerial efforts were displaced when the government retracted the Bakers' contract for the orphanage and prohibited religious activities at the children's center. Following their eviction from Chihango, the Bakers felt overwhelmed, but their visions at Toronto in 1996 carried them forward. During the Toronto revival, one prevalent manifestation was holy laughter. Though a highly controversial spiritual phenomenon, the Bakers have embraced this manifestation as pointing to a supernatural infilling of joy by the Holy Spirit into the believer's life. It is out of the experiential theology of Toronto that the Bakers maintain joy in the face of the suffering they have experienced in Mozambique. From this framework, Rolland asked these rhetorical questions:

Is it possible to preach the Sermon to the poorest of the poor?  
Can we tell victims of poverty, disease and war not to worry?  
Can they be as carefree as flowers of the field and birds of the air?  
The question was, If this gospel of Jesus does not work in these situations, where does it work?<sup>54</sup>

Thus, we see here the theological impulse of Toronto spirituality contextualized for the Mozambican context. Out of a mystical framework of joy birthed in the Toronto revival, the Bakers chose gladness in the face of their eviction; this joy propelled them forward into the next phase of their holistic orphan care in Mozambique.<sup>55</sup>

The Bakers, along with over 300 children, vacated Chihango and started a church plant in a garbage dump in Maputo, Mozambique. It was during this transitory experience that Heidi had several visions that sustained the Bakers for future ministry. She details a vision she had of Jesus dancing in the garbage dump and calling the children to Him. In the vision, Jesus also brought physical and emotional healing to all of the children.<sup>56</sup> It was during this period that a widespread healing ministry was initiated by Iris Global missionaries under the Bakers' leadership. Craig Keener has noted extensive miracle reports in Mozambique. For example, he writes, "Heidi asked . . . if anyone was sick. A deaf and mute girl . . . came forward, and Heidi prayed; the girl began to hear first and then gradually began to try to imitate sounds whispered in her ear."<sup>57</sup> The inclusion of signs and wonders into the ministry of Iris Global demonstrates the pentecostal theological impulse inherent in their service.

Picking up on the classical Pentecostal theme of multi-dimensional salvation (four-fold and five-fold gospel configurations), Iris Global has embraced what Amos Yong refers to as *material salvation* into their holistic ministry. Yong writes, "This includes the healing—of mind, soul, and body; mental, emotional, and physical—ministered by Jesus and made possible by the power of the Spirit."<sup>58</sup> Material salvation is focused principally on the poor and marginalized due to tangible experiences of disease and other social ailments.<sup>59</sup> Thus, healing in the context of Mozambican orphan ministry opens up opportunities to a previously excluded group resulting in social transformation. David Martin, in his hallmark work *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish*, suggests that a relationship exists between modernity and the "healing energies" of Pentecostalism. According to Martin, healing "includes internalized conscientiousness and a portable integrity at home and at work . . . and an aspiration to rise above fickle fortune."<sup>60</sup> In the context of Mozambique, divine encounters among children plagued by disease

and hopelessness thrust many of them into educational institutions and improved health. Martin also argues that this type of pentecostal conscientiousness is especially relevant in Mozambique, a colony left in ruinous condition after decolonization.<sup>61</sup>

A second pentecostal emphasis found amongst Iris Global missionaries is the use of dreams and visions for Christian discipleship. These supernatural phenomena are not limited to the Bakers, though, and signs and wonders have been an invaluable means of transformation among the orphans in Mozambique. Arjun Appadurai has argued that the most noticeable feature of globalization is “the possibility for people to deploy alternative imaginaries that give rise to new kinds of public cultures.”<sup>62</sup> Though widely utilized in postcolonial studies, Appadurai’s concept of alternative imaginaries may also be useful in analyzing the power of dreams and visions prominent among Mozambican orphans. For example, let us consider the case of Ernesto, a street child rescued by the Bakers in Maputo. As a child, Ernesto had experienced instances of rape. The death of his parents combined with sexual trauma left him in a state of poverty and hopelessness. When Heidi brought Ernesto to live with the Bakers, she reports that he had experienced a vision that radically transformed him. Ernesto was taken to heaven where he joined the angels in a blissful dance around Father God. During this trip, God engaged Ernesto in conversation, conveying his abundant love toward him. Ernesto was also told to turn away from his life of thievery and violence as a street child. God would then use him as a miracle-working pastor.<sup>63</sup> Thus, the vision Ernesto received completely redirected his life in several ways. First, there is the area of religious change; Ernesto converted to Christianity following his dream of heaven. Second, Ernesto’s social condition was changed. Following his vision, he permanently moved in with the Bakers. With his improved status, Ernesto also received the opportunity to be educated and receive proper nutritional care. Thus, Ernesto’s vision resulted in holistic transformation because he was able to conceive of a new identity of hope, or, in borrowing from Appadurai, an alternative imaginary.

The Bakers contribute to the formation of a communal alternative imaginary by stressing that their orphans are not actually orphans at all. Heidi writes, “We never call our centers orphanages because the

Father never leaves us as orphans. . . . He adopts us into His family and we become sons and daughters.”<sup>64</sup> Widespread visions by the orphans in Mozambique have resulted in the materialization of an alternative community in Mozambique guided by Iris Global. Rather than caring for orphans, though they are of course doing that, Iris Global articulates a self-understanding of transformation that propels one’s status from orphan to child.

The church plant in the garbage dump of Maputo quickly skyrocketed in attendance following the outpouring of signs and wonders on the children. Rolland Baker writes, “Our first faltering efforts with street children in Maputo soon developed into a great family of hundreds.”<sup>65</sup> Social transformation can also be statistically documented in Mozambique. The Christian population has almost doubled since 1995, and evangelical Christianity is the fastest growing demographic affiliation.<sup>66</sup> Economic change also occurred in the Mozambican areas Iris Global missionaries were present. According to an inflight magazine by South African Airways, Maputo itself has been called the “hippest city in Southern Africa.”<sup>67</sup> Though still relatively poor, Mozambique’s economy is growing. After several years in Maputo, the Bakers were again called to transplant their operations to another part of Mozambique. In 2002, Heidi received a vision that pushed Iris Global to focus on the unreached people group of the Makua in the province of Cabo Delgado.

Following a prophetic sign to seek after God’s Makua Bride, the Bakers tearfully departed Maputo in the early 2000s. After leaving their now thriving base behind in the hands of another missionary couple, the Bakers took fifty of their southern children and headed to Pemba, a town of about 50,000.<sup>68</sup> At Pemba, the Bakers experimented with many holistic ministry projects to reach out to the orphaned children. After seeking a way to combine food service with Bible teaching, Iris Global missionaries ultimately decided to open up a primary school in Pemba.<sup>69</sup> Children at the school engage in a daily routine of Christian discipleship, games, and meals.

Iris Global has now expanded their educational facilities in Pemba to include secondary education as well. This school is designed to empower children, teaching them skills that will be helpful in future

careers. Thus, the children are socially transformed so that they may in turn be change agents for the rest of Mozambique. In an interview with Joy Ercoli, an Iris missionary, I was told that over 3,500 children are educated every day at the primary and secondary schools run by Iris Global. She also stressed Iris Global's educational emphasis in recent years, stating, "I believe the Pemba school is one of . . . the top performing schools in the province. . . . A huge dream of the Bakers is to start a university in Pemba and they are in the first stages of seeing that come to fruition."<sup>70</sup> The schools in Pemba are open to all children, and orphans are actively included in this ministry. Iris Global continues to serve orphans in Mozambique to this day through the unique combination of word, work, and wonder.

## Conclusion

This article explored pentecostal theologizing as a channel of social transformation in Mozambique through Heidi and Rolland Baker's holistic orphan care efforts. Three theological impulses that were stitched into the chronological narrative included: 1) pentecostalism, 2) revivalism, and 3) incarnational love. These three pentecostal impulses birthed word, work, and wonder, and this in turn resulted in social transformation (especially in the areas of orphan enablement and religious identity). These theological impulses continue to characterize and guide the vision of the Mozambican mission organization. Iris Global missionaries are empowering the orphans in Mozambique through identity reconfiguration. Rather than using the paradigm of the hopeless orphan, the Bakers refer to their children as beloved children of God. This paradigmatic shift can be seen in the name of their children's facility in Pemba, the Village of Joy. Based upon Arjun Appadurai's concept of alternative imaginaries, it could be argued that Iris Global has empowered the orphans in Mozambique through collective re-identification, and dreams and visions have been particularly valuable in giving flesh to the skeletal framework of this new identity.

As a result, we see that Iris Global has grown "from two churches and a children's home to 7,000 churches and homes for 10,000 orphaned children."<sup>71</sup> Revival has also swept over northern

Mozambique, and Cabo Delgado is now considered a majority Christian province by the government in less than seven years since the Bakers' arrival.<sup>72</sup> When the Bakers entered Pemba, churches were being planted nearly every week. In 2002 alone, almost 3,000 Makua churches had sprung up amongst a people group that missiologists considered evangelistically impossible.<sup>73</sup> Ultimately, the Bakers' unique pentecostal theologizing has become a channel of social transformation in Mozambique.



**Jeremy Bone** ([jeremy.bone@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:jeremy.bone@asburyseminary.edu)) is a United Methodist and Master of Divinity student at Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY, USA.



**Samuel Lee** ([samuel.lee@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:samuel.lee@asburyseminary.edu)) is a Korean Evangelical Holiness Church pastor, Ph.D. Candidate, and adjunct professor at Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY, USA.

## Notes

1 Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids: MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 18. For purposes of this paper, I am following Amos Yong's typology of the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement, with Pentecostal (uppercase) referring to classical Pentecostalism that emerged out of the Azusa Street Revival of 1906 and pentecostal (lowercase) referring to the three-pronged movement emphasizing the charismatic gifts as a whole: classical Pentecostals, Charismatics, and Neo-Charismatics.

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- 3 Tizon, *Transformation after Lausanne*, 25.
- 4 Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity?: The Gospel Beyond the West* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 17.
- 5 Tizon, *Transformation after Lausanne*, 127.
- 6 Dena Freeman, "The Pentecostal Ethic and the Spirit of Development," in *Pentecostalism and Development: Churches, NGOs and Social Change in Africa*, ed. Dena Freeman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 1.
- 7 Freeman, "The Pentecostal Ethic," 2.
- 8 Freeman, "The Pentecostal Ethic," 2.
- 9 Freeman, "The Pentecostal Ethic," 13.
- 10 Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology: a Theology of Encounter* (New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 26.
- 11 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Society of Missiology, 20th Anniversary Edition (New York: Orbis Books, 2011), 453.
- 12 Rolland and Heidi Baker, *Always Enough: God's Miraculous Provision among the Poorest Children on Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2003), 12.
- 13 Allan Anderson, "Varieties, Taxonomies, and Definitions" in *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods*, ed. Allan Anderson et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 15.
- 14 J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretations from an African Context*, Regnum Studies in Global Christianity (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 2. Dr. Kwabena refers to broad Pentecostalism as "pneumatic" Christianity.
- 15 Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity*, 4.
- 16 Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*, 24.
- 17 Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*, 91.
- 18 Allan Heaton Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth: Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity*, Oxford Studies in World Christianity (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 12.
- 19 Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth*, 13.
- 20 Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth*, 13.
- 21 Rolland Baker, "Toward a Biblical Strategy of Mission," 53.
- 22 Stephen Hunt, "Sociology of Religion," in *Studying Global Pentecostalism: Theories and Methods*, ed. Allan Anderson et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 189.
- 23 Rolland and Heidi Baker, *Always Enough*, 48.
- 24 Rolland and Heidi Baker, *Always Enough*, 49–50.
- 25 Margaret M. Poloma and Matthew T. Lee, "Prophecy, Empowerment, and Godly

- Love: The Spirit Factor in the Growth of Pentecostalism,” in *Spirit and Power: The Growth and Global Impact of Pentecostalism*, ed. Donald E. Miller et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 277.
- 26 Donald Kantel, as quoted by Rolland Baker, “Toward a Biblical Strategy for Mission,” 69.
- 27 Poloma and Lee, “Prophecy, Empowerment, and Godly Love,” 280.
- 28 Poloma and Lee, “Prophecy, Empowerment, and Godly Love,” 280.
- 29 Poloma and Lee, “Prophecy, Empowerment, and Godly Love,” 282.
- 30 William K. Kay, “Gifts of the Spirit: Reflections on Pentecostalism and its Growth in Asia,” in *Spirit and Power: The Growth and Global Impact of Pentecostalism*, ed. Donald E. Miller et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 259.
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- 34 Rolland and Heidi Baker, *Always Enough*, 26.
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- 37 Tizon, *Transformation after Lausanne*, 25.
- 38 Rolland and Heidi Baker, *Always Enough*, 32.
- 39 Rolland Baker, “Toward a Biblical Strategy of Missions,” 51.
- 40 Heidi Baker, *Compelled by Love*, 35.
- 41 Rolland and Heidi Baker, *Always Enough*, 44.
- 42 Rolland and Heidi Baker, *Always Enough*, 50.
- 43 Orthodox here refers to classical mainstream Christianity and not the Orthodox tradition specifically.
- 44 Rolland Baker, “Toward a Biblical Strategy of Mission,” 2.
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- 46 Rolland Baker, “Toward a Biblical Strategy of Mission,” 122.
- 47 Rolland Baker, “Toward a Biblical Strategy of Mission,” 125.
- 48 Rolland Baker, “Toward a Biblical Strategy of Mission,” 128.
- 49 Rolland Baker, “Toward a Biblical Strategy of Mission,” 131.
- 50 Rolland Baker, “Toward a Biblical Strategy of Mission,” 135.
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- 53 Pastor Surprise, *Voice in the Night*, 152.
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- 58 Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*, 93.
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- 63 Rolland and Heidi Baker, *Always Enough*, 59.
- 64 Heidi Baker, "Primacy of Love," in *Supernatural Missions: the Impact of the Supernatural on World Missions*, ed. Randy Clark (Mechanciburg, PA: Apostolic Network of Global Awakening, 2012), 252.
- 65 Rolland Baker, "Toward a Biblical Strategy of Mission," 16.
- 66 Rolland Baker, "Toward a Biblical Strategy of Mission," 15.
- 67 Rolland Baker, "Toward a Biblical Strategy of Mission," 13.
- 68 Heidi Baker, *Compelled by Love*, 47.
- 69 Rolland and Heidi Baker, *Learning to Love: Passion, Compassion and the Essence of the Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Chosen, 2013), 57.
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- 72 Ercoli, email to authors (1 December 2015).
- 73 Rolland Baker, "Toward a Biblical Strategy of Mission," 17.