Towards New Priorities in Mission

Christians today are challenged to take a closer look at their priorities. When it comes to mission, do our actions genuinely reflect what we say our goals are? Have we paid sufficient attention to what our priorities are, and what they ought to be? There is ample biblical encouragement for us to rethink our priorities periodically, and this issue of the International Bulletin challenges us to do just that.

David B. Barrett, editor of the World Christian Encyclopedia, contends that priorities for Christian goals have been greatly distorted by the ways in which Christians actually spend their money. He provides here statistical data to examine the financial resources that are available to Christians in the pursuit of their mission, and he suggests strategies for improvement.

Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden call attention to the ways in which the operations of mission agencies resemble multinational corporations, and distort the priorities of national churches. In response, William R. Burrows, S.V.D., and David M. Howard acknowledge the problem, and assess its implications for mission planning.

The significance of conversion within the culture of the new believer is a matter that has been hotly debated from biblical times to the present. John A. Gration calls for a new sensitivity to the distinct value systems of a particular culture, so that those value systems may be appropriately addressed by the gospel.

“Education for mission currently receives such low priority in many congregations, seminaries, and denominational programs that certain questions must be raised,” warns Ward L. Kaiser. He describes how a particular group of mission boards and agencies have tried to carry out mission education, and he suggests that much remains to be done.

Lamin Sanneh points out that analyses of Western missions in Africa that have focused on the role of missionaries within the context of Western colonialism have distorted a proper understanding of what continuing impact the missions had. This has especially been the case when African Christians came to preside over a process of adaptation to local culture after the departure of the missionaries.

A missionary and missiologist who was very sensitive to the priorities of the people among whom he worked was Johan Herman Bavinck, whose contributions are examined by J. van den Berg in our continuing “Legacy” series. Bavinck was a missionary “who thought it important to confront the world of Eastern religious thought with the message of Christ.”

In the midst of both perplexity and opportunity, Christians are continually challenged to pay closer attention to their priorities.

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Silver and Gold Have I None: Church of the Poor or Church of the Rich?

David B. Barrett

This essay discusses Christian financial resources at the global level and asks how extensive they are today and how effective they are for today’s mission.

Jesus did not carry money or own any. He had no silver or gold, no cash income, no property, no stocks or shares, no current account, no savings account, no hedge against inflation, no tax havens, no financial reserves. He had nowhere to lay his head. He accounted, no savings account, no hedge against inflation, no tax havens.

He had 1.5 billion followers who receive annual incomes totaling U.S. $6.5 trillion and who own two-thirds of the earth’s entire resources. On this basis, global Christianity has become overwhelmingly the church of the Rich. To what extent are these people having any impact today?

The World of Billions Squandered

Each year in today’s world, billions of dollars are, from the Christian standpoint, recklessly wasted. We are all familiar with the appalling global squandering of resources going on around us in the twentieth century, in most of which Christians individually and corporately are deeply involved. These involve the environment and pollution, forests and desertification, oil, coal, minerals, and other energy sources. Major resources are the 10 million species on earth (20 percent nearing extinction), and of course the human populations themselves. The total cost of wasteful actions and policies in these areas is enormous.

Then there are the vast annual expenditures on causes to which Christians are either fundamentally opposed, or hostile, or at any rate cool. International and national crime, especially of the organized varieties, is known to involve over U.S. $400 billion each year. Of this, illicit drug traffic accounts for some $60 billion. In the United States the two most lucrative forms of crime cost the following: $25 billion a year on the cocaine industry (1982 figure), and $44 billion a year on white-collar thefts such as fraud and computer crime (1977 figure). Criminal justice to combat these activities cost United States taxpayers over $26 billion in 1979 alone. In addition, several times as much as these sums goes on the less criminal activities of graft, corruption, and embezzlement each year. Further, there are scores of lesser examples of squandering when considered in the total world context. The United States documents its total expenditure in the most detail, hence provides most of the concrete examples and comes under the most scrutiny (and fire). There, dog owners spend $3.2 billion each year on their dogs; tobacco products sold rose from $16.7 billion in 1970 to $20.4 billion in 1980; and alcoholic beverages consumed rose from $22.4 billion to $42.8 billion over the same period. A high percentage of the persons involved are Christians of one persuasion or another.

But the best-documented mass squandering of resources, in the view of many thinking Christians, is the arms race linked with the global military-industrial complex. Worldwide military expenditure rose from $236 billion in 1969 to $480 billion in 1978 and $650 billion in 1982. Of this, 22 percent was spent by the United States, and 31 percent by the U.S.S.R. The U.S.S.R.’s expenditure is expected to rise to $300 billion in 1985; while the United States is planning to spend $2 trillion over five years. It is known that some 500,000 scientists (50 percent of the world’s one million), including many Nobel Prize laureates, are involved today in military and defense expenditure, together with 100 million employed citizens working under national ministries of defense. By 1983 this expenditure on the arms race reached over $140 a year for every man, woman, and child on earth. Over 60 million Christians—employees, employers, scientists, government leaders—are deeply involved in this issue, since their whole livelihood stems from it.

The World of Billions in Poverty

By contrast, some 46 percent of the world, or 2.1 billion people, live in varying degrees of poverty. They eke out a living in twenty-six countries, each with a per-capita income of under $235 per year. This sounds bad enough, but the full picture is much worse. The world in 1983 has some 800 million persons living in absolute poverty, each with an income of less than $90 a year. This is one-third of the entire developing world, the Third World; to it must be added 150 million on the edge of poverty in China. As defined by the World Bank, absolute poverty is a clearly defined category that represents “a condition of life so characterized by malnutrition, illiteracy and disease as to be beneath any reasonable definition of human decency.” With each month that passes, these totals increase as the gap between affluence and poverty widens almost everywhere.

Worldwide, absolute poverty is overwhelmingly concentrated in the rural areas of developing countries. It has many dire consequences, centering on a chronic lack of the basic necessities for survival. Among these consequences: 1.1 billion human beings remain without adequate shelter; landlessness and mass unemployment are rampant; 2.1 billion do not have access to adequate water supply; some 50 million are temporarily displaced or permanently unsettled refugees; 800 million adults are illiterate with no access to literature; 850 million have little or no access to schools; 1.5 billion have no access to medical care; 500 million exist on the edge of starvation; 570 million people (20 percent of the Third World, and up to 33 percent in several countries) suffer from inadequate and uncertain diet and thus from severe protein-calorie malnutrition; and some 1.5 billion human beings on earth are hungry or malnourished.

This catastrophic state of affairs is to some extent a direct consequence of the blatant misuse of resources sketched in the preceding section. The predicament of the 2 billion “have-nots” (the poor) is a damning indictment of the diversion or even theft of trillions of dollars over the years by the 2 billion “haves” (the rich). From another point of view, however, the blame rests on

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*Figures are United States dollar equivalents throughout this article.
A Global Table of Resources

There are various types of Christian resources. Clearly, the main one is the basic one: people. Human beings won to the service of Christ and their fellow beings are undoubtedly the main Christian resource. Subsidiary resources may be listed as follows: workers (full-time personnel), missionaries, Scriptures, books, literature, periodicals, libraries, institutions, service agencies, organizations, broadcasting, et alia. An attempt at tabulating these for each of the continents of the world across the twentieth century was given in Global Table 12, in the World Christian Encyclopedia. This table omitted one major resource, namely, Christian finance, and we shall now attempt to deal with this below.

In this article we investigate only one aspect of Christian finance, namely, money donated each year by the entire world community of all Christians. Starting with United Nations and World Bank data, it has been possible to build up a computerized global table of Christian financial resources. Part of this table is reprinted with this article. We shall now comment on some of the figures there, at the same time showing how further figures can be derived by simple arithmetic, depending on what the reader is interested in. Numbers in parentheses following the headings below refer to numbered items in the statistical table.

Personal Income and Lifestyle (nos. 3, 5)

The first three lines of the table show the world distribution of population, total income and income per person. Average income at the world level is around $2,400 per person each year. Because Christians are concentrated in the Western world, their average income (no. 5 divided by no. 4) is far higher at $4,500. Non-Christians average only $1,350 (subtract no. 5 from no. 2, then divide by the sum of no. 1 minus no. 4). Since lifestyle depends on income, Christians across the world can be seen to live on average at a level over three times higher than non-Christians.

195 Million Christians in Absolute Poverty

So much for the averages. There is a further factor, however: income distribution is so unequal that, whereas 52 percent of all Christians live in affluence and a further 35 percent are comparatively well off, 13 percent live in absolute poverty. The degradation and agony of absolute poverty are thus shared by millions of our fellow Christians. Some 109 million Christians live in the world’s twenty-six poorest countries. In all developing countries, Christians living in absolute poverty number...
Southeast Asia. This is what we usually mean by the "Church of the Poor." By the world's standards, they have nothing. Today a vast literature has been building up on their predicament from the theological and biblical standpoints.

How "poor" is the Church of the Poor? Here we meet a strange paradox. On the one hand, the answer is: shockingly, appallingly, scandalously, outrageously poor. It is surely outrageous that 750 million affluent Christians can continue to allow 195 million brethren in Christ to exist in abject poverty year after year. But from another point of view, the answer, surprisingly, is that this church is largely financially self-supporting, and that it has huge potential financial resources right there amid its membership. The personal income of the 195 million looks bad enough when expressed as an average of $90 per person per year, but in aggregate it amounts to the huge sum of $19 billion each year. Their churches operate on income of well over $300 million a year, enough to run major relief programs of all kinds.

Again, the major problem is that income distribution is grossly unfair. In the "churches of the poor," that is, in the actual denominations to which the 195 million belong, they exist in close proximity to some 20 million relatively affluent co-citizens, elite, fellow Christians above them. These include the hierarchies of church leaders who control the churches, few of whom are poor and a number of whom have become very rich since taking office. Regrettably, these 20 million show less concern for the poor than many of their co-religionists in the Western world.

Yet another side of the paradox is that this Church of the Poor is poor only in material goods. They are far from being spiritual paupers. Spiritually, it is the Church of the Rich. Some of the richest and most dynamic forms of Christianity today, and the most rapid church growth, are to be found in these areas of material poverty and destitution. Within this Church of the Poor we count the 5.5 million involved in the charismatic renewal throughout India and South Asia; the 200,000 base ecclesial communities (or, the Iglesia Popular) in Latin America; and the entire 30-million-strong African Indigenous Churches movement among Africa's lowest social classes. This Church of the Poor is the only part of global Christianity whose lifestyle is similar to that of Jesus on earth. They are the only Christians who are able with complete accuracy to proclaim, with the apostle Peter (Acts 3:6): "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!"

### Christian Financial Resources (nos. 8–11)

What about total resources? How much in aggregate are the world's 1.3 billion church members worth each year on the world scene, considering here only the aspect of financial income? The answer is easy to compute, but startling to comprehend: $5.9 trillion. The largest slice of this (43 percent) goes to Europe, the next (36 percent) to North America. The influential worldwide community of Evangelicals alone have personal income totaling just under $1 trillion a year. All this looks impressive. It looks less satisfactory when its uses are expressed in percentage terms, as we shall shortly do.

### Global Christian Giving (nos. 6, 12–16)

So much for the individual and aggregate income of Christians. How much do they give away each year? In theory, many confessions and communions assert that Christians should tithe, which means give away 10 percent of their income. If all did this, the total would be $647 billion a year. In practice, they give a third of this—something like $181 billion, if we include every kind of Christians. But it makes more sense here to restrict the definition of "Christians" to all affiliated church members. In this case, their annual donations total $160 billion. Forty-nine percent of this comes from North America, 34 percent from Europe. Africa contributes a mere 2 percent, Asia less than 1 percent.

### Where Does the Money Go? (nos. 16–18)

Who are the immediate beneficiaries of all this wealth? A few percentages can answer this question. Though Christians number only 32 percent of the world population, they receive 62 percent of the entire world's annual income—and spend 97 percent of it on themselves. Put this way, it is shocking. Put another way, each year North American and European church members spend $4.5 trillion on themselves personally and on their families. The Church of the Rich (the "Middle-Class Church") is at heart a selfish and a self-serving church.

Of the remaining 3 percent of Christians' income, a meager 1 percent, or $60 billion a year, is given or donated to secular or non-Christian causes and charities; and about 2 percent, or $100 billion a year, is given or donated directly to Christian causes. This latter sum forms the vast bulk of what the churches and parachurch agencies across the world receive to run the worldwide Christian church and its annual operations.

### Giving to Secular Causes (no. 17)

These figures in the preceding paragraph can be rearranged to convey a much more favorable perspective. Christians support their own religion financially, as one would expect; but they also give 60 percent as much again to secular charities (famine relief, hospitals, handicapped programs, cancer research, etc.) even to non-Christian causes. Christians are heavily involved in financial support of social and development programs in the world beyond or outside the boundaries of the churches. This is surely greatly to their credit.

The actual breakdown by category is instructive. In the United States, some 14 percent of all giving by Christians goes to secular education, 13.4 percent to health and secular hospitals, 9.9 percent to social welfare, 6.2 percent to arts and the humanities, 2.8 percent to civic and public services, and 7.1 percent to other secular causes. The remaining 46.4 percent is spent directly on religion and religious causes, which in the United States context means largely Christian causes.

### Giving to Christian Causes (nos. 18–25)

Before the year 1900, over 90 percent of Christian giving was channeled through the churches and denominations. A modest 10 percent supported the Bible societies and missionary societies. But the twentieth century has seen the emergence on a massive scale of over 15,800 distinct new parachurch agencies whose finances are independent of the churches. This ought to be regarded by older denominations and agencies, not with envy or jealousy but simply as the latest development in the long history of where Christian wealth is concentrated. Unfortunately their attitude often resembles that of the older brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son (see Luke 15). Be that as it may, 36 percent of all Christian giving to Christian causes was regularly bypassing the churches and denominations by 1980. In consequence, giving to denominations in many countries is declining at an alarming rate. One major exam-
ple and cause of this that springs to mind is Christian broadcast-
ing. Nonexistent in 1900, by 1977 religious broadcasting in the
United States alone accounted for $500 million as the cost of
broadcast time. On the world scale the total cost of Christian
broadcasting is over three times larger, around $2 billion in 1982.

Giving to Denominations (no. 20)

All this is bad news for the world’s 20,800 Christian denomina-
tions. Their once unchallenged hold on their members’ giving, and
their appeal as worthy causes are dwindling. While their members
do not reach the widely taught stewardship target of tithing (giv-
ing 10 percent of personal income), nevertheless they do average 3
percent of income. But a third of this is given to secular causes,
and another third to parachurch organizations, leaving only a third
for the operation of the denominations themselves. And their third
is rapidly declining.

Despite this, denominational spending on property increases
year by year. Thus the value of new construction of religious
buildings in the United States (again, the best-documented coun-
try) rose from $0.9 billion in 1970 to $1.6 billion in 1980. There,
certainly, we see overwhelmingly the Church of the Rich. Yet,
again paradoxically, the Church of the Poor exists in parallel in the
United States, mostly as a Black or a Hispanic urban phenomenon.
Even here, though, “Church of the Poor” is a relative term, since
the poor as officially defined in the United States have per-capita
incomes over sixty times greater than the absolutely poor in the
Third World.

Individual Giving (nos. 26-31)

These huge sums of money become more intelligible when re-
duced to what the average individual contributes. On the world
level, the average church member gives $76 a year (which is $1.46 a
week). As one would expect, individual giving is highest in the
strongholds of the Church of the Rich (the affluent West)—$212 a
year in North America; is much lower in the strongholds of the
Church of the Poor in Africa ($20 a year) and in Latin America
($15 a year); and is lowest of all ($4.70 a year) in the Church of the
Absolutely Poor in the continent with the lowest per-capita in-
come of all, South Asia.

Global Foreign Missions (nos. 32-34)

It is in its global religious outreach that the Christian world seems
least certain of itself and of its mission. Only 5 percent of global
Christian giving ($5 billion a year) goes to support the Christian
world mission. Outreach, foreign service, evangelism among non-
Christians, conversion, new and experimental types of mission and
ministry, translation of the Scriptures into non-Christian lan-
guages—these attract the least money. The remaining 95 percent of
global Christian giving ($95 billion a year) goes on the home
church and its ministries at home. The average church member,
donating his $1.46 a week, gives out of this only $0.07 (seven
American cents) to support Christian foreign missions. This indi-
cates a very low level of commitment to the Great Commission of
the Lord Jesus Christ: “Make disciples of all nations.” In this re-
spect, the entire Christian world is a Church of the Poor—poor in
spiritual dynamic and in missionary vision and obedience.

The Indispensable Role of Research

One reason for this dismal state of affairs with regard to global
mission is the absence of sufficient serious research on the subject.
Research is essential to the prosecution of all large enterprises in
the modern secular world. Most countries recognize this by allo-
cating massive financial resources to research, averaging some 2.1
percent of their gross national product. Many commercial and in-
dustrial enterprises allocate 5 percent of their total income, some
as high as 10 percent. In 1980, the total national research-and-devel-
opment expenditure on the sciences was 2.33 percent of GNP in
the United States ($61 billion), 2.3 percent in Europe ($76 billion),
and 3.47 percent in the Soviet Union ($38 billion). The world total
spent on research and development in 1980 was $210 billion. Well
over 90 percent of this is spent in, and therefore primarily benefits,
the techno-economic colossi in the North of the planet (the West-
ern world and the European Communist world). The South (the
Third World) benefits only indirectly, if at all.

The result of this recognition of research is that vast sums are
available to experiment in numerous new directions at once. This
is an essential element in research, since in scientific or industrial
applications any new line of research has only a 1:8000 chance of
success. A typical case is the chemical multinational Hoechst U.K.
In 1982 it spent $240 million on pharmaceuticals research. In 1983
it is spending U.K. £1 million a day on agrochemical and related
health and nutrition research, employing 13,000 people in fifteen
different countries on its research program. One concrete result of
this area of research is that average human male life expectancy
in Britain has increased from forty-one years in the year 1870 to sev-
enty years today.

The Norwegian missiologist Olav Myklebust once said:
“What theology is to the church, missionary research is to the task
of world evangelization.” In other words, it is fundamentally
essential. Without adequate research, the global work of Christ
and in particular its mission and outreach have often floundered in
ignorance or error.

How extensive is Christian research today? Until the 1950s re-
search had always been almost completely decentralized, relying
on the voluntary and unorganized labs of thousands of scholars
in all disciplines. Between them nowadays they produce some
3,000 new scholarly research books on the Christian faith every
year.

Together with these individual scholars, there has grown up
since 1950 a vast, loose network of 950 Christian or church-related
research centers across the world. These undertake research on the
entire range of Christian issues, from biblical archeology and bibli-
cal exegesis to human rights and futurological topics. Yet, since
1970 these 950 centers have been seriously undermined by drasti-

cally curtailed funding. Quite a number of denominational centers,
and some 70 percent of all church researchers since 1970, have sub-
sequently collapsed or otherwise gone into oblivion. I estimate that
their total budgets today have fallen to some $19 million a year.
For global Christianity, a global organization with an annual bud-
get of $100 billion, this is an exceptionally small proportion: only
0.019 percent. Such a low outlay is shortsighted in the extreme by
contemporary standards. And only a small fraction of this goes to
research on global mission, the “Missionary Research” to which
this International Bulletin is dedicated.

The only bright area of this picture today is the handful of
North American parachurch agencies who have been able to retain
large research budgets. But these employ their research funds
almost exclusively on in-house projects under their own control.
Almost always today these revolve around purchase of sophisti-
cated computer hardware whose applications in most cases go no
further than word processing, phototypesetting, stockkeeping, and
accounting. Regrettably these agencies do not freely share these
scarce resources with outside church-based researchers in Western
denominations. Still less do they share their temporary good for-
### CHRISTIAN FINANCIAL RESOURCES

#### WORLD
- Total population (millions of persons) 4,373.9
- Total income (Gross National Product, per year, billion US$ per annum [pa]) 10,448.0
- Average income per person (GNP per capita per year, US $ pa) 2,389.0

#### GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY
- Christians of all kinds (millions of persons) 1,432.7
- Income of all Christians (billion $ pa) 6,467.7

#### ACTUAL GIVING BY ALL KINDS OF CHRISTIANS
- Giving to missions per church member per year ($) 3.79
- Giving to missions per church member per week ($) 0.073

#### CHRISTIAN ACTIVITIES
- Christian income, and it excludes the secondary and subsequent levels of giving. All these categories are used as defined in Oceania, whereas UN agencies define both countries as in Asia. US $ 75,000, and in the year 1900 to have been US $19,100,000 (both at the second and subsequent levels of giving). Definitions of financial variables. These largely follow World Bank usage. Both church members and nominal Christians, while line nos. 12-29 are much higher than their counterparts on the amounts of giving in the USA. Thus 16% of USA residents give 10% or more to charitable organizations. As a result, cover the total extent of Christian giving, omitting as they do much spontaneous or unplanned or one-time acts of charity to individuals in need, beggars, family members, or acquaintances, et alia.

#### ACTUAL CHRISTIAN GIVING BY CHURCH MEMBERS
- Giving to church members (billion $ pa) 387.8
- Giving per church member (billion $ pa) 0.75

#### ACTUAL GIVING TO CHRISTIAN CAUSES
- Giving to Christian causes 100.3

#### ACTUAL GIVING TO CHRISTIAN CAUSES BY CONFESSION
- Protestants (billion $ pa) 42.5
- Roman Catholics (billion $ pa) 44.1

#### ACTUAL GIVING TO CHRISTIAN CAUSES BY CONTINENT
- Latin America 8.0
- Eastern Europe 10.0

#### ACTUAL GIVING TO CHRISTIAN CAUSES BY COUNTRY
- United States of America 100.3

#### ACTUAL GIVING TO SECULAR OR NON-CHRISTIAN CAUSES
- Giving to secular or non-Christian causes 59.9

#### ACTUAL GIVING TO ALL CAUSES
- Giving to all causes 150.3

#### ACTUAL GIVING TO ALL CAUSES BY CONFESSION
- Protestants (billion $ pa) 15.2
- Roman Catholics (billion $ pa) 16.2

#### ACTUAL GIVING TO ALL CAUSES BY CONTINENT
- Latin America 8.0
- Eastern Europe 10.0

#### ACTUAL GIVING TO ALL CAUSES BY COUNTRY
- United States of America 100.3

### Methodological Notes

**a. Limits of the above table.** This table deals, not with static wealth but with the annual movement of Christian financial resources by individual Christians. It refers only to the first, or initial, level of Christian finance, i.e., to live Christian stewardship, which means ongoing financial resources in the pockets of today's Christians and the amounts they donate each year. The table excludes endowments, bequests, state support, political support, business support, and other forms of church income such as the activities of funding bodies that circulate or otherwise spend the money donated by Christians. Variables shown are suggestive and selective rather than comprehensive. Three (nos. 18, 19, 22) are the same variable but repeated in different contexts. The full listing of all financial variables likely to be useful to mission strategists approaches 100 or more. The figures on this table indicate the second and subsequent levels of giving. Definitions of financial variables. These largely follow World Bank usage. The Global total of giving to Protestant and Anglican missions in the year 1800 is estimated to have been US $7,500, and in the year 1900 to have been US $19,100,000 (both at 1900 values of the dollar). In terms of 1982 dollars (each worth only 9 cents of the 1900 dollar) these sums are respectively $833,000 and $212,000 million.

**b. Variables shown.** These largely follow World Bank usage. Both church members and nominal Christians, while line nos. 12-29 are much higher than their counterparts on the amounts of giving in the USA. Thus 16% of USA residents give 10% or more to charitable organizations. As a result, cover the total extent of Christian giving, omitting as they do much spontaneous or unplanned or one-time acts of charity to individuals in need, beggars, family members, or acquaintances, et alia.

**c. Continuities involved.** The first 3 lines refer to the total population of the whole world. Nos. 4-6 refer to all Christians of all kinds (provisions, nominal, and affiliated). All remaining lines, where unindentified, refer to the totals of or on all affiliated Christian church members) of all confessions. Lines indented refer to subcategories (e.g., Roman Catholics, Protestants). Note that these 2 subcategories are not of course the only possible ones (e.g., in the USSR, there are 84 million Orthodox who are neither Protestants nor Catholics), hence they do not necessarily add up to the total for all Christians. A further indication is shown for Evangelicals (Protestant and Anglican) as a subdivision of Protestants. All these categories are used as defined in World Christian Encyclopedia (1982), pp. 70-71.

**d. Giving.** This term refers here to “live giving,” i.e., money given or donated per year or per week by living Christians (hence it excludes bequests). Christian giving to secular causes is inclusion only in nos. 6, 16, and 17. In all other lines, Christian giving refers exclusively to giving to specifically Christian causes, which means to churches, denominations, parachurch agencies to individual Christian workers or groups or causes. Note that line no. 6 refers to giving by all Christians, both church members and nominal Christians, while line nos. 12-13 refer to giving by church members only.

**e. Tithing.** “Potential” Christian giving (nos. 12-15) refers to what would be given if all Christians tithed (gave 10% of all personal income). The global total of giving to Protestant and Anglican missions in the year 1800 is estimated to have been US $7,500, and in the year 1900 to have been US $19,100,000 (both at 1900 values of the dollar). In terms of 1982 dollars (each worth only 9 cents of the 1900 dollar) these sums are respectively $833,000 and $212,000 million.

**f. Sources.** Basic data are from: 1981 World Bank Atlas; annual World Development Report; 1978-1982; Statistical Abstract of the U.S.; 1981 World Christian Encyclopedia. Individual figures or amounts may differ from other published sources because of slight differences of definition, geographical area, or timing. Country data sources. Some 200 secular variables for all countries are tabulated in “World Development Indicators,” WDR, 1981: 99-159. These have been combined to give the continental totals shown. S. Giving. The most exact annual surveys of giving come from the USA. Total official or publicly recognized giving to charities there—secular or religious—has risen steadily each year from $6 billion in 1955 to $39.6 billion in 1978, of which 46.5% ($18.4 billion) was then classified as giving to “Religion” (Giving USA: Annual Reports, American Association of Fundraising Counsel/New York). In 1982 the total rose to $60 billion. Of all giving to charities, 81% is by individuals. These well-defined and thorough annual surveys do not, however, cover the total extent of Christian giving, omitting as they do much anonymous or private or secret or unheralded giving, or unofficial or spontaneous or unplanned or one-time acts of charity to individuals in need, beggars, family members, or acquaintances, et alia. The Princeton Religion Research Center (Calhoun and Christians) today have recently published poll results covering percentage of income donated in the USA. Thus 16% of USA residents give 10% or more to all causes, whereas between 5-9%, 33% less than 5%, and 24% nothing. Denominational giving. Total donations from their own church members are published annually by many denominations.

**g. Interpretation.** When attempting to understand the exact definitions involved and the exact contexts. Thus the ratios given in the table under USSR for line nos. 26-29 are much higher than their counterparts on other continents. This does not, however, imply or mean that Soviet church members give far more generously than the rest of the world; it arises simply because, due to government restrictions, the numbers of registered and full Christians are forced down to very low levels for the large numbers of church members concerned.

**h. Acknowledgments.** The author is grateful to Donald McGilchrist of The Navigators for providing additional data, critiques, and interpretation for successive drafts of this table.
tune with denominational research centers in the Third World.

So then, we are faced with yet another shocking paradox: church members pay out of their own pockets more for secular and military research ($130 billion a year) than they pay to support organized Christianity in all its forms worldwide ($100 billion a year). The world’s 1.3 billion church members pay for secular research (including that to advance the arms race) to the tune of some 2.2 percent of their incomes each year (involuntarily no doubt, via government taxes), yet at the same time they pay less than 0.0003 percent of their incomes for Christian or church-related research. In fact, Christians pay out of their pockets 7,000 times as much for secular research, including nuclear-weapons research, as they pay for specifically Christian research to advance the kingdom of God.

This therefore represents an urgent call to all organizations professing to support the world Christian mission to immediately include in their annual budgets a fixed percentage of between 5 percent as a maximum and 1 percent as a minimum, specifically for research. While this would cover research on all subjects of primary concern to the particular mission of each, it should also contain an element for genuinely international, interdenominational, interconfessional, multidisciplinary research on global mission and world evangelization. If these organizations followed the example of well-run and efficient secular bodies who have discovered that to spend 2.1 percent per year on research brings rich dividends, then each year there would be $2.1 billion available for all varieties of Christian and church-related research, and $105 million for research specifically on global mission. These are the sensible sums to spend on research for such a complex global operation.

Conclusion

From this examination of the money circulating in Christian circles for Christian work each year, we draw several conclusions. First, the terms “Church of the Poor” and “Church of the Rich” have many complementary and overlapping meanings. The Church of the Rich usually refers to the affluent West. It has enormous material wealth, but contains within it sizable pockets of the Church of the Poor. Spiritually this middle-class Church of the Rich is, from some aspects, a mere pauper itself and so has gradually become looked down on by Third-World Christians as itself spiritually a Church of the Poor. Likewise, the initial meaning of the term “Church of the Poor” usually refers to the Third World. It lives largely in absolute material poverty yet has sizable enclaves of the Church of the Rich prospering within it oblivious of the plight of their neighbors. Paradoxically this Church of the Poor has an abundance of charisma and charismata, and so has become spiritually a Church of the Rich.

Second, there is plenty of money available worldwide to meet all reasonable Christian global goals and obligations. There is entirely enough to undertake the effective prosecution of the Christian world mission. There is enough to undertake every type of research essential to the prosecution of the churches’ life and mission. There is even enough to enable the Church of the Poor to break out of its vicious environment and bring out the rest of humanity with it. It is simply a question of vision, determination, challenge, mobilization, redistribution, management, internal control, and sharing.

This assessment is not affected by temporary setbacks—world recession, shortfalls in giving to particular relief bodies, escalating inflation, fluctuating oil prices, bankruptcies among Christian institutions, even graft and corruption where they exist in Christian organizations. Even the most radical proposal of all—that Christians unilaterally implement a global redistribution of income—is a practical proposition that could have immense global repercussions. A voluntary 10 percent cut in income on the part of all church-member Christians in Europe and North America could produce a 93 percent increase in income on the part of the entire 1.4 billion population of South Asia, or an 82 percent increase throughout Latin America, or a 158 percent increase for every soul in Africa.

Third, responsibility to act is not confined to Western Christians in their Church of the Rich. We have noted above that in the Church of the Poor, there is a combination of 20 million relatively affluent Christians on top of 195 million Christians in absolute poverty. This means that if these nouveaux-riches elites, including leadership hierarchies, redistributed their income and their wealth, they would solve much of the imbalance without outside interference or charity from the West.

Unfortunately mere theorizing or pious exhortations are unlikely to motivate affluent Christians anywhere in this direction. Instead it is a question of research (what actually is the true situation?), then information (get your facts right), then communication (let me tell you the situation), then confrontation (do you know how bad things are?), then education (we are all responsible), then persuasion (do something about it)—and then implementation.

Despite the logic of this situation, it would be unrealistic to expect the Christian community on any continent to be totally obedient to this particular heavenly vision. Eighty-five years ago Samuel Zwemer, apostle to Islam, put it succinctly when contributing to John R. Mott’s classic The Evangelization of the World in This Generation. Difficult regions like Arabia, he said, and indeed the whole world, “could easily be evangelized within the next thirty years if it were not for the wicked selfishness of Christians.”

To a large extent, the global sharing by Christians of money, wealth, property, and goods could solve most of these problems, including those of famine, poverty, disease, unemployment, dangerous water supply, and so on. Because this is so, there is a sense in which Christians are to blame for the persistence of the present disastrous state of affairs. Every Christian with an income of over $500 a year ought to be deeply concerned and actively involved in this problem. At the least, each should consider donating 10 percent of his or her income to Third-World missions or charities, or to studying, preaching, writing, teaching, or researching about the situation. Every Christian who ignores this obligation lies under the solemn judgment of God on this issue.

Several centuries ago a Roman pope who was an avid patron of the arts is said to have surveyed the vast artistic riches he had amassed, and to have gloated: “No longer can the Church of Jesus Christ now say ‘Silver and gold have I none.’” “True, Sire,” a subordinate replied, “but then neither can she now say, ‘Rise up and walk!’” Material wealth has always carried the risk of attendant spiritual bankruptcy. Today’s Church of the Rich, on all its definitions, has vast resources capable of reaching the entire world for Christ. But unless these resources are immediately deployed to that end, this church will ultimately prove to have had minimal spiritual impact upon the world.

Notes

Mission Agencies as Multinationals

Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden

The National Church Bypass

Many developments in mission since World War II, and some future strategies for the remaining years of this century, bypass the national church. By “national church” we mean those visible expressions of the body of Christ, on the neighborhood, local, and national levels, that are independent in finance and policy within the context of their national setting; they are neither dependent on outside groups nor accountable to them. We distinguish between these national expressions and those that in fact are subsidiaries of multinational mission agencies. Since 1945 these latter institutions have proliferated. Earlier the entire missionary leadership and control of policies, activities, and finances had been outside the country. True, leadership has now shifted to personnel of the “host” country, but the effective power and decision-making still lie in most cases with organizations outside that country.

Our thesis: in many areas these multinational mission agencies are preventing the effective mission of the gospel in the context where they are operating. Bypassing the national church is a prime example. A 1979 MARC Newsletter from World Vision proffered that

Today all over the world we encounter local expressions of Christ’s Church who are saying in effect, “We are the church in this country. We appreciate your coming to us with the good news, but now we are mature in Christ and quite capable of handling our own affairs. If you would like to work in this country under our direction, we will be happy to accept your assistance. Just remember that we are the church in this country.” . . . Meanwhile, there may be millions of people in this country whom the existing church has no ability to reach, and, indeed too often no desire to reach. By planting a church in this country we often effectively block further outreach to hundreds of other people groups within the country, because we plant a “national” church.1

The concept of “people-groups” has therefore been constructed, and is used to bypass the central place of the “national church.”

Another example. A consultation of one missionary society in South Asia on the evangelism of Pakistan decided that the Pakistani church, with its origins before partition in 1947 in low-caste Hindu groups, was not in an effective position to evangelize the Muslim majority. Therefore they concluded that this task had to be committed to expatriate white leaders of a new church.

It is our contention that, in many ways, there are parallels between multinational business corporations and multinational mission agencies. A multinational corporation (MNC), as defined by Freeman and Persen, is

a company that produces and markets goods and services in more than one country, looks at the entire world as its area of operation, and acts accordingly. An MNC searches everywhere for new technology, talented people, new processes, raw materials, ideas and capital. It thinks about the entire world as its market and strives to serve customers everywhere. It produces goods wherever they can be economically produced or renders services to serve one or more markets at a profit, regardless of national boundaries or ideologies.2

The growth of multinationals represents the transition from the political control of colonies by Western nations to substantial participation in the economies of the former colonies.

We detect much of the spirit and strategy of multinational corporations in the history of Christian mission, especially since World War II. National churches have replaced the large Western missions, and Western Christians now participate in mission in these countries through large multinational mission agencies. The number of these agencies has dramatically increased and will continue to do so. Serious concern for world mission marks the North American church, particularly the evangelical churches and parachurch organizations. In the first half of the 1970s, North America produced about thirty new mission agencies. Between 1975 and 1980 it produced a further ninety. There is a concerted effort and call to multiply the North American contribution to the mission force by a factor of five, and to send 150,000 more missionaires overseas as soon as possible.

Our perception of parallels between some multinational business corporations and mission agencies does not mean that all in either group act in this fashion or, if they do, that they intend to do so. We now examine the parallels.

Promotion and Distribution

Multinational corporations aim to sell their products as widely and cheaply as possible through efficient packaging and distribution. Often they create in the consumers artificial needs, unrelated or even contrary to their real needs. The “Two-Thirds World” is littered with such inappropriate products. For example, Nestlé skillfully markets ready-mix baby milk to illiterate nursing mothers. These women replace nature’s purest food supply with such milk often mixed with the local polluted water. Diseases can occur, even death.

Many strategies for Christian mission are based on a multinational organization that promotes the same clear message, a universal slogan that can apply to all men and women, everywhere. The goal is to make this message as widely and easily available as possible, preferably to people who have had no relationship with national Christian groups. Careful studies are made of individual psychological needs. The gospel message is presented to meet these personal needs. It does not address the wider social context of the individual. The message becomes in grave danger not only of failing to meet the real needs of the context (as Nestlé fails to meet the need for clean water) but also of creating inappropriate needs (as Nestlé wants to substitute its product for mother’s milk).

Such a gospel reflects the spirit of a consumer society. Coca-Cola, for example, is not interested in your cultural makeup, only in the fact that you get thirsty. Coca-Cola does not care if you are the oppressor or the oppressed, as long as you can afford to buy the drink. Neither is Coca-Cola interested in the social conditions of the country. In India, until the company was asked to leave in 1977, thousands of villages had Coca-Cola available, but no drinking water.

This consumer approach can also characterize what happens when the gospel is treated as a universal message solely for indi-

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individual needs. The hearers are treated only in their psychological needs of guilt, fear, anxiety, loneliness. Ignored is their social existence—whether they are employed or not, receive justice or not, have liberty or not. That message will not meet India’s needs, for in India’s strong family society, the loneliness that characterizes (or is a product of?) Western industrial society is not such a pronounced need as in the West. Such a gospel message does not integrate the whole human life, but creates its own needs and subverts the mission of the whole gospel. The method reflects the spirit of the multinationals.

Churches as Distribution Centers

In the multinational business strategy, local centers are bases for distribution. Even if they are production centers, they reproduce the master-copy for local distribution. And if they do not distribute the product effectively, the franchise is transferred to a new subsidiary.

In multinational mission strategies, the church is defined as a distribution center. If the national churches are considered inadequate because “there are millions of people in the country whom the existing church has no ability to reach and indeed too often no desire to reach,” then these churches are judged to be ineffective distribution centers for the mission agency’s product. So the agency bypasses the national church and creates its own church or its own distribution system. Many evangelistic organizations sponsor rallies, retreats, conventions, conferences, and a whole system of Christian nurturing for leaders and supporters. Often they build a structure of service activities that prevents people from taking any other part in a local church than its Sunday worship.

The ideological basis for bypassing the national church comes from the way in which the multinational mission agency defines the challenge of world mission: to reach with the gospel India’s 600 million—or the world’s 2.7 billion—non-Christians. This overwhelming challenge dwarfs the efforts of the churches in the “Two-Thirds World” countries wherein most non-Christians live. With few material resources and minimal personnel trained in Western techniques, these churches cannot by themselves hope to meet the challenge stated in such terms or by using such means. The multinational mission agency then presents itself a possible servant to fulfill the challenge that it has already defined. These many “challenges for world mission” sound suspiciously like sales pitches for the Western agencies themselves.

If the national church seeks to meet this need with the techniques the agency supplies, that church is caught in the same trap in which the “Two-Thirds World” countries are caught by multinational businesses. Once the corporation has defined a need that only it can meet, for example, computers, a subsidiary process begins so that through the multinational the country itself can gradually produce its own computers. However, by the time the country becomes self-sufficient in that technology, Western technology has leapfrogged ahead and procured superior equipment, which again is available only through the multinationals.

Similarly, once the national church in India had become an adequate distribution center for Christian education, literature, Sunday school materials, and seminary programs that originated in the West, Western agencies leapfrogged ahead and introduced radio and cassettes. India gradually adapted to produce at least some of the financing and personnel for radio ministry, but then the Western church became most interested in the funding of relief and development projects. We suspect that once the Indian church is geared up to meet the challenge of the 600 million non-Christians as defined by the multinational mission agencies, the West will have further redefined the need and the methods to meet those needs.

Leadership

A multinational corporation acts as a parasite on the leadership resources of a country. A poor nation devotes a large percentage of its resources to the training of its small percentage of leaders. Along comes a multinational corporation that can offer more secure and lucrative employment than indigenous industry or government. It recruits students and people who have been educated and trained in the country at the expense of the taxpayer, mostly the workers and farm laborers. So at no expense to itself the corporation attracts some of the most capable leadership, and uses these people to further its own ends—and that often means bypassing leadership of local industries and local government.

A similar pattern occurs in church leadership. Mission agencies can pay larger salaries than the national churches, so they attract capable, well-qualified young people from the church training colleges. Then in forming and executing policies they tend to bypass the local leadership of bishops, synods, and councils. It is often convenient to stress that this local leadership is “nonevangelical.” However, some of the most painful situations arise when the local leadership is thoroughly evangelical. What tends to happen is that the mission agency approaches pastors for support, and access to their congregations. These pastors are responsible to a wider authority (the bishop or council), but mission agencies seldom if ever consult these wider bodies and so effectively bypass them. Many pastors are happy to go along with the bypass because of the resources and facilities that the agency offers.

Finally, the mission agency begins to impose its own leadership in the situation by establishing colleges to train its own leaders. One seminary finds that the majority of its graduates immediately join parachurch agencies, and others who had joined church-based ministry, after five years or so move into parachurch bodies. This well-educated, articulate leadership, with loyalty to the message and the method of the mission agencies, then forms the “national evangelical leadership” with no accountability to the church in the country, and no base in local churches and denominations. They represent no national church bodies and are accountable to none. They are evangelical pirates. They control the seaways and commandeer resources, but are beyond the law. Yet they control and direct resources and policies that have important consequences for the mission of the gospel in that context.

Total Control

Among multinational corporations inevitable growth tends toward covering the entire market or toward dividing the market up on a global scale. Airline companies now are in the hotel and car-rental business. Mitsubishi and Philips divide the electronics business between them. Multinational companies now turn out about one-third of the world’s gross product. In the last twenty years they
have averaged an annual growth of 10 percent; this is double the growth rate of the industrial countries. They control much of the technology, management talent, and private capital to solve the world’s economic problems as they define them.

Similar trends occur in Christian relief work, theological education, leadership training, mission research, and literature publication. Agencies divide up the market between them and regard particular territories as their own sphere of influence. The recent indignation of one Western agency that another agency moved in to set up a headquarters in its "patch" can only be matched by the unexpressed indignation of "recipient" countries that the original agency presumes to tell them what they can and cannot do in their own country.

Such a process is built into the multinational approach, and Christian agencies merely reflect the specific gravity of their home cultures in perpetuating the approach. Inherent pressures for growth within multinational mission agencies often prevent them from fulfilling their claims of taking the whole gospel to the whole person. This is true especially of those agencies that start from a concern for relief and development and then move into evangelism and church-planting. This phenomenal growth is often at the expense of other groups that cannot show quick results. For example, in Britain one multinational mission agency reported in 1980, when Britain's economy was being systematically dismembered by its government's monetarist policies and unemployment was rocketing, that their own income had increased by 70 percent over the previous year. This giving was often at the expense of more traditional agencies. One church had a week of featuring a wide variety of mission groups. At the final offering over 90 percent of the giving was designated for one multinational agency.

These agencies are successful in raising money because they can show photographs and reports of wells dug, hospitals built, and projects completed in a short time. They need maximum income to support these programs, and require an increasing number of programs to use up the increasing income and to ensure further income. To ensure this maximum income these groups act like political parties. They take a middle-of-the-road position on social issues in order to attract the widest possible support among those likely to contribute to them. Many situations in poor nations require that the church take a clear stand on the side of the poor against exploitation and injustice. Multinational mission agencies proclaim that they are taking the whole gospel to the whole person, especially when they combine direct evangelism with relief and development. But they do not in fact do so. They do not clearly stand on the side of the poor for fear of losing financial support from their constituency at home, and for fear of implicating their supporters as among those responsible for the injustice they are confronting.4

Evaluation

In the business world there is one law—profits. Profit is the only criterion by which shareholders hold their multinationals accountable. Shareholders are not concerned with what a multinational does to the structures of justice in a country. Few controls have yet been worked out for multinationals, and their own vested interests and declared goals make them impervious to criticism.

Multinational mission agencies find it very hard to listen to critical questions raised by the Scripture about their activities. They have their own limited agenda, and plead that they must fulfill their supporters' expectations. A recommendation at a recent international conference that relief and development agencies might try to educate First-World supporters about the real situation in the Third World, and its relation to the First World, was greeted by a prediction that 90 percent of the agencies' income would disappear if such programs were introduced.

There are vested interests also in theological positions. Through reading Kids and the Kingdom by John Inchley, a Scripture Union children's worker of vast experience, we are realizing that it may be more biblical to regard children as persons who belong to Jesus until they reject him, rather than as lost souls who need to repent as soon as possible. Should this understanding be accepted, many large-budgeted, foreign-sponsored organizations for children's evangelism in India would have to alter both their strategy and their fund-raising appeals. None of these twenty-one agencies during the International Year of the Child in India publicly raised one query about the child-labor employment of over 40 million Indian children.

A Way Ahead for the 1980s–1990s

History shows that the chief bearers of mission have always been groups within the church who have come together under the call of God to make mission their chief activity. Charles Mellis confirms that these "sodalities" have always been the promoters and seedbeds of new initiatives in mission.6 The very success of the last thirty years has exposed them to the dangers noted above.

The source of a relevant critique for the multinational agen-
cies must be other sodalities from the "Two-Thirds World," which would be comprised of the leaders of the national churches who are committed to these churches. By engaging in shared analysis, they could forge a fruitful partnership that would marry the skills and resources of the multinational mission agencies with the sensitivity and cultural authenticity of the national church.

First, the partners should examine the agencies' and the churches' understanding and practice of mission by the biblical criteria of incarnation and servanthood. Then together they should look at the parallels between the agencies' activities and those of the multinational business corporations—what similar methods can be adopted, what must be avoided. This process could contribute to the Christian critique of multinational businesses. The Christian agencies could witness to an important alternative pattern of international partnership and cooperation.

Second, the agencies, where necessary, will need to rectify their present relationships with other groups. For example, one multinational mission agency began work among children, and planned a whole literature program for them. A smaller indigenous evangelical agency had seventy-five years' experience of children's work. It had a program of holistic evangelism and first-class literature available. But short of funds, it was unable fully to implement these programs. Initially, the multinational agency had planned to produce literature and develop holistic programs on its own, but the contribution and need of this smaller local agency was pointed out as the basis for a constructive partnership. Happily the multinational agency saw that it could marry its resources and funds with the skill and expertise of the local agency for their mutual benefit, and above all for the benefit of the church's mission to children.

Third, agencies will need to initiate and encourage new patterns of relationships among Christian groups. The national church in India is not the sole guardian of the welfare of the 70 percent of India's population who have not encountered Jesus Christ. Its small size and resources cannot determine whether or not the 70 percent will hear about Jesus Christ. The church is the body of Christ worldwide called to bear one another's burdens. At present vast numbers of Western Christians are willing and able to share the burden of evangelizing India. The key question is: How can they do so?

The answer must be that such Christians and such agencies must be committed to a holistic gospel and come in the way that Jesus came, as an incarnate servant in the context. This process takes time. It takes time to listen and hear the reality of the context. Jesus took thirty years! No one is advocating that length of time. But one executive of a multinational mission agency with whom we shared these ideas admitted that its style of working and expectation of results were not conducive to "taking time." This process also means that large numbers of missionaries should not arrive and expect quick results for themselves or for their constituencies.

The national church should be affirmed and not bypassed. The national church is the group of Christians in the situation who can help the multinational mission agencies in the process of incarnation. They must be able to monitor how many agencies come, the type of work they do, and how they do it. To affirm the national church is to allow it substantial decision-making power in this area.

This process will be costly for the multinational mission agencies. To embrace a holistic gospel will mean that at some points they will have to take stances that will not readily command majority support among the constituency that finances them. They can prepare for this by educating their supporting constituency in the true struggles of the gospel in the context. But they cannot brace a holistic gospel consistently unless they are prepared to sacrifice some financial support.

This partnership is between people who, in spite of their unity in Christian commitment to mission, will come to issues with different perspectives. This difference could lead the partners to situations of potential conflict. The temptation for multinational mission agencies will be to use the power of their resources to unfair advantage when differences of opinion arise: "We raise the funds." By the same token, the "Two-Thirds World" cannot use its cultural advantage unfairly: "You don't understand the situation." When confrontation develops in such a situation, one could assume that partnership is absent, but maturity in partnership requires that confrontation be used for correction, education, and redirection. This enhances rather than reduces participation.

We end with hope and optimism. We have informally shared these concerns with Christian leaders in the "Two-Thirds World" and with executives of some multinational mission agencies. Both are grappling with the same issues, both are enthusiastic in an open dialogue on them. Furthermore, we ourselves are already partnered with a large multinational mission agency in the promotion of holistic mission in Asia. But we are also aware, sadly, that other agencies, especially of more recent origin, find the whole debate a threat, even a hindrance to the fulfillment of their own visions.

### Notes

1. MARC (Missions Advanced Research and Communication Center, a Division of World Vision International, Monrovia, California), Newsletter, November 1979, p. 6.


William R. Burrows, S.V.D.

The timely, perceptive, and insightful way in which the authors raise these important issues deserves praise, all the more so because they ask Christians in the (once?) so-called "sending churches" to examine their assumptive world. Such examinations are never easy.

Were we in Rome, Goa, Macao, or Kyoto in the decades preceding the establishment of the Roman Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in 1622, the issues would have been similar. And those who know that the ecumenical movement was born out of questions not terribly different from those raised in the article will perhaps be smiling (gently, one may hope) as they see a new generation of evangelical churches faced with dialogue-demanding problems.

I see a three-faceted set of questions emerging: (1) Who decides when a social service or evangelistic outreach program is to be started? (2) How does one get Christians whose sole criterion for making decisions is the Bible to look at other issues such as those raised in the article? (3) What criteria are to be applied in situations where a local church may be incapable of carrying on an effective outreach program? Behind all of these questions, of course, lurks the substantive and perennial scandal that one of the things American Christianity does best is to export its ecclesiastical divisions.

In the seventeenth century, Catholicism centralized its governance of missions, at least in part to keep its mission solidalities from each other's throats. More recently, in its Vatican II Decree on the Missions (and in three postconciliar instructions and norms on implementing the decretel), Catholicism has attempted to keep its Propagation of the Faith, or Evangelization, Congregation in step with current postcolonial-era realities. Taken together, the Catholic attempt has been to establish an important principle: local churches (under the direction of single bishops) and episcopal conferences (made up of all the bishops in a nation or a region) have the responsibility for planning and approving all evangelistic and official church social-service programs. Groups within the church with special interests and programs ("sodalities," to use the authors' terms) must seek local church approval for their operations. Thus far so good. The principle works on paper and practically, but at great cost.

As is fairly well known, Roman Catholicism continues to refuse to allow significant or substantial contextual modification of its (supposedly de jure divino) structures. Since the sixteenth century, it is hard to name a major mission brought by Catholicism from the stage of primary evangelization to full self-ministering and -sustaining church-status, and beyond that to itself become a church-in-mission. Centralization, then, prevents the sort of evangelistic free-lancing decried in the article. But the Roman model makes the local church in effect a wholly owned and controlled subsidiary of a Rome-based company. I say this sadly and as a Roman Catholic.

Samuel and Sugden raise the sort of practical questions that uncover theological issues. Though their problems seem resolvable by practical cooperation and priority-setting, in fact a major criminological dilemma arises: the meaning of the "whole gospel in context." Inexorably the inner-Christian and interreligious dialogue issues raised by trying to sort out the authors' and the international agencies' perceptions and priorities take churches into the ecumenical arena.

Should not each side learn from and accept the basic principle of the other: namely, that a local church that does not properly till its ground is not and should not be immune from criticism or free from competition; and, second, that contextual factors significantly shape the meaning of the gospel?

My crystal ball is at best cloudy. But I see promise of an enriching discussion provoked by this excellent article. And the world church will benefit immensely from the dialogue's fruits if it is carried on frankly and honestly.

Notes

1. These documents may be surprisingly useful to non-Roman Catholics, since they aim to spell out the relationship between central authority and local churches, and between both the central authorities and the solidalities (usually religious orders of priests, brothers, and sisters, though also groups of lay persons) specializing in "missions." See the following, all available from the United States Catholic Conference, 1312 Massachusetts Avenue, Washington, D.C. 20005: Regimini Ecclesiae Universae ("Apostolic Constitution on the Roman Curia") chap. 9, "Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples or Propagation of the Faith": also, the instruction of Propagation on "Cooperation of Bishops with Pontifical Aid Societies," and on "Relations between Local Ordinaries and Missionary Institutes."

2. Hans Kasdorf's Christian Conversion in Context (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1980) is a good primer in such areas.

David M. Howard

To raise questions about the thesis of this article is to run the risk of being labeled reactionary. The thesis is both attractive and valid—up to a point. But it does raise some disturbing questions that must be asked before the thesis can be accepted as applicable to many mission agencies.

Let us examine the statement that "the context of 'people-groups' has therefore been constructed and is used to bypass the central place of the 'national church.' " Is it fair to imply that this is the real reason for the development of the "people-group" con-
cept? Is it not possible, rather, that this concept developed from a genuine desire to reach groups of people who were totally outside the range of the gospel?

It is true that multinationals often “create in consumers artificial needs.” Is it accurate to imply that missions do the same thing? Do they actually create a need that does not exist? Who would claim that the people they are trying to reach really do not need the gospel, even though the methods used may not always be the wisest? Coca-Cola can be criticized accurately as not being interested in quenching people’s thirst as much as in selling Coca-Cola. (If they were only interested in alleviating thirst, they would provide clean water.) But is it fair to suggest that missions create an artificial need so that they can sell a product? What are they trying to sell, if not the gospel of salvation? Certainly the validity of the product cannot be compared with Coca-Cola. People can live without Coca-Cola. No one can live eternally without the gospel.

The authors make a strong point when speaking of how missions “can pay larger salaries than the national churches, so they attract capable, well-qualified young people from the church training colleges.” That the leadership thus trained by the mission ends up with “no accountability to the church in the country” is one of the most tragic aspects of bypassing the church. This criticism is valid.

In suggesting that missions “take a middle-of-the-road position on social issues in order to attract the widest possible support” (italics added), the authors apparently do not allow for the possibility that the middle-of-the-road position may genuinely be where the mission stands theologically and politically. It may be unfair to claim that this is motivated solely by finances.

When it is stated that “they do not clearly stand on the side of the poor for fear of losing financial support from their constituency at home,” is this an accurate evaluation of many of the relief and development agencies whose major thrust is based on the needs of the poor? They have sometimes been criticized from the opposite perspective for having overlaid the plight of the poor (orphans, starving people, desolate refugees, etc.) in order to raise funds. Should they not be given credit for being honestly concerned for the poor?

A major theological issue is raised in the statement that “it may be more biblical to regard children as persons who belong to Jesus until they reject him, rather than as lost souls who need to repent as soon as possible.” At what age do people reach the age of accountability? If it is only when they reject Jesus, what does this imply about adults who have never consciously rejected him? There is not space here to discuss this in depth, but it bears much closer scrutiny than the authors have given it in raising the question.

The authors end “with hope and optimism.” This is encouraging. They have rightly raised a very valid issue. Leaders of mission agencies from the West need to listen carefully to such critiques. It is hoped that dialogue can continue with Western Christians eager to learn in humility, and with leaders in the “Two-Thirds World” keeping the doors open, not by overstating their case, but by compassionate understanding and equal humility. If this can happen, then the body of Christ can develop together around the world in fulfilling the Great Commission.

Conversion in Cultural Context

John A. Gration

Introduction

In a very true sense every conversion is in context, a context that is multifaceted, embracing the political, social, economic, and religious domain in which a person is living at the time of his or her conversion. Thus whatever the meaning of conversion, it never takes place outside a cultural context. Conversions therefore are of almost infinite variety. Though “God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34) in the sense of esteeming or accepting one person above another, he does deeply respect persons as individuals and meets them in their own context. So although there is only one way to God, and that through Christ (see Acts 4:12; Jn. 14:6), there are a thousand ways to Christ, and the variety of religious experience as seen in conversion bears witness to this fact.

Whether or not conversion involves both a point and a subsequent process is a subject of debate even among Reformed theologians. Equally debatable is the question whether or not the process aspect falls into a strict definition of conversion. It cannot be denied, however, that a process is inherent in the experience of conversion, involving stages of development.

Missiological Perspective: The Two Contexts

One way to begin a consideration of this topic from a missiological perspective is to define contextualization as relating the gospel to a particular culture in all its dimensions, or more properly, permitting it to relate, for the gospel is relevant. The phrase “in all its dimensions” is purposefully ambiguous with reference to its antecedent, for it refers back to both the gospel and culture. The gospel in all its dimensions must relate to culture, and likewise that same gospel must relate to a given culture in all the dimensions of that culture.

Biblical Context

A biblical view of conversion must at least recognize (if not explore) all the dimensions of that term in its biblical context. Likewise, as with contextualization, the subject must be viewed with all the dimensions of culture in perspective. If either of these components is missing, then one is left with an inadequate and truncated view of conversion.

Evangelicals have not always benefited from this in-depth study of conversion where both the Bible and the context have been given equal and adequate consideration. One is tempted to
These four spheres include a system of beliefs, values, customs, and "givens" on the subject. Even when viewed from the perspective of the revelational application, it keeps us from a rigid and static view of conversion, the "minority report" at the Lausanne Congress in 1974, as well as the book that grew out of it, attests to the incomplete gospel (and consequent view of conversion and its demands) that has all too often characterized the "culture Christianity" of North American evangelicalism.

Any discussion of conversion must therefore look at all the scriptural data. The recognition of this imperative keeps the subject open-ended, subject to further modification, amplification, or application. It keeps us from a rigid and static view of conversion, even when viewed from the perspective of the revelational "givens" on the subject.

Cultural Context

The second dimension to conversion is that of culture. If we use the definition of culture adopted at the Willowbank Consultation in 1978, we can fit each culture under consideration into four broad categories that form the framework for that definition. These four spheres include a system of beliefs, values, customs, and institutions.

Certain movements within evangelicalism have not always facilitated the gospel's penetration of all the dimensions of culture, probably due in part to their basic "Christ against Culture" stance. The Pietism that found expression in the Fundamentalist movement, for example, which in turn produced many of the interdenominational missionaries of the past sixty years, did not take a high view of culture, nor was it especially concerned with its transformation as such. The concomitant individualistic emphasis likewise further contributed to the down-playing of "possessing" a total culture for Christ, as Calvin, for example, had viewed the church's mission vis-à-vis culture.

Now in seeking to understand the contextual dimension of conversion and thereby permitting the gospel to become relevant in each situation by functioning as the ultimate and absolute judge of culture (see Heb. 4:12, kritikos), we are faced with innumerable differing contexts. The situation is further compounded, almost geometrically, if we view cultures as integrated wholes and reject Donald McGavran's idea, in The Clash between Christianity and Cultures, that they are "aggregates rather than ... organisms" whose components are seldom essential to the culture and thus are without any particular significance because of an inextricable relationship with the total cultural system.

However, when culture is viewed as an integrated whole, a total system, each form or part derives its specific meaning and significance from internal and inherent relationships. In such a view the meaning of a particular form can differ greatly from culture to culture. Thus a given component that proves acceptable when judged by biblical criteria within one culture could be totally unacceptable in the context of another culture simply because of the meaning that it carries, growing out of its relationship to the world-view of that particular culture, for example. A simple, harmless, and "neutral" cultural artifact could serve as a case in point.

Culture and Conversion

When a study of conversion in cultural context is understood from the perspective of this latter view of culture, the value variables in each context suggested above make for a complex situation, one that precludes a simplistic master matrix that can be successively placed over each culture to determine which elements fit the biblical mold and which do not. This view of culture does not permit broad, generalized value judgments about culture specifics that are transferable from culture to culture. Nor does it permit simplistic formulas that spell out uniform criteria for defining or measuring a conversion across cultural lines. The internal dynamics of an integrated view of culture preclude the use of what the writer calls an "axiological canon" that is universal in its application. Rather, viewing conversion in context demands that the multitudinous elements of each culture be viewed by Scripture in the light of their relationships and consequent meaning within that particular culture.

From this perspective of culture, conversion in context will therefore sometimes, perhaps often, touch the same element in different cultures in a very different way, spanning from total rejection to total acceptance. But the situation is even more complex, especially in a Western context where there is great emphasis on individuals. Though each culture molds its members with certain values and a distinguishable world-view, individuals vary greatly within a given culture. Thus conversion is going to touch different individuals even within the same culture at different points. Conversion for the rich young ruler meant something far different from what it meant for the woman at the well in John 4. And so it is today, for example, within the context of our own American culture, if one can speak so broadly.

This whole question closely parallels Charles Kraft's model related to the dynamic-equivalence translation of Scripture. In both instances the context in its various dimensions is being taken seriously and is being permitted to affect the content of the process. As a result one can expect to see tremendous diversity in the outward manifestations of the conversion process.

Diverse Manifestations of Conversion

Biblical conversion involves in its essence a new life, growing out of a vital, personal relationship with Christ (see 2 Cor. 5:17). To Paul it is nothing less than putting on the "new self" (Col. 3:10), a transforming experience that is described as a continual renewal of one's mind (see Rom. 12:2). In this connection two points need to be underlined. First, emphasis is properly placed on the personal nature of conversion. By this is meant what Kraft terms "a dynamic interaction between God and human beings" that issues from a person's conscious allegiance to God. This should be carefully distinguished, however, from an individualistic approach to conversion. The latter is an expression of Western (and particularly American) culture where family and group relationships are experiencing increasing disintegration. Examples abound of multi-individual conversions. One of the best-known illustrations is the conversion of the Sawi people of Irian Jaya, the exciting details of which are chronicled in Peace Child. A serious view of conversion in context will therefore always take the larger context of tribe or
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A second point to be made is that genuine conversion will inevitably bring significant change to individuals and in turn to communities. Although secular anthropologists may decry anything that would intrude upon the world of "primitive" people living in pristine purity and bliss, the outworkings of conversion (both spiritual and otherwise), while deep and far-reaching, need not be ultimately destructive. In fact, they can be quite otherwise. However, it must be recognized that the gospel can penetrate to the heart of a culture and effect significant change. Bruce Olson, writing of his work among the Motilones in Colombia, speaks of not being ultimately destructive. In fact, they can be quite otherwise. Not just spiritual change. Not just change by and by. Real change, now, with visible power. He is the source of all change. He is the God of everyday miracles.33 "To change or not to change" is not the real issue. No culture is static. Key to the question is who or what effects the change and how it is carried out.

It is at this point that missionaries must exercise extreme caution and, at times, great restraint. It is all too easy and natural for them to come with their own conversion agenda, which is usually a reflection of their personal religious experience or that of the Christian subculture they represent. They often may not realize how fully certain items on their agenda relative to their understanding of the "things that accompany salvation" (Heb. 6:9) are conditioned by their own cultural context. With the best of intentions they may seek to effect certain changes in the lifestyle of their converts and, in the process, convey the impression that certain activities (or the absence of others) are of the essence of Christianity. While not minimizing the divine working of redemptive grace as a reality in the lives of such new believers, it needs to be understood that such externally imposed "signs" or marks of conversion can be extremely detrimental.

First, they can easily blur the real nature of what it means to be a Christian. Christianity is far more than certain prescribed and proscribed activities. Two further results may tragically flow from this first error, which is primarily theological in nature. First, legalism can easily develop.29 It becomes assumed that growth in the Christian life and consequent "acceptance" into the Christian church is to be achieved by conformity to certain external standards. Obtaining baptism and the status of a concomitant new name in certain parts of the world comes as a result of passing "inspection" before a group of church elders who have a "checklist" of the required items that either must be present (ability to read, a tithing record, etc.) or decidedly absent (use of tobacco, etc.). It is very possible for the new convert to seek to attain mechanically through external conformity to an imposed standard what dynamically should be realized through the transforming power of the Spirit producing his fruit in the believer's new life. In a word, the ancient error of the Galatians is being repeated, an error that prompted Paul to rebuke their legalism with these words: "Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit are you now trying to attain perfection by human effort?" (Gal. 3:3).

A second possible result of an externally imposed conversion agenda can mean that at least certain aspects of the new believer's conversion experience are nothing more than a "cultural conversion." The convert is in fact converting to the missionary's or the church's subculture by assuming the proper pattern of behavior in order to "belong" and find total acceptance in his or her new context. Such a conversion, even when accompanied by a genuine inner spiritual work of God, can be superficial and may have serious consequences. It can deceive the convert, the missionary, and the church leaders into assuming that more of spiritual significance has been accomplished than in reality is the case. It can also lead to a contentment in remaining on this level of Christian experience when in reality new areas and dimensions of the believer's life and thought need to be possessed by Christ.21

An even more serious problem of "cultural conversion" is seen when this is the only conversion that has taken place. It can occur even in a Christian context when conversion is simply to a Christian cause, person, organization, or merely to Christianity as a theological system and not to Christ himself. Such a "cultural conversion" may well be portrayed in the one who, hearing the message about the kingdom, "receives it with joy, but since he has not root, he lasts only a short time" (Mt. 13:20-21). Cultural conversion may indeed be one of the chief causes for reversion or abandoning commitment to Christ and Christian faith, however else one might explain this phenomenon in the context of a particular theological system.

Thus certain behavioral consequences of conversion, cultural in nature and origin, must not be externally imposed, especially when one is working cross-culturally. Such a demand can produce a deadening legalism, stifle normal spiritual growth, and hinder the dynamics of conversion from effecting internal and lasting change on a deeper and more significant level, namely, that of world-view. To this crucial aspect of conversion we now turn our attention.

Conversion and World-view

Reference to world-view brings us to consider its crucial significance in any discussion of conversion. Understanding the worldview of the people whom one is addressing with the gospel is a vital prerequisite to its effective communication. David Hesselgrave properly affirms that only when the missionary has by a "herculean effort" come to understand the world-view of his hearers and to speak in that framework does "true missionary communication" begin.22 World-view as it relates to conversion will be considered from two perspectives.

Conversion in the Context of Value Systems

At the heart of any culture is its world-view with its own system of values. At the very beginning of the conversion process the gospel comes into direct contact with this value system, both confronting its sinfulness and fulfilling its unmet longings, for, as we have seen, God graciously meets human beings in their particular culture.

A sensitivity to a culture's distinct value system will enable the evangelist or missionary to emphasize that particular aspect of the gospel that most appropriately speaks to the given felt need. While in every human situation one's ultimate predicament centering in one's broken relationship with God must be addressed, the gospel does speak with relevance to human beings where they are.23
The writer is painfully aware that his own presentation of the gospel in an African context was influenced far too much by his own Western Protestant value system. Consequently he failed to emphasize adequately that aspect of the gospel that would lead to what Alan Tippett terms a "power encounter" between the power of Christ and the world of spirits, an encounter that offers deliverance from the tyranny and captivity of fear.24 Differing value systems, therefore, an integral part of the world-view of a people, must be held clearly in focus by the missionary for conversion to take place in context.

Conversion of the World View

Although conformity to a "Christian" lifestyle may be relatively easy to obtain in the lives of new converts, nothing less than the penetration and utter "possession" of a person's world-view must be the evangelizer's ultimate goal. Only in this way can a culture be transformed.25

There are in this regard two extremes to be avoided. The first is to demand too much in the conversion process, especially as it may relate to the "signs" of conversion in the missionary's own culture. In this connection reference should be made to the matter of timing. Even practices that probably should be eliminated from the new converts' behavior must not be prematurely excised, especially under severe duress such as the threat of excommunication. A prime example of this is the female-circumcision issue in the early years of the Protestant church in Kenya.26 The stand of the Africa Inland Mission on this controversial matter resulted in the loss of 80 percent of the adherents in one church district. The Kikuyu churches were reduced to about 10 percent of their membership in the late 1920s.27 Granting the wrongness of the practice, and certainly there was not a consensus concerning it even among church leaders, the question may be raised whether the missions involved demanded too much too soon. This view was reflected in a statement of one of the missionaries standing in the center of the storm that the issue generated:

...I can't help but feel sometimes that somewhere we have made a tremendous mistake, when it becomes necessary for us to force out Christians (and I believe most of them are Christians) who have only recently come out of the rankest heathenism. I don't see now how we can do differently, but I doubt if we should have done much harm if we had agreed that since female circumcision must go, we would be patient and work and pray against it until the natives themselves had cast an overwhelming vote against it, rather than that we should make a rule that severs them from church membership.28

Although there is always the danger of demanding too much too soon, and doubtless the real problem lay in the demands being made by outside change agents (in this case the missionaries), yet the other extreme of not expecting enough must also be avoided. As already suggested, the "conversion" or transformation of the world-view of a people must be the ultimate goal. This will in many cases involve a crisis point of significant decision where the question of basic allegiance and loyalty to a new Lord is settled. As for all of us, however, it will involve an ongoing process in which that initial commitment is fleshed out in all its ramifications and areas of life. Kraft describes this lifelong process with the terms "reinterpretation," "reevaluation," and "rehabilitation."29

Integral to the process is the renewing of one's mind by which the believer increasingly views his or her world of reality from God's perspective. This ongoing process will at times run counter to the approach of accommodation to culture, an approach normally associated with contextualization. It will at times give the believer such a radically new perspective on life that Paul can write to the Corinthian church in their particular context: "...from now on those who have wives should live as if they had none; those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them ..." (1 Cor. 7:29-31). In this demand Paul is operating on the level of world-view; he is addressing their perception of ultimate reality and of ultimate value.

It is on this level that missionaries and church leaders in Africa must concentrate their attention during the coming years, given the great influx of new converts into the church. History should teach us the folly of merely concentrating on externals while the very heart of a Christian's culture, one's world-view, often remains largely unpossessed by Christ and only partially transformed by the gospel. Working on the conceptual, or world-view, level is the key to the ultimate institution of new behavioral patterns. Customs will change when there is a basic change within the world-view of a people.30

When the advocates of change begin on the peripheral level, however, incorrect messages are received that blur both the message and the impact of the gospel. The female-circumcision issue in Kenya is again an apt illustration. Like an invading army that fails to "secure" adequately its beachhead before pushing on to capture new territory, several of the missions failed to secure the internal beachhead of the converts' world-view. Consequently, when the custom of female circumcision was attacked head-on in the name of Christianity, there developed not only a misunderstanding of the gospel message but also much unnecessary and traumatic cultural disequilibrium.

The radical changes being demanded were not growing out of a transformed world-view. Rather, operating at least partially out of their preconversion world-view, the majority of the converts saw things very differently from the missionaries. To the missionary, female circumcision was a relatively minor, external, physical operation, albeit often painfully and even harmfully performed. To many of the Africans involved, however, the missionaries' actions were a major cultural operation, a surgery that cut away a very crucial element of their culture; namely, an institution that marked the boundary between childhood and adulthood. Therefore it was profoundly significant in the social and educational development of their young people. Unfortunately the issue was not approached on the world-view level, where the question could have been reevaluated when biblical, supracultural truth was brought to bear on the African world-view.

"Although conformity to a 'Christian' lifestyle may be relatively easy to obtain in the lives of new converts, nothing less than the penetration and utter 'possession' of a person's world-view must be the evangelizer's ultimate goal."
Conversion in context takes seriously both individuals and groups within their cultural context. Thus the approach to a given people with the gospel ought to be characterized by sensitivity to their cultural milieu. Furthermore, the expression of Christianity within that culture will, one hopes, by the process of internal transforma-

**Summary**

Convoson in context takes seriously both individuals and groups within their cultural context. Thus the approach to a given people with the gospel ought to be characterized by sensitivity to their cultural milieu. Furthermore, the expression of Christianity within that culture will, one hopes, by the process of internal transforma-

**Notes**


3. To do so is beyond the scope of this paper. Such a biblical and theological study should begin with the key terms used to describe conversion in the Old and New Testaments. A good biblical overview of this kind is found in Hans Kasdorf, *Christian Conversion in Context* (Scottsdale, Pa: Herald Press, 1980), pp. 38–62.


10. Ibid., p. 38.


20. The place of legalism in the “conversion” experience as seen in context of certain modern cults such as the Unification Church would make an interesting and informative study, though outside the scope of this paper. It is common knowledge that most of these tight religious communities are characterized by stringent legalism and moral codes that demand absolute compliance by the converts in every area of their lives. These are often reinforced by a peer pressure that subtly demands conformity as the condition for continued acceptance by the group. See Frances Adeney, “The Quiet Revolution,” *SCP Newsletter* 8, no. 3 (April–May 1982): 1–4.


23. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture*, p. 344. Conn distinguishes between a Christian witness having a “common ground” with a non-Christian and finding a point of contact with that person in order to communicate the gospel. Harvie Conn, “Conversion in Culture,” *Gospel and Culture*, p. 228.


30. Ibid., p. 366.
Are Churches Building Mission Consciousness? Education for Mission Evaluated

Ward L. Kaiser

"Education for mission exists to help persons understand and undertake their role in the Christian world mission," says D. Campbell Wyckoff of Princeton Seminary. Is anything more central to the life and purpose of the church? Yet education for mission currently receives such low priority in many congregations, seminaries, and denominational programs that certain questions must be raised: Are churches short-changing their members? If Christians have a right to know what the mission is all about, and to be helped toward meaningful participation in it, to what extent are churches failing to meet their obligation? Are churches, in short, guilty of malpractice?

A Word about Structure

If a goal of the church is to help Christians capture the vision of mission and significantly join in it, the means chosen by many denominations in the United States and Canada is the Missionary Education Movement. This movement, born in 1902, is now part of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Within the council structure it is known as the Commission on Education for Mission (CEM). Its publishing imprint is Friendship Press, through whose materials many thousands each year deepen their awareness of global mission. The press's annual output of books, maps, leaders' guides, simulations, plays, and audio-visuals for all ages becomes the practical enfleshment of the ongoing goal.

Behind the Scenes

Obviously, Friendship Press resources do not come into existence by fiat. What may be less obvious is the intricacy of the process by which they are created.

Just the selecting of two annual themes stretches over a year. It begins when more than fifty participating boards and agencies in twenty-five denominations—Protestant and Catholic, in Canada and the United States—try to discern, some four years ahead, those functional issues in world mission and those geographical areas of the world that should be lifted up. These suggestions are collected, evaluated by a "themes committee," perhaps reworked and set in new combinations, then narrowed down to four possibilities. These four are resubmitted to denominations, which must vote by denomination, not by member board. (Thus an overseas board, an agency for Christian nurture, and a unit on social action must come to a common understanding—no small achievement!) Votes are counted and interpreted in the themes committee, which makes its two recommendations to the CEM Executive Committee for final decision.

The comment is often made that the process has a remarkable success rate. The annual themes seem, again and again, to leap into public consciousness just as the study is making its impact on the church. Some see this as a sign of perspicacity on the part of participants. Others credit the guidance of the Holy Spirit. A third, simpler hypothesis might be set forth: the world today is so fraught with crises that any committee, working blindfolded, could stick pins into a world map and be sure that three, four, or five years later that area would be on the front pages of our newspapers. So far, however, no one has tested that hypothesis.

Once consensus is reached on themes, the responsible program committee seeks expert input. In the case of a geographical theme, this will likely include several nationals from the area. Then task teams, comprised of denominational appointees, start to work through questions of content as well as educational goals, and to prepare a recommended curriculum. Simultaneously, names of possible authors are being considered for staff follow-up. After another year authors' manuscripts are submitted to careful scrutiny by the task team, denominational and council staffs, and invited experts. Thus every Friendship Press resource carries with it an amazingly broad-based approval—as befits the output of the only church-owned ecumenical publishing enterprise in North America.

Changes and Events of Moment

Across the eighty-year history of the mission-education movement some events stand out as signaling, supporting, or bringing about changes in the ways we Christians understand the mission and seek to be faithful to it. The following are examples:

About 1900: "The evangelization of the world in this generation" called students to a new awareness of Christian missions. This awareness, under the leadership of such persons as John R. Mott, led to the founding in 1902 of the Young People's Missionary Movement of the United States and Canada. Its first conference was held at Silver Bay, New York, with fifteen denominational boards represented. The stated purpose of the movement was "to deepen the spiritual life and missionary purpose of the church of the future." It took as its constituency the 14 million in Sunday schools and 5 million in young people's organizations.

About the same time large numbers of North American women caught the vision of world missions in the service of Christ. In 1901 they organized the Central Committee on the United Study of Foreign Missions. This, historians tell us, was "the first truly interdenominational undertaking by women." In 1903 women set up a similar committee for home missions; within a few years the two were merged.

1900-1910: The work expanded numerically and geographically. At Silver Bay, attendance at the annual missionary education conference rose steadily from 168 (1902) to over 600 (1905). Similar conferences developed elsewhere; one of these, at Asilomar, California, is still thriving, having enrolled 520 persons in the summer of 1982.

1911: The Missionary Education Movement was organized; it brought together the existing organizations of young people and women. To this day the vigor of youth and the informed loyalty of Christian women remain prime supports of the movement.

1950: The Missionary Education Movement (of the United States and Canada) was one of eight organizations that came together—on a stormy December day in Cleveland, Ohio—to form

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the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. While this relationship has contributed much to mission education, it also entailed two less happy results: the withdrawal of the Southern Baptist Convention from full participation and a gnawing feeling on the part of some Canadians that they are second-string participants in a basically United States-oriented enterprise.

1965: A deliberate shift in emphasis was made, reflecting and encouraging new interpretations of mission. Tradition, which included a strong emphasis on what missionaries were doing, was set aside. In a theme entitled "Mission: The Christian’s Calling," the case was persuasively presented that every Christian, by reason of his or her incorporation into the body of Christ, participates in the missionary calling. So education about missions became education for mission. Closely related to this change of perspective was the abandonment of a pattern that had prevailed from the earliest days, that there should always be a "home missions" theme and a "foreign missions" theme.

The years following 1965 saw several alternative ways of organizing the studies: the one that gained favor and continues well into the 1980s focuses on one mission issue of worldwide importance, and one geographical area. Thus the geographical theme for 1982–83 was "People of the Pacific Islands," and the issue, "Pilgrimage of Faith—Oneness in Christ," dealing with the relation of Christian unity to world mission. The 1983–84 themes are "Central Africa" and "The World’s Uprooted." Those presently in preparation include "Korea" and "Swords into Plowshares: Visions of Peace" (1984–85) and "Native Peoples of North America" and "The Earth Is the Lord’s" (1985–86).

1970s: Certain roles were shifted to indigenous leadership. Case in point: in preparing for the geographical study on the Caribbean (1977–78), no major decisions were taken by the North American task team without careful consultation with and approval by the Caribbean consultants. Thus the Caribbean Conference of Churches identified the salient issues that Christians there confront. They recommended writers. They provided critiques of work in progress. To be sure, there had been fruitful contact with people on the field for many, many years; this step represented a clear recognition of a growing partnership with mature, responsible churches on the scene.

An Evaluation

What has the mission education movement accomplished these eighty years, and where is it moving today? No other organization has contributed so much, over so broad a spectrum, to a deep appreciation of the meaning and importance of the worldwide role of the Christian faith. Missionary personnel, prayer, interest, informed support, openness to new expressions of mission—all these have come in ways beyond measure as a result of mission education. Great names are numbered among our authors, such as John R. Mott, Pearl Buck, Margaret Mead, Stephen Neill, Lesslie Newbigin, Kenneth Scott Latourette, Frank Laubach, Philip Potter, Toyohiko Kagawa, Chandran Devanesen, Rosemary Ruether, K. H. Ting, Charles Forman, James Scherer, Keith Bridston, Gerald Anderson, Cynthia Wedel, Donald McGavran, E. H. Johnson, C. I. Itty, Richey Hogg, Masao Takenaka, Benjamin Mays, and Emilio Castro.

Annual sales now represent about a million retail dollars. The trend is strongly upward even in a downward economy. More than 85 percent of the budget comes from sales; about 10 percent represents denominational contributions. Such contributions serve to support the nonpublishing activities of the organization in education for mission, and to keep the price of Friendship Press’s offerings as low as possible.

But rejoicing in the record is not enough. Some probing questions need to be faced, including whether we North American Christians are really serious about this undertaking. If so, how is it that a major book, such as The Cry of My People by Mortimer and Esther Arias (1979) has sold only 55,000 copies spread across more than a score of participating denominations? In fairness I point out that I have many peers in the publishing world, including some in the "big name" houses, who would gladly take on such a problem! Sales of Friendship resources surge well ahead of typical titles in many publishing houses. Comparing the figures with sales of books from other companies may, however, be beside the point. The real question is: How is it that so few Christians seize the opportunity to widen their horizons, deepen their sympathies, and strengthen their participation in Christ’s mission—out of the millions who count themselves part of our constituent denominations? Twenty years ago a book like The Cry of My People would have registered double the sale. In the years ahead a major book ought to achieve a sales figure four times as great; surely that is not too much to expect. If we believe that an informed people are better able to serve the great cause of Christian mission, we’d better let them in on our own well-kept secret. “Education for Christian mission” need not be on everybody’s lips. Neither need the name of Friendship Press bring instant recognition. But the purposes for which they stand must continue to challenge the church.
The Horizontal and the Vertical in Mission: An African Perspective

Lamin Sanneh

The story is told that when Western missionaries arrived in Ashanti, Ghana, the Asantehene responded to their invitation to send local children to schools being opened under missionary auspices by saying that no reasonable person could countenance a project requiring children to be released from productive labor on farms only to have them sit all day long idly learning, “hoy, hoy, hoy!” It introduces the theme of missionary schools as a prominent aspect of the horizontal character of historical Christianity. It also suggests that in its horizontal dimension Western mission quickly arrived at the point of local resistance.

The other aspect of the vertical impact of Western mission has been described in terms of the elite tendencies created in society. The numerical spread of the church had been facilitated by political subjugation, while the restrictive nature of imperial control fostered a class of collaborators in the new elites of Africa. Mission schools provided the ideal climate in which a trustworthy class of educated Africans could emerge to begin the process of modernization by imitating the colonial model. In either case Western mission had its colors firmly nailed to the mast of colonial lordship.

We possess today an impressive output of works dedicated to the exploration of the political—and horizontal—character of Western mission as well as to the social—and vertical—impact of Christian institutions. I shall suggest shortly that both these complementary views of Western mission are inadequate, and shall therefore urge that we work out an alternative methodology for the subject. Some of the significant pioneering work in the field was done by political historians whose perspective of seeing missions as an extension of the political penetration and takeover of Africa began to determine the direction of subsequent research and writing. Political history as a discipline thus became the prominent platform from which the cause to view mission as an ideological form of contemporary political culture was launched. It was highly successful, for ever since we have struggled, with meager results, to articulate an alternative formula. Furthermore, political history called into being a species of social science that focused on elites and social alienation as the most lasting form of missionary endeavor. African scholars, mesmerized by the lucid force of a medium they aspired to emulate, sought to outdo their Western mentors, and the arguments became repetitive. Western missions were guilty: because they were allies of colonialism; because they did not do more thoroughly what they set out to accomplish, that is, educate enough Africans; because they were not sufficiently political. This schizoid approach to Western missions was the result of a methodological defect. As long as missions were seen as a religious rationalization of a wider political scheme, so long would their work be seen in terms of the shifting attitudes of those who studied them.

We need therefore to move rapidly to a general overhaul of the intellectual scaffolding that had sustained the labors of previous generations of scholars. Freed of this dubious heritage we ought to reassess Western missions by their own lights, and from that apply a critique that can uncover both achievements and shortcomings. To do this effectively we would have to account for the significance of local factors and agents. Our aim should be to repossess the subject in its religious seriousness and submit it to standards of verification every bit as exacting as those to which other scholars had aspired. What we gain by this approach in terms of understanding the religious theme would also be a gain for a fresh appreciation of missionary initiative and African agency. This complementary approach had been sacrificed by the older methodology, which engendered a certain neglect of the popular voice in history.

It is clear that if we assess the effectiveness of Western missions by statistical standards of horizontal spread, they would fail abysmally. The most spectacular gains by Christianity occurred by other hands or after the formal withdrawal of missionaries. Similarly, if we measure the social, vertical impact of Christian schools and other institutions by quantitative evaluations, we should find an equally less encouraging picture. Yet it seems hardly reasonable to banish out of our reckoning a whole class of missionaries because they failed the statistical test. The realization of this dilemma has occasionally driven missionary apologists to complain that everything could not be as bad as the critics make out, although we are not told by what methodological insight such an acquittal is being urged. This conceptual wooliness has provoked the critics into making strident denunciations that are no less woolly for their vehemence. We are, as the pessimist would say, back to square one. The growing awareness that we cannot continue to occupy this methodological limbo has created a new climate for a passionate scrutiny of the materials. I am convinced that we have entered a new threshold. My task here will be to suggest what fresh methodology, which engendered a certain neglect of the popular voice in history.

The subject of Western missions needs to be unhinged from the narrow colonial context and placed in the much wider setting of African culture, including the religious background of African societies. This would not deny that missions played an active political role, but it would analyze that role as one strand of missionary history called into being a species of social science that focused on elites and social alienation as the most lasting form of missionary endeavor. African scholars, mesmerized by the lucid force of a medium they aspired to emulate, sought to outdo their Western mentors, and the arguments became repetitive. Western missions were guilty: because they were allies of colonialism; because they did not do more thoroughly what they set out to accomplish, that is, educate enough Africans; because they were not sufficiently political. This schizoid approach to Western missions was the result of a methodological defect. As long as missions were seen as a religious rationalization of a wider political scheme, so long would their work be seen in terms of the shifting attitudes of those who studied them.

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Lamin Sanneh, a Gambian, is Assistant Professor in the History of Religion at Harvard University. He has previously taught at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, the University of Ghana, Legon, and at Fourah Bay College, Freetown, Sierra Leone.
The work of missionaries seen in isolation from the African factor has served as a double foil for provoking secular attack and nationalist approbation.

The short-term advantages of missions but much more often to their immediate and long-range disadvantages. Rather, our real interest should be directed to the ways in which missions provided the initiative for a process of religious change in which Africans unquestionably became the more dominant agents. Missionaries may be one step ahead in the historical transmission of Christianity with Africans serving as secondary agents, but in the process of local assimilation Africans were to the fore, with missionaries now in a reverse position, overwhelmingly inferior in the local adaptation of a religion they helped to introduce.

The question with which we are faced fundamentally is this: Of the two processes at work in Christianity, historical transmission and indigenous assimilation, which one is the more significant? Without hesitation we should say the process of assimilation, for it is within that that the historical process itself becomes meaningful. Let me clarify that point. Missionaries were often exercised about the question of scriptural translation, and made that their primary object. Whatever missionary theology was and however distant from the culture, the matter of having the Bible available in local languages was accorded priority. Often, it is true, the work of translation acquired steam from the promise of statistical reward, but that was to crown the labor, not to be its substitute. This enterprise of translation proceeded on two revolutionary notions concerning the significance of local cultures. One was that local languages, whatever their social status, could serve as adequate bearers of the divine revelation: to put the matter coarsely, God was not so disdainful of Africans as to be incomprehensible in their language. The import of this was to imbue local cultures with an eternal significance and to endow African languages with a transcendent range. The spirits of the ancestors, fitted with the engine of biblical revelation, transformed local neighborhoods into commuter belts of heaven. You may object that that was not the intention of Bible translators, but you can hardly deny that it was a universal consequence of their efforts. The second was the assumption that the God whom the missionary came to serve had actually preceded him or her in the field and that to discover His true identity the missionary would have to delve deep into the local culture. It is the hidden reality of this divine presence that both validates external mission and requires translation as a sine qua non of witness. Thus the central categories of Christian theology—God, creation, Jesus Christ, and history (“the world”)—are transposed into their local equivalents, suggesting that Christianity had been adequately anticipated. To digest for a moment, perhaps this realization caused some missionaries to try to put the brakes on local religious vocation to which Christianity was being effectively yoked. But no matter. Scriptural translation had invoked the beast of the tribe and there was no stopping it.

To relate this to the two-part model proposed above, the process of historical transmission in the form it took under scriptural translation stimulated that of indigenous assimilation. Before long the forces of adaptation predominated over those of transmission. The missionary acquired a transformed significance, becoming important, not as an ally of the colonial regime, but as the unwitting agent of local adaptation over which the African presided with effective authority. If they said they came to serve, missionaries were now finding that in reality they could do nothing more. The notion that they held in their hands powers of life and death over African cultures was a flattery. Their eager adoption of that flattering view of their work proves, not its reality, but the awareness of their increasing marginalization once the stage of assimilation was reached. The articulate attack by Western missionaries, especially the conservative among them, on local religions should not be seen as a measure of the strength or weakness of the religions concerned, but as evidence that missionaries were being threatened with a marginal status in the historical reconceptualization of Christianity. Protesting vehemently that they would not relinquish power, most missionaries in fact held in their hands only tokens of influence, thanks to persisting myths about missionary collaboration with colonialism.

One consequence of our methodology, as suggested above, is indeed to scatter these myths and to rescue missionaries from being caricatures to becoming real figures of history. Thus if they stumble on the statistical ladder of glory, as they deserve, at least their significance is not entirely denied, and we could secure their service for the much more profound process of internal assimilation. We would discount their ideological hostility, for that is only a mask, and instead investigate those actions that advanced the cause of religious adaptation. Over a range of cultural materials we should be able to find evidence of the stimulus of Christian religious influence, with the missionary lurking within accessible distance. By this procedure we have established the greater
significance of indigenous assimilation vis-à-vis historical trans-
mission. But we have done more. We have also retained the mis-
sonary theme by placing it in the appropriate rank of secondary
importance. We must now turn to the stage of local assimilation to
which all the evidence increasingly points.

Even the most optimistic view of the work of Western mis-
ions concedes that missionary numbers were comparatively small.
When they were concentrated on a mission station, missionaries
found themselves isolated from the events they would have liked
to control. With the advent of motorized transport, village
churches receded further behind a veil of obscurity, for, while out-
station visits might now be more frequent, they were too short to
allow anything more than a superficial acquaintance. Professor
John Carman’s work on Village Christians and Hindu Culture makes
this point vividly, especially since he was dealing with churches
regarded by official missionary administrators as “success stories.”
That pattern is repeated through most of Africa. Thus for a variety
of reasons missionaries failed to assert the kind of close supervi-
sion over local Christian life that official reports would like to be-
lieve was possible. This leaves a vast field under local suzerainty.
We must now add to this fact the matter of expertise in indigenous
culture. Whatever their degree of competence, missionaries re-
mained outside the local culture. The language into which they
translated the Scriptures remained the mother tongue of Africans.
In the Christian setting of Scripture and liturgy this language reso-
nated with familiar religious notions to which the missionary
would be oblivious. Thus lack of numbers in missionary ranks cre-
ated problems that the transport revolution did little to resolve,
and this exacerbated the state of isolation, which was highlighted
by the indispensable need for scriptural translation.

This brief sketch completes the stage on which Africans were
to arrive in their full powers. African agency in the dissemina-
tion of Christianity is a major category in the transmission of the reli-
gion. This suggests that even the historical process of transmission
was properly got under way only after that of local adaptation had
been fully initiated. Historical chronology thus moves down the
priority order behind the theme of local appropriation, which is as
it should be. It is now indispensable to the whole enterprise to in-
vestigate the role of local agents in the establishment of Christian-
ity. The history of Western missions is a small facet of the larger
picture of the course of Christian penetration in Africa, a course
that has since extended well beyond the formal limits of mission-
ary withdrawal. To view Western missions in comparative terms is
in fact to unshackle the larger theme of universal Christian history
from its ethnocentric Euro-American shibboleth.

We have said nothing so far about the popular conception of
Christianity as the religion of the white person, euphemistically
referred to as Western. But the implication of what we have set
out is to question this designation of the great complex called
Christianity. African Christianity, even by the most conservative
measure, is not less Christian for being mediated through local
languages. Therefore its vision of the church reflects values inher-
ent in primary attitudes on the ground. It is as much subject to
change as its Euro-American counterpart, and has as much right to
provide a critique of the practice of Christianity in the West as it
has been submitted to. The appeal to universal standards will not
provide sufficient cover behind which the claims of an ethnocen-
tric West can be smuggled. The ecumenical movement in the West
shows that there is a plurality of universal models at work, though
a less charitable view might say that there is in fact a jungle of re-
relative yardsticks threatening to choke the whole enterprise. Such
ethnocentric views of Christianity proliferated thickly under the
congenial climate of Christian statistical superiority over which
the missionary as historical transmitter presided. The situation is a
lot different today, with the African jungle nurturing its own ap-
propriate version of the story.

One prominent area where missionary tutelage was over-
thrown with dramatic effect was in the role of women in Chris-
tianity. Western missions perpetuated a strongly masculine form
of Christianity. In African communities where women played a
critical role in the economic and religious life of the people, this
placed an intolerable strain on social relations. The result was a
spectacular rise in the number of Independent Churches, many of
whose pioneer leaders were women. Increasingly women flocked
into these Independent Churches, repudiating the subservient role
fashioned for them by Western missions. In this way, too, tradi-
tional religions helped to avoid some of the contradictions threat-
ened by early Christian evangelism by encouraging women to
insist on an appropriate role for themselves. Numerous stories
about the founding of these Independent Churches focus on the
lives of women as recipients of charismatic gifts and as possessors
of spiritual and prayer power. I have no doubt that this timely in-
tervention of women saved Christianity from a moribund fate in
much of Africa. Is the West still too ethnocentric to allow this ex-
perience from Africa to shed light on its present dilemma? It is by
that kind of cross-cultural influence that I would wish to promote
the idea of a universal Christianity.

The Western missionary factor in African Christianity is rec-
ognized by our methodology, although it comes into its own only
in the context of local influences. This needs to be emphasized, for
the trend in missionary circles today is to claim that mission is
faced with a fundamental crisis on the unstated grounds that the
days of missionary heroism are over. As to why that should create
a crisis instead of relief, I do not care to speculate. One regrettable
consequence has been to relegate the story of postcolonial African
Christianity to the back room where it is kept smoldering by the
time-fuse of Western guilt. Meanwhile in Africa itself the subject
has entered the period of its Golden Age, a new spring of religious
vitality that has covered the face of the continent. It seems a little
self-deluding to abandon the enterprise at the point of its greatest
expansion.

A mere descriptive approach to the situation will reveal that
the most significant areas of Christian renewal coincide with areas
of traditional religious vitality. The converse of this appears to
hold too, namely, that where traditional religions are weakest, as
in north Nigeria, Senegal, Guinea, and Mali for example, there
local Christian activity seems weakest. Some of these areas,
though not all, are highly Islamized, and whether that is a relevant
factor remains to be determined. But if Islam was a factor, we
would still have to discover how its relationship with traditional
religions affected the notion of a pluralist religious environment.
The fact remains, however, that in a profoundly challenging way
the fate of a robust Christianity was intimately bound up with the
strength of local religions. Let me pull together some threads left
over from the discussion on scriptural translation. The observation
has often been made that unless Africans possessed the Scriptures

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in their own languages, the future of Christianity was correspondingly bleak. We might extend that to saying that unless the indigenous religious vocation was a deep and sincere one, the church would be sinking very shallow roots indeed. The other side of the proposition is that religious traditions may actually turn out to be indispensable to the vocation to which the church might be calling us, a remark that would set a bogey cat among Barthian pigeons. The historical experience of Africa, however, is a demonstration of the salvific value of religion. People might come to know the God of Jesus Christ only because they had been vouchsafed intimations of it in their religious traditions. It is across that tender bridge that the craft of translation arrived at its rendezvous. Otherwise the effort would not be worth the shot and powder. Thus translation assumed that the abstract “word of God” would find its true destiny when embodied in concrete local idiom, lending credence to the theological insight that the “word of God” had always carried the burden of the incarnation, and that its historical manifestation in Jesus Christ concentrated and made visible a process that is occurring throughout history. We may call this phenomenon the transformation process, or process theology, or Universal Providence, but it brings the matter closer to our concerns if we describe it as the missio Dei. As such it illuminates and judges the many kinds of Western mission that arrived on the scene. Similarly the reality of the missio Dei sustained traditional religious enterprise by bringing about a convergence with Christianity. Historical missions, for example, might fail, either because they provoked antagonism through statistical rivalry or because they sowed seeds of alienation and conflict, but the Christian vocation might prosper in spite of that. Where that is the case, it often means that the missio Dei, activated by the stimulus of historical contact with the West, has fused with local religious enterprise and acquired a concrete reality.

When we raise questions about the tradition of reform and renewal in local Christianity we are driven to the very heart of African religious agency, although the transition to this from the theme of missio Dei is a natural one. We are all aware of the critical role Scripture has played in Christian renewal movements in Africa. African charismatics, burning with the Spirit’s fiery promptings, announce that the old dispensation is abolished and a new order has come into being on the authority of Scripture. But this is not a new phenomenon. The tradition of religious and social innovation existed in the old dispensation through oracles and the dream faculty. There has been little categorical shift in this sense. The written text of Scripture now warrants and fixes change in a way that oracles once did. On the other hand, Scripture might perform the very opposite role by inhibiting change and reinforcing boundaries, a role that traditional religions filled very well. Nevertheless a new element was introduced in local religious calculations, namely, the fact that Scripture, and the Supreme Being to whom it testifies, now came within range of popular piety. Thus it was that African religious agency established a prominent platform for the popular voice. The charismatic revival may be viewed in one way as a mass movement. Social ranks, ethnic identity, and economic status all ceased to determine who might belong. Spiritual power, available to anyone so predisposed, created a living fellowship out of disparate social and ethnic groups, thus concentrating the stream of community life and experience into explicitly religious channels. The binding though flexible character of this new religious grouping, its vision of a caring and disciplined community, its sense of hope and expectation that God was about to accomplish great things, and its willingness to be channels of divine favor, all suggest that we are dealing with a concrete manifestation of the incarnate Word in the missio Dei. Christianity penetrated the soul of Africa in this way, vindicating claims that local adaptation held incomparably greater prospects for the future of the religion in Africa than external agency did.

In Conclusion

In this brief methodological inquiry I have tried to show that we cannot continue to appropriate Christianity as an ideological theme and annex it as a subplot to the history of Western imperialism. That approach, I suggested, sacrifices the religious theme in the story and overlooks Christianity’s shifting fortunes under imperial patronage. I have also suggested that the process of historical transmission of Christianity under Western missionary agency should be subordinated to that of local assimilation and adaptation under African agency. This would require us to analyze the subject in terms of its local history and not simply from missionary records in metropolitan archives. I have said that the statistical scales on which missionaries were weighed and found wanting conceal the true worth of their labors. Only by looking at them in terms of their contributions to the process of indigenous religious enterprise can we adequately account for their significance. It is by this complementarity, I suggested, that we can repossess the subject in its religious seriousness. Then I suggested that historical missions were side-effects of the missio Dei, and that without that correlation Western missions propagated an ethnocentric view of Christianity. However, the enterprise of scriptural translation, with its far-reaching assumptions about traditional religious categories and ideas as a valid carriage for the revelation and the divine initiative that precedes and anticipates historical mission, concedes the salvific value of local religions. As a final consideration I turned our attention to some of the deeper aspects of African religious agency in questions of renewal and reform. I suggested that often some strong trends of continuity bind the new charismatic Christians to the old dispensation, in spite of the seemingly radical nature of the call to repentance. However, this confident appropriation of old religious techniques was able to mobilize people across existing frontiers of social status, economic rank, and ethnicity, thus creating new, popular horizons for the religious life. The essay as I originally conceived it is concluded with this resume. What I now add may be, I hope, worthy of further attention.

I began with a reference to the history of early missionary penetration of Kumasi, Ghana. I end with another story from there. The story is best described in the words of the missionary concerned. It brings three themes together, and because it is a most unexpected medium for the juxtaposition of the horizontal in mission proceeding by some rather archaic means of transport to arrive at African agency, it may form the appropriate basis on which we can leave the subject. The great missionary pioneer of Ghana, Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman, son of an African by an English mother, describes his experience of a journey in a basket in Ghana in 1839. I quote his words:

“We cannot continue to appropriate Christianity as an ideological theme and annex it as a subplot to the history of Western imperialism.”
It was sometimes the case that little progress could be made in a basket during a night's journey unless the traveller took care to keep awake. Instances have occurred in which a person has started in the evening, on a night's journey and fallen asleep. At length he has awoke and found all round him still and quiet. His first thought has been, "Where am I?" Experience answered, "O, Sir, but your men were tired, and finding that you were asleep felt disposed to imitate your example, and have a sleep themselves, and as they could not carry you and sleep at the same time, they have put you down—softly, softly, catch monkey—with the greatest care not to disturb your slumbers in the act, and are all asleep around you. They do not intend to neglect you . . . they only wanted a little sleep and if Ser-

geant Hyena come near, they must suffer and not you as they are all grouped round you!" The traveller is much annoyed at the delay and should he have a little stick with him in the basket, lays it on all around him . . . Up they jump in perfect good humor; they have had their sleep . . . Arrived at the end of the journey . . . they reproach the traveller and coolly ask for the usual allowance of rum, as though they had been, during the night, the most reliable carriers in the world.*


The Legacy of Johan Herman Bavinck

J. van den Berg

I. The Life of J. H. Bavinck

Background

Johan Herman Bavinck, the son of Grietje Bouwes and Coenraad Bernard Bavinck, a minister of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland), was born at Rotterdam, the Netherlands, in 1895. The spiritual background of the Bavincks was in a church that had seceded from the Netherlands Reformed Church (Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk) in 1834. Jan Bavinck, Johan Herman's grandfather and a native of the German county of Bentheim near the Dutch frontier, had been a leading minister of the secession church, and it was perhaps only modesty that had prevented him from accepting a call in 1854 to a teaching function in the newly established theological college at Kampen. Jan's eldest son Herman, did become a professor of dogmatics, first at the Kampen Theological College and later at the Free University in Amsterdam. Coenraad Bernard was also a theologian at heart (he was especially at home in the works of Augustine), although he left the writing of theological works to his elder brother.

The secession of 1834 originated in the protest of some Calvinistic ministers against the more liberal tendencies then prevalent in the Netherlands Reformed Church. With some of the seceders, however, the harsh contours of a strict and conservative Calvinism were softened by a milder evangelical spirit. The Bavincks were representatives of this more open-minded tendency within the church of the secession. In 1892 this church united with a church which, under the influence of Abraham Kuyper, had seceded from the Netherlands Reformed Church in 1886, to form the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland). In the tradition of the Reformed Churches the name "Bavinck" is associated with the catholic and irenic form of Reformed thought that found its most succinct expression in a lecture by Herman Bavinck, published in 1888 under the title The Catholicity of Christianity and Church.1

Student Days

Johan Herman Bavinck grew up in an atmosphere of warm and mild piety, blended with a lively interest in theology and an open-minded attitude toward the world of culture. In 1912 he enrolled as a student of theology at the Free University in Amsterdam. The study of religious psychology became one of his major interests; in this he was possibly stimulated by his uncle, who was one of his professors. He was deeply influenced in this period of his life by his contacts with people in the Netherlands Student Christian Movement—a circle in which a wider world of spiritual and theological interests was opened to a number of students who had grown up in the rather confined atmosphere of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

After completion of his work at the Free University, Bavinck went for further studies to Germany (Giessen and Erlangen). In 1919 he was awarded the doctor of philosophy degree from the University of Erlangen, having written a dissertation on the medieval mystic Henry Suso, whose thought he approached from the viewpoint of the psychology of religion.2

Bavinck as Pastor

In the same year, 1919, Bavinck was called by a Dutch church at Medan in Sumatra, Indonesia, where he served for two years as assistant pastor. In 1921 he became the pastor of a Dutch church in Bandung, Java. This period in his life may be seen as a prelude to his later work as a missionary in Indonesia, although he did not yet have any intention of undertaking missionary service. In Bandung he found the time to pursue studies in psychology, and it was his psychological insight, combined with a natural ability to listen without intruding, that made him a good and sympathetic pastor. He was also a distinguished preacher whose sermons were marked by a combination of spiritual depth and lucid simplicity. Bavinck could not have been comfortable in the armor of dogmatic certainties, but he was deeply steeped in the biblical message through daily Bible study and reflection, and he had a special gift for relating that message to the great problems of his own times.

1. J. van den Berg, a minister of the Reformed Church (Gereformeerde Kerk) in the Netherlands, is Professor of Church History at the State University in Leiden. He previously taught the history of missions at the Free University, Amsterdam.
While in Bandung he was married to Trientje (Tine) Robers. More practical and matter-of-fact than her sometimes absentminded husband, she brought much sunshine into a very happy marriage that lasted until her death in 1953. A daughter and two sons were born to this marriage.

The Bavincks returned to the Netherlands in 1926, where he became pastor in the village of Heemstede (near Haarlem), but for a briefer period than they had anticipated.

**Bavinck as Missionary**

In 1929 Bavinck was asked to become a missionary of his church in Solo (Surakarta), a town in central Java. There the old Javanese culture, influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism, was still very much alive under the surface of Muslim religious life. The call to missionary service conflicted with his plans for further activities in the field of religious psychology, but he responded to it in full confidence that it was God’s will. He was particularly well qualified in both personality and education to penetrate the subtle and inscrutable world of Javanese mysticism. Bavinck had a rare gift for sharing other people’s spiritual experiences, so much so that he was sometimes nicknamed “the white Javanese.” He made contacts in the kraton (palace of the prince), one of the centers of old Javanese culture. Long talks with Javanese mystics on moonlit nights, and an intimate knowledge of the wajang (play of light and shadows with puppets, representing heroes and demons of the old epic poems) gave him an even deeper understanding of the Javanese spirit. This writer has a lively memory of Bavinck’s lectures on Javanese religious life: it was as though the bare lecture room in Kampen had become the courtyard of the kraton in Solo; as though a Javanese mystic, rather than a Dutch professor, were initiating his pupils into the mysteries of Javanese religion.

Bavinck’s almost intuitive understanding of Eastern thought did not lead him, however, to any form of syncretism. His affinity with the Javanese mind in no way diminished his deep conviction that the God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ is different from the “cosmological” God of Oriental mystical thought. He was a respectful missionary—but still a missionary—one who thought it important to confront the world of Eastern religious thought with the message of Christ.

In 1931 he became a lecturer at the theological college in Jogjakarta, also in central Java. There he was able to pursue his studies, especially in the field of Oriental mysticism, and at the same time help his pupils to relate the Christian message they were going to preach and teach with their Javanese heritage. His friend and colleague Abraham Pos once heard him say that the years spent at Jogjakarta were the most beautiful years of his life.

**Bavinck as Professor**

When the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands decided to establish a chair of missiology at their theological college, the choice of Bavinck as its first occupant was logical. He accepted the call, and returned to the Netherlands in 1939, on the eve of World War II, to assume his post at Kampen Theological College. At the same time he was appointed professor extraordinary of missiology at the Free University, Amsterdam. Soon the Netherlands was caught up in the whirlpool of war. Academic teaching was still possible for only a few years; ultimately all universities and colleges were closed. For a man like Bavinck who, despite his apparent otherworldliness, reacted with deep intensity to the events of those years, the cessation of classroom activities could not be merely an opportunity for quiet and uninterrupted study. He gave spiritual guidance in various ways, among them the writing of books and pamphlets on a popular level, preparing the church for the resumption of its missionary task in the postwar period.

The outbreak of a long-smoldering conflict within the church on matters of doctrine and church order, in which he attempted vainly to mediate, strengthened his aversion to doctrinal fanaticism and ecclesiastical self-centeredness. Neither aspiring nor attempting to become an ecclesiastical leader, he helped in his own quiet way to open a door to the future for a church that had been too concerned with the past to become sufficiently aware of the new-day challenges. In so doing, he remained true to the catholic ideal his uncle had already formulated in 1888.

When Bavinck was able to resume his professorial duties after the war, new problems demanded attention. The political and military conflict between the Netherlands and the new Republic of Indonesia created a cleavage between missionaries and missionary leaders, on the one hand, and church members who sympathized with the Dutch government’s policies, on the other. Although not a radical by nature, Bavinck unhesitatingly sided with those who pleaded for more understanding of the motives and aspirations of the Indonesian nationalists. His wisdom and tact contributed to bridging the gap between those whose knowledge of Indonesian life led them to a more progressive stance, and those who still thought in categories that were to be invalidated by the winds of change.

A problem partly related to the former one was that of the changing relationship between the Dutch churches with their mission agencies and the Indonesian churches. The latter, during the period of Japanese occupation when Western assistance was totally absent, had shown that their institutional independence was more than a formal matter. After the war they were prepared to cooperate with the Dutch missions only if all vestiges of paternalism on the part of the missionary partners disappeared. Here again, Bavinck saw and accepted the challenge of a new phase in missionary history. In 1947 he shared in the discussions held in Djakarta between Indonesians and Dutch and, upon his return to the Netherlands, was able to convince his own church of the need for a new mission policy.

The new situation demanded new forms of mission organization. Under Bavinck’s stimulating influence, a Missionary Center of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands was established at Baarn. A Missionary Seminary was also established, to be united in the course of time with the Missionary College of the Netherlands Reformed Church to form the present Hendrik Kraemer Institute at Oegstgeest. Bavinck maintained his international contacts, lecturing in the United States (once at the invitation of Mirece Eliaade) and in South Africa. He tried, in South Africa, to persuade his white fellow-Christians of the evil of racial discrimination inherent in apartheid policies.

Among the many obligations he assumed, the professorial task always dominated other interests. He was an inspiring teacher, one whose lectures left an unforgettable impression on his students. A number of those students, from the Netherlands and other countries as well, took their doctor’s degree under his supervision. Ultimately, however, the work at Kampen and Amsterdam together became too heavy a burden; and, when the chair of practical theology at the Free University became vacant in 1955, Bavinck left Kampen to become full professor at the Free University. He was succeeded at Kampen by Dr. Hendrik Bergema, who also assumed a number of Bavinck’s duties in the field of missionary organization. Bavinck’s personality, his homiletical gifts, and his studies in psychology especially qualified him for his new position. At the Free University he retained his responsibilities in the field of missiology, although after some years he delegated the
teaching of the history of missions to a former pupil who had become one of his younger colleagues.

Despite the realignment of his work, Bavinck’s life remained busy, too busy for one whose physical strength was no longer equal to his great strength of mind and his multifarious tasks. His health began to fail and plans had to be left unfulfilled. He died in 1964, a quarter of a century after first undertaking his professorial duties. During the last, difficult years he was lovingly supported by his second wife, Fennechien (Chien) Bavinck-van der Vegt.

Bavinck was a man of deep spirituality, with a warm personal interest in pupils and friends, a disarming sense of humor, and a subtle and respectful approach to life’s great problems. His scholarly work reflects many traits of his personality.

II. The Scholarship of J. H. Bavinck

Variety and Continuity

Bavinck was a prolific and fluent writer. From 1923 onward there was scarcely a year in which he did not publish one or more books or articles. Within the confines of this essay it is impossible to do justice to the variety of those publications. I shall try, however, to summarize his broad range of interests, on the one hand, and to point out the element of continuity in his work, on the other. Some of his most important publications in the field of missiology will then be singled out for special mention. A preliminary remark is indicated: it is not always easy to make a clear-cut distinction between Bavinck’s more popular works and his scholarly publications. Some, which to all intents and purposes belong in the first category, still reveal the scholar’s mind and the fundamental pattern of his thought in an interesting way. And some of his typically scholarly publications were written with a lucidity and an almost deceptive simplicity that made them accessible to a much wider circle than that of the specialists. Bavinck himself was, in fact, not a specialist in the technical sense of the word. He was more a generalist, interested in all the great questions of his discipline. With fine intuition for discovering what is relevant, he approached those issues from the inside, as it were.

Bavinck’s first publications were in the fields of psychology and philosophy. His doctoral dissertation on Suso (1919), mentioned above, dealt with the question of how far thinking in general, and religious thinking in particular, is influenced by feeling. This first work witnesses already to his understanding of and ambivalence toward the world of mystical thought. In 1926 he published An Introduction to Psychology, in the foreword of which he cited the words of Augustine that are so typical of his own approach: Deum et animam scire cupio, “I desire to know God and the soul.” To those words he added, “For one who has faith in God in his heart, in this world few things are more beautiful than to be allowed to penetrate into the depths of the soul.” After returning to the Netherlands he published a series of lectures on a number of great philosophers, concentrating on the relationship between personality and world-view. 

He would no doubt have pursued this line of psychological and philosophical studies had he not been called back to Indonesia. As indicated above, it was the mystical aspect of the Javanese world that became the center of his interests. This fascination is evident in a curious little book, written in Javanese, concerning the way Christ enters into the soul. In this work, the kraton with its mysterious gateways and alleys stands as a model for the human soul. It appears that some of the more conservative missionaries rather frowned on that approach, the more so because much of the vocabulary of the book was derived from the mystic Al-Gazali. In any case it was an interesting and original attempt to relate the Christian message to the categories of Javanese mysticism. Bavinck dealt more fully with some of the underlying problems in what is undoubtedly one of his most important studies, Christ and Eastern Mysticism.

During his missionary period as well as afterward, Bavinck wrote a number of works on biblical subjects. His earlier publications in this field—I refer especially to People around Jesus (1936), and History of God’s Revelation: Vol. II, The New Testament (1938) — are indicative of his psychological approach. In his later biblical studies the historical dimension assumes a larger place; this is the case, for example, in his work on the spread of the gospel in the days of Paul (1941), and even more so in that on the book of Revelation (1952). His interest in the symbolic language of the Bible appears in his Man and His World (1946). These and others he wrote in this field are not the contributions of a specialist in biblical studies, but they reflect in an original way his broad familiarity with the biblical message in its various aspects.

As a professor of missiology he wrote a number of studies in that particular field: a survey of the history of missions; studies on adaptation, communication, the “point of contact,” and so forth. He wrote on the place of Christianity among the world religions, religious consciousness and Christian faith, the race problem, and several topics of more incidental interest. In the last years of his life, he wrote a number of articles in the field of practical theology, but failing health made it impossible to realize his plans for a more comprehensive work in that field.

Bavinck’s writings cover a wide, almost overwhelming and confusing, variety of subjects. Yet an element of continuity is clearly evident: his fascination with the problem of God and the human soul.

Religion and the Christian Faith

The central problem, in Bavinck’s thinking, was that of the relationship between religious experience and God’s revelation in Jesus Christ. The tenor of his thought is reminiscent of Schleiermacher, who took the notion of religious experience as his starting point. The present writer has in his possession Bavinck’s own marked copy of Schleiermacher’s Relen, in which the underlinings show how much he was preoccupied with Schleiermacher’s thought on this subject. However, at a later period he was also
deeply impressed by Barth’s emphasis on the critical character for revelation. One does not do justice to Bavinck by suggesting that his mind balanced between those two poles without reaching a decision. Rather, through a subtle and original approach, he tried to reach his own conclusion. In this there is a noticeable difference between Bavinck and his friend Hendrik Kraemer, though not of a fundamental nature. It is interesting to note that Kraemer, the opponent of a syncretistic approach, sympathetically advised and assisted Bavinck when he wrote his Javanese booklet on Christ’s entrance into the human soul, mentioned above.12

That Javanese booklet was a Prelude to Bavinck’s larger work, Christ and Eastern Mysticism. At the very beginning of this book he states that the missionary task is one of striving to win people for Christ, but that it is also one of wresting with a culture that has grown out of a different religion, and Bavinck indeed came to grips with Javanese culture. In many ways it attracted him, but at the same time in its fundamental presuppositions it was alien to the heart and core of his own beliefs. The result of this encounter was a book of great depth and beauty. In it Bavinck confronted Javanese thinking, influenced as it is by Hindu and Muslim mysticism, with the thought world of Augustine who, in his own day, had coped with the problems posed by Neoplatonic mysticism. On the one hand, Bavinck perceived many parallels between Javanese and Christian thought on deliverance from the power of darkness—parallels that led him to expect that once a living church had found its place in the Eastern world the message of Christ would be better understood there than in the secularized context of the Western world. On the other hand, one fundamental contrast remained: in the East, deliverance is primarily a psychological process; in the Christian message, it is a radical change in the relationship between God and human beings along the way of atonement and justification.

Bavinck stood as it were on the boundary between two worlds. Christ and Eastern Mysticism was written before the Tambaran Missionary Conference of 1938, and before Barth’s theology (largely through Kraemer’s mediation) had made its influence felt in misiological thinking. Yet this book pointed somehow toward the post-Tambaran stand missiology was to take with regard to the relationship between religion and the Christian faith. On some issues it is, of course, dated—especially in its evaluation of secularism. Yet perhaps its careful and understanding approach to the religious experience of the East may have a new relevance now that the emphasis on religious experience is more highly regarded than it was four or five decades ago.

The theme was taken up again in Bavinck’s inaugural lecture of 1939, published as The Proclamation of Christ in the World of Nations.13 In this he pointed to people such as Kanaharyan Paul and Vangel Chakkara from India, Toyohiko Kagawa and Taisei Michihata from Japan, as examples of the way Christians in the East approach the mystery of the cross. In 1940 he published a summary in Dutch of Kraemer’s The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World (1938), in the course of which he remarked that Kraemer had made too sharp a distinction between Christianity and revelation.14 But his most penetrating study on the subject, Religious Consciousness and Christian Faith,15 appeared in 1949. In a masterly analysis of Romans 1, he showed that God in his general revelation is at work in this world, but that at the same time people replace God’s revelation by images of their own making in a continuous process of substitution; as in a dream, sensations from outside are replaced by related yet different images. The originality of this study lies in the way Bavinck approached a central theological question within the context of his knowledge of religious psychology and the religious life of the East.

A summary of Bavinck’s legacy is his great work An Introduction to the Science of Missions.16 In it we meet with the various elements characteristic of his approach: his psychological interest traceable in many places (though not as explicitly present as in earlier publications), his biblical orientation (here very prominent), and the respectful way he dealt with other religions. From the vantage point of almost three decades since the publication of that book, we are aware of a certain one-sidedness as a result of an almost exclusive attention to the confrontation between Christianity and the non-Christian religions. In that respect it reflects the major emphasis of a period in the history of missions when the non-Western world was not as deeply influenced by the modern secular climate as is the case today. Perhaps it is precisely that one-sidedness, inevitable in its time, that gives this book special flavor and lasting quality. It brings us into contact with a man who was not only a gifted missiologist but also a humble missionary—one who, just because of his belief in the unique meaning of God’s revelation in Christ, could trace with an open mind and a respectful heart the vestiges of God’s presence in the world of religions.

Notes
1. H. Bavinck, De Katholieke van Christendom en Kerk (Kampen: Zalsman, 1888).
3. For this, see his lecture on “The Future of Our Churches,” De toekomst van onze kerken (Bruinisse: n.p., 1943).
5. Inleiding in de ziekwunde (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1929), p. iii.
7. For this work (Soeksa soepa, 1932, written under the pseudonym Kjai Martawahana), see J. Verkuyl, Inleiding in de nieuwe zendingswetsenschap (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1975), p. 63.
11. Alcoo wies het Woord (Baarn: Bosch en Keuning, 1941); En wient wertele de ouware (Wageningen: Zomer en Keuning, 1952); De mensch en zijn wereld (Baarn: Bosch en Keuning, 1946).

Selected Bibliography
Major Publications of J. H. Bavinck
Note: In J. van den Berg, ed., Christusprediking in de wereld (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1965), a memorial volume published shortly after Bavinck’s death, A. Wessels has provided a complete bibliography of J. H. Bavinck’s writings. The following list is restricted to those that have appeared in English:

The Impact of Christianity on the Non-Christian World (Grand Rapids,
More Cross-currents in Mission

Geevarghese Mar Osthathios

In the discussion on “Cross-currents in Mission” in the International Bulletin (October 1982), Lesslie Newbigin—with characteristic humility—concludes his reply to critics with the statement, “We need more input from Third World theologians” (p. 155). As an Orthodox bishop from the Third World, I venture to make a few brief comments in this important discussion.

1. Holy Trinity Is the Key

Unfortunately, in most of the discussion, no reference is made to the Holy Trinity, whereas the Great Commission made it central with the directive, “... baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt. 28:19). The basis of membership in the World Council of Churches was amended at the Third Assembly at New Delhi in the trinitarian pattern, but its centrality has not yet penetrated into mission studies, though it has become central in the discussions of Faith and Order. The Trinity is not just a baptismal formula, but the mark of the new humanity created by conversion and baptism. It indicates the ultimate model of Christian koinonia, the sharing fellowship of agape wherein distinctions are maintained with equality. Mission is eternal in the Godhead because of the dynamic nature of love. Mission is not that which started with the incarnation, though the incarnation is the only absolute model of mission. Creation was mission; incarnation was mission; the descent of the Holy Spirit was mission; and consummation awaited is mission. “God is love” means that God is eternally self-giving, self-sharing, trinitarian love. San karacharya would say that love is the opposite of hatred, and that Brahma is beyond love and hatred, and so attributeless Absolute (Nirguna Brahma). Christianity distinguishes such limited love (eros or phileo) from agape or eternal, limitless, infinite love of God. In Christianity, love is not just an attribute of God, but the ontological essence of God, and so God could love in action even before creation, as he himself is eternal love in eternal action in the Holy Trinity. As mission is divine love, mission may also be seen as the ontological nature of God.

2. The Incarnation Is the How of Mission

As the incarnation was both kenotic (Phil. 2:5–11) and cosmic (Col. 1:15–20), the Christian mission has to be self-emptying and universal. He was in the world (as logos) and “the world knew him not” (Jn. 1:10) indicates that he has not left himself without witnesses in any time even before the incarnation. The preincarnate logos and the incarnate logos are identical. Hence wherever divine love was present the logos was present. The criterion of that love is manifested finally, absolutely, only in the incarnation of God as Jesus of Nazareth. Priority is for the incarnation of love, holiness, and truth in Christ, crucified and risen, for the mission of the Holy Spirit that still continues and not just of what we human beings do and proclaim. Proclamation or evangelization, diakonia, koinonia, eucharistia were all daily things in the early church, filled with the Holy Spirit. A Spirit-filled life is mission, including all these things.

3. On Discipling the Nations

The Great Commission says, “... make disciples of all nations” (Mt. 28:19), or “... preach the gospel to the whole creation” (Mk. 16:15). What a tremendous responsibility! It does not say that we can be satisfied after baptizing a few individuals in each nation. The most neglected part of our present mission is “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded” (Mt. 28:20). The discussion about “cross-currents in mission” has to include mission and discipleship; evangelization and marturia, or martyrdom; Christian life as mission; worship and eucharistia as mission (as in the Romanian church today). At the Bangkok meeting in 1972, I had the privilege to pilot a resolution on revising the aim of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, to include the phrase, in “word and deed.” Mission and evangelism in countries such as India will depend on the Christ-like life of missionaries and the converted, and not just on oral proclamation alone, which we have been doing for many centuries in Kerala, where the church was founded by St. Thomas the Apostle, probably in A.D. 52. Our fault is that we are not living like Christ.

Writings about J. H. Bavinck

See “De wetenschappelijke arbeid van Prof. Dr. J. H. Bavinck,” this writer’s survey of Bavinck’s work as a scholar, in J. van den Berg, ed., Christusprediking in de wereld. In the same volume is “Leven en werk van Dr. Johan Herman Bavinck,” a short biography by Bavinck’s friend and former colleague in Djokja, A. Pos, to whom this writer is indebted for some of the biographical details given in the present article.
4. On Holistic Mission

I must agree with Bishop Newbigin, who in reply to Paul G. Schrotenboer says, "I am willing to 'buy' 'holistic mission,' but not 'holistic evangelism.'" As I have indicated above, holistic theology is trinitarian theology, and holistic mission is trinitarian mission comprising both personal ministry and social ministry, conversion and Christian nurture, the whole person and the whole world, meeting the material needs, physical requirements, cultural enlightenment, political liberation, historical and eschatological dimensions of life, secular and spiritual hunger, personal freedom and social justice, and the quest for equality, fraternity, and liberty. The Pentecostal sharing community, which "day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, ... praising God and having favor with all the people" (Acts 2:43-47), was the result of holistic mission directed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We must realize that it is a sin to be rich in a poor world, and we need to share both our material and our spiritual riches in the kingdom of God.

5. Prayer Is Primary

Emil Brunner said that the church exists by mission, as fire exists by burning. A more holistic view would say that the church exists by worship and mission, as fire exists by burning. Having studied in the United States for three years, and having visited the U.S.S.R. several times, I can say that the church in the Soviet Union is growing more by worship than by mission. I could see only elderly people in the churches of Russia in 1967, but in 1982 I was pleasantly surprised to see about 60 percent of the congregation in Kiev consisting of children, youth, and the middle-aged. The success of both mission and evangelism depends on prayer, worship, devotion, meditation, and the Spirit-filled life of the missionaries and the converts.

In conclusion, may I say that Bishop Newbigin's concern for a convergence of the viewpoints of so-called ecumenicals and evangelicals is of paramount importance. Similarly, Eric J. Sharpe, in the same October issue, has done a signal service in urging a fresh study of the Bhagavad Gita, if interreligious dialogue with Hindus is to be a serious aspect of Christian witness. I also hope my friend Peter Beyerhaus will respond to the sharp and penetrating criticism of his book in the review you published by Johannes Verkuyl.

Long live the International Bulletin of Missionary Research!

Noteworthy

The World Council of Churches has announced the appointment of Eugene L. Stockwell as Director of its Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, effective January 1, 1984. A former Methodist missionary in Uruguay, Stockwell has been Associate General Secretary for Overseas Ministries of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. since 1972.

George W. Peck, Dean and Judson Professor of Christian Theology and International Mission at Andover Newton Theological School in Newton Centre, Massachusetts, became President of the seminary on September 1, 1983. Earlier Peck served as a missionary professor at Eastern Theological College in Assam, India.

Norman E. Thomas, formerly on the faculty of Boston University School of Theology is now Vera B. Blinn Associate Professor of World Christianity at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio.

George D. Hunter III, Dean of the new E. Stanley Jones School of Evangelism and World Mission at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, has announced the appointment of Malcolm McVeigh, Darrell Whiteman, and Mathias Zahniser to the faculty.

The new Editorial Director of Westminster Press, Philadelphia, is Keith Crim, a former Presbyterian missionary in Korea.

Joan Delaney, a Maryknoll Sister, has been appointed by the Vatican to be a consultant to the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, Switzerland, effective January 1, 1984. Currently on the staff of the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) in Washington, D.C., she was formerly on the staff of SEDOS in Rome.
Book Reviews

The Theology of Mission and Evangelism in the International Missionary Council from Edinburgh to New Delhi


Had this book been available in sufficient number in the United States in 1980 or 1981, it could well have been chosen by this journal as one of its "Fifteen Outstanding Books for Mission Studies" for the year. A 1980 University of Helsinki D.Th. dissertation supervised by Professor Seppo A. Teinonen, it is photo-printed from typescript. It provides no word concerning the author.

Shivute develops his theme chronologically by conferences, 1910–61. He generally follows the path laid out by Wilhelm Andersen in his brief but notable Towards a Theology of Mission (1955) and cites that work more frequently than any other. He presents a vast array of studies related to International Missionary Council (IMC)-generated theology, and makes the majority of his citations and quotations from European authors. He includes considerable important detail and commentary, much of it packed into extensive footnotes. His bibliography spans eighty-six pages, but his index covers only persons—not subjects.

Edinburgh 1910 concentrated on effective strategy for mission. Yet within it lies a lode of theology, the mining of which Shivute has begun. He covers Jerusalem 1928, and Tambaram, Madras 1938 well. Yet in relation to them he views Willingen as the "high water mark in the history of the missionary movement" (p. 141) and makes it his longest chapter. In it he presents Continental/Anglican tensions, Barth's 1932 lecture on mission, Hoekendijk's attack on church-centric mission, and the Continental emphasis on eschatology as among the forces transforming the theological emphasis from "the missionary obligation of the church" to that of the Trinitarian rootage of the missio Dei.

W. Richey Hogg, Professor of World Christianity in Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, since his return in 1955 from India, is the author of Ecumenical Foundations.

All Their Splendour. World Faiths: The Way to Community.


The name of Bishop David Brown is destined to become part of the legendary of the ecumenical movement in Britain. He was the leading Anglican advocate of the English Covenant that failed as a result of the vote of the Church of England in July 1982. A few days later, at the very meeting in which the Churches' Council on Covenanting was to be wound up, he was taken ill and died. People say already that he died of a broken heart, a martyr of Christian disunity.

In one sense this is false. David Brown, who had been a missionary among Muslim peoples and who thought in terms of the long vistas of God, was well able to cope with this temporary setback. In another sense, though, it is right to point to the pain of disunity that this servant of Jesus Christ felt on behalf of his Lord. Brown's life was about the mending of the broken creation, the rebuilding of divided human community, the summing-up of all things in Christ.

All Their Splendour was published just a few weeks before his death, and enables him to speak still of the things that most concerned him. Therefore the book is primarily about God and his ways with humankind, discussed under the headings: "Word," "Way," "Communion," and "Healing." These four chapters are an affirmation that the religious experience of people who are adherents of other faiths is authentic. But how these different experiences and traditions are to be woven together is both an urgent practical problem and a theological issue of the gravest significance. What David Brown was in the habit of calling our "interim theologies" no longer suffice, and this brief, beautiful, profound, lucid book is a contribution to our discerning of the way in which "Christ will provide the link by which the different religions will be brought into a deep and mutually enriching relationship with one another" (p. 221).

—Kenneth Cracknell
History of Christianity in India. 
Vol. II: From the Middle of the Sixteenth Century to the End of the Seventeenth Century (1542–1700).


The present work is the second volume (though the first to appear) in a projected six-volume comprehensive history of Christianity in India from its earliest times to the present, an ecumenical project undertaken by the Church History Association of India. It has a new perspective insofar as it seeks to understand Christianity as a movement, and how far it has influenced the life of the people, both Christians and non-Christians. In a word, it is a history of Indian Christians among their non-Christian neighbors.

Volume II deals with a most troubled period in the history of Christianity in India, from the middle of the sixteenth century to the end of the seventeenth century. The bibliography shows that the author, who is professor of church history at Kristu Jyoti College, Bangalore, has consulted and used all available sources, both published and unpublished, in the various libraries and archives of Europe and India. His treatment of the period reveals a meticulous and balanced approach to the tangled Syrian-Latin-Christian encounter, conflicts, rivalries, and power play, and the Padroado-Propaganda conflict. It deals also with the beginning and growth of Christian communities in western India, North India, eastern India, and South India. The extensive bibliography, index, and maps add to the usefulness of this extremely valuable work of reference. The language is uniformly clear and simple, but the proofreading could have been more accurate.

It is impossible to give a brief summary of the book in a short review, but one may safely say that it is an invaluable reference book for all future students and scholars on the period covered. What strikes the careful reader is the balanced views of the author on difficult and complex problems. He has not been afraid to state his position, yet has done so with circumspection and intellectual honesty. Treatment of the social, cultural, and political context into which Christianity was introduced is another distinctive feature of the book. Again, access to all the relevant sources and knowledge of the original languages of the sources show that the research has been thorough and extensive. No significant material has been overlooked.

There is no doubt that this volume is a major contribution to the study of the history of Christianity in India. Both scholars and students of church history and mission history in India and abroad are indebted to Father Thekkedath for his invaluable contribution. It deserves national and international welcome by students of history, secular and ecclesiastical historians, missionaries, and church leaders.

—Sebastian Karotempal, S.D.B.

Sebastian Karotempal is President of the Sacred Heart Theological College, Shillong, India, and Editor of the Indian Missiological Review.

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When the United States acquired the Philippine Islands from Spain in 1899, President McKinley asserted that "the mission of the United States is one of beneficent assimilation, substituting the mild sway of justice and right for arbitrary rule." But as Stuart Miller, professor of history at San Francisco State University, convincingly demonstrates, the establishment of American rule required military conquest that was anything but beneficent. Through the diligent investigation of newspaper accounts, diaries and correspondence of ordinary soldiers, and unofficial reports, Miller shows that all too often American soldiers perpetuated atrocities, including the torturing and killing of Filipino prisoners.

For the conduct of the war, Miller is critical in varying degree of all three military commanders in the Philippines, particularly Adna Chaffee, who seemed to think he was back in the Wild West hunting down Apaches. But ultimate responsibility, Miller suggests, rested with President Theodore Roosevelt, who fully approved of the harsh tactics. In other words, Miller comes close to accepting as valid the assertions of some contemporary critics that wartime excesses resulted from high-level policy decisions. The evidence seems to bear him out.

"Benevolent Assimilation" is considerably more than a narrow account of military activities. It places the war in the context of the age and examines currents of thought that help to explain American actions. Perhaps Miller's most original contribution to scholarship is his analysis of soldier opinion about the war. Unlike many American soldiers in Vietnam (and contrary to the assertions of naive anti-imperialists at the time), virtually all soldiers in the islands were "gung ho," strongly supportive of the national purpose, impatient with anti-imperialist criticisms. In this respect they reflected dominant attitudes at home, including those of both the Protestant and the Catholic communities.

Miller seems not to have utilized certain important collections of unpublished materials in the National Archives, and his analysis of the Filipino side of the war overlooks certain complexities. But "Benevolent Assimilation" is clearly superior to earlier accounts of the conflict. For those interested in this important if often overlooked war, this well-balanced and engagingly written book is surely the place to begin.

—Kenton J. Clymer


Nigeria, the most populous country of the African continent, is a difficult country to understand fully. The colonial history took a completely different line in its southern and northern regions. One of the most fascinating encounters of the missionary enterprise with British colonialism during the twentieth century took place in northern Nigeria. Here we find both elements side by side: colonial power helping and supporting Christian missionaries, on the one hand, and at the same time hindering the Christian missionary endeavor by giving Hausa Muslims a chance to penetrate into formerly pagan areas of the middle belt, which it had been unable to conquer by military force during the whole of the nineteenth century.

The book by Boer was submitted in 1979 to the Free University, Amsterdam, Netherlands, as a doctoral dissertation under the title "The

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Addressee: Chinese Church Research Center, Ltd.
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The January 1983 issue of the International Bulletin carried a very informative piece on Christian liberty and restrictions in Israel by Ray G. Register, Jr.

I have discussed some of this material with Rabbi Joshua Haberman, who is head of the Board of Rabbis for the Washington area. He and I marched together some months ago in a protest against the Soviet Embassy for restrictions on religious liberty in Russia.

Rabbi Haberman tells me: (1) that Israel is the only state in the Middle East which from its very beginnings affirmed religious liberty for all its inhabitants; (2) that to this day there is no governmental or institutional restriction on religious liberty, although doubtless the occasional action of fanatics has that effect; (3) that there is indeed a restriction against civil marriage (which creates a problem for interfaith marriages), but this is viewed as a civil-rights rather than as a religious-rights restriction; (4) that the Rosh Pina developments can hardly be interpreted as an Israeli desire to eliminate a Christian presence in Israel, since there are flourishing Christian kibbutz settlements; (5) that after the arson destruction of the Baptist Church in Jerusalem, Jewish leaders privately raised funds that were made available to the congregation for the rebuilding of an even better building. There is no denial here that occasional outbursts may occur on the part of fanatical individuals. But if the facts are as Rabbi Haberman insists, they should be published as a contribution to understanding.

Carl F. H. Henry
Arlington, Virginia

Author replies:

With all due respect to Dr. Henry and Rabbi Haberman for their efforts toward religious liberty, I would like to make the following clarifications and update on my article of January 1983. In respect to Rabbi Haberman’s comments: (1,2,3) “Religious liberty” in Israel, as in other Eastern countries, is related to the freedom of an individual within one’s religious community or “millet.” Nationality and religious identity are inseparable. Therefore freedom to proclaim one’s faith to those outside his religious community and especially the right to change his religious conviction and identity is severely restricted, if not by law, by the dominant Orthodox Jewish leadership in Israeli society. This is evidenced by the continual struggle of “progressive” Judaism to gain legal status, the attempts by Orthodox to pass the “Who is a Jew?” law in Knesset, and the passing of the so-called “anti-missionary” law. These efforts to restrict the religious liberty of nonconformist Jews and evangelical Christians are not the work of “fanatics” but the organized program of a powerful religious faction in Israel. (4) Rosh Pina was a case of Jewish believers in Jesus as Messiah being persecuted by Orthodox yeshiva students. The most flourishing Christian settlement (not “kibbutz”) in Israel is Nes Amin in Upper Galilee. Recently a member who married a local Jewish girl was required to move off the grounds because of a clause in the settlement charter that prevents Jews from living there. Both cases highlight my observations above. (5) The treasurer of the West Jerusalem Baptist Congregation reports that to date $6,277 plus small anonymous gifts have been contributed by Jewish friends out of a total $100,000 received for the rebuilding of the burned-out church. Total cost will be in the neighborhood of $1,000,000.

The Israeli Government is reported to have contributed IS 1.3 million ($32,500) as a goodwill gesture to compensate for damages in Kefr Yasif village (Jerusalem Post, March 18, 1983, p. 3; see my article, p. 18).

Speaking personally, I can say that I feel complete freedom in my work as a Christian representative to the Arab minority community in Israel and have many fine Jewish friends in all levels of society who encourage my work. This despite the above realities.

Ray G. Register, Jr.
Baptist Convention in Israel
Evangelicals and Development: Toward a Theology of Social Change.


Lifestyle in the Eighties: An Evangelical Commitment to Simple Lifestyle.


These two volumes edited by Ronald J. Sider provide further evidence that evangelicals are recovering the commitment to social action that distinguished their witness in the nineteenth century. If Sider’s eighteen authors are a sign of things to come, evangelical influence toward service, based on a lifestyle marked by compassion, humility, and sacrifice might even become an accepted norm.

Growing out of two international consultations, these volumes have similar material and style. They serve as two volumes in a set, the first dealing with a significant transition in Christian mission, the second concerned with practical problems of affluence.

Neither book is intended to leave the saints at ease in Zion. Material and spiritual problems are discussed, especially comparing rich and poor, and the way churches from rich nations can help people in poor nations. The purpose of a simple lifestyle is not to reinforce poverty but to share with those in need. The biblical foundation is primarily in the incarnation of Christ. General guidelines are suggested for a transition to simple lifestyle in response to biblical truth and to the needs of the world. Included are matters of diet, housing, travel, salary, clothing, offices, and church facilities. Among the authors are several nonclerics including Graham Kerr, Colleen Samuel, Roberta Winter, and Tom Sine.

Though theology responsible and of sound, scholarly style, these articles do not belabor abstract arguments. They provide practical applications, enough to satisfy even the casual reader. But many a casual reader will be stopped short by such assertions as, “The church should clearly take the side of the poor in society . . . because they are most likely to be taken advantage of and be unprotected against those who would exploit them” (Evangelicals and Development, p. 42).

From these materials it is clear that some evangelicals, at least, have taken seriously the search for answers to problems of social injustice and oppression. Further, it is clear that the definition and burden for evangelism is becoming deeper and wider. The concern for salvation forces a concern for physical well-being and for the whole context of society.

Historic evangelical values and motives are thus reaffirmed. Now comes the issue of willingness to shape personal lifestyles by these values in the midst of history’s most widely available affluence, and to shepherd churches to be faithful to such commitments. The hard part is just ahead.

A lack of acquaintance with the technical literature and research in the development field shows through in several ways, most annoyingly in the failure to differentiate relief activities from development processes. To fulfill their destiny as leaders, evangelicals will have to do more homework.

—Alemu Beeftu and Ted Ward

Has God Rejected His People? Anti-Judaism in the Christian Church.


Williamson is professor of theology at Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, Indiana. He provides an overview of the historical relationship between Judaism and Christianity, focusing “on the ideology of Christian anti-Judaism” (p. 7).

The story is not a comforting one.

Important Contributions to the Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue

LUTHER: A Reformer for the Churches,
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George Tavard. How does one pass from sin to grace, from alienation from God to friendship with God? With solid historical reasons, the author finds the answer in Luther’s doctrine of justification.

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Alemu Beeftu is a doctoral student in the College of Education, Michigan State University. He is also involved in ministry service among fellow Ethiopians in the United States. Ted Ward is Professor of Curriculum Research and Coordinator of Graduate Programs in Nonformal Education in the College of Education, Michigan State University.
Christians will find many age-old assumptions effectively challenged in the crucible of Christian misdeeds and po­lemically inspired theology. But it is a story all Christians need to confront with integrity and humility.

Williamson's survey of the first-century material (pp. 11–85) offers "revisionist" views of "Rabbi Jesus" and the crucifixion, a study of the Pauline texts and of how the four Gospels reflect "the growing split" between the Jewish and Christian communities. Williamson's ability to condense disparate sources into a coherent summary will commend itself to preachers and students.

Part Two (pp. 89–122) recounts the "downward path" of theological anti-Judaism "from Barnabas to Barth." The level of anti-Jewishness embedded in Christian teaching, from the church fathers (Augustine, Chrysostom) through the Reformation (Luther) to the present (Bonhoeffer, Barth), is depressing. Only Calvin, with his "higher view of the Hebrew Bible and the place of Law in Christian life" (p. 103) provides a more hopeful note. Equally disconcerting are facts such as that Gerhard Kittel, the first editor of the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, was a rabid anti­Semit in the Nazi period. One has to question the adequacy of the portrait of first-century Jews gathered by a blatant twentieth-century Jew-hater. Williamson concludes his study of the dismal Christian record with the pregnant comment that, over the past two mil­lennia, "Jews have given the most tremen­dous witness of faith in human history," a large claim but not unsup­portable on the evidence.

Part Three, "The Holocaust and After," raises the question of Christian responsibility (not guilt) and offers several positive actions that can be taken by Christian congregations today.

—Eugene J. Fisher

Eugene J. Fisher is Executive Secretary of the Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations, National Con­ference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C. He is author of several books, including Seminary Edu­cation and Christian-Jewish Relations: A Resource and Curriculum Handbook (Na­tional Catholic Education Association, 1983).

Seventeen Important Publications on the Churches in Central America

In these critical times in Central America, the situation of the churches is both difficult and strategic as Christians there witness to the gospel of peace and justice in the midst of much suffering and violence. As a contribution to education for mission, the editors of the International Bulletin of Missionary Research, in consultation with other mission scholars, have compiled this list of publications in English about the history and present situation of the churches in Central America. This includes the seven countries of Belize, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and El Salvador.

Arias, Esther and Mortimer.
The Cry of My People: Out of Captivity in Latin America.

Berrymam, Phillip.
Christians in Central American Revolutions: Ethical, Pastoral, and Theological Issues.

Brockman, James R.
The Word Remains: A Life of Oscar Romero.

Cabistero, Teofilo, ed.
Ministers of God, Ministers of the People: Testimonies of Faith from Nicaragua.

Cardenal, Ernesto.
The Gospel in Solentiname.

Christianity and Crisis, special issue.

El Salvador's Struggle.
New York: Christianity and Crisis, June 13, 1983.

Dussel, Enrique.

Erdozain, Placido.
Archbishop Romero: Martyr of Salvador.

Esquivel, Julia.
Threatened with Resurrection: Prayers and Poems from an Exiled Guatemalan.

Holland, Clifton, L., ed.
World Christianity: Central America and the Caribbean.

Lang, Martin and Reinhold Iblacker, eds.
Witnesses of Hope. The Persecution of Christians in Latin America.

Lernoux, Penny.
Cry of the People. United States Involvement in the Rise of Fascism, Torture, and Murder and the Persecution of the Catholic Church in Latin America.


Metivelle, Thomas and Marjorie.
Whose Heaven, Whose Earth.

Montgomery, Tommie Sue.

Pro Mundi Vita Dossiers.
The Church in El Salvador.

Richard, Pablo et al.
The Idols of Death and the God of Life.

Sojourners, special issue.

Nicaragua: A Fragile Future.
His Mission was the Middle East

John Badeau's memoirs, a fascinating account of a half-century of service in the Muslim world. As missionary, educator, scholar and diplomat, John Badeau brings a unique series of different perspectives to his intimate involvement in the events that shaped the modern Middle East.

"John Badeau played a personal role as a serving Christian, employing his talents as an engineer and educator for the lowly and the mighty. He records it all vividly and personally," says Thomas A. Bartlett, Chancellor, University of Alabama System.

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John Norman Jonsson

John Norman Jonsson, Professor of Christian Missions and World Religions at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky since 1982, has been engaged in pastoral work, seminary training, and research in world religions in Southern Africa, over the past thirty years.
cies in their relations with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. Progress has been made, however, even in the touchy area of money grants from “rich” Western Lutherans to “poor” Lutherans in Tanzania.

The book devotes only two-and-a-half pages to the crucial World War II and postwar years, 1940–52, under the title, “New Custodians.” The war “orphaned” the five Leipzig, Bethel, and Berlin mission fields. The British government made the American Augustana Lutheran Mission the official trustee. When most of the foreign-mission agencies and their missionaries returned to Tanzania after the war, the initiative for Christ’s work had already passed from prewar foreign-mission governance to the budding indigenous churches. Failure to recognize this change created problems. Deeper research is needed on what happened in this area to Lutherans in Tanzania during those years. This is a task that a Tanzanian should undertake.

—Elmer R. Danielson


Edward Pentecost of Dallas Seminary introduces several current concepts in this work written for neophytes in missiology. His purpose is “to show the multiplicity of disciplines which contribute” (p. 10) to the field and lead one to study them in depth. The author writes from the perspective of premillennialist dispensationalism and will be helpful primarily to those within that tradition. A nondenominational reader will raise serious questions precisely because of that theological framework.

The author rightly encourages us to discover aspects of each culture that can become bridges of communication. He urges missionaries to distinguish between form and function in the early church as they attempt to plant churches that are both biblical and indigenous. However, his apparent nativeté about “western Christianized culture” (p. 120), his concern for a style of “separation” that focuses more on form than on meaning (p. 29), and his failure to recognize that God permitted Israel to borrow worship forms (e.g., sacrifice) from surrounding peoples prevent adequate treatment of the issue.

The book suffers most from an inadequate view of the kingdom of God as a reality both within and beyond history. Thus there is no discernible relationship between the cultural and spiritual mandates in his discussion. We find no significant treatment of the issues raised by liberation theologies or by evangelicals who seek to integrate proclamation and praxis. The treatment of the homogeneous unit principle fails to recognize the tension that must exist in an approach that seeks to reach all persons within their own cultural context and also recognizes that the church is called to model the kingdom in which there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free.

In the final analysis, relegating the kingdom completely to the future leads to an unbiblical separation of the spiritual and the physical and to a missiology that fails to speak to the most crucial issues of our day.

—Paul E. Pierson

Paul E. Pierson was a church planter and theological educator in Brazil (1956–70) and is now Dean and Associate Professor of History of Mission and Latin American Studies, School of World Mission, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California.


Shiri’s stated purpose in this revised Hamburg doctoral dissertation is “to critically analyse the work of the CISRS [Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, Bangalore] in the light of its own history and the political environment of India which has influenced it” (p. viii). He concentrated upon the political and economic rather than the social and cultural aspects of Indian Christian social thought from the Sino-Indian border war in 1962 to the end of emergency rule in 1977, or almost exactly the years when M. M. Thomas was director of CISRS (1963–76).
The six chapters deal with assumptions underlying the study; political and intellectual context; responses to the Sino-Indian conflict of 1962, the economic crisis of 1967, and emergency rule in 1975-77; the Church's political witness and the reasons for its ineffectiveness (perhaps Shiri's favorite theme); theological foundations of Indian Christian social thought; and the history of CISRS during 1962-77. Shiri's assessment is that CISRS has been strong in analyzing Indian social problems but weak in offering alternative strategies for action, fragmentary in its theological reflection on the Indian reality of powerlessness, and of little influence upon the life of the Church, especially at the congregational level.

This generally useful, but often opinionated, introductory survey is guided by two unstated assumptions that limit its value. The first is an assumed consensus among "Indian Christian social thinkers" (ICSTs), an oft-recurring label, reflected in such phrases as ICSTs believed, realized, approved, opposed (etc.) this or that. The opposite assumption, that of a diversity requiring explanation, would have given the study greater depth. Second, if the ICSTs were influenced by the empirical studies of Indian social scientists, Shiri pays little attention to this fact.

Dr. Shiri, a former CISRS research student, currently teaches Ethics at Karnataka Theological College, Mangalore.

—John C. B. Webster

John C. B. Webster, formerly professor of history of Christianity at United Theological College, Bangalore, is Visiting Professor of Church History and World Mission at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

Toward a New Age in Mission: The Good News of God's Kingdom to the Peoples of Asia.


These volumes contain the consensus papers, addresses, and conference position papers of the Roman Catholic International Congress on Mission held in Manila, December 2-7, 1979. They reveal how deeply the conclusions of Vatican Council II have permeated all levels of leadership of the Catholic Church throughout the world. This is clearly a church in the process of change, of renewal. Manila 1979's importance also lies in its representing a continuity of development and commonality of mind emerging from more than a decade of Asian conferences following Vatican II.

At Manila 1979 perhaps the outstanding speaker was Patrick D'Souza, bishop of Varanasi, India. D'Souza gave the keynote address on the theme of "Church and Mission in Relation to the Kingdom of God Especially in a Third World Context." Like other speakers and preparatory writers, D'Souza drew heavily upon the documents of Vatican II, the Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi of Pope Paul VI, as well as the conclusions of preceding Asian conferences. As C. G. Arevalo of Manila's Loyola School of Theology has written, D'Souza's address and papers touched practically all the important bases of the theology of mission in Asia today.

Cornelio Lagerwey, a Filipino specialist in media technology, noted that...
in the past the Catholic church often thought of this task as having much to do with “bringing civilization” and hence used the structures of government, in Europe and elsewhere, to bring the good news. But, “actually, often enough the Church was being used and the Good News did not seem to be all that good to the recipients.” In the twentieth century, as seen with special clarity in the theology of Vatican II and later conferences, a modesty that is both new and old has replaced this medieval/early modern triumphalism. It is a modesty that is open to the wider work of God in the world, to perceptions of the cosmic dimensions of the presence and work of the Christ. Hence we have “the realization that there is truth outside the realms of the Church and that the whole of mankind is somehow under the redemptive influence of Christ.” This means that the church is a community of people who themselves are still “in search of truth with all people of good will.”

This understanding clearly meant for Manila 1979 a new/old respect for all peoples, persons, and cultures; a recognition that through the incarnation of the Christ as Jesus of Nazareth, as a complete human being, all humanity has been in some measure consecrated. This also meant that “the various cultures of the world have their own inherent validity because they contain elements of true humanness.” The result is that there is now a due modesty within the Catholic church, an openness, a readiness to learn as well as to teach, but the difference is such that “we can speak of a new age in human history.”

This new age means, as Maria Lucia Sarmiento puts it, “a church in continuous, humble and loving dialogue with the living traditions, the cultures, the religions” of all humankind. Because Christians have rediscovered “a God-filled world, a God-directed history and God-permeated human life,” they now see missionary witness as mutually transforming, as giving new understanding and new life to Christians as well as to those to whom they witness and with whom they would work and live.

D’Souza gave perhaps the most powerful and eloquent expression to these convictions. He affirmed that the most acute problem of the mission in Asia is “the new relationship of our Christian message with the existing living faiths of the Third World.” And in this context he insisted that “what is required today is nothing more and nothing less than a new theological understanding of that role that ‘the living faiths of mankind’ today play in the work of salvation. They and we must understand the saving activity of God in them.” This means that “these Living Faiths are not so much fortresses to be conquered and perhaps razed to the ground, but rather tabernacles to be lovingly opened with the love of the Lord, to be beautified and perfected by His saving presence.” Speaker after speaker at Manila 1979 pleaded that the Catholic church be a church for and of the poor, that it work for the transformation of the whole of the human person, of the whole of human life, and of the whole of society.

—Richard H. Drummond

Richard H. Drummond, a United Presbyterian fraternal worker in Japan (1949-62), is Professor of Ecumenical Mission and History of Religions at University of Dubuque Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa.
Dissertation Notices
from The Netherlands (1979-1982)

1979
Boer, Jan Harm (Free University, Amsterdam)

Theunis, J. M. (Catholic University, Nijmegen)

1980
Coomans, Michel C. C. (Catholic University, Nijmegen)
“Evangelisatie en Kultuurverandering, onderzoek naar de verhouding tussen de evangelisatie en de socio-kulturele veranderingen in de adat van de Dajaks van Oost-Kalimantan (bisdom Samarinda), Indonesiër.”

Hulley, Leonard Dugmore (State University, Utrecht)

Quarlers van Ufford, Ph. (Free University, Amsterdam)
“Grenzen van internationale hulpverlening. Een onderzoek naar de aard en effecten van de hulpverlening tussen de Javaanse Kerk van Midden-Java en de zending van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland.”

1981
Dijk, C. van (State University, Leiden)
“Rebellion under the Banner of Islam: The Darul Islam in Indonesia.”

Engen, Charles van (Free University, Amsterdam)
“The Growth of the True Church. An Analysis of the Ecclesiology of Church Growth Theory.”
Amsterdam: Rodopi. Pp. 545.

Jones, J. F. (University Protestant Faculty in Brussels, Belgium)*
“Kwakoe en Christus: Een beschouwing over de ontmoeting van de Afro-Amerikaanse cultuur en religie met de Hernhutter zending in Suriname.”

1982
Adonis, J. C. (Free University, Amsterdam)
“Die afgebroken skeidsmuur weer opgebou, Die verstrengeling van die zendingsbeleid van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika met die praktik en ideologie van die apartheid in historiese perspektief.”

Padrón Castillo, Mario Eduardo (State University, Leiden)
“Cooperación al desarrollo y movimiento popular: las asociaciones privadas de desarrollo.”
Published as Leiden Development Studies No. 3, by the Institute of Cultural and Social Studies, Stationsplein 10, Leiden. Pp. 368.

Platvoet, J. G. (State University, Utrecht)

Schoon, S. (Joh. Calvijn Stichting, Kampen)
“Christelijke presentie in de joodse staat. Theologische overwegingen betreffende de verhouding van Kerk en Israel, naar aanleiding van enkele vormen van christelijke presentie in de staat Israel.”

Tullemans, H. G. M. (Catholic University, Nijmegen)

Verstraelen-Gilhuis, Gerdien (Free University, Amsterdam)
“From Dutch Mission Church to Reformed Church in Zambia: The Scope for African Leadership and Initiative in the History of a Zambian Mission Church.”

This list has been compiled for the International Bulletin of Missionary Research by Leny Lagerwurf, staff member of the Department of Missiology of the Interuniversity Institute for Missiological and Ecumenical Research (I.I.M.O.), Rapenburg 61, 2311 GJ Leiden, The Netherlands.

Since this dissertation is written in the Dutch language and Dutch professors were involved, it is included here.
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