Today’s Pluralism: Mission and Next-Door Neighbors

On at least four occasions within the last ten years, this page has dealt with mission in the context of secularism, cultural diversity, and religious pluralism. But the frequency of such themes is picking up; the issue now in your hands makes the second within a year to address secularism and pluralism as it impacts the message and witness of Jesus Christ. The fact is that world mission has come home. With greater and greater frequency, we find ourselves thrown into “missionary” situations in our immediate neighborhoods, whatever our “homeland” or current place of residence.

Not so many years ago, says a pastor in one of the working-class areas of London, there were 200 churches in his district of 200,000 people. Today, most of the churches have closed, and on a typical Sunday, less than 1,000 attend church. It is not only secularism that has transformed this community; it is also the pluralism created by the influx of major immigrant populations, and the rise of new religious movements.

In this issue, Roger H. Hooker, a former CMS missionary in India, makes the new reality sharply immediate and engagingly personal in “Ministry in Multi-Faith Britain.” Anna Marie Aagaard, in the fourth contribution to our “Mission in the 1990s” series, probes new “spiritual” stirrings in Europe that lead some of her contemporaries to say No to the religion associated with the cross. Lesslie Newbigin also joins the “Mission in the 1990s” discussion, and declares, “A congregation is not missionary just because it supports the work of a board or society; the question always is whether or not it is itself missionary, whether it exists as a witness to the people around it.” From the other side of the globe, the Theological Advisory Commission of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences contributes “Seven Theses on Interreligious Dialogue”—with insights and principles that apply equally in the pluralistic context of the Occident!

Other features rounding out this issue include two timely documents from the recent World Council of Churches’ World Conference on Mission and Evangelism in San Antonio; a “Legacy” article on J. Waskom Pickett; Nico Smith’s frank account of his remarkable “Pilgrimage in Mission”; Norman E. Thomas’s study and updating of the teaching of missiology in North American seminaries; and Zablon Nthamburi’s “Toward Indigenization of Christianity in Africa: A Missiological Task.”

Whether your “pluralism” is at home or overseas, the challenge is the same and cannot be avoided.

On Page

98 Mission in the 1990s: Two Views
   I. Anna Marie Aagaard
   II. Lesslie Newbigin

103 From Missions to Globalization: Teaching
   Missiology in North American Seminaries
   Norman E. Thomas

108 Seven Theses on Interreligious Dialogue:
   An Essay in Pastoral Theological Reflection
   Theological Advisory Commission of the
   Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences

112 Toward Indigenization of Christianity in Africa:
   A Missiological Task
   Zablon Nthamburi

118 My Pilgrimage in Mission
   Nico Smith

122 The Legacy of J. Waskom Pickett
   John T. Seamands

124 Noteworthy

128 Ministry in Multi-Faith Britain
   Roger H. Hooker

130 Message from the World Conference
   on Mission and Evangelism, San
   Antonio, Texas
   World Council of Churches

132 Letter from Evangelicals at the
   San Antonio Conference to Lausanne II
   at Manila

135 Book Reviews

142 Dissertation Notices

144 Book Notes

of Missionary Research
Mission in the 1990s: Two Views

I. Anna Marie Aagaard

Europe and Mission

Recently a Danish sculptor told some traveling reporters about his life and times. From his present base in northern Italy he reminisced about years spent in India with stonemasons in search of the secrets of their craft. The sculptor went on to tell about his homecoming to Europe and the culture shock he was going through. He did not elaborate on taxes, politics, or affluence, but went straight to the issue of religious traditions and their impact on cultures.

Much was commonplace in his observations, but a couple of sentences stood out. The return to Europe and its religious symbols had made this Dane understand why Christianity was not a viable option for him, and why the cross had lost its hold on so many Europeans. From his perspective the crucifix, with the thorn-crowned head and mutilated limbs, is an apotheosis of violence—a cult symbol with long, dark shadows reaching right into the high-tech world with its violence against nature.

When the cross becomes a symbol of violence without reference to the victim and to the resurrection of the crucified Christ, the No to Christian faith becomes different from the No’s that Europeans have been accustomed to during modernity’s history of secularization. Churches and individual believers may not have been too successful in dealing with rationality’s No to transcendence, but successive mission endeavors and a continuous theological struggle have at least found some ways to communicate the gospel as good news to secularized women and men. Mission in the 1990s in Europe will, however, encounter more and more of the No’s that are not secular No’s to transcendence and a religious attitude to life, but a religious affirmation of a different transcendence, an Ultimate that looks a whole lot different from the God of the crucified and resurrected Christ. Many of those who dissociate themselves from Christianity, view the God of the crucified Christ as far too violent. What is affirmed may be a cosmological highest principle yielding power over destinies and shaping everyday existence; it may be a hierarchy of spirits to be sought in various ways, or a fertility goddess as a symbol of personified reproductive powers. What is new are not the variants of a spiritual, transcendent realm, but the fact that European pagans (the word is not a haughty misnomer, but is used as self-identification) want to affirm both a post-Christian religious attitude and the values, the freedoms, and the inalienable rights of European culture and legislation permeated by Christian beliefs and tradition.

I am not convinced that European churches and transconfessional mission groups have the theology, and leadership (let alone the strategies) for bringing a gospel of good news in Jesus Christ to this strata of Europeans. I surmise that what mission in Europe has taken for granted, namely, some shared values as preliminary ground for preaching the gospel, will have to get on the mission agenda in the 1990s. Values, freedoms, and rights are no free-floating, ahistorical, and eternal entities. What happens to these things if they increasingly are combined with a variety of post-Christian beliefs and cut off from faith in a God whose love is manifest in justice, solidarity, care for the weak and the dying, and in the overcoming of death’s destruction?

Ethics and Dialogue

My concern with words and attitudes, lifestyles and actions that will allow European pagans to encounter the Ultimate as truth and love in Jesus Christ will have to be differentiated from the future dialogue with the faithful of the world religions. Till well into the 1980s there was more “dialogue about dialogue” among Christians than actual interreligious dialogue in Western Europe. That picture is changing. And it will have to change in the 1990s. With refugees and immigrants even northern European cities are becoming “rainbow cities” in the sense that here live a growing number of people who profess variants of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, and who want to keep, develop, and hand on the lifestyles, the values, and the cultures in which these religions were first inculturated.

It seems to me that interreligious dialogue at present is dominated by three approaches from the Christian side. Some argue from a hope for convergence of religious traditions; others from an inclusivist understanding of the universal Christ; and yet others argue from a distinction between a universal revelation and a particular salvation linked to the church and the profession of Christ as Lord and Savior. Whatever the stance, it presupposes the willingness of the Other to engage in a religious project with some universal claims. These divergent perspectives also impact the hope for an evolved Christianity within a “unitive pluralism.”

But what will happen to interreligious dialogue if the Other refuses to be a part of such a project? What happens when organized Hinduism and Buddhism on the Indian subcontinent and in the Far East decide that religion cannot that easily become aculturated; that religion comes with the particular culture in which it was first embedded; that regions and countries with cultural roots in Hinduism and Buddhism must update their heritage and restrict (even more) the possibilities of dialogue, not to mention conversions to Christianity or visas for expatriate church personnel?

Interreligious dialogue, as we know it, may go on among “professionals,” but it seems to me that the questions of religious pluralism will be posed in a new way in the coming decade, both in Europe’s cities and in the relation between Christianity and world religions as religious-cultural systems. I hear the present message addressed to Christians and churches to be more like “we are not a part of a common project” than “let us go ahead.” Such a message has long been heard, loudly and clearly, from Muslim countries with a total osmosis between political and religious powers.

Things do not get less complicated when we realize that the entire population of the globe does have a common project: the economic, social, and ecological crisis. Till not too long ago it was thought that ecology could be dealt with apart from the North-South economic crisis and the East-West political crisis. Now we know that there is only one, interlocking economic, sociopolitical, and ecological crisis, and that there is a common future (cf. the

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conflicts connected with having decision-making in poor churches and the funding in the first world will continue as long as the inequalities of the present economic system prevail. And these conflicts won’t become easier to deal with as donor churches in the North learn that decision-makers with spiritual authority do not necessarily have a first-world, let alone a Vatican, address.

Demographic forces in conjunction with political and economic forces made the moratorium debate obsolete, even before it gained momentum. But another round of debate on a moratorium of a different sort is needed: a moratorium on proselytism. Nobody living in Central America or in Latin America’s poverty-stricken countries is unaware of the rapid growth of all kinds of denominations. Proselytism among the unchurched and the steady stream of immigrants from Latin America—many of whom are already baptized—will be a continuing struggle and source of contestation.

There is little agreement among Christians on what precisely proselytism is, and hence little prospect of a constructive debate, let alone any solution to problems not even commonly acknowledged as problems. But even if Christians do not have a common language about the phenomenon, the reality articulated by the language still exists. I do not think that proselytism is a moot question; experience has convinced me that it is one of the rarely touched questions that influences—and will continue to influence—the ecumenical climate.

Ecumenism and Mission

It is at best hazardous to point to present trends that may have effect on the future. The risk of becoming a fool (and not merely feeling like a fool) lurks in every line of the writing. But having begun, let me add a few thoughts on possible historical shifts in Europe with consequences for global mission and ecumenism.

If perestroika continues in the Soviet Union, will European Anglicans, Catholics, Baptists, and Lutherans help the churches in the Soviet Union, first of all the Russian Orthodox Church, with their mission, in their way, to the peoples of the Soviet Union? Will, for example, the Bibles in Russian language, so thoroughly needed, reflect the biblical canon acknowledged by the Orthodox tradition, or will help come with conditions saying “accept our understanding of the canon and make do with the Old Testament and New Testament writings as we list them”? Will European Protestants be willing to let the churches in the Soviet Union go about evangelization and instruction of new members by way of worship and liturgies, liturgies and worship, and hours and hours in church? Or will all sorts of European Christians try to make the peoples of the Soviet Union part of their efficient mission project—with dire consequences for ecumenism?

If perestroika continues, will the churches of the Soviet Union be able to survive the onslaught of consumerism as well as they have survived the times of persecution and martyrdom? And what kind of help do consumer Christians in consumer countries really have to offer?

If perestroika continues and liberal freedoms (press, movement, freedom of religion) become more of a reality within the Soviet sphere of interest in Middle Europe, Mozambique, and Ethiopia—what will happen to the churches of these countries? Will everybody else try to smother them with unsolicited advice, or can one expect a restraint that will allow these churches to find their feet with regard to their own mission?

Conjectures, extrapolations from present facts, and mere guesses are just that, namely, conjectures, extrapolations, and guesses. Of one thing I am sure: nothing of what will be going on in the 1990s will be easy.

II. Lesslie Newbigin

I am no prophet and no futurologist. I am impressed by the fallibility of all human attempts to peer into the future. As Christians our horizon of expectation is not any vision of what we might expect in the next decade or the next century. The horizon is firmly marked in our creed: “He shall come again in glory.” That is sure; the rest is very fallible guess-work. For what it may be worth, let me try some guessing about the coming decade.

1. The Context

For 400 years the major thrust of Christian missions—Catholic and Protestant—has been bound up with the expanding economic and political power of Europe and North America. We are already witnessing a shift in the balance of power. The nations of the Pacific rim are now the expanding economic powers. They are

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investing on a massive scale in future growth. By contrast the affluent societies of Europe and North America are spending—probably beyond their real income—and investing little. As Jürgen Moltmann has said, they have hoisted a sign for all to see: “No future.” And if one contemplates the life of these affluent societies, marked as it is by growing violence, drug addiction, and all the signs of the loss of meaning and hope, it is hard to see any future except collapse. Certainly anyone whose beliefs are shaped by the Bible can hardly fail to hear the word of God’s dreadful judgment pronounced over that part of our world that calls itself “developed.” Christians who come from the old “mission fields” to taste the life of the old “Christendom” are more and more deeply struck, and wounded, by the contrast between the message they received from the early missionaries and the reality they now meet.

But the categorization of nations as first, second, or third world, popular since the 1950s, is no longer meaningful. More and more rapidly the whole world, and especially the expanding urban peoples of all the nations, are drawn into a single global network. The fantastic development of information technology in the past few years, development that continually accelerates, is locking more and more people into a single system—financial, economic, and ideological. The ideological battle between capitalist and Marxist systems becomes less and less significant. The power of Marxism seems to be waning, while capitalist societies show increasing signs of internal disintegration. Both are challenged by a resurgent Islam. Islam calls into radical question the assumptions that underlie both the capitalist and the Marxist ideologies.

The furor arising from the publication of Salman Rushdie’s book The Satanic Verses has illustrated the internal weakness of the liberal democratic societies of the West. The question is posed whether or not the freedoms that these societies cherish as their most precious possession can be sustained in the absence of any ontological basis in the nature of God, and whether or not belief in God (or in any ultimate truth) can survive in a society that is incapable of understanding why blasphemy is a serious matter. My guess is that in the coming decade the prevailing relativism and subjectivism of our contemporary “Western” culture will be challenged more and more sharply by passionately held beliefs about fundamental realities, and that the sharpest of these challenges will come from Islam. That makes it imperative that we seek clarity about our message, about the content of the Christian mission.

2. The Content

It is instructive to look at recent history in this respect. The early missionary conferences (London 1888, New York 1900) did not think it necessary to discuss the message. Everybody knew what its content was; those taking part were agreed about a broadly evangelical Protestant faith. Edinburgh (1910) had no commission on the message as such, but devoted splendid scholarly resources to the question of the right Christian approach to each of the great religions. Jerusalem (1928) found it necessary to write a “Message,” but that was so skillfully drafted by William Temple that it concealed profound disagreements, which surfaced during the succeeding years. The “Laymen’s Report” (1932), J. H. Oldham’s work on church, community and state (1934–37), and Hendrik Kraemer’s “The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World” (1938) represented important and very diverse ways of spelling out the message. The debates at Tambaram failed to resolve the issues and for the next twenty years the questions raised by Kraemer about the relation of the gospel to the world religions dominated discussion. The questions posed at Jerusalem and by Oldham, questions about the relation of the gospel to secular society, were not generally perceived as central to the missionary message. Oldham was, in this respect, a lonely pioneer.

In a second phase the discussion of the message centered on the relation of gospel to culture. Perhaps it was at Bangkok (1973) that this issue was most prominent. Discussion of it was stimulated by the terms of the “second mandate” of the Theological Education Fund, with its emphasis on “contextualization.” The weakness here was that the cultures discussed were almost always non-Western cultures. The question of the relation of the gospel to Western culture was seldom posed.

In a third phase (and of course these phases always overlap) the stress was upon the articulation of the message in relation to oppression and injustice. At the center of the missionary message was the “option for the poor.” Perhaps the Melbourne Conference (1980) was the point at which the World Council of Churches’ thinking on this was most prominent, but of course it was very widely present in many Protestant and Roman Catholic circles.

What is often not noticed about all these discussions is that they have been carried on in European languages and within the parameters of the worldview that has controlled these languages since the Enlightenment. To discuss “religions” as though they were a separable entity from the entire life of human communities is possible only in a society that has accepted the privatization of religion typical of modern Western culture. It is wholly inappropriate to the great world faiths. Equally, to discuss “culture” as a matter separable from human behavior as a whole presupposes that division of human life into the private and the public. There has not been a similar discussion of the question “The Gospel and Personal Behavior.” And finally it must be said that much of the discussion of the message in its relation to economic and social injustice has presupposed a Marxist analysis of the human situation rather than a biblical one. In the Marxist analysis human beings are divided into oppressors and oppressed. In the biblical understanding all human beings are both sinned against and sinners. That starting point leads to different conclusions.

What I think has been lacking, and what I hope the next decade will provide, is a serious and sustained effort to articulate the Christian message vis-à-vis this globally dominant Western culture, which has become the shared culture of at least the urbanized part of humankind. For this I think two things will be needed. One is the resolute effort to overcome the tragic split between “fundamentalists” and “liberals,” so that there can be a coherent and credible appeal to biblical authority. Without this there is no locus standi from which the critical questions can be addressed to our culture. This split is itself a particular manifestation of the fundamental split in Western culture between a false objectivity and a false subjectivity, between a world of “facts” supposed to be available apart from the commitments of the knowing subject, and a world of “values” supposed to be purely a matter for the personal choice of the subject. When our minds are locked into this dichotomy, then we are compelled
to choose between reading the Bible as a collection of "facts" and reading it as the record of subjective "religious experiences." In this situation, neither side can hear the other. We therefore need, second, the help of those whose minds have been shaped by non-Western cultures and who come to the Bible unencumbered by this dichotomy. At present this is difficult because the ablest theologians of the non-Western societies have been trained in colleges and universities whose curricula were wholly in the Western model. I hope that the next decade may witness a fresh and resolute attempt to clarify the content of the Christian mission from a perspective that is not wholly controlled by the assumptions of Western thought.

And I hope that this re-thinking will lead to the correction of a defect that seems to me to be present in the whole debate about the missionary message during the past century. It has all been terribly Pelagian. Whether the emphasis was upon the saving of individual souls from perdition, or on the shaping of more truly humane cultures, or on the righting of social wrongs, the overwhelming emphasis has been upon missions as our program. From the New Testament I get a different impression. There, it seems to me, mission is an overflow of gratitude and joy. The center of the picture is not the human need of salvation (from sin, from oppression, from alienation) but God and God's immeasurable grace. So the central concern is not "How shall the world be saved?" but "How shall this glorious and gracious God be glorified?"

3. The Community

Who will be the bearers of the mission in the 1990s? Who will be the missionaries? Modern missions began as the enterprise of groups of enthusiasts often with little backing from the churches. That has changed. The Tambaram meeting of 1938 posed the issue that could not be ignored. A church is no true church if it is not missionary, and missions are no true missions if they are not part of the life of the church. Faithfulness to that logic has led to measures—more or less effective—to integrate church and mission at national and international levels. What has not generally happened is integration at the level of the local congregation—and that is where it matters most. A congregation is not missionary just because it supports the work of a board or society; the question always is whether or not it is itself missionary, whether it exists as a witness to the people around it. I think that in the coming decade this question will be increasingly important. In the period when the major bearers of the Christian mission were churches in the rich and powerful nations, the main thrust was in the form of people and funds mobilized and sent by supra-congregational agencies. Yet even today the great numerical increases are taking place mainly through the quiet witness of members of congregations to their neighbors. I think this happens chiefly where church structures are flexible and the spontaneous generation of fresh centers of Christian congregational life is made easy. In this respect I think that we have still not properly learned the lessons of Roland Allen.

I am sure that international and intercultural missionary sending will continue and will be important, but I think that the main point of growth will be at the point where ordinary congregations in contact with their neighbors. We are living in a time marked by skepticism about large organizations, even though (or perhaps because) the power of these organizations is increasing. Much of the liveliest Christian commitment is going into small groups, "base communities," "house-groups," and the like. This seems likely to continue into the coming decade. And the strongest growing points are in the cultures that have not been shaped by "modern" Western culture. My guess, for what it is worth, is that it will be in the unspectacular and unheralded growth of small congregations, especially in the non-Western world, that the gospel will be communicated in the coming decade. But, at the same time, "modern" Western culture will continue to strengthen its grip on the life of human communities everywhere and—therefore—Christian churches that have so long accepted a syncretistic co-existence with the "modern" worldview will continue to bear the prime responsibility for articulating a Christian message for this particular culture. That remains a task which calls for the best intellectual and spiritual energies that we can bring to it.
From Missions to Globalization: Teaching Missiology in North American Seminaries

Norman E. Thomas

In April 1988 the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) at its biennial meeting adopted globalization as a major program emphasis during the decade of the 1990s. The Task Force that developed this recommendation will identify major globalization objectives for theological education in North America, and propose to the 1990 Biennial Meeting major programs of curriculum and staff development to achieve those goals.1

What will be the impact of this new priority in theological education upon missiology—the study of the church's mission especially with respect to missionary activity? James Scherer, premier historian of missiology as an academic discipline in North America,2 calls it "a newcomer discipline, barely 120 years old, with no secure place within the theological curriculum."3

To chart this road less traveled, consider three kairos moments for the teaching of missiology. I refer to three prestigious proposals to redirect theological education—that of the World Missionary Conference of 1910, and those of the ATS in 1956 and 1988. Responses to each reveal the prevailing definitions, objectives, and methods of professors of mission in each period.

I. Missions—1910

The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910, was "the birthplace of the modern missionary movement."4 The culmination of the great century of advance of modern missions, it launched that movement toward the unity of the churches that was to culminate in the formation of the World Council of Churches in 1948.

With unparalleled thoroughness, eight preparatory commissions surveyed the status of world missions. That on "The Home Base of Missions" surveyed 128 theological training institutions in North America to determine the place of the study of missions in their curricula. Of the 115 institutions that responded, thirty-eight (33 percent) had no courses or regular lectures on the subject. Fifty-eight schools (50 percent) reported "that the study of missions forms an integral part of the required curriculum" but "required courses are brief and often fragmentary," representing a mere 2 percent of all seminary curriculum hours. Only three institutions (the Presbyterian seminary in Omaha, Nebraska, Southern Baptist in Louisville, Kentucky, and the Episcopal Theological Seminary in Cambridge, Massachusetts) reported full mission professorships. The remaining seminaries offered occasional public lectures on world missions. The largest effort, however, was through voluntary classes for mission study, organized and usually conducted by students of each campus YMCA or Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (SVM), with 70 percent of the schools reporting such activity.5

The commission gave a somber assessment to these findings: "While it is generally acknowledged that the supreme task of the Church is to make Jesus Christ known to all men, scarcely a single theological school in Christendom provides any adequate course in missions."6 While schools in all countries offered lectures on missions, rarely were they recognized as an essential part of the curriculum. "It is no wonder, then," they continued, "that so many are indifferent to missions, and that the opposition or luke-warmness of the clergy is given as the reason why the Church as a whole does not more loyally support the cause."7

The commission recommended that every theological seminary or college (1) have a prescribed course of instruction in Christian missions as an integral part of the curriculum; (2) increase time devoted to missions study from one-fiftieth to one-fifteenth of the total; and (3) employ a special professor or instructor to teach in this field.8

Almost all . . . seminaries offered some work in comparative religion and missions. Rarely was missions a professor's primary concern.

The Pragmatists

Edinburgh gave a powerful impetus to the teaching of missions, especially in North America. O. G. Myklebust in his classic work, The Study of Missions in Theological Education, judged that many of the professorships and lectureships in missions established in North American seminaries in the next twenty years were largely inspired by Edinburgh. They included the Kennedy School of Missions at Hartford (1911), the Disciples of Christ College of Missions in Indianapolis (1911), and the Department of Foreign Service at Union Theological Seminary in New York (1914, after an earlier abortive start in 1906 prior to Edinburgh). The dominant emphasis was on practical training both for would-be missionary candidates and for future pastors who would lead in missionary promotion.9

At Edinburgh, Professor O. E. Brown of Vanderbilt University had expressed his conviction that "the science of missions has come, and no man [sic] should go into our ministry of to-day without being versed in that science."10

That was the distinctive Continental way of thinking about missiology. German scholars in particular, as well as many Dutch and Scandinavians, presented missiology as an exact science to be studied at university level. Gustav Warneck (1834–1910), at the University of Halle the first full-time professor of missions in Germany, has been recognized as "the real founder of the science of missions." He distinguished three main divisions of Missionswissenschaft: the history of missions, the theory of missions, and missionary apologetics ("the confrontation of Christ-
tianity with non-Christian religions and ways of life”).

The North American scene was more eclectic, however. Yes, by 1934 almost all Protestant theological seminaries offered some work in comparative religion and missions. But there was no agreement on where to locate missiology in theological studies. Most schools followed the schema of F. L. Patton in his Theological Encyclopaedia (1912), placing missions as a subdivision of practical theology (along with pastoral theology, liturgics, and homiletics). Others grouped missions with church history; still others with theology. Rarely was missions a professor’s primary concern. Kenneth Scott Latourette of Yale described the situation well—professors of missions occupied “settees rather than chairs.”

The weakness was papered over by the popular interest of the churches in missions and the training of missionaries. According to Scherer, however, missions “was commonly viewed as a mere appendage to theological study, and its proper content and relation to older theological disciplines were never clarified.”

II. Mission—1956

In 1956 members of the Association of Professors of Mission (APM) heard a somber assessment of “Missions in the Curriculum” by Creighton Lacy, a new professor at Duke. He reported that fewer seminaries required a course in missions than twenty-five years earlier. Those with basic missions courses on average had reduced the credit hours of the requirement. He concluded:

We in the field of missions are lost sheep, scattered among folds of history, theology, comparative religions, and education, wandering from theological to practical fields and back again. We are so busy looking at the world revolution and the fresh strategies of the mission field that we have failed to analyze the changes required in our own teaching. We have barely nibbled at the ecumenical movement and missionary education and theology. We proclaim in our lectures and sermons that the World Mission is the central task of the Church, yet we have all too often allowed it to become peripheral in our curricula.

This sober assessment was shared by R. Pierce Beaver of Chicago Divinity School. Concerning the founding of the APM in 1950, the dean of North American missiologists recalled that it came into existence “not as an expression of the old missionary triumphalism but as an attempt to build a lifeboat for floundering brothers and sisters.”

Two causes of this malaise should be noted: retrenchment in world missions, and changing priorities in theological education.

Retrenchment

In 1949 Mao Tse-tung’s forces became the masters of China. The jewel of missions, especially for North America, was lost. During the first half of the twentieth century, no country had received as many Western missionaries as China. Now they were dead or jailed or gone. Like a modern Jeremiah, David Paton wrote Christian Missions and the Judgment of God. A “debacle” he called it. In thoughtful self-examination, he wrote:

It became evident to some of us, and to many more of our Chinese friends, that our mandate had been withdrawn; that the time for missions as we had known them had passed; that the end of the missionary era was the will of God.

The process of decolonization was in full swing in Asia, and the tide of colonialism was soon to turn in Africa as well. Soon not only in the People’s Republic of China would the cry be heard: “Missionary—go home!” The urgency for sending missionaries was undercut as mainline Protestants reconsidered their motives for mission.

Two themes emerged from the international mission conferences of the period (Willingen 1952, Ghana 1958, and Mexico City 1963) that would influence the teaching of missiology. “Mission in Six Continents” became the slogan, affirming the selfhood of the younger churches. Each land was both to send and to receive persons in mission. Symbolizing this shift the International Review of Missions, the oldest ecumenical journal, dropped the final F in its title in 1969, arguing that mission is the primary business of all Christians in every country in every continent.

Second was the shift from a church-centered to a God-centered theology of mission. The missio Dei (God’s mission) was taught as the initiative for mission. The missionary structure of the congregation was to be discovered in the world in which God is already active in the work of redemption.

Parochial Ministry

At first glance the 1956 “Study of Theological Education in the United States and Canada,” headed by R. Richard Niebuhr of Yale, echoes this same concern for the mission of the church in every community. The purpose of the church for Niebuhr was “the increase of the love of God and neighbor.” Ministers were cautioned that leadership that neglects responsibility for the “enviroring society” results in an institution of “narrow scope and outlook.” “Clear understanding of the nature and mission of the Church are prerequisite to any effective solution of the problems that present themselves,” Niebuhr concluded.

The blue-ribbon commission directed by Professor Niebuhr was backed by an all-white and all-male Advisory Committee of prominent clergy, bishops, and seminary presidents. The Carnegie Corporation provided generous funding. The “establishment” character of its leadership was paralleled by its recommendations. The “emerging new conception of the ministry” was that of the “pastoral director.” Clergy were cautioned not to lose themselves “among the manifold demands made . . . by the neighborhood.” The model parish of the study was not East Harlem Protestant Parish engaged in storefront ministries among New York’s poor, but rather, West Haven (Conn.) Congregational Church with its ordered worship and well-developed Christian education program for all ages.

The image of order, competence, and stability in ministry fitted the prevailing tenor of the time. The global foci of hunger, war, and destruction of the 1929–53 period had receded, while new concerns for civil rights were still on the horizon. Rather than an image of the church as a moving ark of people in mission, the dominant image was of a stable temple on a hill that shall not be moved.

As for the theological school, the image presented was of an intellectual center for the church’s life. The report emphasized cognitive learning, asserting “that the study of theology must be considered a kind of ministry and not only a preparation for other service.” The authors feared an overloading of the curriculum with studies and requirements to prepare seminarians for specialized ministries. Rejecting the solution of a four-year B.D. plan, they preferred integration through the “classical” disciplines of Bible, church history, theology, pastoral care, and preaching.

Missiology became a hidden field of study. It was not analyzed as a subject field. Instead the study of “non-Christian religions” gained recognition. A note of urgency was sounded: “To neglect study of other religions is a provincialism which our Christian faith itself in its claim for universal significance.
cannot tolerate." But the commission did not recommend the addition of courses in world religions. Instead they proposed increased pre-theological studies in this area, or the addition of modules on world religions within courses in church history, theology, and apologetics. A similar response was made to suggestions that ecumenics be recognized as a field of study. While affirming the value of attention to ecumenical problems, the authors proposed that they be infused within existing courses in the classical disciplines. 24

The Phoenix

Readers of the prestigious Niebuhr report might have predicted the demise of missiology as an independent field of study in North American seminaries. Although buried by benign neglect in 1956, it was to rise again with vigor like the mythical phoenix in the three decades to follow. Of the many factors contributing to this revival, four shall be noted: the saliency of third-world issues and churches, mission ferment among Roman Catholics, rapid growth of evangelical missions, and the affirmation of missiology as an academic discipline.

In 1961 the World Council of Churches held its assembly in New Delhi, India—its first outside North America and Europe. Increasing numbers of both members and leaders came from the two-thirds world of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania. David Barrett, world Christianity’s foremost statistician, estimated in 1986 that a majority of Christians now live in those continents. 25 Third-world issues (famine, poverty, apartheid, Vietnam, civil rights, etc.) moved from the TV screens to the concerns of church leaders and to seminaries.

Roman Catholics at Vatican Council II experienced a reformation of mission concern. John Schutte in 1967 gave this cogent evaluation:

The Church and the missions were the real themes of the whole Council. The Council was about bringing back the missions into the heart of the Church, into the inner core of its being and task. Mission is a part of the inner nature of the Church, its pulsating growth. 26

The Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity stated that “seminary and college professors should teach young people the true state of the world and of the Church, so that the necessity of a more intense evangelization of non-Christians will become clear to them and will nurture their zeal.” 27 In response the U.S. Bishops’ Conference in 1971 directed that “eclesiology with its missiology” be one of the principal areas of the seminary curriculum, and that “all seminarians . . . should be given a certain general knowledge of the missions, or an introduction to the more fundamental questions of missionary theology.” 28 Because of declining enrollments and faculties, however, few seminaries were able to implement this recommendation. 29

By coincidence the Niebuhr report was published when mainline Protestant church membership and attendance peaked in the United States, to be followed by thirty years of steady decline. Retrenchment of missionaries was more precipitous, reaching 30 percent in the 1960s alone. As a consequence several missionary training programs closed, including those at Hartford Seminary Foundation, Scarritt College, and the Lutheran School of Theology at Maywood.

Meanwhile, conservative evangelical missionaries increased by 60 percent during the 1960s with new training programs opened at the School of World Mission and Institute of Church Growth at Fuller Seminary, and the School of World Mission of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. 30 In 1985 Trinity’s dean spoke of missions as “the very air that the whole seminary breathes,” with a stated goal to send upwards of 50 percent of Trinity’s graduates into home and overseas mission fields. 31

These three factors combined to stimulate the self-consciousness of missiologists in North America. Members of the Association of Professors of Mission, from its inception in 1950, were determined “to defend missiology’s right to exist, and to explicate its valid contribution to theological education.” 32 In 1972 the APM supported the formation of the American Society of Missiology (ASM) to provide a wider forum where mission issues could be considered by mission professors, missionaries, and mission executives meeting together. In 1975 the ASM was admitted to the Council on the Study of Religion as a member learned society. The ASM’s president, Louis Luzbetak, claimed that “on this day missiology becomes a fully recognized academic discipline in North America.” 33

III. Globalization—1988

One year after the ASM’s admission into the theological fraternity, a small group of deans and presidents attending the biennial meeting of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS) initiated a conversation around the topic of “the internationalization of theological education.” As they shared in subsequent meetings their concerns and experiments in international exchange, a common goal emerged—“to educate a generation of pastors and scholars who will be sensitive to the fact that the context for ministry and scholarship in their futures is global.” 34

Participation in the discussion broadened in 1981 as 150 theological educators, students, and church leaders met in Toronto, Canada, for a U.S./Canadian Consultation on “Global Solidarity in Theological Education” sponsored by the World Council of Churches’ Programme on Theological Education. Within its general purpose “to seek ways to place the pursuit of justice at the heart of theological education,” the following goals were articulated:

- To gather and disseminate information about existing programs of theological education for ministry that have a multicultural and an international perspective.
- To analyze, conceptualize and demonstrate appropriate educational methods for leadership formation for global solidarity.
- To prepare guidelines, strategies and structures for theological curricula that will deal seriously with both the local context and global realities.
- To provide encouragement and help for theological schools that wish to carry out ministerial formation with a global perspective in order to build a truly ecumenical vision in the churches.
- To heighten the process of conscientization in terms of Gospel imperatives, world realities, and radical discipleship in the face of cultural parochialism, political conservatism, the privatization of religion, and theological malaise. 35

The ATS took up the challenge in 1982, appointing for a six-year term its Committee on Global Theological Education. Donald W. Shriver, Jr., president of Union Theological Seminary in New

July 1989
York and with broad international experience, was selected as chairperson. Taking seriously its own commitment to a global perspective, the committee sought "to listen to, and to learn from, colleagues in theological education on five other continents."36

The result was a holistic, ecumenical inquiry open to the concerns of Christians of varied nationalities and confessions. Consider the six areas identified for ecumenical engagement, with representative questions in each area:

1) Ecumenics. "Should the unity of the church or the unity of humanity be the focus for our understanding of the new ecumenical reality?"

2) Mission. "Is there an inherent tension, even contradiction, between the evangelistic mission of the church, and the loving respect owed by Christians to all the cultures, communities and religions of the human world?"

3) Ethics. "Is the ethical, social critique of the world inherent in the faithful preaching of the Gospel to individual human beings?"

4) Education. "... are all theology schools called to take secular learning seriously?"

5) Religions. "What is the Biblical, theological basis for scholarly empathetic Christian attention to the religions of the world?"

6) Context. "Can we be confident that 'indigenization' is the surest route to 'globalization' of the spirit and substance of the theological curriculum?"

In sharp contrast to the 1956 Niebuhr study, the Shriver report gave prominence to the study of Christian mission, but linked it with the study of other world religions. "What changes, compared with teaching of a generation ago," Shriver asked, "are appropriate in our teaching about the history and philosophy of missions? What new understanding of Matthew 28:19–20 is ours to commend to students and churches? What do we learn from the growing missionary work of the 'younger churches,' e.g. 15,000 non-Western missionaries?"37

That these concerns were broadly representative of the ATS is reinforced by a parallel ATS/Lilly Endowment study by Joseph C. Hough, Jr., and John B. Cobb, Jr., of Claremont School of Theology, entitled Christian Identity and Theological Education. Like Niebuhr a generation earlier, Hough and Cobb sought to redefine the purpose of the church and its ministry. They argued that, since the whole world is God’s concern, and Christ’s redemptive work is for all peoples, “all Christian theology today should be global theology.” This, they contended, has radical implications for theological education. For Hough and Cobb “the world consciousness that is today Christian consciousness should permeate the entire curriculum and not be relegated to only one of its parts.”38

This, however, did not imply that globalization would make the study of missiology redundant. “No topic is more important for practical Christian thinking today than the church’s mission,” they continued. Rather than confining the study of missiology to one department and limited elective courses, they recommended an abolition of disciplinary boundaries. Consider three topics proposed for core courses—“The global context of our lives,” “What does the reality of Buddhism (or Hinduism or Islam) say to us about our faith and our mission?” and “What is the church’s mission today?”39

In its 1988 report the ATS Task Force on Globalization affirmed and sharpened the values contained in the Hough/Cobb study. It assumed that the present profound connectedness of human life worldwide (in economics, the military, technology, population movements, transmission of diseases, and cultural influences) will continue.

The stated theological assumptions correlate with current dominant themes in mission theology. The first is that globalization is one form of faithfulness in our time to the biblical mandate. The second is that sharing the gospel involves being in solidarity with the poor and the victimized. The third is the assumption that the church’s mission includes mandates of evangelism, prophetic-justice ministries, and dialogue with persons of other faiths and ideologies. A fourth is that the church’s center is no longer found in North America and Europe because the church is worldwide.

As for theological education, the Task Force assumed that new sources and methods will be required to help the churches respond to the new global reality. These will include non-Western sources, increased use of the insights of the social sciences, new learning styles, and significant inputs by both men and women of various ethnic, national, and racial groups. They judged North American theological institutions at present to be both peculiarly global and provincial. To their credit they have achieved degrees of interdenominational, cross-cultural, multicentric, and gender-balanced theological education greater than has been achieved on other continents. On the other hand, their continued functioning as if Western theological education should be the global norm is a sign of their continuing parochialism.40

**Conclusion**

This brief historical survey has been focused on three critical times for the teaching of missiology. Major recommendations in 1910, 1956, and 1988 provided those kairos moments when missiologists faced both crisis and challenge.

The World Missionary Conference of 1910 gave a powerful impetus to the teaching of missions. Schools responded with new courses and training programs both for missionary candidates and for pastors. The Niebuhr ATS study of 1956 came at a time of crisis for mainline Protestant missions as numbers of foreign missionaries declined and goals became diffuse as mission replaced missions. But teachers of mission met the challenge to re-focus their discipline through the new Association of the Professors of Mission (APM) and the American Society of Missiology (ASM). They were less able, however, to impact the curricular changes of the 1960s and 1970s except in evangelical seminaries in which the missionary mandate remained strong.

The 1988 kairos is the most significant of all. The ATS Task Force on Globalization has proposed that missiological concerns move from the periphery to the center of every theological school’s life and work. The twelve-member Task Force (plus six consultants) includes five mission scholars and administrators whose work has gained international acclaim.

How will missiologists respond to these radical proposals? In 1987 William Richey Hogg judged that “the ‘Globalization’ program is not mission’s new form.”41 James Scherer dismissed it as “a certain faddishness” and called cross-cultural exchanges “a secularized end-product of the age-old mission...
experience.” Such critiques miss the central thrust of the ATS effort. Missiologists whose discipline has been marginal in the theological curricula find it difficult to contemplate a future in which the missiologist may become the catalyst/enabler of significant changes in theological education.

The *kairos* moment is filled with both danger and opportunity. The search for a new theology of religions challenges traditional mission priorities. The new future is akin to the movement from being just one discipline competing for students and recognition alongside so many others. Instead it can become the field which provides that interdisciplinary focus that the new global theological education requires.

Notes

6. Ibid., p. 374.
7. Ibid.
21. Ibid., pp. 79–94.
24. Ibid., p. 89.
27. Ad Gentes, no. 39.
30. Ibid., pp. 31–32.
32. Ibid. Scherer summarizes thirty-five years of debate in this article.
35. Ibid., p. 3.
37. Ibid., pp. 8–10.
38. Ibid., p. 17.
40. Ibid., pp. 107, 130.
43. Scherer, “Missiology as a Discipline,” p. 521.
44. See Barbara Brown Zikmund, “Response to Keynote Address,” *Theological Education* 23 (Autumn 1986): 40–42, for an initial contribution to this debate.
Seven Theses on Interreligious Dialogue: An Essay in Pastoral Theological Reflection

Theological Advisory Commission of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences

These theses on interreligious dialogue were prepared by the Theological Advisory Commission of the Roman Catholic Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC). The commission is composed of members from all the Bishops' Conferences of FABC. This first joint presentation represents the work of the members of the commission and of other theologians over a period of two years, finally approved in their meeting in Singapore, April 1987. The theses are offered solely as a basis for discussion with the wider community of pastors and professional scholars, prior to restudy and revision. Due to space limitations, the commentary on each thesis has been omitted here. Requests for the full report, along with comments and criticisms, may be sent to: FABC, G.P.O. 2984, Hong Kong.

Introduction

Dialogue is an integral dimension of human life. The human being alone is capable, not only of reacting to stimuli but also of responding to the other through language and symbol, and in this manner, of building up community. While the increasing facility and rapidity of communications and the growing economic and political interdependence favor mutual relations and fellowship, the symbolic systems that structure human life, like language, culture and religion, combined with the human desire for domination, seem to be causes of conflict and division. But their desire for peace and fellowship urges people to a dialogue based on their common destiny and on mutual acceptance of and respect for each one's dignity and freedom. The religions are called to provide a special role of leadership in the process, oriented as they are to the ultimate, and therefore capable of transcending the limiting and divisive factors in human history.

Pope John Paul II has emphasized "the importance and the need which interreligious dialogue assumes for all religions and all believers, called today more than ever to collaborate so that every person can reach his transcendent goal and realize his authentic growth, and to help cultures preserve their own religious and spiritual values in the presence of rapid social changes" (Address to the Secretariat for Non-Christians, 3 March 1984).

The community of God, one and triune, and the communion of his Kingdom, to which God calls all peoples and of which the Church is the servant, make dialogue an integral dimension of the mission of the Church. The story of God's People in the Bible is an inspiration as well as a beginning of such dialogue. Israel in the Old Testament, as well as primitive Christianity in the New, were, both in their origins and through most of their historical life, heterogeneous mixtures taken literally from the nations. Encounter and dialogue with other religious and cultural traditions was a frequent phenomenon in the history of Israel and the Church.

Israel in the land of Palestine had to face new realities, to answer new problems and, therefore, was forced to enter into a cultural and religious dialogue with Canaan. As a result, in all spheres of its existence Israel had to learn and borrow from the Canaanites. This cultural and religious encounter affected in a positive way the faith of Israel, as can be seen from its creed, cult and code of the Covenant. The ultimate result of this encounter for Israel was a new experience of Yahweh and a deeper understanding of earthly realities as integral parts of their faith in Yahweh.

When Christianity confronted Judaism and Hellenism, it developed a new and inclusive vision of the Christ-event and of the Church, as manifested in the New Testament, especially in Paul and John.

Paul was fully conscious of becoming a Jew to the Jews to win the Jews, and a Gentile to the Gentiles to win the Gentiles (cf. I Cor 9:19-23). In his speeches at Lystra (Acts 14:25-27) and on the Areopagus (Acts 17:22-31) Paul develops the Christian message in such a manner that it forms the logical conclusion of the Gentile history of religion. As the history of Israel leads up to the coming of Jesus Christ, the history of the Gentile world also prepared itself to welcome the Christian message by leaving a place for the unknown God which the Christian proclamation tried to fill up.

The language of John, using a terminology which awakened echoes in Hellenistic language and thought, was the bridge between the essentially Palestinian Gospel tradition and the vast world which lay within and beyond the Hellenistic world. The dialogical approach of John is indicated in the Prologue of his Gospel (Jn 1:1-18) in which he describes the Christ-event. If in the first half of the Prologue he describes it in general terms such as "logos," "life," "light," "world," etc., which are understandable by and in common with the surrounding religions, in the second half he describes it in specifically Christian terms, such as "Jesus Christ," "grace," "truth," "only Begotten Son of God," etc. In presenting Christ as the "Word" mediating the mysterious reality of God's presence to the world, John is implicitly admitting the presence of God's self-revelation in other religious traditions. The fact that John presents the Christ-event as an experience which is not reduced to the compass of his individual and ecclesial experience but which transcends any particular form of expression and can be identified in the universe at large, shows that the Johannine Church was prepared to enter into dialogue with the surrounding religious traditions.

In the course of the last two thousand years the Church has encountered and dialogued with various peoples, cultures and
THESIS 1

In the developing, multireligious societies of Asia, struggling towards liberation and wholeness, all religions are called to provide a common and complementary moral and religious foundation for this struggle, and be forces for growth and communion rather than sources of alienation and conflict. They can do this only through dialogue and collaboration. The religions have a prophetic role in public life. They should not become victims either of those who seek to keep them apolitical and private, or of those who seek to instrumentalize them for political and communal ends.

THESIS 2

Dialogue with other religions, which are significant and positive elements in the economy of God's design of salvation, is an integral dimension of the mission of the Church, which is the sacrament of the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus. In Asia today, Christians, though they are a "little flock" in many places, animated by the Spirit who is leading all things to unity, are called to play a serving and catalyzing role which facilitates interreligious collaboration. This call challenges all the churches to common witness as they grow together towards fuller ecumenical communion.

THESIS 3

Interreligious dialogue is a demand of our Christian faith in the Trinity, which is a mystery of communion in interpersonal dialogue. The unique and definitive action of the Father to save all peoples who have him as their origin and goal is leading all of us to a unity. Christ in whom God is reconciling all things to himself is urging the Church to be the servant of this communion. The universal presence and action of the Spirit is calling everyone to the realization of the oneness of the Kingdom. As a response to this mystery, dialogue is a process of growing into the fullness of divine life. It is a participation in the quest of all peoples for the full realization of the Truth. It is LOVE for people which seeks communion in the Trinity.

THESIS 4

Interreligious dialogue is a communication and sharing of life, experience, vision and reflection by believers of different religions searching together to discover the work of the Spirit among them. Removing prejudices, it grows towards mutual understanding and enrichment, towards a discerning and common witness and towards commitment to promote and defend human and spiritual values leading to deeper levels of spiritual experience. It is a journeying together in a communion of minds and hearts towards the Kingdom to which God calls all peoples.

THESIS 5

Interreligious dialogue takes place at various levels, and involves both individuals and communities. Moved by the Spirit and proceeding from exterior to more interior aspects of life, it leads to more profound levels of communion in the Spirit, without detriment to but deepening each community's specific religious experience. Such communion finds expression through common prayer, reading of the Scriptures and Holy Books, celebration of festivals and common liberative action in a common animation and transformation of culture and society. Religions may feel closer to some than to others because of a shared history and other reasons. Owing to human imperfection and sinfulness, all religions are called to an ongoing renewal under the judgment of the Spirit and their own mutual critical challenge. This renewal will involve mutual forgiveness and reconciliation.

THESIS 6

Dialogue and proclamation are integral but dialectical and complementary dimensions of the Church's mission of evangelization. Authentic dialogue includes a witness to one's total Christian faith, which is open to a similar witness of the other religious believers. Proclamation is a call to Christian discipleship and mission. As a service to the mystery of the Spirit who freely calls to conversion, and of the person who freely responds to the call, proclamation is dialogical.

THESIS 7

An authentic dialogue with other religious traditions is the task of a local Church, fully involved in the life and struggles of the people, especially the poor. It is also an integral element in the process of building up authentic local churches in Asia.

PASTORAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Preamble

Religious, cultural and socio-political situations in Asia are so different from country to country that it is very difficult to present concrete and adequate pastoral recommendations which
could apply equally well to all our countries. If our churches, however, are to become truly local churches, then, interreligious dialogue is indispensable and imperative. Hence, in each country, careful analysis and reflection on its situations are called for in order to decide on concrete steps to be taken.

In the light of the foregoing considerations we submit here some suggestions as pastoral recommendations.

1. Spiritual Renewal Through Common Prayer

A sincere and authentic renewal of our mind and heart is called for with regard to our mission of witnessing to the Gospel by showing the face of Christ in our multireligious situation. We should seek for opportunities to come together to pray with people of other religions.

A week of prayer and fellowship with people of other religions could be organized at the diocesan and parochial level. Could we make this an annual practice throughout the FABC region, perhaps in relation with the CCA [Christian Conference of Asia] Asia Sunday?

2. Conscientizing Toward a New Catechesis

There is a need for a renewed Trinitarian theology in catechesis:

a) on Revelation and the universal salvific plan of God;
b) on the nature and mission of the Church as servant of God’s Kingdom;
c) on the uniqueness of Christ;
d) on the all-penetrating action of the Spirit in and beyond our churches;
e) on the meaning of proclamation, dialogue and conversion as understood by the Church today.

We need to be conscientized and helped to free ourselves from prejudices, attitudes of self-defense, and of seeking merely our own benefit by becoming open to the positive values in other religions, and ready to learn from them.

With regard to interreligious dialogue an updated theology and catechesis must be incorporated in the programs for seminaries, houses of formation and pastoral centers. Study and feedback on this document by agencies and people are desired.

Because people of other religions are our fellow travellers in a common search for truth and on a common pilgrimage to the Kingdom, the interreligious dialogue should be seen as mutually enriching, and a new pastoral approach is called for. Implications of this paradigm shift need to be discussed.

3. Interreligious Dialogue Through Common Witness and Action

Our churches are to be encouraged to come together as often as possible with other religions to share life experiences and to promote and to defend human and spiritual values, such as solidarity with the poor, justice and peace.

We are to develop our sense of co-responsibility to participate actively with all men and women of good will in responding to the socio-cultural and political needs of our people.

Steps should be taken to build mutual confidence among Christian churches so as to promote common witness and collaboration for human welfare.


Symposia, colloquia, seminars and exchanges on the problems of religions and interreligious dialogue should be encouraged at the diocesan and parochial levels.

Research centers are needed to study the various aspects (socio-cultural) of life in our societies. The actual role of religions, the meaning of religious symbols, the conditions favorable to religious dialogue, the obstacles facing such dialogue, and other questions, are issues for further research at national levels.

The question of the membership and participation of the Catholic Church in the National Councils of Churches and in action-oriented associations of other religions is to be seriously considered.

New structures that facilitate contact and cooperation with other religious groups in specific areas of common concern should be set up at diocesan and national levels.

5. Questions for Further Animation

What has been and should be the place and role of our Church in the multireligious context of our country?

Are we identifying ourselves adequately and meaningfully with the religio-cultural traditions of our people? How do we approach people of other religions within those traditions?

As a minority Church, are we playing a role of mediation among diverse groups and exercising a prophetic role of reconciliation? Or do we privatize religion and fail to play a prophetic role expected of us? Do we get instrumentalized as a means for the powers that be?

What is our present understanding of mission, proclamation, evangelization, conversion, etc., in view of the growing imperative of the Church for interreligious dialogue.

What can be done? What can we do as a group?
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Toward Indigenization of Christianity in Africa: A Missiological Task

Zablon Nthamburi

Historical Setting

Areas of Africa were Christianized long before Western Europe. Within the first three centuries of the church’s existence, Christianity had been planted in Egypt, Roman North Africa, and Nubia. By the middle of the fourth century A.D., missionaries from Egypt were busy planting churches in Ethiopia. According to ancient tradition, it was St. Mark who established the church in Egypt in A.D. 42. Within the first two centuries North Africa became one of the great centers of Christianity. North Africa produced such theological giants as Augustine of Hippo, Tertullian, and Cyprian. Alexandria had such renowned apologists as Clement, Origen, Athanasius, Antony, and Pachomius. The latter two introduced monasticism, which had its home in the deserts of Egypt before it spread to western Europe.

The rise of Islam in the seventh century challenged the existence of Christianity in North Africa. Islam as a new faith spread like wild fire. Within a period of one hundred years after the prophet’s death, Islam had overtaken North African Christianity. Part of the reason was the preoccupation of the church with its own domestic quarrels. For a long time Donatists and Catholics fought for dominance and recognition, while at the same time the Roman empire was in a state of decay. The Donatists were suppressed by means of imperial power, and the Catholics failed to evangelize the Berbers, who were the indigenous people of North Africa. Had the Donatist church survived, it would probably have played a significant role in the establishment of Christianity in North Africa, for, prior to its suppression, the church had been able to reach the Berbers. In fact, however, North African Christianity, at the time of the Muslim pressure, was mostly Catholic and identified with the Roman element of society. When troubles came, these members of the upper strata left for Italy and Spain. The rapid disappearance of the church in North Africa was due to its not having thoroughly taken root in the Berber population. Thus when the Berbers enthusiastically embraced Islam, Christianity disappeared, leaving hardly a trace of its existence in the region.

Egyptian Christianity, which had been the bulwark of Christendom, lost much of its vigor through Islamic pressure. Leading Christians often retired to monastic life, leaving ordinary Christians without the bond of fellowship that could sustain them in hard times. Many converted to Islam to avoid the economic and social pressure imposed by a Muslim society. Nubia gradually declined as well. In the midst of threat and intimidation, only Ethiopia persisted as a Christian stronghold. However, it remained isolated from other Christian countries. Through this isolation the church in Ethiopia developed its own peculiar characteristics, which have played a significant role in its cultural, economic, and spiritual development.

The Modern Missionary Movement

Modern missionary activity in Africa traces its origin to the exploratory zeal of Henry the Navigator of Portugal in the fifteenth century. The religious aspect of this geographical enterprise received an impetus from a papal letter of indulgence encouraging Henry to carry the Catholic faith on all his expeditions. That the papal injunction was taken seriously is illustrated by the fact that when the Portuguese party reached LaMina on the coast of present Ghana, they celebrated Mass and prayed for the conversion of natives so that they would be rescued from idolatry, paganism, and witchcraft.

Vasco da Gama’s legendary expedition around the Cape of Good Hope was considered a new venture by a Christian nation in its attempt to spread Christian influence and civilization to the Far East. A major concern of the Portuguese was to check Muslim aggression, the impact of which was being felt in Europe. There were legends that indicated the existence of a Christian king in Africa. The legendary king, “Prester John,” was of primary interest to the Portuguese, who were looking for an ally that would lend a hand in stopping the Muslim aggression.

By 1518 the Portuguese had consecrated a son of the ruler of the Congo as the first bishop. Even though the ruler and his 500 subjects were converted to Christianity, there was little evidence of radical change among them. (When Baptist missionaries entered the Congo basin in the late nineteenth century, they lamented that Sao Salvador, the former capital of the Congo kingdom, did not show any trace of having been influenced by Christianity.) By 1541 the Portuguese were already in Ethiopia, where they assisted Ethiopian resistance to the Muslim intrusion, and by 1600 they had introduced Catholicism in Ethiopia and were finding fault with Ethiopian Christianity. They could not come to terms with the Ethiopian practice of having married priests, nor did they feel inclined to accommodate a church that did not recognize the pope. As a result they doubted the efficacy of Ethiopian sacraments and started to re-baptize Christians and to re-consecrate churches. They attempted to replace the sacred Ethiopian language of Gezz with Latin as a liturgical language. They went to the extent of wanting to replace the Ethiopian abuna (bishop) with a Portuguese bishop. At this point the Ethiopians, incensed by Portuguese paternalism, expelled them. Even though the Portuguese tried to plant Christianity in the lower Zambesi valley and Madagascar, these efforts produced no permanent Christian communities apart from Mozambique.

The Protestant churches were somewhat late in initiating their mission work. Part of the reason was that for two centuries after the break with Rome, Protestants were largely preoccupied with the effort to establish themselves as viable Christian communities. There were sporadic Protestant efforts early in the eighteenth century to establish Christian missions in Africa. The church of the United Brethren of Moravia arrived at the Cape in 1737 in an attempt to initiate work among the Hottentots. Thomas Thompson, in 1751, decided to leave his position as a representative of the English Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts in New Jersey in order to go to West Africa as a missionary. Three years later he sent three Cape coast

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boys to England to be educated.

Late in the eighteenth century the Evangelical Revival swept across Western Europe and North America. The revial owed its genesis to the work of John and Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, and others. The Great Awakening in America led to the founding of missionary societies that would join their English and Continental counterparts to send missionaries to Africa. The Clapham sect within the Anglican church in Britain was concerned not only with the abolition of slavery but with the extension of Christianity beyond their borders. Such household names as Wilberforce, Sharp, and Macaulay were members of the movement and were active in the establishment of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) by members of the evangelical wing of the Church of England, in 1799. These people were very concerned about the damage the slave trade did to the missionary cause. Later, David Livingstone, who initiated the founding of the Universities Mission to Central Africa, felt that the central focus of missions was to heal the “open sore” caused by the slave trade.

The missionaries to Africa believed in the supreme altruistic nature of the Christian gospel. They were drawn by the stories of the unfortunate condition of people who had been denied a chance to hear the saving gospel of Christ. The descriptions of Africa circulating in the West convinced them of the urgency of preaching the gospel to Africans. African barbarism, superstition, treachery, cunning, laziness, paganism, and general moral depravity had been depicted in a very dramatic and vivid manner. Few nineteenth-century missionaries doubted that these evils would soon succumb to the purging nature of the Christian gospel. While it was widely believed that Africans were depraved creatures who lived in a perverted environment, no one doubted that they could be redeemed. What was needed in such a situation was the spread of Christianity coupled with Western civilization. The pamphlets and news reports from foreign fields generally painted a dark picture of African barbarism, thus motivating potential supporters of Protestant missions to rescue for the kingdom souls destined for hell.

As a result of the effort of missionary endeavors of both Catholics and Protestants, Christianity was introduced not only along the coast but in the interior of Africa where no traders or explorers dared to venture. In most places it was readily accepted either as a way of enhancing the status of a community or as a means of obtaining literary skills that were important for communication to the outside world. Henry Venn, the skillful and energetic secretary of the Church Missionary Society, urged that the strategy for missions should be to create as soon as possible an indigenous church that was self-propagating, self-supporting, and self-governing. He envisioned a situation in which the mission would give way to an indigenous ministry, which would be suited to the local idiosyncrasies. Largely through Venn’s foresight Samuel Ajayi Crowther was appointed the first African bishop of the Anglican church in West Africa. Consecrated in 1864, Crowther made a remarkable contribution to the evangelization of the Niger delta. He endeavored to indigenize the Christian faith to make it possible for Africans to accept Christianity without having to renounce their cultural values. His effort was, however, undermined by missionaries who insisted on a rupture between Christianity and African culture.

**Definition of Terms**

In the quest for indigenization different terms have been used: adaptation, inculturation, Africanization, and indigenization. “Adaptation” refers to areas of apparent similarities and contacts between Christianity and African traditional religion. To the proponents of this view, immediate adaptation is experienced when elements of Christianity are taken to mean something that is already familiar. For instance, when missionaries went to different African communities they adapted the term for God that was used by the traditional religion. Thus in Zulu, God is *Unkunkunkulu*, in Kikuyu *Njambi*, in Meru *Murungu*, and in Lunda *Njambilungu*. This was intended to show that Christians worship the same God as the traditionalists, the difference being in the understanding of who this God is.

The term “inculturation” expresses the encounter between Christianity and African traditional religion, which is basically an encounter between two cultures. Since Christianity comes to Africa from another culture it is expected to grow within the African culture in order to become truly African. There is a process of transformation that takes place in order for Christianity to reflect authentically the African cultural milieu. While “indigenization” basically means the same thing as inculturation, indigenization is meant to emphasize the incarnational aspect. The concept, drawn from Christology, means that just as Jesus became human in order to redeem humankind so must Christianity become African in order to reach the African soul. Christianity must grow within the African environment so as to acquire the characteristics, forms, and trappings of African spirituality.

African spirituality is rooted in the traditional religions of the African people, which existed long before other religions such as Islam and Christianity were introduced. Generally African people believed in God as the supreme being, called by different names in different communities. God was worshiped through different rituals according to the traditions of the people. Africans believed that everything had its origin in God and nothing came into existence without divine sanction.

African people also believed that there were lesser spirits through whom God spoke to people and who served as mediators between God and humans. Included in this category were the ancestral spirits or the spirits of the living-dead who, together with the living, make up a community. Going back to time immemorial, African religion is interwoven with the experiences, history, and cultures of the African peoples. It prepared the ground for the reception of Christianity and Islam. African Christians see the hand of God at work in and through African religion. We now recognize that mistakes were made by Western missionaries when they dismissed African religion as fetishism, spiritism, animism, or paganism.

There were some missionaries who recognized quite early that Africa had a religion that was truly efficacious. Thus Placide Tempels, a Belgian missionary, believed it was necessary to study and understand African traditional religion in order to Christianize Africans without destroying their culture. His *Bantu Philosophy*, published in 1945, paved the way for a sympathetic study of African religion. E. W. Smith had already made similar studies. The symposium he edited in 1936, under the title *African Beliefs and Christian Faith*, showed that Africans had a concept of God.
long before Christianity arrived. Such scholars, however, were 
an exception in an age or rhetorical misrepresentation of African 
beliefs. The majority of missionaries saw African religion within 
their Western understanding and concluded that it was heathen, 
anti-Christian, and repulsive.\textsuperscript{11}

African societies started to disintegrate when traditional re-
ligion was attacked. The Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe, in his 
book \textit{Things Fall Apart}, portrays a situation in which an African 
indigenous missionary succeeds in separating a son from his Af-
rican parents so that the son can become a Christian. As the son 
leaves his parents’ house for the mission compound the mission-
ary quotes the Bible, “Blessed is he who forsakes his father 
and mother for my sake.”\textsuperscript{12} Ngugi wa Thiong’o similarly depicts 
a situation in which the family is utterly divided as a result of 
the parents’ conversion to Christianity. A rift occurs between 
the family and the extended family. Instead of bringing reconciliation 
and understanding, Christianity in this case brings division. This 
is because converts were instructed to leave everything behind, 
including families, for the sake of the gospel. African religion 
looked at life in a holistic way. There was no dichotomy between 
sacred and profane, hence many people were horrified when the 
first converts wanted to set themselves apart, away from other 
members of the community. This is why indigenization is im-
portant, as it enables the African Christian to see and experience 
life in a holistic manner without doing needless violence to cul-
tural values.

\textbf{African Theologians}

African theologians have wrestled with the problem of indigen-
ization. The main question is: How can Christian faith be har-
monized with African beliefs and practices so that Christianity 
may truly become a religion for Africans? Justin Ukriko sees syn-
cretism among African Christians as a sign that Christianity has 
not taken African culture seriously, nor has it been deeply inte-
grated with the indigenous culture. Ukriko refers to the liturgy 
as an example of the problem. The liturgy in many mission-
founded churches seems to be insensitive to the African, for 
whom worship is not merely an act of praying and singing. It 
involves dancing, drumming, clapping hands, and making var-
ious bodily gestures.\textsuperscript{13} Ukriko quotes a Nigerian novelist, Onuora 
Nzeku, who portrays the syncretistic nature of Igbo land Chris-
tianity:

That is why even though Christianity claims many millions of con-
verts among our people, real converts can be counted on your 
fingers and toes alone. Isn’t it a shame that after a hundred years 
of missionary activities here Christianity can only boast of millions 
of hybrids. Converts who are neither Christian nor traditional wor-
shippers, religious bats who belong to no particular faith, only 
claiming to be one or the other when it suits their purpose.\textsuperscript{14}

J. Omosade Awolalu endeavors to demonstrate how a notion 
of sin is evident within African religion. He asserts that Africans 
live in an ethical covenant relationship with one another and with 
their ancestors, their divinities, and the creator. Guilt is incurred 
when the established taboos are violated and when the ancestors 
are neglected. Sin is also recognized in antisocial behavior such 
as murder, theft, adultery, and individualism, for what disturbs 
equilibrium in society disrupts the union between the human and 
the divine.\textsuperscript{15} Awolalu sees compatibility between the Christian 
notion of sin and that of traditional African society, in that in 
both cases sin is primarily an affront to the righteousness of God.

Edmund Ilogu shows that Igbo culture prior to the colonial 
era was an integrated matrix with patterns of decentralized au-

\textsuperscript{11}\textsuperscript{16} Achebe, Chinua. \textit{Things Fall Apart.}

\textsuperscript{12}\textsuperscript{17} Achebe, Chinua. \textit{Things Fall Apart.}

\textsuperscript{13}\textsuperscript{18} Achebe, Chinua. \textit{Things Fall Apart.}

\textsuperscript{14}\textsuperscript{19} Achebe, Chinua. \textit{Things Fall Apart.}

\textsuperscript{15}\textsuperscript{20} Achebe, Chinua. \textit{Things Fall Apart.}

\textsuperscript{16}\textsuperscript{21} Achebe, Chinua. \textit{Things Fall Apart.}
the ‘African genius’ thrown in by way of anecdote, curiosity, and folklore.” It is clear that we have to turn to African indigenous churches to experience indigenization in practice.

**African Indigenous Churches**

The African indigenous church movement can be traced in part to the African reaction to the process of colonization and subjugation of African peoples by European powers. Christianization preceded colonization even though the two were often seen by Africans to have the same objectives. As Christianity swept the continent, reactions to Western Christianity sprang up in the form of indigenous churches. The Providence Industrial Mission founded by Chilembwe of Nyasaland (Malawi) in 1914 became the symbol of political and religious liberation. The movement of William Wadé Harris in Ivory Coast in 1913 and 1914 gave the African indigenous movement a much needed impetus when African leadership in the mission-founded churches was almost nonexistent. Somewhat later, Moses Orimolade founded the praying churches of Cherubim and Seraphim in Nigeria. These churches later acquired the name “Aladura.” In Kenya the Kikuyu Independent Church arose out of the need to preserve African traditions such as female circumcision and polygamy in the wake of missionaries’ attack on such indigenous customs. In South Africa, Ignatius Lekhanyane founded Zionism, which spread into Botswana and Zimbabwe. Zionism emphasizes holistic healing and the early return of Christ.

What is significant in all these churches is that most of them came into being as a protest movement against white domination in the mission churches. The new indigenous churches developed their own ecclesiology and polity, and incorporated elements of the African religious ethos, such as healing, spontaneous expressions in worship, and veneration of ancestors. A few of them tolerated polygamy, while all of them castigated witchcraft. By the 1930s they were called “Spiritist Churches” because of the centrality of prayer in their churches and the emphasis upon the
work of the Holy Spirit. Many of them formed a close-knit community that exemplified the early church community. Let us now look more closely at one of these churches.

**The Kimbanguist Church**

It was in 1918 when Simon Kimbangu received his call to be a prophet. After resisting the call for three years, he yielded, and in 1921 began a fiery prophetic ministry. At N’Kamba, his own village, thousands of people turned to Christ. Kimbangu exhorted his people to abandon fetishes, give up polygamy and dancing. He prayed for people who gathered to hear him preach. He also performed miracles. In the words of an eyewitness,

> The healing of a deaf man followed, then a cripple called Thomas from Lombo. His mother brought him and laid him at the prophet’s feet. “What do you want for your child?” the prophet asked. “I want him to be able to walk,” the woman answered. The prophet spoke to the child, “In the name of Jesus Christ, stand up and walk.” The child arose and was able to stand and walk.”

Kimbangu’s success was short-lived. Distorted reports of his work were relayed across a thousand villages. After a little more than five months he aroused the anger of the colonial government and the envy of missionaries. Kimbangu was arrested on September 12, 1921, accused of treason and insurrection, and sentenced to death after receiving 120 strokes of the cane. Kimbangu, who was a pacifist, had done no wrong and, on the petition of Baptist missionaries, King Albert of the Belgians commuted his death sentence to life imprisonment. He was deported 2,000 kilometers from his home to Lubumbashi, where he spent the rest of his life, mostly in solitary confinement. He was never permitted a visit from any member of his family or from a Protestant pastor. He was described by prison authorities as having an exemplary and amiable character, a self-effacing and very humble person. He died in prison in October 1951.

After the death of Kimbangu the mantle of leadership was taken up by his youngest son, Joseph Diangienda. Kimbanguists continued to grow despite persecution and threats by the colonial government. Finally the government was forced to tolerate the movement because of its vitality and sheer numbers. The Church of Jesus Christ on Earth through Simon Kimbangu gained official recognition after Zaire became independent. Through its rigorous evangelistic outreach, the church spread to other neighboring countries, namely, Republic of Congo, Angola, and Zambia. The church, which boasts a membership of 5 million, is self-supporting and has organized a unique community life. It has established massive farming projects in which members of the church actively participate. It has a modern seminary and boasts of having some of the best-educated clergy in Africa. Through persecution and harassment the church came to know that “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.”

Like other indigenous churches in Africa, the Kimbanguist church has an indigenous ministry. It emphasizes the African spirit of wholeness, which embraces both body and spirit. It encompasses the whole community, for if the community is “sick” the individual will also be affected. To a certain extent, the individual is subservient to the needs of the community, for the individual’s wholeness can be guaranteed only when the community is whole. Healing is the central aspect of a worship service, reflecting the words of Jesus, “Your faith has made you well” (Matt. 9:22, 29). The same Jesus, according to the Kimbanguist church, will do the same today, wherever there is faith. Faith creates new strength for the handicapped, new relationships for broken families, new hearing for the deaf, new hope for the hopeless, new sight for the blind, and renewed vigor for the frail and weak.

Water, which is a sign of washing away, is used when the sick are healed. When ministers and elders are praying for the sick, they use water from N’Kamba, which is the Kimbanguists’ New Jerusalem. Water is applied to painful parts of the body and may also be drunk for therapeutic effect. During pilgrimage to N’Kamba a pilgrim can dip himself or herself in the pool three times using the trinitarian formula. Water in this case is seen as an outward sign of healing and does not have any magical properties. It conveys an invisible blessing, which is effected through faith, for without faith and prayer water is useless; it cannot purify ex opere operato. N’Kamba water is important in that it is from the home village where Kimbangu exercised his short-lived ministry of preaching and healing. It is the extension of the healing power of God through Christ, who demonstrated that he is not only the Savior from sin but also from disease and suffering. Since evil and suffering are associated with bad spirits, the devil is accused of causing physical and spiritual calamities. Those possessed by evil spirits are healed through exorcisms and then exhorted to live by faith, for it is faith that protects believers from such attacks.

Archbishop Milingo of the Zambian Catholic Church provides a strong supporting voice from outside the Kimbanguist circle. He has conducted hundreds of exorcisms and testifies to the need for exorcisms and faith-healing in African churches. He feels that many times people go to church on Sunday to pray for “decent problems.” The Western-trained clergy do not have time for the “real problems” that haunt people, since they have been taught that such problems do not exist, and they dare not show that they exist, for fear of the consequences. In his own words, Milingo observes:

> It is strange, then, that the people tend to believe that one can ask a priest only what he knows from his academic and theological studies, and nothing beyond? The traditional spiritual consultant speaks to the ancestors and other protective spirits and they give the answers. Yes, they often mislead the people, but does the church offer alternatives and preach the absolute when the Christians need answers to their problems?

Indigenous churches feel that wholeness is a gift from God, hence the church should be an instrument of recovering spiritual and physical wholeness not only for the individual but for the whole community. Many mission-founded churches shun faith-healing for fear of syncretism or superstition. They need to learn from such churches as the Kimbanguist church in order to discover how this Christian practice can be incorporated into the liturgies of their churches.

Prayer is also an important component of indigenous church practice. The African attitude to prayer is one of great humility, reverence, and submission. Among the Kimbanguist Christians
personal prayer is very important. One thanks God for protection during the night. Those who are sick or in prison are to be remembered during prayer. Before partaking of any meal, thanksgiving prayers are said for the provision of food and the nourishment that food gives. Before work, one prays to be preserved from all evil and be given the strength, intelligence, and wisdom to perform duties satisfactorily. Before one goes to bed, prayers are necessary to invoke the protective power of God during the night. Prayers are for all occasions, in times of distress or sorrow, in difficult circumstances, in joyful moments, in times of pain or loneliness, or in times of uncertainty.28

In public prayer Kimbanguists remove their shoes before entering the sanctuary. The people are exhorted to remove their watches, bracelets, and hats. Women are expected to cover their heads with cloth as a sign of reverence. Pockets are emptied of all money and other objects that may distract one’s devotion, since one is expected to demonstrate human vulnerability and unworthiness before God the creator. The community prays together, thus emphasizing community cohesiveness.29 Such fellowship includes not only those who are gathered together at a particular place but all God’s people, including not only the living members of the community but the living-dead as well.

The eucharistic celebration was not instituted by the Kimbanguist church until 1971. In April of that year 350,000 pilgrims came to N’Kamba from all parts of Zaire to participate in this momentous occasion. This was also part of the celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the church. The bread is baked from a mixture of potatoes, maize, and bananas, while the wine is made of honey diluted with water. Honey is considered by many African communities to have healing properties, thus symbolizing the Holy spirit who gives power and energy to the Christian community. The Eucharist is indeed a moment of reconciliation and healing in the community.

What has been said about the Kimbanguist church could be said of many other African indigenous churches, such as the Church of the Holy Spirit, Aladura churches, Cherubim and Seraphim, and hundreds of others. What they have in common is a faith that grows out of African life and is rooted in the Bible. What these churches have learned from African traditional religiosity is the place of prayer in the life of a community. The church is, above all else, a praying community. It is only after meaningful fellowship and prayer that the church can go out to evangelize by the strength of the Holy Spirit. In the Kimbanguist church every Christian is an evangelist who must seek to make Christ known to all others around.30

The Task Ahead

It is clear that the indigenous churches have challenged the mission-founded churches in Africa to take traditional African values and religion more seriously. They have, for instance, challenged the half-Christian who goes to church respectfully, but who in secret, with a measure of guilt feelings, also goes to the diviner to seek the cause and cure of illness. Indigenous churches, knowing that Africans cannot dichotomize life, combine the mundane and spiritual spheres of life. Salvation is seen in both material and spiritual planes. A holistic understanding of life is crucial for the modus operandi of missions in Africa. On the whole an African enjoys ritual and order as well as spontaneity. Africans employ their culture, their cosmology, experiences, poems, songs, dances, and celebrations to appropriate the Christian message, interpret it, and incorporate it into their daily life. I agree with Andrew Walls that there is a growing rapport between indigenous churches and historic or “older” churches.31 This distinction will disappear with time, to give room to a singular self-propagating African church.

The objective of indigenization is to give expression to Christianity in African religio-cultural terms. It is an attempt to create a synthesis between African culture and Christianity. It aims at abolishing syncretism, which renders African Christianity ineffective. In presenting Christianity in a way that is congenial to the African experience and reality, African Christians will be enabled to live out their faith authentically and creatively.

Notes

1. August Neander, General History of the Christian Religion and Church, trans. from German by Joseph Torrey, 5 vols. (New York: Hurd & Houghton, 1871), vol. 2, pp. 143–45. Introduction of Christianity to Ethiopia is credited to Frumentius who, after initial contact with the Ethiopians, was consecrated bishop by Athanasius and sent back to Ethiopia.


4. Ibid., p. 131. Portuguese interest in the Congo kingdom declined with the extension of Portugal’s hegemony to the more lucrative markets of Brazil, East Africa, and Asia.


8. T. Ranger, “Missionary Adaptation of African Religious Institutions: The Masasi Case,” The Historical Study of African Religions, ed. T. Ranger and I. N. Kimambo, (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1972). We should point out that not all missionaries believed that Christianity should be equated with Western civilization even though many did. Gustav Warneck denounced such a view as being “nothing but a form of continuing slavery” (M. Wright, German Missions in Tanganyika, p. 8).


My Pilgrimage in Mission

Nico Smith

“A pilgrimage” in mission can be understood in several different ways. I consider my personal experience in mission over the past three decades to have been “a journey of discovery.” On this “road of mission,” I have discovered “new worlds”—worlds completely fresh and unique to my eyes. Each time I was exposed to a new world, my understanding of what mission is developed yet another dimension. Whenever I thought that I understood all that mission entailed, I would discover another new world, another way of understanding, another “new” way of understanding mission.

Nico Smith, sixty years old, presently lives in Mamelodi, a black township that serves Pretoria. He is pastor of the Mamelodi West Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, and Actuarius for the Moderature of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa. He also holds a part-time position as lecturer in Missiology at the University of South Africa. Previously he served sixteen years as professor of Missiology at the Afrikaans University of Stellenbosch, before which he and his wife served as missionaries in the Northern Transvaal.

Discovering My First “New World” in Mission

It was during my studies in theology for the ministry in the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa that I discovered my first new world. Until I started my studies, the strong pietistic influence of my parents and the Student Christian Association led me to understand mission as the winning of “souls” who had to be saved from this evil world and preserved for heaven. The world was ruled by the devil and destined to be eliminated by sulphur and fire. The only important thing about the world was that the Christian had to flee from it. To me, living in South Africa, all Africans (the prevailing term for black South Africans) were objects of mission to be brought to a definite conversion to God, aject to be brought to a definite conversion to God, a


Calvin and Karl Barth, among others. To me they were the “theological giants.” They made me aware of the fact that God is not only the God of heaven, but also of earth. Calvin’s *Soli Deo gloria* (to the glory of God alone) helped me to progress from Luther’s *sola fidei* (through faith alone) in my faith and understanding of mission. To the glory of God alone in the whole of creation (not only in heaven) opened my eyes to the greatness of all human existence.

Barth contributed to my conception of Calvin by giving me a “new look” at this world. While I really believed that the devil ruled this world, Barth said very definitely, “No! Satan was conquered through Christ. He is not master of the world anymore; Christ is Lord over the whole of creation!” I was fascinated to read how Barth once addressed a group of pastors. It was rumored in theological circles at that time that Barth did not really believe in the existence of the devil. So someone therefore asked him, “Professor Barth, what do you say about the devil?” Barth kept quiet for a while and then replied, “He is conquered, overruled. Do not pay too much attention to him. If you do, he will keep you busy all the time. Concentrate on the work of Christ who conquered him.”

These words from Barth came as a real liberation to me in my thinking about the world. The idea of a liberated world in which all and everything have to be drawn unto Christ to the glory of God alone made me discover my first new world in mission. My understanding of mission moved from the saving of “souls” to the proclamation of the good news of God’s Lordship over the whole of creation to all the nations that have to be brought to glorifying God through their existence. To me, this was particularly applicable to the Africans, who to my mind were still “captives” of their “heathen culture.” So strong was my zeal to proclaim this “new message” I had discovered, that a friend and I went downtown every Saturday to sell Bibles and tracts. They were God’s creation, created to glorify him and not to serve Satan, who is conquered. All must know it. We had a responsibility to proclaim it.

Although I then started to believe that mission meant to Christianize all nations so that they might glorify God, I still had the conviction that Africans should not lose their identity through Christianization. They should not be converted to the Western way of life or become black Westerners. They had to accept our way of faith but not our way of living or our culture. They had to work out for themselves what their culture should be like if it were submitted to God’s sovereign rule. How this should be worked out in practice I never clearly understood, but I believed it as part of my apartheid thinking.

In 1948, during my third year at university, the present Nationalist party came into power. Because my parents were strong supporters of the Nationalist party and therefore also of the apartheid ideology, I had been brought up with the concept of apartheid as the way God wanted things to be. Therefore it was the only way a peaceful and harmonious society could be created. God had created different peoples and had granted them different identities through which to create their different cultures. They thus had to be separated in order not to mix and lose their God-given identities. Africans had to be Christianized but should not be alienated from their own identity and culture in the process. They had to become African Christians but should not become part of Western Christianity. They had to Christianize their own culture and eventually develop their own African Christianity.

With this perspective of mission I completed my studies and went to the mission field among the Venda peoples, living on the Zimbabwean border in the northeastern corner of South Africa. There my wife and I started the first Dutch Reformed Mission Station among the Bavenda. With great zeal we proclaimed God’s Lordship in Christ to the people, and to illustrate this, I assisted my wife, a medical doctor, to build a mission hospital. The people had to know that God was concerned with their bodies as well as their souls. Large numbers came to seek healing for their bodies, and the mission hospital became the center of our mission action, putting God into the greatest need of the people. To proclaim and implement the good news of God’s Lordship over the whole of creation, body and soul, my wife and I were willing to make extreme sacrifices. We were willing to serve the Africans to the glory of God. We were willing to come close to them religiously but not socially. As a Chinese Christian said of a missioner who worked among them for many years, “He loved us, but he loved us only in the Lord.” Our mission work was still captive to the apartheid ideology. Naturally, we were not in the slightest way troubled by our attitude. We were totally convinced that we should not mix socially with Africans, in order to prevent them from trying to become Westerners. We had to help them to preserve their Africaness. Only by maintaining their African identity could they serve and please God in their own and proper way.

Shortly after our arrival in the new mission field, I was invited to attend a quarterly fraternal (a group of pastors in an area who meet to share and pray), in this case made up of missionaries and African pastors in that part of the country. I was the first and only Afrikaner (white South African from original-settler ancestors) to attend the meeting. When it came to lunch time, I accepted that whites and blacks would have their meals in separate venues, as was customary in Dutch Reformed circles. All of a sudden, for the first time in my life, I was confronted with having a meal at the same table with a black. Because I was brought up to believe that whites and blacks should never eat together, I had a psychological block that made it impossible for me to eat with the blacks. I decided not to betray my own tradition and belief and did not want to join them at the table. My German host’s wife quickly prepared a table for me in a separate room where I had my meal in solitude while the other missionaries shared tables and the companionship of the African pastors.

I had my meal in solitude while the other missionaries shared tables and the companionship of the African pastors.
increased the tension between the two races. In other words, if you eat with them, you will have to allow them to become a part of your society; and, if you allow them to be a part of your society, you will have to allow your children and their children to intermarry. The mixing of blood between the races is a sin in the eyes of God.

I still wonder what the overseas missionaries thought of me after reading that article. I praise them for not rejecting me, but continuing instead to accept and nurture me as a fellow Christian and colleague.

Discovering My Second “New World” in Mission

After seven years in the mission field, I was called to the position of mission secretary for the Dutch Reformed Church in the northern region of the province of the Transvaal in South Africa. While serving as mission secretary, I began working on a doctorate in mission. My studies brought me into contact with the theological thinking of the Dutch theologian A. A. Van Ruler, whose concept of theocracy fascinated me, thus introducing me to yet another “new world.” I began to view mission in terms of the kingdom of God. In Van Ruler’s theology, I discovered the consequences of Calvin’s and Barth’s concept of God’s sovereign rule over all creation. Van Ruler illustrated the consequences of God’s sovereign rule for the state, society, education, marriage, and even football! Within the framework of my apartheid thinking, I could accommodate Van Ruler’s concept of theocracy very well. I then began to translate Van Ruler’s concept of theocracy into my own context of mission in South Africa. The infiltration of God’s kingdom into the reality of my world—here and now—became for me the realization of the Christianity and culture of all nations.

The kingdom of God in mission, however, had still not become a synthesis of all peoples into the reality of a new nation—the nation of the kingdom of God. No, separate nations there would always be. Each nation had to prepare the crown of its own cultures and contribute that crown toward the fullness of the kingdom at the eschaton. Although the kingdom of God became a very real feature of my existing reality, the full consequences thereof still remained a future reality.

After three years as mission secretary, I was appointed as lecturer in the Science of Missions at the University of Stellenbosch, one of the training centers for ministry in the Dutch Reformed Church. With great enthusiasm I began to teach mission from the perspective of the kingdom. Gradually the “new world” of mission in the framework of the kingdom of God started to expose me to new perspectives. I started to doubt that it was necessary to think in terms of people having separate and unique identities, and cultures having indigenous forms of existence and function. If the kingdom of God has universal implications, is it still necessary for mission to be understood primarily in terms of pluralisms of culture and tradition? Is this the central concern with which mission must struggle? Or do cultures and traditions determine the framework of mission? Is the kingdom not capable of breaking through barriers such as these cultural and traditional frameworks? Is it necessary to concentrate on nations and cultures in mission or are these only human realities that have little or no effect on the kingdom? If there is only one kingdom (nation), does it matter that there are different nations, each with a different culture and traditions? Are all people (nations?) not drawn into the same reality of the kingdom of God that is present in each one of us?

Since in my apartheid thinking the complete focus was in terms of culture and tradition in the South African context, my conceptualization of mission became shaped by ideologies of culture and tradition. I discovered that my teaching was simply confirming the old apartheid missiology and practice of mission stereotype of white South Africa. In spite of the “new world” I had discovered in the perspective of the kingdom, I was still a captive of the “old world” of apartheid. I became more and more convinced that apartheid was, is, and will always be a concept and system separate from the kingdom. The apartheid perspective essentially contradicted everything the kingdom represents and is.

My ideas of culture and tradition symbolized the division of people, whereas the kingdom represents the unification of all people. I had reached a point where I could no longer justify apartheid as part of my teaching in missiology—and even more so in my teaching from the Bible. My conscience had come into conflict with my own teaching, and gradually I came to discover my third “new world” in mission.

Discovering My Third “New World” in Mission

When I was called to become mission secretary, I requested permission from the church leadership to visit Europe first in order to orient myself to the recent thinking about mission within churches and missionary societies in Europe. When I visited the Basler Mission in Basel, I expressed my desire to the then acting secretary of the society, Dr. Raeflauw, to meet with Karl Barth personally. I had always thought that my first trip to Europe would just not be satisfactory if I did not meet Barth. Raeflauw, a personal friend of Barth’s, very kindly arranged a meeting.

On my way to Barth’s house I decided not to talk to him about mission or South Africa. I had a notion that Barth would not be very sympathetic toward South Africa with its apartheid ideology and even less so with the Dutch Reformed Church practicing apartheid theology and mission. I wanted to avoid any conflict with my “theological hero” at all costs. When I sat down in Barth’s study, he immediately started the discussion by saying, “A few days ago I read a speech by the prime minister of your country, Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd. You know, what your Prime Minister expressed was almost exactly the same viewpoint as President Davis’s of the Confederate States of America on their race problems in that part of the world. But Davis said it one hundred years ago. Must I therefore accept that you people in South Africa are moving one hundred years behind the times in your thinking on race relations?”

I was embarrassed but just laughed in a friendly way and explained that I would like to discuss the South African situation, but was interested in the future of theology in Europe and would like to hear his thoughts on that. We entered into a lengthy discussion on his and Rudolf Bultmann’s theology, their differences, and the influence they would have on Europe in the future. I was
surprised at Barth’s honesty and humility. His own theology, he said, was too biblical and conservative for modern humanity in Europe. Bultmann’s theology will be much more acceptable to people in the future. It allowed people much more freedom to conform their faith to modern culture. The only question was whether there would still be faith left to conform or whether people in Europe would become completely secular.

After about an hour and a half I announced that I had to leave and that I deeply appreciated his willingness to meet with me. Then Barth asked if he could ask me a personal question. “Tell me,” he said, “are you free to preach the gospel in South Africa?”

“Oh course!” I responded. “We have freedom of religion in South Africa. Everyone is free to practice his or her religion.”

“No,” Barth replied, “that is not the type of freedom I am asking about. Are you free in yourself? Say, for instance, you became convinced of a certain meaning of the gospel which might not be the way your family and friends understand the gospel. Would you feel free to say, ‘This is how I understand the gospel and how I must preach it?’”

I explained to Barth that I had had no experience of such conflict, and therefore did not know if I would be free enough to preach the gospel as I became convinced of its message.

Then Barth said, “It may become even more difficult. You may arrive at a point where your convictions about the gospel contradict what your government believes. Will you then also feel free to preach the gospel?” Once again I was rather embarrassed. I felt like Peter as Christ asked him for the third time, “Do you love me?”

On my way back to the Basler Mission offices I argued with myself about Barth’s question, and in the end decided that his question came out of his own experience with Nazi Germany and the common European belief that South Africa was similar to Nazi Germany. At that stage, knowing South Africa, I felt quite comfortable that there could be no similarity (possibly because I knew too little about Nazi Germany at that time). I thought Barth was just trying to make me aware of the danger of conforming the gospel. Only later, when I became uncertain about my teaching of missiology and my attitude to apartheid, did Barth’s question develop real relevance for me. I discovered that I was not really able to express what I became convinced of about the gospel. At that time I was still a member of the powerful secret organization, the Afrikaner Brotherhood (der Broederbond). I knew that if I started expressing my doubts about the biblical justification of apartheid I would have to leave the Broederbond—not because they would ask me to leave, but because of my own responsibility to be faithful to my conscience regarding the gospel. I also knew that if I left the Broederbond it would be like committing social suicide.

Eventually I discovered another “new world” in mission, the world of freedom in mission. I knew that if I were not free to preach the gospel and teach missiology according to my conviction as I became convinced of the message of the gospel, my preaching and teaching would have no meaning for mission. Mission could put the liberating power of the gospel into action only if the missionary was a free person—free in the Holy Spirit to teach us all that God has taught us (John 13:26). In his own way the Holy Spirit guides us toward new insights, new ways of understanding the gospel, new dimensions of the implications of the gospel in our personal lives as well as in the world at large. My freedom became a reality for me the night I walked out of the Broederbond and openly declared that for the gospel’s sake I could not continue to be a part of it. I went home, woke up my wife, and told her, “I’m a free man! Thank God!” From then on it was so much easier to express openly what I believed. My liberation from the bonds of my own people, my nation, culture, and traditions insofar as they were a stumbling block to kingdom—mission, was the beginning of my experience of what it means when family and friends do not accept what you believe about the gospel.

I finally had to make a choice: either to preach and teach what I believe or to preach and teach mission without spelling out the implications of mission in the concrete context of South Africa. Just to keep quiet would have made it possible for me to keep my post as professor and to read, write, and teach in peace—except from my own conscience. While still pondering this choice, I suddenly received a call from a black congregation 1,600 kilometers away from where we lived in Stellenbosch. At that particular point I knew that call was God’s answer to the choice I had to make. I knew, and so did my wife, that I would have to resign my professorship and go to the black church in Mamelodi, near Pretoria. Those days of moving out of a comfortable academic post and a comfortable house and neighborhood were hard. My wife and I are no heroes. Many a tear was shed. So often we had to ask ourselves, “Did we really hear the Lord clearly? Is this what he has in mind for us?” At the same time we knew that obedience was better than all the other good things we would have been willing to do if only we could stay where we were. However, the move to Pretoria was not the end of the consequences of our freedom in mission. Because of the Group Areas Act, one of the main pillars of apartheid, we were not allowed to move into the black township, but only to a white area, which meant that we had to commute to and from our congregation every day. After two years we realized that we were not really part of the people to whom we were ministering. It was a sort of hit-and-run ministry. I preached and taught during the day, but at night moved back into the protected white world. Then, in a wonderful way, the doors to go and live in the black community suddenly opened to us through the black community leaders, who granted us the right to live in the black township.

The government was willing to extend permission, so we were enabled to move into another “new world”—the world of the blacks of South Africa. We moved only about five kilometers away from the white area, in which we had lived, to the black township. But those five kilometers separated two worlds from each other: a black world and a white world. We felt as if we had emigrated; as if the township to which we now belonged was not a part of the rest of South Africa. How desperately the blacks need liberation in their own country! They have become captives and are kept captives of an ideology—more truly enslaved in more senses of the word even than the whites. Freedom in mission needs to work for their liberation, which is the liberation of all people—a day for which there is so much yearning. I read about a rabbi who asked his students, “When is it dawn? When has a new day broken?” His students gave various answers, such as,
"When you can see an animal in the distance and can tell whether it is a dog or a sheep," or "When you look at the tree in the distance and can tell whether it is a peach or a fig tree." Each time the answer was No. "It is dawn," said the rabbi, "only when you look on the face of any man or woman and see that he or she is your brother or sister. Because if you cannot do that, then no matter what time it is, it is still night!"

It will be the dawn of a new day in South Africa when whites discover in the faces of blacks their fellow human beings, their fellow citizens, and above all, their fellow brothers and sisters who belong to the same Lord and God of all. My pilgrimage in mission has indeed been a pilgrimage from one crisis to another.

I am thankful that I could describe these crises as new worlds. I believe that crisis is the natural setting of mission: without crisis there can be no mission. Mission does not take place only within crisis—mission creates crisis. Mission is, indeed, the movement of God into his creation. Creation has become naturally inclined to resist God's residence in his creation. Mission, God’s movement into his creation, will therefore always create crisis. And because mission takes place in crisis and creates crisis, it can go to the crux of history—the liberation of the whole of creation into a new heaven and a new earth. I am grateful that I could be part of this liberating act of God—not because of, but in spite of, all my human weaknesses and failures. God is great! Hallelujah!

The Legacy of J. Waskom Pickett

John T. Seamands

Jarrel Waskom Pickett, son of a Methodist minister, was born on February 21, 1890, in northeast Texas. His father L. L. Pickett, had attained considerable recognition as a hymn writer, editor, author, and controversial debater. After serving a few years in Texas and then in South Carolina, the Rev. Mr. Pickett moved with his family to Wilmore, Kentucky, where Asbury College had recently been established.

Waskom’s childhood was, in many respects, unusual. His mother taught him to recognize the alphabet, both in capital and lower-case letters, before he was two years old. By the middle of his fourth year he began to read the morning newspapers and to report chief items of news at the breakfast table. Before he was six, he had read all of the New Testament and several books of the Old Testament.

On his first day at public school, Waskom was put in the kindergarten at nine o’clock, promoted to first grade an hour later, and to second grade in the afternoon. When he was thirteen, he enrolled as a student in Asbury College.

Two days after college opened, a young man called at the Pickett home, asking for a place to stay while he attended college. It was E. Stanley Jones. Waskom graciously accepted him as his roommate, and thus began a life-long friendship between these two young men, both destined to be outstanding leaders of the church in India.

In May 1907 Waskom and Stanley graduated from Asbury College, both with academic honors. Stanley Jones went on to India as pastor of the English-speaking Methodist Church in Lucknow, while Waskom stayed on to teach at Asbury College and take a Master’s degree. He wanted to go to the School of Theology at Vanderbilt University, but his father objected strongly. He was prejudiced against seminaries and called them “cemeteries.” So instead, Waskom accepted a position as instructor of Latin and Greek in a small college at Vilonia, Arkansas, and a year later became assistant professor of New Testament and Greek at Taylor University, Upland, Indiana.

In February 1910 Waskom received a cablegram from Stanley Jones, advising him to apply to the Board of Missions to be sent to India, to replace Jones in the Lucknow church. Waskom immediately applied, was accepted, and soon after began his journey to India. But he had been in India only about four years when he was ordered to return to America because he had contracted tuberculosis. The government expert in that disease said that his lungs were so badly affected that he would not live more than a year. But on board ship, during his second day at sea, Waskom spent a long time on his knees in prayer, and the Lord assured him that he would recover. Several weeks later when he arrived in San Francisco, he reported to a doctor on orders from the Mission Board. The doctor examined him and said, "Who told you that you had tuberculosis?"

Pickett showed him his x-rays he had brought from India. The doctor said, "Well, you actually had advanced t.b. when these x-rays were taken, but something wonderful has happened to you since then."

During this first furlough, Waskom was married to Ruth Robinson, daughter of John Wesley Robinson, missionary bishop in India. For the next twenty-five years after the return to the field, Pickett served variously as pastor, superintendent, evangelist, and editor of the Indian Witness. In 1935 he was elected to the episcopacy and served in that capacity for twenty-one years, until his retirement in 1956. In the United States following his

As a Methodist missionary, John T. Seamands served as district evangelist and district superintendent in the Methodist Church in India, 1941-60. From 1961 to 1987 he was professor of Christian Missions at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky, where he is now retired.
Pickett, the Statesman

Waskom Pickett was especially gifted in meeting government officials and national leaders, and gaining their respect and confidence, not only for himself, but for the entire Christian movement in India. Though he had a wide range of such contacts, he made a great impact upon three persons in particular.

Bhim Raj Ambedkar was born into a low-caste Hindu family, but leaped into prominence after advanced study in England and America. He returned to India with an overpowering desire to free his people from age-long oppression. He traveled all across the country, holding mass meetings among members of the lower castes. He denounced Hindu gods as immoral, and urged his people to renounce Hinduism, which, he claimed, was the cause of their poverty and social stigma. “I was born a Hindu,” he shouted, “but I will not die a Hindu.”

Just at this time Waskom Pickett was elected bishop and appointed to the Bombay area, where Dr. Ambedkar served as president of the Law College. The two men became close friends and often prayed together. One day Ambedkar asked Bishop Pickett to baptize him as a Christian but, afraid it might ruin his political career, he wanted it done in secret. Bishop Pickett refused, and insisted that he should openly confess Christ as Lord and Savior. This, Ambedkar was not willing to do. Some time later, after he had become minister of law in Prime Minister Nehru’s cabinet, he took the oath to Buddhism along with 75,000 of his followers.

During Ambedkar’s last conversation with Bishop Pickett, he asked the bishop if he had lost hope for his acceptance of Christ. The bishop replied, “No, I am still praying for you.” To this Ambedkar said, “Please keep it up. I am not yet satisfied, and may still ask you to baptize me and admit me to the Methodist Church.” Shortly afterward, however, Ambedkar died of a heart attack.

Early in his missionary career, Waskom Pickett met Jawaharlal Nehru and over the years a strong friendship developed between the two men. Nehru was by birth a Hindu, but he was fully committed to the Christian ideal. In one of their early conversations, Nehru said to Pickett, “Bishop, in the area of ethics I try to be completely Christian. If at any time you think I am doing wrong, please rebuke me, and I will be grateful.”

When Nehru was elected first prime minister of the new India in 1947, Pickett was resident bishop in Delhi. Immediately following independence, clashes between Hindus and Muslims took place in many parts of North India. Every day and night whole families were being murdered. Bishop Pickett felt concerned that he should organize a Relief Committee of Christians to help the Muslims who, in Delhi, were chief victims of the surging violence. When he approached the prime minister, Nehru was at first fearful, but then gave his permission. A few days later when the situation became desperate, Nehru asked Bishop Pickett to take charge of the Government Relief Station. The bishop told him he thought this would be unwise, so Nehru appointed a Christian official with the understanding that the bishop be his unofficial adviser. Messengers were sent out to the Christian community for volunteers, and within two or three days over 200 Christians were working in the Relief Center, seeking to stop the slaughter. Hindus and Sikhs threatened to kill Bishop Pickett and his wife, and one night actually fired a shot at him when he was in the upstairs bathroom of his home.

To care for the sick and wounded, Bishop Pickett prepared a list of needed medical supplies and tried to send it by cable to government friends in Washington. But Indian law-breakers had captured the telegraph offices and refused to accept the cablegram, saying, “You want medicine to save these damn Muslims. Let them die!” Bishop Pickett then went to the American ambassador, Dr. Henry Grady, who got the message through in a few hours. Within four days a plane landed in Delhi loaded with necessary supplies, donated by several pharmaceutical firms in the United States. In a few days these supplies were saving lives in every hospital in Delhi.

Mohandas K. Gandhi (Mahatma), father of India’s independence, was another national leader with whom Waskom Pickett had close ties. Pickett was bold in his witness to Gandhi and often confronted him with the claims of Christ. In their very first interview, Gandhi made the statement that he was a Christian, as well as a Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Buddhist, and Jew, and that he worshiped Christ along with the Hindu gods. Pickett then asked, “Mr. Gandhi, are you not aware of the teachings of Jesus that He is the one and only Savior?”

Gandhi said, “Yes, I know what He said, but I cannot accept that claim. It was, I’m sure, a mistake.”

Pickett then asked, “Do you believe that Jesus was totally without sin in all His life?”

Gandhi answered, “No, I think He sinned like all others have done.”

Pickett then asked, “Would you be willing to mention what you regard as His sins?”

To this Gandhi replied, “His greatest sin as I see Him was His apparent approval of the man who killed a calf to honor his repentant son. No man can hold my affection who approves killing a calf.”

Almost twenty years after this memorable personal contact with Gandhi, one of Gandhi’s sons came to Bishop Pickett at his home in Bombay and asked him to baptize him. The bishop asked why he wished to be baptized. He said, “Because my father mistreats me and all my family. I hate him and want to hurt him. I know no possible way to hurt him more than to renounce Hinduism and become a Christian.”

Gandhi’s son was surprised when Bishop Pickett refused to accept him on these terms. A few weeks later, newspapers reported that young Gandhi had become a Muslim.

Shortly after independence, when the Hindu-Muslim conflict was at its height, Bishop Pickett was preparing to go to bed one night, when there was a sudden knock at the door. The Delhi commissioner informed Bishop Pickett that he was on his way to Nehru and explain the grave situation to him.

When the bishop explained his mission to Nehru over breakfast the next morning, Nehru said, “Bishop, I have done my best to persuade Mr. Gandhi to leave Delhi, but he will not listen. Why don’t you go to see him? He has great respect for you.”

Bishop Pickett went straight to Gandhi’s residence, but found him adamant in his refusal to leave the city. “Why should I be afraid to die?” he asked. “I am a failure. I have pleaded for peace and we are having war. Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims have forgotten their promise and are killing one another. All my hopes for a better India are being destroyed. Perhaps Gandhi dead will be more respected than Gandhi alive.”

“Mr. Gandhi,” Bishop Pickett replied earnestly, “I assure you that Indian Christians are working tirelessly for peace. In my opinion, you have never been fair to the Christians in India.”

“That is true,” Gandhi admitted. “I have failed at this
Noteworthy

Wilbert R. Shenk has been appointed Director of the Mission Training Center of the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, Elkhart, Indiana, effective July 1, 1990. He will conclude his service as Vice President for Overseas Ministries, Mennonite Board of Missions on January 1, 1990, but remain on staff during the interim. He has been with MBM since 1965. Starting in January 1990 Shenk will be seconded up to six months per year for the next three years to "The Gospel and Our Culture" project of the British Council of Churches based in Birmingham, United Kingdom.

Paul E. McKaughan, Associate International Director of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization in Pasadena, California, has been appointed Executive Director of the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association (EFMA). McKaughan, former chief executive officer of Mission to the World in Atlanta, will succeed Wade T. Coggins, who is retiring in March 1990, after 15 years as Executive Director. McKaughan will begin work with EFMA in January, 1990 and assume the executive post at EFMA's annual convention in March.

John Ferguson, former president of Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham, England, died on May 24th. He was 68 years old. During the late 1950s and early 1960s he spent ten years in Nigeria where he was Professor of Classics and later Dean of Arts at the University of Ibadan. He retired from Selly Oak Colleges in 1986.

Mennonite Brethren missiologist George W. Peters (1907–1988), born in Orloff, Russia, died December 24, 1988, in Fresno, California. On November 29, 1919, he witnessed the massacre of his father, family members, and many villagers. Together with his mother he came to Canada via
lieve in Christ worked very well in the United States where Christianity was the major religion, and people could become Christians without separating from their families and friends. The one-by-one method, however, did not work in India among Hindus, because if only one person became a Christian he was thrown out of his family and caste, and suffered social dislocation.

One very significant result of the survey must be noted. A Disciple of Christ missionary, Donald McGavran, was greatly influenced by the findings of that research, and joined Bishop Pickett in subsequent studies on group movements. This later led to the publication of his two books, *The Bridges of God and How Churches Grow*, and eventually to the inauguration of the Church Growth movement, which has greatly influenced the strategy and teaching of Christian missions in the past two decades. Church Growth principles have been the driving force in establishing several departments and schools of World Mission and Evangelism in seminaries across the United States and around the world.

In a letter addressed to this writer, McGavran has expressed his debt to Bishop Pickett's influence in these words:

Pickett limited his insight to India. He never hinted that this might be a universal principle applicable everywhere. During the years 1940 to 1952 I began to see that this principle applied everywhere. Between 1954 and 1961 I carried out extensive surveys in Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Formosa, Thailand, Belgian Congo, and Jamaica. What I had begun to see in the preceding decade was abundantly proved. In short, I universalized Pickett's findings concerning India. . . . All this opening of vision I owe to Waskom Pickett.'

**Pickett, the Social Activist**

Waskom Pickett was not only concerned about the spiritual needs of the church in India, he was also concerned about the physical and material needs of Indian people, particularly in the villages. His interest in a variety of areas made a profound impact on life in India.

Discovering that the average Indian cow yielded little more than two quarts of milk a day, Waskom Pickett began to consider the possibility of importing first-class bulls from America and breeding them with the best cows in India. So he persuaded a successful dairyman in Merced, California, to ship four Jersey bulls to India, and arranged for the semen of the bulls to be artificially inseminated into several Punjabi cows. The result was a new breed of cows that produced considerably more and richer milk. Soon many Punjabi farmers were begging that their cows be inseminated so that they would have offspring equally productive and valuable. Finally the government imported over 800 Jersey bulls into India and started a full-scale program of interbreeding. Consequently, the milk supply in that part of India increased greatly!

The worldwide influenza epidemic of 1918 and 1919 left a great many babies in India as orphans. Dozens were brought by their neighbors to Christian hospitals or schools. So Bishop Pickett raised Rs. 100,000 (then $30,000) and constructed a baby fold on land adjacent to Clara Swain Hospital in Bareilly. One baby was left on a winter morning in a basket on the verandah of the missionary in charge. Years later that baby became Bishop Pickett's secretary and sometime afterward came to America for advanced study. Today he is professor of Old Testament in Leonard Theological College in Jabalpur. Other baby-fold wards hold responsible positions in church and state all over North India.

One of Bishop Pickett's chief public services was his campaign to promote prohibition in the country. He edited and published a biweekly *Temperance Clip sheet*, which contained articles on the evil effects of the liquor traffic in society, and was mailed to over 1,000 editors who were influencing public opinion across India. This effort acquired wide recognition and brought letters of support from every province in the country. Politicians and national leaders joined in the fight against liquor. The Right Honorable Chintamani Rajagopalacharia, chief minister of Madras and later acting governor general of India, developed a severe restrictive policy for dealing with the sale of intoxicants, which he called "a half-way to prohibition." He spoke of Bishop Pickett as "the father of Indian prohibition" and said that the *Temperance*
Clipsheet had convinced him that it was his duty to support the struggle against alcohol, opium, and hemp drugs.8

This is the legacy of J. Waskom Pickett, evangelist and social activist, churchman and statesman, who untiringly and unselfishly served the people of India for forty-six years and made an impact upon both church and nation that continues to this day.

Bishop and Mrs. Pickett spent the last years of their lives in a retirement village in Columbus, Ohio. He passed away in the summer of 1981, at the age of ninety-one, and his wife, Ruth, followed just two years later. This writer had the honor of conducting a memorial service for the couple in July 1983, when their remains were interred in the cemetery at Wilmore, Kentucky.

Notes

1. Pickett, handwritten notes entitled “My Struggle with t.b.,” Archives of Asbury College.
2. Narrated by Bishop Pickett while speaking in Dr. Seamands’s class in Asbury Theological Seminary.
3. Pickett, My Twentieth Century Odyssey, p. 156.

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In the Archives of Asbury College, Wilmore, Kentucky, there is an assortment of unclassified personal correspondence and handwritten materials left by Bishop Pickett.
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THE WORKABLE PROGRAM.
Ministry in Multi-Faith Britain

Roger H. Hooker

A few years ago a Lutheran pastor from East Germany was visiting Britain. At the end of his stay he was asked if he had any parting message for Christians in this country. He replied: “How I envy you, for in the people who walk the streets of your big cities are embodied all the major issues which face the churches across the world today.” He went on to say that he found his own country somewhat dull and monochrome in comparison to this one.

For the last six years I have lived among the kind of people to whom he was referring, and I reckon he was a perceptive visitor. My home is in Smethwick, an urban area on the edge of Birmingham, Britain’s second city after London. Here is to be found an extraordinary mixture of races and religions.

Let me illustrate this from my own personal situation: next door to my home are three Sikh brothers and their families. They own several shops, a housing agency, a club, and have recently started a taxi service. In the house opposite is a black Seventh-day Adventist and next to him a black pastor of the Church of God of Prophecy. Around the corner is a shop run by Muham-

mad, who comes from Pakistan. A few months ago a white family moved into a house three doors up the road from ours. That was quite an unusual event; they turned out to be Buddhists. There is a house where three or four Yemeni Arabs live; there are Muslims from Bangladesh as well as from Pakistan. Within Smethwick there are two Sikh gurdwaras, both of them in buildings that used to be churches, a Muslim mosque in a small terraced house, converted for the purpose, a Buddhist shrine in a private house, as well as an almost infinite variety of Christian churches and chapels.

Most of the religious groups live their own separate lives and have little to do with one another. Often indeed they are extraordinarily ignorant of each other’s lives and customs. I used to think such ignorance reprehensible, especially among Christians. Surely they ought at least to know what their neighbors of other faiths believe and how they live. But now I can see that ignorance is a kind of self-defense. The various communities are living very close to one another; very few if any of our streets belong wholly to one particular group. Such a situation, at any rate in this country, is still relatively new. Closing one’s eyes and ears to people who are different is one way of coping. It is a kind of survival mechanism, understandable even if not very creditable.

Probably the most locally rooted community is the Muslims. Every afternoon after the schools have closed one can see groups of Muslim children hurrying along to the house mosque where they are taught the Arabic of the Qur’an. All Muslims with small children want to live near such a place, so that the children can learn the sacred language. The Sikh gurdwaras are open at all hours, and a constant stream of people can be seen going in and out. Their clientele often come from far afield as well as from Smethwick itself. The gurdwaras are not only places of worship, as they are back in India, but focal points for the whole life of the community, places where in a very literal sense the members can feel at home. In contrast to the mosque and the gurdwaras, many churches are closed apart from Sundays and a few hours during the week. Not surprisingly, even if inaccurately, many Sikhs and Muslims feel as a result that Christians are not very active in the practice of their religion.

Smethwick has become a multi-faith area during the course of the last thirty years: in the late 1950s immigrants began to arrive from what is today called the New Commonwealth—from the West Indies and from the Indian subcontinent. Many of them came intending to stay for only a few years and then return home. But somehow things did not work out as they had planned. Eventually they brought their wives and children over to Britain, and many of the children in particular are now thoroughly West­ernized and have rarely if ever seen their ancestral home.

The churches have been curiously slow to respond to this new presence in their midst. Many Christians left the area as the immigrants moved in. In part this was for economic reasons, but often their departure had less worthy motives. Those who had traditionally supported the work of missionary societies overseas were baffled if not affronted to find they had neighbors from India or Pakistan. Sometimes they simply couldn’t cope and so left.

My family and I served with the Church Missionary Society (CMS; a voluntary society of the Church of England) in India for thirteen years. In 1982, after we had returned to Britain, I was seconded by that society to the Diocese of Birmingham for full­time ministry among the Asian population, as they are usually called, in this area. At this local level my job has two parts. I speak Hindi, the lingua franca of much of North India, and this invariably opens the door into homes and hearts. Some families are perfectly contented but seem to appreciate a friendly visit from time to time. Nothing much may seem to happen during such a visit, and yet it is all part of the long slow business of building up trust and confidence.

In other homes there may be a particular need one can meet: father has to go to a government office to get some problem sorted out, and says, “If you come with me, they will listen.” Often teenage children feel themselves caught between the kind of freedoms their white peers enjoy and to which they themselves aspire, and the much more restrictive and traditional expectations of their parents. They welcome the chance to talk with an older person about their perplexities. Some of the older generation who

Those who had supported . . . the work of missionary societies overseas were baffled if not affronted to find they had neighbors from India or Pakistan.

Rober H. Hooker was with the Church of North India as a CMS missionary from 1965 to 1978. After returning to Britain he was on the staff of Crowther Hall, the CMS training college at Selly Oak in Birmingham, from 1979 to 1982, when he took up his present ministry in Smethwick, which is described in this essay. He is also a member of the Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths of the British Council of Churches.
cannot speak English have considerable difficulties: they cannot understand what is happening to their children. Many are now unemployed and the great dream of improving themselves, with which they came to this country, has somehow not been fulfilled. They too appreciate a listening ear.

Sometimes in my visits I find that profound questions about the meaning of life and about God are raised—usually when I am least expecting it.

I also have a ministry to the local Christians and this is the second part of my job. Many of them wish they could have left the area when others did. Often they feel bewildered and emotionally bruised by the enormous social changes of the last twenty years, changes that are somehow all gathered up and symbolized in the coming of the Asians. Most of those who live locally are elderly, while others commute into the church on Sundays, having long since moved out of Smethwick in order to find work elsewhere. Their weekly visit to the church is their only remaining link with the place where they once lived. How can those who have stayed and those who have left be helped to see the hand of God in change, to discover God’s reality in the present and not just in the good old days whose passing they lament? Unless they can have a positive attitude to their own time and place they cannot be open-hearted to the newcomers. So just below the surface of life in Smethwick is a good deal of resentment, and this is fertile soil for racial prejudice. In addition to that, for many people life is a struggle for survival. They do not have much energy for new ventures.

However, it is possible for Christians to encourage positive opportunities for meeting: at our local church we have invited Asians to come and join us for the annual Harvest Festival, since harvest is an event with universal appeal and when many people want to thank God. Few have actually come but at least this is a beginning. My wife was invited by a church women’s group to talk about Indian weddings. She took a young Sikh woman, herself recently married, with her, and this led to an invitation to visit the temple. She also got two of her Sikh friends to arrange a cookery demonstration in our local church kitchen. All these are small beginnings but they leave good memories behind, and so we hope can touch the imaginations of those who shared in them and lead to more adventurous initiatives.

Sometimes the crossing of frontiers has less happy results. A Hindu shopkeeper who had come to this country from South Africa shared with me his concern about his son: the young man had joined the Jehovah’s Witnesses and father’s anxiety was that he might, as he put it, “marry a Jamaican.” A Sikh father told me of his pain and bewilderment at his son with whom he can no longer communicate, for the boy has become a Christian. He is one of a number of Asians who have been converted to Christ in recent years. Most of them belong to strict evangelical groups, which tend to keep apart from other Christians.

Here we begin to touch explicitly on those large issues that face the world church and to which that Lutheran pastor referred. How do we bear witness to Christ in a place like Smethwick? For today Smethwick has many equivalents in other cities across the world. Some Christians advocate a direct and traditional evangelistic approach, and as I have just indicated, some young Asians are brought to faith in Christ in this way. Yet this is at a cost, for many others, who are already vulnerable, are hurt and angry when their own religion is despised and they are told that only in Jesus Christ can salvation be found. I think too of a Sikh family whom I know well. Father suffers from depression and is sometimes violent with his family. His eldest son has a bad stammer and asthma as a result. The mother’s deep Sikh faith is all that holds the family together and keeps them going. In that sort of context an explicit Christian statement would seem intrusive and divisive even if it were understood.

These dilemmas reflect a Christian dividedness that is found in many multi-faith areas in contemporary Britain. On the one hand are evangelical groups whose aim is conversion, and who tend to cut themselves off from other Christians whom they regard as untrue to the faith. On the other hand are more liberal and questioning Christians, who believe their task is to offer the hand of love and friendship in the name of Christ but who are very uneasy about, if not actually hostile to, the idea of conversion. Sometimes they set up interfaith groups to further the cause of mutual understanding and discovery.

Some of us are called to interpret these two sets of Christians to one another, and we can do that only if we carry within ourselves the pain of the conflict between them. It is very easy to opt for one side and reject the other, but that is to evade the pain. Is it possible at the same time to work out a more profound theology and practice that can hold these two ways together in a creative and fruitful tension? I believe it is not only possible but urgently necessary, and so I want to devote the rest of this article to a tentative beginning.

I start with the idea of giving space. Part of loving our neighbors is giving them space to be themselves. In personal encounter this means listening rather than talking. It may mean going with them to a government office as I have suggested above, so that their life can be happier and more secure. At the level of community relations it may mean helping a particular religious group to find a building where they can worship according to their own tradition. It may mean protesting publicly against racial prejudice and discrimination by the white community.

Only those who are secure in their own space can have the confidence to relate to others, so giving space is a way of preparing the ground in which that kind of relationship can take root and grow. In the first part of this article I have given some practical examples of how the establishment of relationships is possible, but the giving of space must precede it and undergird it. When we are in the constant business of doing these two things, we can then begin to ask what kind of witness to Christ is appropriate and possible.

When one looks at the ways in which people are in practice brought to Christian faith, they are varied, so varied in fact that it is impossible to say one is the right or the only way. Here we have to trust in the Holy Spirit. If one is in a relationship of friendship and increasing openness, if one feels that somehow the friendship is growing and has not got stuck, then one can rely on the Holy Spirit to do with it whatever the Spirit wills. The Christian’s task is to be present in that friendship, a presence that is willed and intended as the presence of Christ.

The Christian’s task is to be present in friendship, a presence that is willed and intended as the presence of Christ.
To put that in different words: at the heart of the gospel is the self-giving love of Christ. That love has to be embodied in the lives of Christians if our words about it are to make sense. At this point white British Christians face a searching challenge: for many centuries Christian faith has been closely linked to the life and culture of our country, so closely linked in fact that the half-conscious assumptions of many people, to be white, Christian, and British are all part of a single package.

Before the arrival of the newcomers thirty years ago there was little to question in these assumptions, but minorities always compel the majority to redefine itself, a process that the majority invariably resents and sometimes fears. In Britain our Christian faith and our nationhood are too deeply bound together for our health. We need to discover that we are part of a world church. My own society, CMS, to which I have already referred, now sees itself as a receiving as well as a sending agency. A few miles from where I live it has set up a small training house for mission partners (as they are now called) going overseas. In charge of it is a couple from South India. But this is only a beginning, even if a useful and imaginative one. Racism in the churches is a very real factor, and very often strident antiracist rhetoric does little to improve the situation. Yet the strident are the way they are because they have been deeply hurt. Their voices must be heard. We are starting to listen to one another, but there is still a long way to go.

To be sure, the best in British culture is rooted in the gospel, but there is much more to the gospel than the British have discovered. Because we rightly perceive the gospel as the source and inspiration of so much that is good in our heritage, we are apt to see Christian faith as something that must today be defended and preserved. Can we be humble enough to accept criticism in the name of that same gospel from those over whom we were until yesterday the colonial masters? That question implies, in the first instance, discovering our membership, at the local level, of the worldwide body of Christ.

Can we and should we also learn from the people of other faiths who now live among us? That is a much more searching question. I believe the answer to be Yes, but it is a Yes that needs undergirding with a strong theology. My theological mentor, Leonard Hodgson, often used to say, “Christ gave his life; it is for Christians to discern the doctrine.” In other words, at the heart of Christian faith is a Person whose full significance is inexhaustible, and which therefore can never be finally encapsulated in any form of words. Perhaps indeed that is what “finality” really means. Will it not take the whole world to understand and truly worship the whole Christ? Contemporary Catholics talk of “appropriating the values of other faiths.” This is not syncretism but “baptism,” and it takes a very penetrating kind of discernment to see what can and should be “baptized” and what rejected.

Here too we need the world church to help us. One could argue that in India, for example, the church is too foreign and so needs to be more deeply rooted in the local culture, while here in Britain we have the opposite problem. We are too much at home with our Britishness and need others to help us to discover in the gospel a critique of what we are.

This is an agenda both daunting and exciting. It is what makes Smethwick a good place in which to live.

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**Message from the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism, San Antonio, Texas**

In the name of the Triune God, Creator of heaven and earth, Savior and Comforter, people gathered from all parts of the world in San Antonio, Texas, U.S.A., as a World Mission and Evangelism Conference of the World Council of Churches, under the theme “Your Will Be Done, Mission in Christ’s Way.”

The two most significant trends of this conference were the spirit of universality (catholicity) of the gathering, and its concern for the fullness of the Gospel, namely:

- hold in creative tension
  - spiritual and material needs,
  - prayer and action,
  - evangelism and social responsibility,
  - dialogue and witness,
  - power and vulnerability,
  - local and universal.

Mirror of that diversity, San Antonio is a multicultural city where many strands meet, clash and intermingle: Hispanic, Anglo-saxon, Black, Indigenous Peoples, others.

In this context, the gathered people looked ahead to 1992, the 500th anniversary of the conquest of the Americas, a time when the Gospel message was brought to these lands under the auspices of colonial powers, which often distorted Christian love with violence and oppression. The heirs and survivors of the indigenous people recall this date with bitterness. This past cannot be undone, but reparation must be done to redeem the future, and the hands of all people must join to weave a new world community.

Concerned with the discernment of the will of God in today’s world, the representatives of the churches gathered in San Antonio, and spoke about shared signs of hope and renewal. They celebrated the new opportunity for religious expression in many socialist countries. They realized that the Holy Spirit, Spirit of Truth, Freedom, Communion and Justice is at work today in different parts of the world. Communities, and even entire nations, in unexpected ways, are involved in self-examination, repentance, renewal and...
struggle for justice,
turning to the Living God,
stressing the infinite value of human dignity,
and turning to one another to make peace.
For all this,
we rejoice in the Spirit;
we thank the Living God,
and in these signs we hear a new call to faith,
and see a new challenge for mission and evangelism.
At the same time,
Christ is still suffering in many parts of the world,
and is waiting for our concrete response:
solidarity and action.
We have heard many voices of anguish and pain:
voices of poor and oppressed people,
voices of women who suffer discrimination,
voices of youth challenging injustice in church and society,
voices of children who suffer innocently in body, mind and spirit,
voices of victims of foreign intervention and militarism,
voices of those who are discriminated against and violated because of race,
voices of those who are being destroyed by nuclear abuse,
voices of peoples suffocating under the burden of external debt,
voices of indigenous peoples yearning for self-determination,
voices of refugees and displaced persons,
voices of hunger for food and for meaning in life,
voices of anger at blatant violation of human rights,
voices of longing for liberation and justice,
voices of solidarity in the quest for a new human community.
We also heard of the voiceless suffering of religious communities
whose right to exist is denied constitutionally, as is the case in Albania.
In the study of Holy Scripture,
in worship and prayer,
in self-examination and penitence,
we have sensed anew
the urgent voice of God calling us to love mercy,
to act justly
and to walk humbly with our God.
This is a time for repentance,
to make reparation,
to turn to the Living God.
Judgment begins in the household of God.
In faithfulness to God’s will,
it is time for a new commitment to a mission in Christ’s Way,
and prayer, witness and action,
in the power of the Holy Spirit.
God calls us, Christians everywhere, to join in:
proclaiming the good news of God’s redeeming love in Jesus Christ;
acting in solidarity with those who suffer and struggle for justice and human dignity;
sharing justly the earth’s resources;
bearing witness to the Gospel through renewed communities in mission.
To those who hear or experience a twisted or partial Gospel, or no Gospel at all:
Mission in Christ’s Way calls us by deed and word
to share the wholeness of the Gospel,
the love of God revealed in the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ.
To churches and nations where divisions, barriers and enmities prevail:
Mission in Christ’s Way calls us to strive
for unity with justice as a basis for effective mission.
To peoples of wonderfully diverse cultures across the earth:
Mission in Christ’s Way calls us to extend understanding and respect,
relating the Gospel of Christ to these cultures with sensitivity.
To persons of other religious faiths of the world:
Mission in Christ’s Way calls us to listen to and respect their beliefs,
witness our faith to them in word and deed,
seek with them for peace and justice.
To young people and all those resisting injustice and war, facing repression and death:
Mission in Christ’s Way calls us to solidarity in the struggle for life,
turning hopelessness into strength.
To those whose land and livelihood are taken away, despoiled or polluted:
Mission in Christ’s Way calls us to resist all that violates human rights,
that basic justice may extend to all.
To those who suffer and whose life is threatened, exploited, shattered or oppressed:
Mission in Christ’s Way calls us to commit all in our power
to defend life in all its fullness and self-determination for every human being, community and nation.
Proclamation of the Kingdom,
and of hope for the whole creation,
of a Mission in Christ’s Way
is not just an affirmation,
but a way of life.
We are called to concrete acts of faithfulness,
a living expression of the prayer that Christ taught us:
“Your Will Be Done.”
Letter from Those with Evangelical Concerns at the World Council of Churches’ Conference at San Antonio to the Lausanne II Conference at Manila

Our sisters and brothers in Christ:

We bring greetings with this letter from all your sisters and brothers in Christ gathered at this World Council of Churches’ Conference on “Your will be done—Mission in Christ’s Way” here at Trinity University, San Antonio, Texas, May 21 to 31, 1989.

We have taken part in this conference in the spirit of the aim of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) which we affirm: “To assist the Christian community in the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by word and deed to the whole world to the end that all may believe in him and be saved” (from the Constitution of the CWME).

We have found encouragement to take part in the discussions of this conference from the statement “Mission and Evangelism—An Ecumenical Affirmation,” published in 1982. This has been the first conference of the Commission since its publication.

The statement affirms: “The Church is sent into the world to call people and nations to repentance, to announce forgiveness of sin and a new beginning in relations with God and with neighbors through Jesus Christ. This evangelistic calling has a new urgency today.”

We welcome the production of the Ecumenical Affirmation on Mission and Evangelism and we commend it to be owned and acted on by member churches of the World Council. We also commend it to study and response by the Lausanne Committee. We recommend that out of such study, authentic models of evangelism be collected in which all sections of the church universal may find their concerns expressed.

I. We wish to share with you many of the good things we have learned and been enriched by at this conference

We have appreciated the rich diversity of the make-up of the conference. The World Council has sought to reflect the worldwide people of God. 43 percent of the delegates are women, 70 percent from the two-thirds world and 15 percent are youth. It has also sought a balance of lay and ordained people, and to involve the gifts of women equally with those of men, and we commend this to the Lausanne movement.

We have been enriched by the worship and the Bible study. The worship has drawn on the Word of God; it has made use of verbal and non-verbal activities and has drawn on prayers and devotions from many cultures and different languages to express our devotion to God. An early morning walk with meditation on the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus was particularly powerful. Our six Bible studies on the Gospel of Luke have been a means of sharing, and of building relationships of fellowship, learning and trust with those from whom we are divided by denomination or race, and of building community around the Word of God. We have had a chance to hear and learn from other Christian traditions as equally committed as we are to following Christ.

We have welcomed the importance given to the cross of Jesus in this conference. The cost of suffering as we share the good news of Jesus has been stressed. The cross is to be at the heart of all authentic Christian witness, both in our words and in our life.

We have appreciated the openness of the conference process. Through its group work the conference has given space for all views to be heard and represented. This openness has given ample opportunity for evangelical concerns to be voiced and to find expression in conference documents. Since we recognise that the worldwide evangelical family has a rich diversity of views held in submission to the authority of scripture, we would welcome a similar process in evangelical conferences.

We have been encouraged by the way in which Christians from many traditions have joined here in confessing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of the world and in affirming that they cannot point to any other way of salvation but Jesus Christ. We ask that you join us in refusing to identify the WCC declarations about the cross as a retreat from an affirmation of the centrality and finality of Jesus Christ.

II. We wish to encourage you to pursue a number of concerns which you bear as a gift and a trust for the worldwide body of Christ.
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In worship, we evangelicals have a strong tradition of expounding the Word of God with relevance to the lives of the hearers. In addition to being a lived faith, our faith is a *preached faith* which uplifts and inspires. We would have welcomed more of this in our worship times here and we believe this is an area where the Lausanne movement can contribute.

We have appreciated the contributions of Africans at San Antonio, but we have missed the full range of the experience of the *black-led churches and denominations* in the West. They have often not been able to find their way into the mainline churches or their associations. We have learned much from these black-led churches and from immigrant churches in the West. We missed an expression of their strong sense of mission and evangelism, and their powerful combination of preaching and worship. We commend their contribution to the gatherings of the Lausanne movement.

A whole tradition in Christian mission draws particularly on Jesus' *ministries of healing and deliverance* from demonic possession. We have missed serious reflection and consideration of this in this conference and believe that there are those within the Lausanne movement who can contribute this to the mission of the wider church.

We have major concerns in the areas of the relation of *evangelism and social responsibility* to witness in the context of those of other faiths.

*Evangelism and socio-political involvement* are both part of our Christian duty, as the Lausanne Covenant of 1974 reaffirmed. Many thousands of evangelicals have found innovative ways to issue the invitation to follow Jesus Christ in the context of engaging in social action. Encouraged by what we have seen God do through these, we give thanks to God and urge you to pursue a stronger relationship between proclaiming and demonstrating the good news in relation to the social and political dimensions of life.

The concern to bring reconciliation between divided groups and justice for oppressed peoples, sets the context and agenda within which the work of Jesus Christ to overcome evil and bring new relationships with God and between people can be authentically shared, and the invitation to follow him can be given. Those within the Lausanne movement who are engaging in evangelism in such contexts must be encouraged and their experiences highlighted, so that the world Christian community may know where evangelicals stand with relation to witness in the context of concern for social justice.

For too long the World Council has been perceived as being involved with justice without relation to justification of sinners; and the Lausanne movement has been perceived as being concerned for personal justification without reference to the personal and corporate sin at the root of injustice. Without an affirmation of the invitation of Jesus to repentance, faith and discipleship, mission among the poor for justice can become indistinguishable from the economic developmental notion of eradicating poverty without respect to the many cultural and human values of poor communities.

The Lausanne movement takes seriously the *exclusive claims made in the Bible for Jesus Christ* as the final revelation of God, and the only savior for all humankind. *Mission and Evangelism—An Ecumenical Affirmation* of CWM states that “Christians owe the message of God’s salvation in Jesus to every person and to every people” (Para. 41). “The proclamation of the Gospel includes an invitation to recognise and accept in a personal decision the saving Lordship of Christ. It is the announcement of a personal encounter, mediated by the Holy Spirit, with the living Christ, receiving his forgiveness and making a personal accept-

III. We venture to suggest a number of areas in which new and creative initiatives could be undertaken

This WCC conference at San Antonio had about 300 delegates and 400 other participants. There was an overlap for the first four days with "Encuentro," a North American Conference held by the WCC on the same theme. Our conferences shared the same campus, met at meal times and in worship, and had a number of joint sessions where the North American conference sat in on our plenary sessions. The model has much to commend it.

We are aware of the pressure on Christian resources and personnel and of the image portrayed to the world through holding two separate world conferences on mission at San Antonio and Manila in one year.

We are also aware that one of the goals of the Lausanne movement is to be a catalyst in fostering efforts for evangelization and providing networks to that end. So we ask that you seriously consider the possibility that the next world conference of the Lausanne movement be planned to take place with the next World Council conference on mission and evangelism on a similar model to the Encuentro Conference and the World Council conference here—that is, that they be held simultaneously, on the same site and share a number of sessions.

The three official observers from the Lausanne Committee have been warmly welcomed at San Antonio. There has been a remarkable overlap in the concerns of many who identify themselves primarily as so-called "ecumenicals" and those of us
who have evangelical concerns. But this overlap is not so evident in many of the public presentations, platforms and publications of the World Council. We urge that both the Lausanne movement and the World Council avoid the temptations of mutually excluding each other's concerns from their public platforms and presentations. This does violence to the reality of the commitments and concerns of many of God's people who find that authentic Christian discipleship requires them to embrace the concerns of both movements.

We pray that through this year's conferences, God will further empower the whole church to take the whole Gospel to the whole world, to pray with fervour "Your will be done," to do mission in Jesus Christ's way and to proclaim Jesus Christ until he comes.

Book Reviews


In Guardians of the Great Commission, Ruth Tucker of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School brings us the stories of selected missionary women of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The book is similar in format to Tucker's widely acclaimed books From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya and Daughters of the Church: it is a compilation of missionary biographies grouped under subject headings that illustrate different facets of the missionary experience. The book contains many captivating stories and is easy to read. It would be an excellent text for mission study groups in the local church.

The greatest strength of the book is its treatment of the conflicting role expectations faced by missionary women, both single and married. The tension between domestic responsibilities and being called by God for mission work is a thread that runs through the lives of all married missionary women. Tucker elucidates with particular grace the pain of the missionary mother as she sends children away to boardingschool or worries about their health under primitive conditions. The marital stress between partners who feel conflicting calls to ministry is another theme that is treated with sensitivity.

Tucker draws the reader's attention to the astonishingly varied roles that women have played in missions—from home-front organization and mission-strategizing to pioneer translation work among tribal peoples. Her skillful pen captures the spirit of women who might otherwise have been forgotten, especially women from "faith" missions, pentecostal, and nondenominational groups. Her assumption that mission is evangelism means that she does not treat nontraditional forms of mission activity such as work for social liberation.

The book, though inspiring and informative, is not without weaknesses. It consistently misspells the names of the Woman's Missionary Union and the Woman's Missionary Society. Despite the inclusion of several non-Western women, the book might be seen in places to be condescending toward indigenous races and cultures. For example, in the introduction, Tucker selects a quotation to exemplify woman as "guardian of the Great Commission." The quotation, without disclaimer or com-

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Father Segundo Galilea (Santiago, Chile) is a consultant for the Department of Missions at the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM). Former Director of CELAM's Pastoral Institute in Colombia. Former professor at the Intercultural Center of Cuemavaca, Mexico. Author of Following Jesus; The Beatitudes; To Evangelize as Jesus Did; The Future of Our Past, The Spanish Mystics Speak to Contemporary Spirituality; The Way of Living Faith; A Spirituality of Liberation.

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Dana L. Robert is Assistant Professor of Mission, Boston University School of Theology.
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—JOHN GARVEY

Overcoming Missionary Stress.


Stress has become a useful and unifying concept for understanding a variety of experiences and their effects on individuals. In this case, the experiences are mission-related and the individuals are missionaries and their families.

This useful volume by Dr. Marjory Foyle, a veteran medical missionary and psychiatrist whose practice from London now encompasses the world, provides an understanding of many stresses. More importantly, it suggests means for preventing and for overcoming them. Drawing on a variety of sources and theories sometimes as diverse as those of Hans Selye and Carl Jung, the book comes most clearly from the crucible of life experience.

In part an expansion of issues addressed earlier in an Evangelical Missions Quarterly series of articles, this volume fills an important gap in the literature for missionary personnel. To this reviewer’s knowledge no piece with such potential for resonance to this type of need in the lives of missionaries has appeared since the companion pieces on stress and fatigue by Wayne and Sally Dye, respectively, in the 1974 volume of Missiology.

Attention is given such areas as the nature of stress, culture shock, reentry, and family-related issues such as children’s education and development. Importantly, singleness and its stresses are also perceptively discussed. The ever present issue of interpersonal relationships, empirically demonstrated to be a high source of stress among missionaries, is also handled sensitively. Internal stresses as diverse as unresolved conflict, fear of failure, sex drive and separation/loneliness are also addressed.

A powerful feature of the book is the integration of Scripture as a source for interpreting and overcoming stress. The blending of this base, knowledge from psychiatry, and the author’s deep engagement in life experience on the field brings forth a readable and forthright volume. It should be especially helpful to those entering mission service, and to all missionaries, field leaders, and mission administrators who wish to help themselves and others handle stress more effectively.

—John Powell

Spirituality and Liberation: Overcoming the Great Fallacy.


The Great Fallacy—Brown’s bête noire—is dualism: “dividing the world into two separate compartments”: body/soul, spirituality/sexuality, spirituality/liberation. His concern is “to deny the legitimacy of such division” and to argue that these are “two ways of talking about the same thing” (p. 18). There are not two separate worlds to talk about, but one. “Spirituality when radically understood includes what is meant by liberation” and vice versa (pp. 116, 121).

The back-cover testimonials applaud the achievement; but I have hesitations. A lack of nuance and subtlety arises despite the correct premise that “what God has joined together let
none divide." There is too great a tendency—and not only in Brown—to a Ni­
"vellierung, a flattening, which is close to
the "simplistic equating" he wants
in Brown to avoid (p. 123). But as well as the
affirmation of "this is that," we also
need the negation of "this is not
that." You cannot simply reverse la­
borare est orare. For instance: (1) Inte­
gration is vital, but regaining the
creation base of the Old Testament
perspective too easily produces a flight
from the New, and the consequent
adoption of an absolute Kantian
"categorical imperative" of gran­
diose proportions with new "can­
on within the canon" (Mic. 6:8; Isa.
58; Matt. 25:31-46). (2) A marvelous list
of apparent polar opposites on pp. 25–
26 (sacred/secular, church/world, inner/
outer, etc.) can be merged only at great
cost; but if holiness truly equals whole­
ness, then those who can pay for ther­
apy will be further on the way than
those whose life is Christ who know
they are not whole. (3) Finally, there is
plenty about "spirituality" but little
about the Spirit, and none about the
Holy Spirit. As George Macleod, quoted
on p. 111, says: "There are few
words more dangerous than 'spirit­
ual.' "
Brown, professor emeritus of the­
ology and ethics at Pacific School of
Religion in Berkeley, California, has not
convinced me, but his punchy book
has certainly stimulated my thinking!
—Philip Seddon

Fidel and Religion: Castro Talks
on Revolution and Religion with
Frei Betto.

By Frei Betto. Translated by the Cuban
Center for Translation and Interpretation.
Introduction by Harvey Cox. New York:

Some thirty-six hours of tape-recorded
conversation with Castro provide a
ramble through the mind of this fas­
cinating man. The admiring recorder/author is a Brazilian Dominican who
sees the hopes of his liberation theo­
logy largely fulfilled in Cuba. A dedi­
cation salutes Latin American Christians
who "are preparing, in the manner
of John the Baptist, for the coming of
the Lord in socialism."

Long personal reminiscences de­
tail Castro's upbringing as child of a
pious mother and a well-to-do self-made
landowner, through his education by
Christian Brothers and Jesuits, to his
self-made conversion to Marxism and
revolution as a university student. The
commander's zest for life and omni­
vorous reading give him an engaging
delight in talking about everything from
cooking to economics and cosmology.

Castro portrays his revolution as
hugely successful in improving the
health, welfare, dignity; and liberty of
the Cuban people. He admits one flaw­
some discrimination against Chris­
tians. This is due to the inevitable prej­
udice against a Catholic church formerly
identified with a privileged elite, many
of whom now work in the United States
to sabotage the revolution. This prob­
lem has never existed with Protestants
or with progressive Catholics, like the
nuns whose social work Fidel praises
highly.

David M. Stowe was a missionary in China and
Lebanon and overseas ministries executive of the
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Castro is an eloquent and voluble critic of the failures and crimes of historical “Christianity” while affirming that “the teachings of Christ... completely coincide with the aims of Socialists, of Marxists-Leninists” (p. 36). He hopes for a “strategic alliance” (p. 233) with progressive Christians, and a minimizing of controversy over philosophical differences. Although he cannot yet claim to love his enemies, Castro hates only the iniquitous systems of imperialism and capitalism. He uses aptly many biblical allusions: the class struggle in heaven between good and bad angels, the racism of the curse on Ham, Calvary as symbol of self-immolation. As portrayed here, Castro is more than ready to give Christianity a responsible place in a society ordered by the teachings of Marx—and Christ.

—David M. Stowe

Selected Writings of Hiram Bingham 1814-1869, Missionary to the Hawaiian Islands: To Raise the Lord’s Banner.


Hiram Bingham has been one of the most controversial figures in American missions. As the dominant member of the first mission group sent to Hawaii, he has figured largely in American-Hawaiian history and has been much censured for his puritanical impositions and his devaluation of Hawaiian culture. Often the picture drawn of him has been a caricature rather than a full and fair portrait. This is notably true of the picture in James Michener’s book Hawaii, and the movie Hawaii based on it, where the principal missionary character, Abner Hale, is ob-

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Deadline: October 1, 1989.
Frequently meant to portray Hiram Bingham.

With the publication of this useful and interesting collection of Bingham's writings we have been provided with some tools for correcting the caricature. Bingham emerges as a person of deep dedication, strong religious feelings, determined to pursue the right as he saw it, close to the Hawaiians, working in and through their social structures rather than ignoring them, struggling against the imported evils of Western culture, devoted to the high ideals for Christian work with which the mission began, a loving husband with a warm family life.

Admittedly, the picture we get of him is seen only through his own eyes. His writings are mostly letters telling about the struggles and triumphs of the work he was engaged in. These writings need to be supplemented by reports of the ways in which he was seen by others, and there are a few letters included in this collection that are by other people writing about Bingham. Also included are many letters written during his later life, the long trying years of searching for a role in American life after his return from Hawaii, years of frustration and failure. These show another side of the man.

Most useful for the general reader is a fifty-page biography of Bingham, which serves as an introduction. The author, who teaches history at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas, has already shown his mastery of the subject in his earlier work, Fathers and Sons, an exploration of successive generations of the remarkable Bingham family. The present book takes that exploration a long step further.

—Charles W. Forman

Reflection and Projection:


This Festschrift for George W. Peters is a fascinating volume. It consists of twenty-five articles in English and German. Where the article is in German, there is a brief summary in English, and vice versa. Space permits comments on only a couple of the articles.

J. B. Toews has written a biographical tribute that is con amore, but without reflection on the tensions that Peters's strong personality and impatience with formalities and structures created in some quarters, especially at the schools he served in Fresno, California. We meet a strong, dynamic personality, not easily confined to local, academic, or denominational boundaries. We learn about a Christian statesman and warrior for conservative evangelical positions, a theoretical missiologist who at the same time is the practical missionary.

Peder A. Eidberg was professor of missions and history of Christianity at the Baptistenes Teologiske Seminar, Oslo, Norway, from 1960 to 1985. Since 1985 he has been President of this seminary.

In the section on History I especially found the article by Hans-Werner Genesichen on "Mission—ein geschichtliches Phänomen" and the article by Klaus Fiedler on "Der deutsche Beitrag zu den interdenominationellen Missionen" interesting and stimulating. Fiedler draws attention to facts about European mission that deserve a closer look. Very informative also is Hans Kasdorf's "Forschungsgeschichtliche" survey: "Missiology as a Discipline in Historical Perspective."

As a Baptist living and working in a country with a state church embracing about 95 percent of the population, I read with much interest Edward Rommen's article on "A Framework for the Analysis of Nominal Christianity: A West German Case Study." Some will dispute the line of argument and certain conclusions, but I think Rommen has hit the center of the problems of the churches of Western Europe as they attempt to evangelize this continent.

—Peder A. Eidberg

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Jim Montgomery is founder and president of Dawn Ministries. He and his wife Lyn served with Overseas Crusades for 27 years in Asia and on the Executive Leadership Team in California. It was during his 13 years in the Philippines that he developed the DAWN strategy.

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July 1989 139
Lexikon missionstheologischer Grundbegriffe.


The editors of this encyclopedia of basic missiological concepts are already known in the anglophone world: Professor Sundermeier of Heidelberg co-edited Fides pro mundi vita: Missionstheologie heute, with contributions in English (1980); Müller published Mission Theology: An Introduction (1987), translated from his German Missionstheologie (1985). Now they have teamed up as Protestant and Catholic theologians and produced a missiological Lexikon, a veritable curriculum in contemporary missiology.

Several observations must be highlighted. First, the words “contemporary missiology” deserve notice, for it is the contemporary aspect that takes precedence over the historical. The 110 articles are written by ninety scholars of Catholic, Orthodox, and various Protestant persuasions from different cultures and countries. Contributions are arranged alphabetically in a systematic-theological order, dealing critically with current missiological issues.

Second, the editors’ approach is both positive and negative. On the one hand, they address such topics as “Chinese Theology,” “Human Rights,” “Vatican II,” “Polygamy,” “Ecumenics,” “New Religious Movements,” and 104 others. Each article contains a helpful bibliography. Thus they cover the missiological terrain of global importance and provide a gold mine of resources. On the other hand, however, an encyclopedia should transcend the historical eras and include themes related to issues of the past. Even such vital topics as “Bible translations” and “indigeneity” are missing. That is disappointing.

Third, traditional mission thinking is fundamentally challenged. Editors and contributors take the position that missions are no longer the burden of Western churches alone, and that they no longer can move on a one-way street from Western European and Anglo-American countries to the rest of the world. Mission thinking is no longer contained within a Western mold; missionary concerns can no longer be sustained by the Western church. The Christian church is now situated in virtually every country of the globe and everywhere surrounded by unmissionized people. Thus Christian mission is always mission from the church to the world. That makes “foreign missions” obsolete and demands new ways of mission thinking and action.

Finally, the encyclopedia appeals to mission scholars and mission leaders. No student of missiology can afford to be without it.

Hans Kasdorf is Professor of World Mission and Chairperson of the Department, Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary, Fresno, California.

An Introduction to the Catholic Church of Asia.


This book is a brief survey of the Catholic Church in Asia today. However, it is actually only southeast and northeast Asia. Moreover some of the countries, such as China, Vietnam, Kampuchea, Laos, and even Burma, are not really included, since they cannot be freely visited for well-known reasons.

E. R. Hambye, S.J., taught church history and ecumenics for thirty-seven years in India. Since February 1987 he has been on the faculty of the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome.

The volume is made up of ten chapters; all the main themes are included—the local churches and the church universal, the Asian saints and the various spiritualities outside Christianity, the role of the Holy Scriptures, and the problem of indigenous Christian art. The author’s vast experience is well utilized; he has been in the Philippines since 1934, where he has served as Jesuit provincial of the Philippines and has taught missiology for many years.

Owing probably to the shortness of space and the vastness of the sub-
ject, the treatment—at least much of it—seems to me rather superficial and often too general and generalizing for such an introduction.

Is there such a reality as the unification of Christianity in Asia? My own experience suggests this is very doubtful. For instance, what kind of relation exists between the blossoming church in Korea and the rather inward-looking church in India? Are the Asian churches really so young? The author has forgotten in this respect to mention the Oriental Catholics of India, who now number nearly 3 million.

There is no mention that today the tendency of Asian theologies is to borrow liberation theology from Latin America and adapt it to their own conditions, be it in India, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and so forth.

The book concludes with two bibliographies, quite useful indeed: the first on "Scripture in Asia 1960–1984"; the second a more general one that consists of books and articles on the main topics dealt with.

—E. R. Hambye, S.J.


The author is a professor of theology at Immaculate Conception Seminary, Huntington, New York. Answering for Faith is "the second part of a foundational theology conceived as an introduction to a Christian theological anthropology." The first part, entitled The Reason for Our Hope, was published by Paulist Press in 1984.

The purpose of Answering for Faith is to state the rational basis for belief in Jesus Christ as the salvific Word of God to humanity. Viladesau utilizes a transcendental and dialectical method. He also treats non-Christian religions as the presupposition and extension of faith in Christ, not as rivals to that faith.

The thematization of revelation in world religions is considered in Hinduism, Hinayana Buddhism, Mahayana Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Islam. The author discusses in the section on the dialectic and convergence of religions the concept of "incarnation" or the mediation of God. He utilizes examples of the incarnational principle, including the avatar doctrine of Hinduism, the mediation of Buddha and Bodhisattvas in Buddhism, and the Islamic exaltation of Muhammed in Shi'a doctrine.

The last one-third of the book is given to a discussion of Jesus the Christ as God's Word, and to salvation in Christ. The author restates Karl Rahner's Christology and reflects upon it. There is a discussion of Christology as the culmination of anthropology, of the Christ event as means of salvation, and the "absoluteness" of Jesus as saving event and other mediations of salvation. In a closing statement he considers the positive note of other religions vis-à-vis Christianity and makes suggestions of areas of mutual complementarity.

"The idea that Christianity may

George W. Braswell, Jr., is Professor of Missions
and World Religions at Southeastern Baptist
Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C. He
was a Southern Baptist missionary to Iran (1967–74), with assignment as professor of comparative
religions, in the Faculty of Islamic Theology,
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Burkhalter, William Nolan.
“A Comparative Analysis of the Missiologies of Roland Allen and Donald Anderson McGavran.”
Ph.D. Louisville, Ky.: Southern Baptist Seminary, 1984.

Davis, Davena.
“The Dayspring from on High Hath Visited Us: An Examination of the Missionary Endeavours of the Moravians and the Anglican Church Missionary Society among the Inuit in the Arctic Regions of Canada and Labrador.”

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“Basic Ecclesiastical Communities: A New Form of Christian Organizational Response to the World Today.”

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Ph.D. Atlanta, Ga.: Emory Univ., 1987.

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