Reports on the Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) at Canberra, Australia in February, raise concern about the lack of clarity and priority given to mission and evangelism. Basically, it is a theological issue.

At the assembly, the Orthodox participants issued a statement of "Reflections" in which they expressed "sincere concern about the future of the ecumenical movement," especially about "an increasing departure from the Basis of the WCC." That Basis of membership says, "The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit." The Orthodox indicated "a certain disquiet" about "developments of the WCC towards the broadening of its aims in the direction of relations with other religions," and they urged that a definition of theological criteria for these developments "must constitute the first priority of the WCC."

Evangelicals at the Assembly also issued a statement in which they agreed with the Moderator of the Central Committee when he observed that the WCC has remained unable to develop a "vital and coherent theology." The statement by Evangelicals says, "At present, there is insufficient clarity regarding the relationship between the confession of the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour, according to Scripture, the person and work of the Holy Spirit, and legitimate concerns which are part of the WCC agenda."

Writing in this issue about mission concerns at the Seventh Assembly, David A. Kerr says that the theme "proved to be a theological and missiological conundrum." He discusses the heated debate about religion and culture, with an emphasis on interreligious dialogue, and says, "Those who expect mission to be discussed primarily in terms of personal evangelism, conversion, and church growth will be sorely disappointed, because these scarcely feature in the assembly reports."

The ecumenical movement had its genesis in the missionary movement. As the WCC struggles in search of its future, it would do well to recall the words of Isaiah 51:1 (nasv), "Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek the Lord. Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug."
“Come Holy Spirit—Renew the Whole Creation”: The Canberra Assembly and Issues of Mission

David A. Kerr

From Christology to Pneumatology

In the marvelous events of the first Pentecost the earliest Christians discovered that the mission to which Christ called them was one for which they were empowered by the gift of the Holy Spirit. Nearly two thousand years later, therefore, the choice of theme for the Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches—“Come Holy Spirit—Renew the Whole Creation”—holds immense promise for the whole church. In reality it proved to be a theological and missiological conundrum for the WCC member churches gathered at Canberra, presenting them with difficult, potentially divisive problems with which the modern ecumenical movement will have to struggle as the church prepares for mission in a new millennium.

Most previous WCC general assemblies worked with explicitly Christological themes: “Christ, the Hope of the World” (Evanston 1954); “Jesus Christ, the Light of the World” (New Delhi 1961); “Jesus Christ Frees and Unites” (Nairobi 1975); “Jesus Christ, the Life of the World” (Vancouver 1983). At Amsterdam (1948) and Uppsala (1968) the Christological focus was clear, if implied, in their respective thematic emphases of “Man’s Disorder and God’s Design” and “Behold, I Make All Things New.” Participants in these earlier assemblies have testified to vivid experiences of the presence of the Holy Spirit, evidenced in “unplanned developments as momentous as the planned ones”, as member churches struggled to give direction to the modern ecumenical movement. But Canberra (1991) was the first time that the WCC has focused its attention explicitly on the Holy Spirit (pneumatology) as the growing point of Christian unity. What does this mean for its understanding of the church’s mission?

All was not as calm and agreeable at the Canberra Assembly as its reports might suggest.

All Things New.” Participants in these earlier assemblies have testified to vivid experiences of the presence of the Holy Spirit, evidenced in “unplanned developments as momentous as the planned ones”, as member churches struggled to give direction to the modern ecumenical movement. But Canberra (1991) was the first time that the WCC has focused its attention explicitly on the Holy Spirit (pneumatology) as the growing point of Christian unity. What does this mean for its understanding of the church’s mission?

From San Antonio to Canberra

The transition from Christology to pneumatology was anticipated at the WCC San Antonio meeting organized by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism in 1989. The report on its theme—“Your Will Be Done: Mission in Christ’s Way”—affirmed and celebrated that “the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, freedom, communion and justice, is at work today in different parts of the world”; it recognized that “in these signs we hear a new call to faith and see a new challenge for mission and evangelism.”

Planned discussion of mission at the Canberra Assembly, February 7-20, took place under the rubric, “Mission in the Power of the Spirit—the Ministry of Reconciliation and Sharing.” This was part of the thematic section “Spirit of Unity—Reconcile Your People,” one of four into which the assembly theme was divided, the other three being “Giver of Life—Sustain Your Creation”; “Spirit of Truth—Set Us Free”; and “Holy Spirit—Transform and Sanctify Us.” Interfaith dialogue was included in the same thematic section as mission, though it was treated separately. This was consistent with the San Antonio insistence “that witness does not preclude dialogue but invites it, and that dialogue does not preclude witness but extends and deepens it.”

To speak of “transition” from Christology to pneumatology in the milestones of WCC assemblies, or in the ecumenical discussion of mission from San Antonio to Canberra, does not imply a substantive change, an abandoning of a previous focus, a shift of direction. On the contrary, the assembly and its thematic sections worked in a conscious sense of continuity with earlier themes, within a wide-ranging ecumenical exploration of the nature of the church, its ministry and mission, flowing from its trinitarian faith. “Our mission needs to be in Christ’s way, in full obedience to the will of God as it was analyzed at the World Mission Conference in San Antonio,” to quote the report on “Spirit of Unity—Reconcile Your People.”

But continuity is not to be confused with conformity. The Canberra report accepted that “the Holy Spirit leads different people and churches into mission in different ways.” It encouraged difference in terms of such diversity as enriches the mission of the church, in contrast to sinful divergence which causes disunity, for “in Christ diversity is held together in unity.”

The key biblical concept of unity with which the assembly worked was that of koinonia, elaborated in a special study prepared by the Faith and Order Commission. On the basis of this study the assembly articulated koinonia as a “gift and calling” from God, embracing the whole of creation. Of this “communion” the church is a “foretaste,” enabled by grace to be a “sign of the reign of God and a servant of the reconciliation of God.” The unity of the church is given and expressed in “a common mission witnessing to all peoples the gospel of God’s grace and serving the whole of creation.” Nurtured by a common sacramental life in which members and ministries are mutually recognized and reconciled, the mission of the church requires Christians “to recommit themselves to work for justice, peace and the integrity of creation linking more closely the search for the sacramental communion of the church with the struggles for justice and peace.”

“Yet there are limits to diversity,” the Faith and Order koinonia study warns. “Diversities which are rooted in theo-
Logical traditions, various cultural, ethnic or historical contexts are integral to the nature of communion.” On the other hand “diversity is illegitimate when, for instance, it makes impossible the confession of Jesus Christ as God and Saviour, the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8).”

Legitimate diversity, within the communion of the church, contributes to the fulness of the whole body. Reflecting on Christ’s prayer for unity (John 17:21), the Faith and Order report concludes, “In the process of praying, working and struggling for unity, the Holy Spirit comforts us in pain, disturbs us when we are satisfied to remain in our division, leads us to repentance, and grants us joy when our communion flourishes.”

Let us hope so, for all was not as calm and agreeable at the Canberra assembly as selective quotation from its reports may suggest. The assembly logo—a dove, possibly the ecumenical ship, or was it the wind, or fire?—itself became a symbol of the many diverse and sometimes divergent ways by which participants expressed their sense of the Holy Spirit.

“Come Holy Spirit . . . But How?”

At issue was the question: How is the Holy Spirit to be discerned? It is simple enough to turn to the apostle Paul’s description of “the fruit of the Spirit” for an answer (Gal. 5:22-23). But, in God’s freedom, the Holy Spirit breathed over the face of creation (Gen. 1:21), is to be poured out on all flesh (Joel 2:28), and is free as the wind to blow wherever God wills (John 3:8). In response to the Spirit’s moving, can the church recognize authentic fruits of the Spirit in creation and in the cultures of peoples who are not Christian? If the fire of the Spirit burns in the struggles of oppressed peoples throughout the world, is not the church challenged to acknowledge in them the same work of the Holy Spirit as Christians know within the communion of the church? Is God not free to call up, outside the church, witnesses to the power of the Holy Spirit by whom God may be calling the church, in the sinfulness of the many divergencies of its members, to repentance?

Questions such as these arose in several lively dimensions of the assembly experience, each of which contributed to shaping the Seventh Assembly as a memorable event, not least for the way it helped articulate mission priorities at the end of the twentieth century. Four issues stand out as time begins to permit a hindsight perspective on ten intensely filled days.

Indigenous Peoples

Canberra is an Aboriginal word, the Australian Aboriginals being probably the oldest continuous civilization known to human history, living for as many as sixty thousand years in what they call “the land of the spirit.” From their ancient “Dreamtime” they have valued the earth as their mother-spirit who inspires their identity and kinships, and nurtures their sense of the sacred. Aboriginal Australia is full of holy places, in contrast to which the Spirit, an assault upon nature that has been compounded by the near destruction of the Aboriginal peoples.

Christian missions helped turn the Aboriginal “dreamtime” into a modern nightmare. In repentance for the churches’ part in what the WCC classifies as “genocide,” assembly participants underwent a form of Aboriginal purification, passing through the smoke of burning leaves as they entered the worship
tent, recalling the cleansing and refining fire of the Holy Spirit. Before the worship began, the WCC General Secretary asked the permission of Aboriginal elders to enter the land, and as the permission was given, the sound of the didgeridoo (Aboriginal bamboo pipe) invoked the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Repeatedly the assembly was made aware of the plight of Aboriginals in modern Australia, their loss of sovereignty, self-determination, control of ancestral lands, the suppression of their culture, the denial of their human rights, and their sense of injury under a system of discriminatory justice. Yet at the same time the assembly was challenged by the Aboriginal sense of the sacred—the sacredness of land, of kinsfolk, of life itself, communicated through story, song, and dance. Through their witness the assembly began to learn that the cultures of all indigenous peoples should be read as “theology,” not merely anthropology.

**Come, Holy Spirit: Canberra Assembly Message (Excerpt)**

At this Assembly we have been stirred by the manifold forms of prayer, spirituality, theology and Christian commitment which were evident and we would share this enrichment with our respective churches and with people everywhere. . . . The presence of representatives of other world religions as guests in the Assembly reminded us of the growing need to respect the image of God in all people, to accept each other as neighbours and to admit our common responsibility with them for God's creation, including humanity.

We met at a time of increasing threats to creation and human survival. In a time when the fragile environment is in crisis, we have recognized that human beings are not the lords of creation but part of an integrated and interdependent whole, and we resolved to work for the sustainability of creation. Amid the oppression which affects many indigenous peoples, minorities and people of colour, we have joined hands with them in solidarity. In the face of the growing gap between rich and poor, we have affirmed justice for all. In a time of war in various parts of the world, and particularly in the Gulf, we held prayer vigils for peace and appealed for an immediate end to hostilities in the Gulf and for a just solution of the conflicts of the world.

Many divisions still prevail in our world. Some are economic and political. Brokenness of relationships as well as injustices are experienced particularly by many women, children, youth and the differently-abled. The Holy Spirit draws churches into a relationship of love and commitment. The Spirit calls the churches to a commitment to seek visible unity and a more effective mission. Heeding the call of the Spirit, we urge churches to seek new and reconciled relationships between peoples and to use the gifts of all their members.

We, the churches in Council, still experience brokenness. Reconciliation between churches is still incomplete. However, in the ecumenical movement, we have been enabled to come out of isolation into a committed fellowship: we experience a growing responsibility for each other, in joy and in pain, and we seek under the guidance of the Holy Spirit ways to be more accountable to each other and to the Lord Christ who prayed that we “may be one.” But we also recognize that the fullness of reconciliation is a gift of God and we are called to enter into that reconciliation as the Holy Spirit transforms and sanctifies us.

God and humankind are reconciled by the Cross of Christ, a costly sacrifice. To appropriate this reconciliation is also costly, as we become ministers of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18). We thus become a missionary people, not in the sense of dominating people and nations, which has all too often characterized missionary work, but in the sense of sharing God's own mission of bringing all humanity into communion with God through Christ, sharing our faith and our resources with all people.

The Assembly prays for the Spirit of God to lead Christians to a renewed vision of God's rule, so that we may be accountable for our stewardship of “the mystery of the Gospel” (Eph. 6:19). We pray that we may bear the “fruit of the Spirit” that bears out God's rule of love and truth, righteousness and justice and freedom, reconciliation and peace.

Creation

The assembly's most substantive theological reflection developed under the rubric “Giver of Life—Sustain Your Creation.” The greatest challenge facing the church was perceived in terms of the need for a renewed or deepened theology of creation. “The boundless mystery of the universe, the abundance, beauty and grandeur of creation and of this precious planet manifest the glory of God,” the assembly affirmed. The Spirit is the divine presence within creation which binds all human beings together with the whole created order. The groans and travail of creation protest its abuse, and the consequent crises of ecological and social justice.

The Spirit calls humanity to repentance and to the repossession of biblical concepts of justice that help us understand the linkage between poverty, powerlessness, social conflict, and environmental degradation. This requires serious rethinking of all industrial and post-industrial economic systems that treat the resources of nature as sources of profit, and calls urgently for the reconstruction of economic and social systems as subsets of ecology in place of the present obverse mode of relationship. To engage this challenge requires an expanded understanding of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ—or more accurately the retrieval of the cosmic understanding of salvation that includes the renewal of the whole of creation, of which human redemption is an inseparable part, so that with Paul the church can say: "The
creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Rom. 8:21, NRSV).

The assembly’s emphasis on creation theology must be seen as a development of what the WCC calls the “process” of the struggle for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation (JPIC), initiated by the Vancouver assembly and celebrated at the major Seoul conference on that theme in 1990. This was a fundamental concern also at the San Antonio World Mission Conference, which declared that “The mission of the church has cosmic dimensions . . . . Since our mission serves the coming of the reign of God, it is concerned with bringing the future into the present, serving the cause of God’s reign: the new creation.” It would be erroneous, therefore, to interpret the assembly’s affirmation of JPIC as “a mission imperative” as a tilt away from San Antonio toward Seoul; rather, it gives priority to the renewal of creation in the mission of the whole church in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Other Faiths**

As at several previous assemblies, Canberra guests included fifteen persons of other faiths—Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, and Shintoists. They were introduced as “more than guests . . . fellow travellers,” and were enabled to share in the whole range of thematic discussions, not just the subsection on interfaith dialogue. They had prepared for the assembly by meeting previously in Hong Kong from where they brought a message to Canberra. Addressing themselves to the ecumenical priority of justice, peace, and the integrity of creation, their message emphasized that “there is but one source of life nourishing and sustaining the whole inhabited earth.” As the home of people of many religions, each with its deep concern for creation, the oikoumene calls for “a culture of dialogue” in which “we must no longer do separately that which we, as people of many faiths, can do together.” They urged the assembly therefore to affirm a “new paradigm of [interreligious] relationships,” implying an extension of its use of the term “ecumenical” to embrace relationships with other religions.

Without taking up the concept of a new paradigm, the vision of “a culture of dialogue” was embedded in the assembly report on “Spirit of Unity—Reconcile Your People.” In the report on “Giver of Life—Sustain Your Creation,” the assembly elaborated what this means in terms of the creation issue: “Our vision is of people of different faiths beginning to learn from each other’s spirituality and inspiration while developing practical examples in commitment to community and sharing.”

At face value these Canberra perspectives on interfaith dialogue broadly reflect the emphases of earlier assemblies and of the San Antonio mission conference. The latter specifically affirms “the relationship of dialogue” as the means by which “Christians seek to discern the unsearchable riches of God and the way he deals with humanity,” and holds up “peace and justice” as the issues around which interreligious dialogue should be pursued. But at least two groups of assembly participants expressed concern about what they detected as inherent dangers within the WCC’s affirmations of dialogue. Evangelical participants wrote a letter from Canberra in which they insisted that “a high Christology . . . [is] the only authentic Christian base for dialogue with persons of other living faith traditions.” Their point was echoed in a statement of disquiet from Orthodox par-

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**Evangelical Perspectives from Canberra (Excerpt)**

Evangelical participants at Canberra . . . felt welcomed in the dialogue and were able to contribute in concrete ways and at all levels. We were listened to, for example, as the Assembly worked on a biblically informed theology of creation, relevant to the eco-crisis we face. As the Assembly discussed the process of listening to the Spirit at work in every culture, we cautioned, with others that discernment is required to identify the Spirit as the Spirit of Jesus Christ and thus to develop criteria for and limits to theological diversity. We argued for a high Christology to serve as the only authentic Christian base for dialogue with persons of other living faiths. Some drafts of Assembly documents appear to show reluctance to use straightforward biblical language, but the opportunities for evangelical perspectives to find inclusion in the reports of the Assembly represented real progress . . .

Despite such a sincere commitment to take more seriously that major segment of the worldwide church which those with evangelical perspectives represent, evangelicals remained underrepresented at Canberra, at the level of plenary presentation and in leadership sections. For this reason, we have asked the leadership of the WCC to address structural deficiencies in the Council by welcoming an evangelical presence on every commission, . . . and to establish a monitoring group composed both of WCC staff and evangelical advisers from member and non-member churches . . .

The Moderator of the Central Committee of the WCC identified in his report that the WCC has remained unable to develop a “vital and coherent theology.” Our experience of the Assembly confirms this. The ecumenical movement needs a theology rooted in the Christian revelation as well as relevant to contemporary problems. At present, there is insufficient clarity regarding the relationship between the confession of the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour, according to Scripture, the person and work of the Holy Spirit, and legitimate concerns which are part of the WCC agenda. . . . We encourage individuals and churches with evangelical concerns to engage themselves in serious theological reflection to fill the existing gap. The challenge is to develop a theology forged in the midst of obedient action for the sake of the gospel, so as to bring together the apostolic faith and the suffering of the oppressed, the personal and social, the private and the public, justification by faith and the struggle for peace with justice, commitment to Christ and action empowered by the Holy Spirit in the midst of the crises facing the modern world.
Chung Hyun-Kyung’s presentation provoked the assembly’s strongest controversy.

Canberra, on the other hand, made only brief reference to evangelism and suggested, though without elaboration, that dialogue is “an authentic ministry to which many are today being called and which we affirm is urgently needed.” If dialogue is a ministry, what would this imply in terms of our understanding of the gifts of the Spirit that Paul discusses in 1 Corinthians 12?

Culture

These important questions were not pursued in themselves at Canberra but were subordinated to a heated debate about religion and culture. The most dramatic presentation of the theme “Come Holy Spirit—Renew the Whole Creation” was a keynote address by Professor Chung Hyun-Kyung from South Korea. More than giving a mere lecture, she orchestrated a “happen-

Reflections of Orthodox Participants from Canberra (Excerpt)

We preface our comments with an expression of appreciation to the World Council of Churches for its many contributions to the development of dialogue among churches, and to assisting all members in making efforts to overcome disunity. . . . Yet, our experience at this Assembly has heightened a number of concerns that have been developing among the Orthodox since the last Assembly. . . . The present statement is motivated not by disinterest or indifference toward our sisters and brothers in other churches and Christian communities, but by our sincere concern about the future of the ecumenical movement, and about the fate of its goals and ideals, as they were formulated by its founders.

1. The Orthodox Churches want to emphasize that for them, the main aim of the WCC must be the restoration of the unity of the Church. . . . Visible unity, in both the faith and the structure of the Church, constitutes a specific goal and must not be taken for granted.

2. The Orthodox note that there has been an increasing departure from the Basis of the WCC. The latter has provided the framework for Orthodox participation in the World Council of Churches. Its text is: “The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit” (Constitution). Should the WCC not direct its future work along these lines, it would be in danger of ceasing to be an instrument aiming at the restoration of Christian unity and in that case it would tend to become a forum for an exchange of opinions without any specific Christian theological basis. . . .

3. The tendency to marginalize the Basis in WCC work has created some dangerous trends in the WCC. We miss from many WCC documents the affirmation that Jesus Christ is the world’s Saviour. We perceive a growing departure from biblically-based Christian understandings of

a) the Trinitarian God,
b) salvation,
c) the “Good News” of the gospel itself,
d) human beings as created in the image and
Father and rests in the Son.”

“Discernment,” said the Evangelicals, “is required to identify the Spirit as the Spirit of Jesus Christ and thus to develop criteria for and limits to theological diversity.” No other issue of the assembly focussed as clearly the tension between “classical” or normative theology and “contextual” or experimental theology.

Conclusion

An assembly’s failure to engage such issues at anything like the depth they demand raises fundamental questions about its usefulness as an instrument of ecumenical advance. As a celebration of the rich diversity of Christian life and worship it is without equal. As a forum from which churches in different parts of the world can speak to international situations, it can be prophetic, as many assessed its statement about the Gulf war to have been. But where such major theological and missiological issues as those here reviewed are raised, only to be left “in the air,” an assembly opens itself to the charge of superficiality, and participants are likely to feel more confronted by divergence than strengthened by diversity. Also those who expect mission to be discussed primarily in terms of personal evangelism, conversion, and church growth will be sorely disappointed, because these scarcely feature in the assembly reports.

Yet the Seventh Assembly has signaled priorities for the twenty-first century. A renewed understanding of creation is the overarching theological concern that should engage all levels of the church’s witness in the process of wrestling with issues of justice and peace. So far as possible this calls for the church to work with other religions, not against them, in “a culture of dialogue.” Thus the question of how the work of the Holy Spirit in the cultures and religions of the world is rightly discerned and understood stands second to none in the witness of the church as the sign and foretaste of the communion that God intends for the whole of creation.

Notes

3. Ibid., p. 32.
4. Section III Report, “Spirit of Unity—Reconcile Your People,” p. 6. (All references to Seventh Assembly reports are to the final texts as presented to plenary business sessions for approval, but not yet published at the time this article was written.)
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., pp. 4–5.
7. Ibid., p. 4.
8. Ibid.
9. A U.N. working definition of “indigenous peoples” explains: “Indigenous populations are composed of the existing descendants of the peoples who inhabited the present territory of a country wholly or partially at the time when persons of a different culture or ethnic origin arrived there from other parts of the world, overcame them and, by conquest, settlement or other means, reduced them to a non-dominant or colonial situation.” From Resources for Sections: The Theme, Subthemes and Issues—World Council of Churches Seventh Assembly 1991 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990), p. 33.
11. See “Statement for WCC Action on Aboriginal Concerns,” presented to the Canberra Assembly.
12. Section I Report, “Giver of Life—Sustain Your Creation!,” p. 1; this paragraph attempts to summarize the main points of the report.

4. The Orthodox follow with interest, but also with a certain disquiet, the developments of the WCC towards the broadening of its aims in the direction of relations with other religions. The Orthodox support dialogue initiatives, particularly those aiming at promotion of relations of openness, mutual respect and human cooperation with neighbours of other faiths. When dialogue takes place, Christians are called to bear witness to the integrity of their faith. A genuine dialogue involves greater theological efforts to express the Christian message in ways that speak to the various cultures of our world. All this, however, must occur on the basis of theological criteria which will define the limits of diversity. The biblical faith in God must not be changed. The definition of these criteria is a matter of theological study, and must constitute the first priority of the WCC in view of its desired broadening of aims.

5. Thus, it is with alarm that the Orthodox have heard some presentations on the theme of this Assem-
Missionary Encounter With Culture

Wilbert R. Shenk

No question is more urgent for the church in the West as it faces the twenty-first century than how it conceives its relationship to the world. The question is not new. It has been the subject of much debate. The urgency arises from the fact that the message of the church has increasingly lost credibility in that part of the world that has been its "homeland" for some 1500 years. Today it finds itself in an increasingly marginal position.

The church in the West is the church of Christendom. To understand the church in the modern West we must come to terms with the historical trajectory established by Christendom and do this in light of biblical metaphors. Then we must juxtapose terms with the historical trajectory established by Christendom and the primal antagonism between the two was gone. The Christian's primary allegiance to Jesus Christ was compromised and made relative to Caesar.

1. The character of the church was fundamentally altered as a result of the coming of Constantinianism. The church was now based on coercion rather than a voluntary response to God's grace. This was in conflict with what Hobhouse called the "Divine Method" with regard to humankind: "God always respects human freedom, both in the sphere of moral action and in the sphere of intellectual belief. There is no coercion of human will; there is freedom to sin. There is no coercion of human belief; there is freedom to deny God." This involved several consequences noted as follows.

2. The Constantinian era signaled a redefinition of the church-world relationship. Christ founded a visible and clearly defined religious institution of society. Christendom led to the domination of society. Hobhouse sought to demonstrate that logical outcome of Christendom was a church that could command the deep loyalty of the membership. He saw the church in 1909 as essentially deformed, afflicted by nominalism, and fated to suffer continued decline.

3. The church lost its sense of mission to the world. Essentially initiative passed to the state, and the church became the religious institution of society. Christendom led to the domestication—the taming—of the church. Christendom resulted in the eclipse of mission as understood by the primitive church.

4. The church surrendered its integrity as the body of Christ. It now functioned as an arm of the state in contributing to the maintenance of the sociopolitical order. Membership in the church was not a matter of choice. Surveying the successive periods of church history, Hobhouse sought to demonstrate that the logical outcome of Christendom was a church that cannot command the deep loyalty of the membership. He saw the church in 1909 as essentially deformed, afflicted by nominalism, and fated to suffer continued decline.

5. Hobhouse argued that now "the Church should recognize more and more that she is in reality a missionary Church, not only in heathen lands and among races which we are pleased to call 'inferior,' but in every country; and that there is much which she might learn from the methods of the Mission
Fields.” He suggested that the most effective Christian work being done in the England of 1909 was that carried on as intentional mission and that there were urgent needs in the cities where, citing words of Archbishop Lang, people “have not fallen from the Church, for they were never within it.”

The Hobhouse project is useful in terms of the way he defines certain fundamental issues. His perspective was shaped by the established church of which he was a part. Even though ecclesiastical arrangements differ from one country to another, the issue is deeper than the question of whether or not a church is formally recognized as an “established church.” Christendom has cast a long shadow over all Christians in the West that we have not yet effectively dispelled. We are all heirs, to one degree or another, of a Christendom understanding of the church. This is the basic vision of the church that missionaries from the West took with them to other parts of the world. And it is precisely the Christendom spirit and character of the church that have proved to be so difficult to indigenize in other cultures.

The argument I wish to put forward here is threefold: 1. that we need to reclaim a biblically informed metaphor for the church-world relationship; 2. that we consider “missionary encounter” as the normative description of the role of the church in relation to the world; and 3. that we ought to appropriate learnings from the substantial experience in cross-cultural missions of the past two hundred years, for this can furnish clues as to what “missionary encounter” might mean for the future of the church in the West.

The Church as Resident Alien

As already indicated, I believe the church in the West remains largely captive to the Christendom understanding of the church. This fact frustrates efforts to visualize what the relationship of church and world should be and what this means for the mission of the church—not cross-culturally but within the cultural milieu where the church has been at home for some fifteen hundred years.

The whole of the biblical drama can be depicted as a struggle of cosmic proportions. We describe it in terms of pairs of opposites: holiness/sinfulness; good/evil; life/death; salvation/damnation; kingdom of God/kingdom of Satan; this world/the world to come, and so on. The Bible leaves us in no doubt: the world is at enmity with God; the powers are rebellious. But we may not forget that both the world and the church belong to Jesus Christ because “all things were made through him” (John 1:3 RSV). And yet only the church, the people of God, acknowledges God’s sovereignty. The biblical drama is driven forward by the promise and the vision that “the kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15 NRSV).

Paul Minear has argued that we must not distinguish between church and world in terms of separate headships, for there is only one head, Jesus Christ. That headship has been disclosed to his body through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and on the basis of this, the church is under mandate to announce Christ’s lordship over against every pretender lord. The boundary between the church and the world is marked by the cross. For the people of God it signals God’s victory; for the world it is a sign of scandal and folly. “But,” says Minear, “as boundary the cross is also a bridge for constant two-way traffic. Whatever the distance between church and world, this distance must and can be crossed by the church because it has already been crossed by its head.” As the first fruit of the resurrection, the church is confident that this same power is available to all. But it always lives and bears witness under the sign of the cross.

Starting with Abraham in the Old Testament and continuing in the New with the apostle Peter, a primary metaphor for describing the status of the people of God in the world is that of “resident alien” or variants of that phrase. When Sarah died at Hebron, Abraham appealed to the Hittites to grant him a burial plot because “I am a stranger and a sojourner among you” (Gen. 23:4a). When the aged Jacob met Pharaoh in Egypt he described himself in terms of his “sojourning” (Gen. 47:9). David pleads before God: “For I am thy passing guest, a sojourner, like all my fathers” (Ps. 39:12). The book of Hebrews uses the same language in describing the “faithful”: “These all died in faith, not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth” (11:13). At the end of Hebrews Jesus is linked with this line: “So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go forth to him outside the camp, bearing abuse for him. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come” (13:12-14). This latter verse resonates strongly with Philippians 3:20: “For our citizenship is in heaven” (ASV). The Apostle Peter, after describing the special vocation and set-apartness of the people of God, appeals to them “as aliens and exiles” to live a life of holiness and thus command God to the world (1 Pet. 2:9-12). Throughout, the emphasis is not on going but waiting. The people of God are to wait faithfully for the “fulfilment of the promise” (Heb. 6:12,15; 9:28; 10:23-25; Ps. 37:3-8; cf. Phil. 3:20). This stance is maintained in the second century Epistle to Diognetus:

Christendom has cast a long shadow over all Christians in the West that we have not yet effectively dispelled.

Christians dwell in their native cities, yet as sojourners: they share in everything as citizens, and endure all things as aliens: every foreign country is to them a fatherland, and every fatherland a foreign soil... They live in the flesh, but not according to the flesh. They obey the enacted laws, and by their private lives they overcome the laws. They love all men, and are persecuted of all men. They are unknown, and yet condemned; they are put to death, and yet raised to life. They are beggars, and yet make many rich; they lack all things, and yet abound in all things... In a word, what the soul is in the body, that are Christians in the World.¹⁰

This passage compels our attention because of the remarkable self-awareness that characterized the relationship between the Christian and the world. There is no hint here of withdrawal from the world. Rather the picture is that of critical engagement. The model of the resident alien does not focus on the inward life of the disciple. This is no call to quietism. Instead it keeps firmly
in view the tension between God and the world and the place of the people of God in light of that tension. If the image of resident alien focuses on that tension, there can be no retreat into a ghetto or uncritical absorption into the world. Any model predicated on a tension is bound to contain surprises and instabilities. No sociopolitical system can ever adequately and fully embody the new order of God’s reign. But the resident alien belongs to a tradition that always views history through the “eyes of faith” while watching and waiting for the full disclosure of the kingdom. In the meanwhile the resident alien is continually pointing to the signs of God’s coming and living out concretely God’s reign as a counter-demonstration of what the world could be like if it, too, repented and submitted to God’s will.

Missionary Encounter

Johannes Blauw asserted that “Mission is a summons to the lordship of Christ.” Mission is an act of discipleship, and discipleship leads to missionary obedience. In his book Christ the Meaning of History, Hendrikus Berkhof devotes a chapter to “The missionary endeavour as a history-making force.” Mission is integral to God’s plan for the salvation of the world, and the election of the people of God has no purpose apart from mission.

No sociopolitical system can ever adequately and fully embody the new order of God’s reign.

I want to suggest that the goal of authentic missionary encounter with any culture always must be to bring to bear the life-giving power of God against the power of death.

In the previous section we considered the way we ought to visualize the relationship between church and world, especially with respect to the way a Christian understands that relationship and its implications for discipleship. Now we want to consider the process by which that relationship is carried out. We are trying to visualize afresh the role of the church in the world in a way that overcomes the problems created by the long history of Christendom. Christendom insisted that an entire population or society was Christian. No place was given to mission or evangelization. “Christianization” was a one-time step. Subsequently, the essential task was to maintain this religiopolitical status quo. To speak of mission would be to question the status quo. This was at least as much a political matter as it was religious. Religiously, Christendom was maintained through a sacerdotal-sacramental system that was subject to various abuses. From time to time there were appeals for reform and renewal of the church. Important as these reforms were, they largely failed to challenge and overcome Christendom’s deeply non-missionary understanding of the church. Consequently, individuals who began to agitate in support of missions—from the sixteenth century onward—typically found themselves on the margins of church life. The solution to this was to encourage the formation of missionary societies, patterned after the trading companies and newly emerging voluntary societies. This provided an outlet for a growing number of people committed to missions to become involved, either as missionaries or as supporters at home.

It is important to note two things, however. First, mission was from the beginning defined as that which took place in lands outside of Christendom. Second, it was an extra-ecclesial activity. This arrangement, in turn, has had two further consequences. First, it helped insulate the churches of Christendom from the challenge that might have come to them out of this involvement in missionary work and that could have stimulated fundamental ecclesial reform. Second, the understanding of church that missionaries took with them overseas inevitably combined Christendom understandings of the church with missionary society structures.

Already at the beginning of the twentieth century it was evident that the churches in Christendom were in difficulty. Hobhouse was one among many others who read the situation correctly. Christendom for some fourteen centuries had promoted the idea that the church existed to maintain itself as an institution of society. It should come as no surprise that it had lost any awareness of itself as essentially a missionary body. The Enlightenment had brought momentous intellectual changes that gave rise to a range of political, economic, and ideological consequences that undermined the traditional institutional controls on which church and state had depended to maintain the status quo.

During the twentieth century we have witnessed massive losses in the numbers of people in Christendom who identify with the church. Conversely, it is precisely in those parts of the world where Christian missions have been active these past two centuries that the church has grown, often under highly adverse circumstances, as in socialist countries, and in spite of a relatively brief tenure in countries like China. In such situations to be a Christian is costly. Faith can be maintained only if there is clarity concerning who commands the Christian’s ultimate allegiance. In contradistinction to the Christendom understanding, I propose that we return to a vision of the church existing in missionary encounter with the world. Such a stance will mean that the church must confront those elemental forces in a society that are destroying life, for these forces are in opposition to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

Every culture is under the sway of controlling myths that command the loyalties of people—even though these myths are instruments of death. The church is called to unmask these powers and expose them for what they are. Walter Wink has pointed out how the ancient Babylonian creation myth as found in the Enuma Elish has continually reappeared in human history in a variety of guises. Wink notes the way this creation myth—based on violence and the doctrine of might makes right—is the pervasive message being purveyed through children’s cartoons on television today. Citing a survey conducted by U.S. News and World Report that American children watch 36,000 hours of television by their mid-teens, Wink asks rhetorically: “How do we expect the church to make a compelling claim on a young person’s life based on a few hours of catechism prior to confirmation when [he or she has] been thoroughly catechized by the TV medium over such a long and formative period?”

This mythic structure of violence undergirds many other areas of our culture, including the way our governments go about making and interpreting foreign policy. It is within this cultural circumstance that we must define the church’s missionary responsibility. “The result of missionary proclamation,” says Hendrikus Berkhof, “is the realization throughout the whole earth of the analogy of the cross and resurrection of the Christ event.” It is in the crucified and resurrected Lord that history is made transparent in its depths. In that perspective no human society may be exempted from missionary encounter. Nor may we succumb to the temptation to think that at some point a culture
is "fully evangelized," whatever that may mean. This suggests that we need to seek reform of the church along two lines. On the one hand, as I have been arguing, we need reform ecclesiologically and ethically. The impact of Christendom, even on so-called "free" or nonconformist denominations, has been such as to undermine the integrity of the church. The typical congregation is preoccupied with its own welfare and maintenance rather than its mission to the world. Effectively, it has lost its capacity even to discern that it has such a mission.

On the other hand, there is need for missiological reform. By that I mean that we should seek to inculcate the sense that each congregation is a primary arena for missionary encounter in any given community. On a first hearing this may sound like a contradiction. I have criticized the widespread preoccupation congregations have with their internal life, and yet I have called the congregation the primary arena for missionary encounter. The contradiction is real, but it is to be found at another point than the one our reflexes have taught us to look for. The contradiction is in the Christendom model of church that has effectively separated the two elements Jesus Christ held together and which the early Christian community understood to be at the heart of the Christian calling. The ecclesiological/ethical must not be separated from the missiological; the one should inform the other.

Surely, the only way any significant reform in a congregation's outlook will come about is if it redeems the meaning of the nature of the church. The church is not another form of society nor a social subunit. Emil Brunner described the unprecedented character of the church forcefully: "Church is a community which is based on that Word of God which is God's personal deed, and that personal deed of God which is His Word." Communication and action cannot be separated. God's Word creates the community in order that the community might communicate God's Word. "Mission work does not arise from any arrogance in the Christian Church," argued Brunner; "mission is its cause and its life. The church exists by mission, just as fire exists by burning." A properly functioning church is one that is constantly working out its existence through missionary encounter with the world. Church without mission is a contradiction in terms.

Cross-cultural Lessons

In recent years Andrew F. Walls has advanced the thesis that the Christian faith has been saved repeatedly in nearly two thousand years of history by moving from an established heartland to a new environment. Apparently the process of cross-cultural transmission has been critical to the survival of the faith. This insight may be valuable as we take stock of the remnants of Christendom. The modern mission movement emerged around 1800 and may be viewed as the last major thrust of Christendom. Indeed, it can be shown that the modern mission movement was both "a last grand flourish of Christendom and an important instrument in bringing about the dissolution of historical Christendom." In spite of heroic efforts on the part of many dedicated individuals, Christendom proved to be non-exportable in the modern period. The world was changing; new ideas of democracy and human dignity were in the air. Christendom could only be implanted in other cultures with tactics that violated the integrity of those cultures. As the church began to grow in other soils, Christendom as a religiopolitical synthesis was increasingly rejected. This act of disencumbering the church of historical contradictions, accretions, and distortions associated with Christendom may be necessary to the recovery of faith in the West itself. Christendom defined mission out of existence in the West. Until the church in the West recovers a full sense of church/mission, i.e., as an inseparable entity, there will be no genuine missionary encounter.

It is with the promise of discovering new insights that we now turn to the experience of cross-cultural mission of these past two centuries with a view to asking what we can learn that might be useful to the church in the West. Five themes come to mind.

1. The Sense of Frontier

I have discovered in recent years that people become uneasy when one speaks about frontier in relation to mission. Frontier conjures up ideas about powerful Western nations carving up the territories and violating the cultures of helpless and weaker peoples of Asia and Africa. Our embarrassment is understandable, and we wish to close that chapter. It is true that the idea of geographical frontier has played an enormously important role in modern mission history. It was long the basis of appeal for missionary recruits. Even today it remains an important part of the rhetoric in some circles.

As is true of other terms that have become corrupted through inappropriate use, frontier carries some negative connotations. Yet we continue to need it. For one thing, the term implies other senses than the geographical one. Many missiologists, for example, have been emphasizing the importance of sociological frontiers such as rural/urban, rich/poor, or groups identified along ethnic lines (associated with the hidden or unreached peoples groups). Another frontier is the religious one. All peoples of the world can be classified in terms of their religious allegiances, including those who self-consciously declare themselves to be atheists. We know, for example, that the vast majority of all people won to the Christian faith since the time of Christ have come from a primal or traditional religious background. Conversely, relatively few converts have been won from the major world religions. It has long been understood that the training and preparation of a missionary to work in a Muslim society call for something quite different from what is required to train someone to serve a preliterate small-scale ethnic group. In either case, special attention must be paid to the religious frontier, for religion may well be the single most important force.

Another important dimension of frontier that we need to keep in mind has to do with a strategic sense of where the Spirit of God is leading the church, involving a time of preparation and active waiting. Take as an example Nepal in the twentieth century, where an entire generation of Nepali Christians lived in diaspora, and missionaries waited in faith for the day when they would be allowed to enter the country. Some worked and waited in faith on the country would be opened. They busied themselves with useful activities in anticipation of the day when they would be allowed to enter the country. Some worked and waited in faith on the border between Nepal and its neighboring countries as long as thirty-five years. Many of this generation did not live long enough to enter Nepal when the door was opened in 1954. But their years
of active preparation paved the way for the next generation which has seen an amazing response to the Gospel. Who would doubt that the first generation read correctly the mind of the Spirit and acted faithfully in taking those first steps on a new frontier.

2. The Objective Study of Culture

In his book, *The World Is Too Much With Us*, Charles R. Taber traces how we have moved from a precritical to a formal and critical understanding of culture. The transition from precritical to critical study of culture was made only in the nineteenth century.17 Up until that time the vast majority of missionaries—to which there were the heroic exceptions, of course—understood mission as a straightforward process of replicating Christendom in other cultures. Especially in the West where there has been a coming together in the twentieth century of peoples from all parts of the world, we are faced with a new degree of cultural pluralism. To take culture seriously for the sake of the Gospel will demand a depth of cultural sensitivity not required in Christendom.

It has long been expected of missionaries working cross-culturally that they would acquire basic training in the human sciences in order to have a grasp of culture as a concept and as a functioning system. It was further assumed this training would be extended to include in-depth study of the particular culture to which the missionary went in order to understand the world-view and value system. Such specialized training included intensive study of the language. Language study is essential as a gateway to cultural understanding and as a means of communication.

Finally, the objective study of another culture enables one to be self-critical by heightening awareness of the peculiarities of one’s own culture and the relative importance of all cultures. In other words, the study of culture gives the missionary the means to overcome ethnocentrism through greater self-understanding coupled with appreciation for the other culture. The typical metropolitan area in the West today is a veritable United Nations in microcosm. A church fully alive to the missionary encounter with exotic cultures and trying to communicate in strange languages. They learned early that terms important to the Christian faith either had no parallel in the other language or meant something quite different. They had to make many choices in working out a presentation of the Gospel that was culturally and linguistically understandable and yet faithful to what they understood it to be. Missionaries continually walked a tightrope between

If the church becomes merely the religious reflection of its culture, it has sold its birthright.

3. Learning to “Read” a Culture

The cross-cultural missionary long ago discerned the need to “read” a culture in terms of its felt needs. In other words, it was evident that it is the duty of missionaries to listen deeply and compassionately to the people to whom they wish to relate rather than prejudging them and their situation.

Because of the difficulty of cross-cultural communication, it was assumed that a special effort must be made to find the “key” or appropriate cultural analogy by which the Gospel might be made understandable. It is becoming increasingly clear that the same requirement is being made of the church in the West. For example, there are large groups of people throughout the West who have had no direct contact with the church or the Christian Scriptures for several generations. Contemporary language is increasingly bereft of traditional religious—i.e., Christian—vocabulary. If the church wishes to communicate with such people, it cannot assume that religious language will be understood. Indeed, religious language may form an impenetrable barrier.

Every culture constantly parades its hunger, hurts, aspirations, and sicknesses. These are expressed in a multitude of ways—through song, art, poetry, literature, the myths that control a society, and the way people respond to crises, especially death. What accounts for the escalating violence—both in terms of crimes committed and that experienced vicariously through the media, above all television—and the often remarked lack of hope in the West? The church that believes its only reason to exist is to be in missionary encounter with its culture will not avoid the question.

4. Contextualization

In terms of missionary method, the opposite of contextualization is replication. The dominant assumption made by missionaries from Christendom was that Christendom was a religiocultural reality that they were to transmit intact. Thus they attempted to replicate Christendom wherever they went. By 1850 it was becoming evident that replication was not workable and the emphasis was shifted to indigenization. In the long run this, too, proved inadequate.

In 1972 a conceptual change was introduced that made contextual the primary category. The challenge of contextualization is to move beyond the initial communication of the Gospel. The goal of evangelization is that the Gospel should penetrate into all spheres of life and take root. The critics never attacked Jesus for being a foreign interloper, although in reality he was marginalized by both religious and political authorities, much as is done to the foreigner in many situations. His ability to penetrate to the very heart of the central questions of the day threatened and disturbed them. Jesus demonstrated fully what a contextualized message is and does. It stirs up trouble because it elicits the questions the “authorities” do not want people to ask.

Contextualization of the Gospel in the West is no small task. Modernity has left Western culture badly fragmented. People live their lives in numerous compartments, each with its own authority structure. The sense of coherence and centeredness is gone, leaving the individual feeling impotent. A contextualized Gospel will challenge this fragmentation, for there is no realm beyond the claims of Christ.

5. Critical Syncretism

This might seem to be a repetition of the previous comment concerning contextualization, but, in fact, a different point is at issue. The problem of syncretism has been a long-standing missionary concern. This is understandable, for missionaries were encountering exotic cultures and trying to communicate in strange languages. They learned early that terms important to the Christian faith either had no parallel in the other language or meant something quite different. They had to make many choices in working out a presentation of the Gospel that was culturally and linguistically understandable and yet faithful to what they understood it to be. Missionaries continually walked a tightrope between
adaptation to culture and rejection of certain features of culture. On the one hand, an uncritical accommodation led to syncretism that diluted or denatured the Gospel. On the other hand, failure to adapt would have meant that the Gospel remained foreign and inaccessible.

What is now apparent is that long before missionaries confronted the question of syncretism in non-Western cultures, syncretism was a present reality for the church in the West. The fact that for so long no one recognized that syncretism was a present danger for the Western church is proof positive that the church had lost its missionary consciousness. The church that is aware of being in missionary encounter with its culture is continually wrestling with the issues syncretism poses. There can be no escape. Choices must be made continually. The church enters a danger zone when it is no longer self-consciously critical of its relation to culture and is no longer asking the question as to what the path of faithfulness involves. The church must always adapt to its culture in a way that enables it to live and communicate the Gospel credibly. That is constructive syncretism. If the church becomes merely the religious reflection of its culture, it has sold its birthright. That is destructive syncretism.

Conclusion

It appears that a primary metaphor the Bible gives us to describe the relation of church to world is that of the “resident alien,” an image that is used in crucial passages in Old and New Testaments. Some see in this term a license to the church to turn its back on society. Others read it as giving the church too little leverage in society.

Notes

2. The reference to Constantine need not detain us. Constantine as such is not under discussion. He is used as a symbol of a period of transition.
4. Ibid., p. 15.
5. Ibid., p. 320.
6. Ibid., p. 323.
12. Ibid., 109.
Interpreting Reality in Latin American Base Communities

J. Stephen Rhodes

The base ecclesial communities (CEBs) of Latin America have had a considerable impact upon the society and particularly upon the church of the region. They have played a significant role in several political revolutions and several ecclesial revolutions as well. Likewise, they have been the target of numerous curtailments and repression. Few deny their contribution to a changed cultural landscape in Latin America, regardless of one’s assessment of this change. The breadth and depth of this movement have been and should continue to be objects of careful analysis.

Nevertheless, another major question ought to occupy scholarly attention as well: Where does the power (both evocatively perceived and politically tangible) of this movement come from? In particular, what is it about the way the CEBs construe the world that has given them the conviction that society can be made more just and loving, or, to borrow their own frequently cited image, more like the kingdom of God? And, finally, what lessons can be learned, positively and negatively, from their example?

In this essay, I describe five components of the way base communities interpret reality—their hermeneutics—which, when given their particular connotations in the CEBs, generate a new consciousness and activity. These components are community, subjecthood, experience, Bible, and faith. Taken alone and in the abstract, none of these are necessarily revolutionary. But when they are brought together in the nexus of small CEB cells, a transformative power emerges that is either inspiring, disturbing, or both, depending upon one’s point of view. After analyzing each of these factors, I will evaluate some of the hermeneutical assumptions that lie behind them and make some suggestions.

Community

The first piece in the base community hermeneutical puzzle is their communality. There is, of course, nothing unusual about a group interpreting reality. However, it is not always common for a group to set out intentionally to do so, particularly when its members are ordinarily poor and illiterate or only in the early stages of literacy. Some distinctive features of base community communality are economic marginality, relative illiteracy, smallness in number (twenty to fifty); an attitude, which is variously fulfilled, of affirming the value of all members at both the social and theological level; and a flexibility, also variously fulfilled, about the result of the group’s reflection and action. In other words, these are comparatively small groups that are poor, developing in consciousness, discovering their value with each other and with God, and open to new information, actions, and divine revelation.

The significance of this distinctive type of community for its interpretation is that socially and ecclesially disenfranchised people have come together to ask why they are located “at the base” of society, how this visceral reality aligns with the will and activity of God, and what options for transformation lie before them. The very composition of the groups and the fact that they exist self-consciously to address profound needs arising from their marginalization, impart a transformational bent to their understanding and interpretation of reality.

Members experience a new self-confidence and hopefulness. Those who have been perceived in society as having no voice and little significance, and who have perceived themselves in this manner, discover their voices and their value. One priest tells of a CEB meeting in Guatemala in which an old man on the fringe of the group was asked what he thought of the Bible passage being studied that night. The old man began to cry and stated that never before had anyone asked him what he thought about anything, much less the meaning of the Gospel. Stories of this sort are not unusual. The combination of the interpersonal and sacramental valuing of members is quite important. Anonymity and despair are challenged in the experience of mutual affirmation and exploration as well as in the conviction that God has a particular concern with the cause of the oppressed, whose need is so obvious to the members, and confirmed in corporate reflection and worship.

The notable hermeneutical impact of this experience of corporate, ecclesial life is that social reality is perceived as malleable and redeemable. Efforts at rethinking and transforming church and society are deemed trustworthy.

Subjecthood

One important by-product of CEB communality is self-confidence (the roots of which can be found in the remaining components as well). This self-confidence translates into a stance of subjecthood toward life. The members of the base communities approach interpretation as those who are at least part-owners of the process of interpretation, and indeed as part-owners of reality itself. Put another way, the base communities have become active subjects in the interpretation of their world, and regard themselves as (at least) co-subjects with God in the shaping of social reality. The roots of this sense of subjecthood include the self-confidence that can be attributed to the members’ mutual support, their understanding of God’s disposition and activity, their perception of the active role of the church in relation to the kingdom of God, and a view of the world that comes as the result of an emphasis upon praxis.

The ways in which this sense of subjecthood is expressed vary. In ecclesial statements on the movement from Brazil, for example, Cardinal Arns of São Paulo has described how important

The old man began to cry, saying that never before had anyone asked him what he thought about anything.

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it is for "the people to see and analyze themselves . . . [and] discover the power of the gospel and the orientations of Christ." CEB congresses in that same nation have spoken variously of the movement as "the church getting organized for liberation" and "the church born of the people by the Spirit of God." This emphasis upon the church discovering its power at the grassroots and empowering its constitutive membership as important agents in the mission of the church is revolutionary in the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America and reflects not only the dynamics delineated above but the ecclesiological ideal of the participation of "the people" in the central mission of the church enunciated during the Second Vatican Council.

The concept of subjecthood is sometimes expressed even more dramatically. In Managua, for example, base community members have spoken of the kingdom of God as something which "must be done" by the people in the "struggle" or "revolution." Ernesto Cardenal carries this message to an extreme when he asserts that "The messiah isn't only Jesus but all of us," and "God doesn't have anything to do here anymore . . . now he's left it in our hands, so that we can continue the work." Regardless of the hermeneutical and theological questions raised by such extreme statements, the commitment of CEB members to their subjecthood in relation to reality and in interpreting reality is fundamental. The hermeneutical implications, again as in the case of their communality, are that social reality is malleable and that people can be optimistic about their efforts to improve society and church.

Experience

In addition to discovering new insights into their situation by living in community and by claiming their subjecthood, the base communities have learned how to learn from their own experience and have come to rely on that experience as an important source of wisdom in a new way. Experience has at least two meanings in the CEBs and in the literature of the movement. The first meaning is simply the interaction of persons with other persons and their environment(s) in time, whether intentional or unintentional. The second meaning is narrower and refers to such encounters occurring in an intentional manner. This intentional understanding of experience is often referred to in secondary literature as the "hermeneutical circle" and involves a cycle of action and interpretation in which the two mutually contribute to each other. This gives human experience a primary noetic function. No longer is it viewed as a uniform, unchanging, and unchangeable body of reality to be taken for granted, nor is it dismissed as being irrelevant or secondary to other noetic phenomena, such as tradition.

The new hermeneutical status of experience means, in short, that CEB members have begun to ask questions and take actions regarding the discontinuities that exist between their experience of life and the central messages of their church or society. These discontinuities need not necessarily lead to the rejection of the received norms, for example, but quite often may lead toward working for a greater approximation of those norms in society. However, social and ecclesial "ideology" has been the target of reformation as well. Simply because truth has been handed down hierarchically, as one writer has put it, does not mean that it is a nonnegotiable entity in its current form vis-à-vis human experience. Alvaro Barreiro adds that "the transcendence of the Kingdom of God does not mean that human history is insignificant or indifferent with respect to the fullness of that Kingdom." Other spokespersons for the CEBs have likewise argued that truth and falsehood are not abstract concepts; they require the careful examination of human activity.

This emphasis upon the interdependence of action and reflection, which some writers call "praxis," means that truth or fittingness is more dynamically construed in the CEBs; it is more situational and localized. This orientation also means, as stated earlier, that the CEBs claim a greater sense of ownership, or better, of part-ownership of the truth.

While some of the presuppositions of this position will be challenged at the end of this essay, there can be little doubt that the CEBs have evoked considerable respect and attracted a substantial membership. A major factor in this respect and growth must be attributed to the integration of action and reflection in the CEBs, frequently under oppressive circumstances. As with the other components of their hermeneutics, the quality of their engagement in praxis has boosted and apparently confirmed the hopefulness of their interpretive stance and their conviction about the possibility of transforming social reality.

If communality, subjecthood, and experience have a distinctive form in the base communities, a substantial reason for their distinctiveness is their rootedness in the remaining two categories, the Bible and Christian faith. Again, as was suggested in the introduction, it is not the Bible or faith in the abstract that generate this new way of interpreting reality, but the particular style in which they are appropriated. Nor can this new style be isolated from the first three elements themselves.

The Bible

Pablo Richard, who has a long history of service to the base communities in Central America, states that the Bible is a crucial ingredient in the rise of the CEBs and their impact on society. He feels that nothing short of the confirmation of the Scriptures could give CEB members sufficient conviction to dislodge the forces of oppression: internally, the negative concepts of self, and, externally, the unjust structures of society. The Bible, Richard contends, provides the critical leverage necessary to dislodge what he calls the "god of death" operative in oppression and make room for the "God of life" whose reality is testified to in the Bible. The CEB use of Scripture has two major characteristics. First, the Bible is understood to be a crucial tool, or means of grace, in perceiving the Word of God. It is not the sole locus of the Word of God but provides the CEBs with the "grammar" with which to read their situation. To Carlos Mesters, who has worked extensively with the CEBs in Brazil, the Word of God is already present in reality, and the function of the Bible is to help people find it in their own lives. And to Frei Betto, also from Brazil, the Bible is comparable to a flashlight, which is shined up and out.
down the path of history “to find our way” and not to become an object of fixation itself.12 As stated earlier, experience is not a secondary noetic phenomenon, but primary, along with the Bible, in uncovering the Word of God.

The second major characteristic of the CEB use of the Bible is that it is often read from a transformational perspective. The sources of this perspective can include everything from the spirit of Medellín and various forms of Marxist analysis, to the peculiarities of the sociopolitical situations in different countries and the insights of pastoral workers engaged in the lives and struggles of the poor. How these sources are brought into play in the life of a CEB deserves considerable scrutiny in future research. For example, how big a role does a leader’s hermeneutic play in a base community’s interpretation of texts? A considerable number of CEB leaders have a decided preference for an implicit canon that emphasizes the Exodus, the pre-exilic prophets, and the synoptics. Who selects texts for discussion and what criteria are used in their selection?

Faith

The last component, faith, is interwoven with the other components and difficult to separate from them. But it is distinct because it is the foundation of everything else. In the base communities, it usually takes the form of the conviction that a new mode of reality or life has been inaugurated and given expression in Jesus Christ and can be participated in by those who choose to do so. While this conviction is fed by the preceding components, it is itself generative of the particular form they take. What under other circumstances would be a political cell group or task group becomes, under the influence of this faith, a community of the beloved. What, under other circumstances, would be an incidental examination of a religious book becomes, under the influence of this faith, the worshipful, reflective, reading of Holy Scripture.

This basic conviction about Christ and the reality he bears finds a variety of expressions. In a CEB meeting of migrant mothers in São Paulo, one woman stated, “I think that God chose his Son to be born like us so that we can realize that we are important.”13 According to Cardinal Arns, people do not continue to come and participate in base communities if there is no praying and singing; indeed, their religiosity is “the most valuable element” in the CEBs.14 Likewise, J. B. Libanio states that the role of worship in the CEBs offers a striking contrast to leftist and reactionary groups because the latter are so often “devoid of humor and celebration.”15 In exegeting John 1, Alejandro of the Solentiname community states that in calling Christ the Word, the Gospel refers not only to an idea but a reality—a new life, a new truth, in a word: a social change.16

In other words, a core of faith exists which claims the existence of an order of reality that undergirds all of the positive contributions of the CEBs. The base communities do not conceive of themselves as that reality, but they do understand themselves to be an important part of the mediation of that reality encountered in Jesus Christ. That is why a number of CEB spokespersons speak of the church as a “sacrament” of the kingdom of God.17 And that is why worship, prayer, and the sacraments figure so importantly in their life. For, as has been suggested earlier, without the conviction of divine confirmation, the base communities would not have the efficacy they now enjoy. This root conviction about being a part of the mediation of the kingdom of God is crucial to understanding the mode of knowing and interpreting reality at work in the CEBs. It is a foundational element in the hopeful and transformative stance they have taken in Latin America.

Evaluation

In the constellation of these five components the role of experience is particularly noteworthy and merits further evaluation, especially in regard to the weight that CEBs grant in their hermeneutics to experience vis-à-vis Scripture.

In the base communities experience is often invested with an authority understood to be self-evident on the merits of experience in itself. Take, for example, the experience of suffering under oppression. CEBs have granted a hermeneutical status to this suffering at least equal in weight to the ideology of the oppressors, and this contributes profoundly to the transformational potential of the actions and thinking of the CEBs. But what about the ideological lenses and principles of selection that the CEBs inevitably apply to their experience? After all, the experience of suffering under oppression has been a brutal reality in Latin America for centuries. In itself, this experience has not generated a transformational hermeneutic. Obviously, something more than mere experience is at work in the base communities.

Experience, of course, can have a profound hermeneutical impact upon a philosophical system, religion, or worldview. But experience is not appropriated directly; rather, it is selectively appropriated through ideological filters that are sometimes readily obvious, sometimes quite subtle.

From the standpoint of traditional Christian theology, what generates the transformational hermeneutic of the CEBs is their conviction about the nature and praxis of God. Furthermore, this conviction presupposes the trustworthy revelation of the divine praxis on behalf of those in need. It is not what “the people” have done that gives them the power to transcend and transform their situation but their perception of what God has done and is doing in Jesus Christ. It is no accident that the CEBs speak of God’s “preferential option for the poor” and often employ the phrase “kingdom of God” when referring to their struggle. It is the distinctive language of faith and the divine praxis it presupposes that give the base communities the confidence that an alternative vision for society is not only imaginable but can be relied upon as true and operable.

Revelation in the Scriptures and traditions of the church plays the primary role in the evolution of the transformational hermeneutic of the CEBs. If human experience is given a superior or equal weight in relation to such revelation, then, from the standpoint of traditional Christianity, one risks supplanting divine revelation by human wisdom and divine action by human action. Truth does not stand or fall with human performance, observation, or lack thereof. Human experience cannot posit its own validity. At best, human experience can claim, either explicitly or implicitly, to conform to transcendent authorities such as “truth,” “historical dialectic,” “God,” and so forth. For the church out of whose bosom this movement has come (and

"God chose his Son to be born like us so that we can realize that we are important."
out of whose bosom also has come much resistance), the authority
and standard against which all experience must be measured is
its living Lord, Jesus Christ. The direction in which the church
has been called has already been made clear, regardless of its
sufficiency in moving along that path.

Human experience, then, from the Christian standpoint, can-
not itself generate liberating truth; but it will be the essential locus
of such truth when read in a particular way. Experience cannot
be drawn upon directly but only indirectly, i.e., through the spec-
tacles of faith, to borrow from John Calvin.

"Things are not always what they seem." Although it is
not always sufficiently understood by those within and without
the movement, it is precisely a "hermeneutic of suspicion" about the present order of things that is crucial to the transfor-
mative stance taken by CEB communities. This hermeneutic is
grounded in convictions shaped by Christian faith, namely the
Triune God is gracious and good and stands with the downtrod-
den, and that this God is working for the overcoming of all evil.
In the case of suffering under oppression, experience becomes
suspect. Oppression is no longer taken as a "given," somehow
requiring accommodation, but a malleable set of conditions calling
for transformation. This assessment of suffering is possible be-
cause an alternative reality has been perceived under the impact
of the language of Christian faith, informed by new social theo-
ries. Language and symbols referring to this alternative reality,
such as the kingdom of God, are the essential predecessors of
new experience and of new praxis.

Although the experience of the kingdom of God may find
new and powerful expression in the CEBs, it is important not to
confuse this new expression with what grounds it, namely, the
liberating Word of God. Some might object that the Word of God
is not merely conceptual but praxis in its most profound sense;
but it must be remembered that such praxis can only be recog-
nized as such through the lenses of faith and its essential symbols
and language. Neither general experience in the broader sense
nor the more particular notion of praxis can posit its own validity.
Otherwise, truth become a function of human experience in its
totality and vicissitude. Such a view could hardly have generated
the profound revolution represented by the CEBs. The reading
of Scripture, the prayers and insights of pastoral workers and
priests drawing upon the tradition of faith, along with the in-
corporation of new insights from social theory, have all played a
crucial role in making experience revolutionary and in producing
revolutionary experiences through the CEBs.

The hermeneutic of suspicion will be used increasingly, I
hope, not only in the base communities' external interpretation
of society and the larger church but in their own self-understand-
ing as well. If they are to mature and become an increasingly
important force in Latin America, they may benefit from a more
careful reading of the relationship between experience and inter-
pretation. However, any inadequacies in the base communities' self-understanding pale beside the courageous and compassion-
ate lives they live in the face of staggering resistance. For those
of us accustomed to theological subtlety, the call is not to more
subtlety but to a much bolder discipleship and deeper compas-

Notes

1. Interview with Pablo Richard in San Jose, Costa Rica, August 18,
1986.
3. Hector Borrat, "The Future of Religion in Latin America: Diver-
4. Interviews with Julio Sequiera, Chipita __(family name unavail-
able), and Lucia Zelada Godoy in Managua, Nicaragua, August 12–
13, 1986.
6. Ibid., pp. 10, 35.
7. Alvaro Barreiro, Basic Ecclesial Communities (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis
8. Cf. Guillermo (William) Cook, "The Expectation of the Poor: A
Protestant Study of the Catholic 'Comunidades de Base' in Bra-
zil" (Fuller Theological Seminary: Ph.D. diss., 1982), pp. 291–92.
10. Ibid.
11. Cook, p. 244; Carlos Mesters, "The Use of the Bible in Christian
Communities of the Common People" in S. Torres and J. Eagleson,
eds., The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities (Maryknoll, N.Y.:
12. Cook, p. 244.
14. Richard Shaull, "Basic Christian Communities: Latin American
p. 55.
Victorian Images of Islam

Clinton Bennett

The Nineteenth Century Revisited

How did Christians in the Victorian era make theological sense of Islam? Did nineteenth-century Christians merely perpetuate medieval images of Islam, almost all negative? Or did they develop new approaches based on better scholarship of source and primary texts?

When I began my research on these questions, I assumed that nineteenth-century attitudes to Islam were monochrome, apart from exceptions like Thomas Carlyle who wrote from outside Christian orthodoxy. But this soon proved not to be the case.

My initial idea was to concentrate on the contribution of Sir William Muir (1819–1905), whose life spanned the then closely related worlds of colonialism, missions, and scholarship. Muir’s scholarship, judged by Albert Hourani as “still not quite superseded,” was motivated by his support for the missionary cause. He believed that if missionaries were successfully to refute Islam (which those missionaries he supported aimed to do), they would need more accurate information than what had been available to their predecessors. Muslims could look with “contemptuous incredulity” on the works of Maracci and Prideaux, but now, Muir wrote, Christians could use Islam’s own “best sources” to prove to Muslims “that they are deceived and superstitious in many important points.”

For some of his contemporaries Muir certainly succeeded. However, scholars were able to use Muir’s Life of Mahomet (1861) and other books to confirm opinions that sometimes differed from his: they accepted his facts but questioned his interpretations and conclusions. Not everyone in Victorian England accepted without question jingoistic attitudes of cultural and religious superiority. Also, the too comfortable and convenient alliance between Christian missions and everything Western did not pass without criticism, even by some who stood within the Christian tradition.

An early writer who questioned traditional attitudes toward Islam was the Reverend Charles Forster (1787–1871), whose book Mahometanism Unveiled appeared in 1829. In our century, Albert Hourani and Norman Daniel have found Forster sufficiently noteworthy to summarize his theories in Europe and the Middle East (1980) and Islam, Europe and Empire (1966). Muir reviewed Forster’s Mahometanism Unveiled in one of his own early articles—part of a series in the Calcutta Review later republished in The Mohammedan Controversy (1897). Muir described the public debates in Northwest India between the Christian missionary, Karl Pfander (1803-1865) and the Muslim ulema, Sayyed Rahmat Ali, Mohammed Kazim Ali, and Sayyed Ali Hassan. Muir credited Pfander with victory and suggested that with even better sources at their disposal, the position of Christian missionaries was unassailable. This was the context in which Muir reviewed Forster’s book. Positively, Forster’s book contained, said Muir, “a vast fund of useful information which will well repay a perusal,” but the book advocated an argument which, if accepted, would both prove “the divine origin of Islam” and endanger Christian mission.

Muir commented how the ulema would welcome such a book, written by a Christian cleric.

Two Views Contrasted

My survey of contemporary reaction to Forster revealed that most reviewers, while acknowledging his scholarship, were unhappy with his conclusions. Missionaries such as John Muehleisen Arnold (1817–1881) and John Drew Bate (1836–1923) took issue with Forster’s thesis as late as 1859 and 1884 respectively. However, I also discovered that other nineteenth-century writers adopted approaches to Islam resembling Forster’s. This suggests that there were two schools of thought, mutually aware and mutually critical of each other. The first, represented by Forster (his book was the first to be published), may be characterized as “conciliatory”; the second, represented by Muir, as “confrontational.” This latter description does not imply a value judgment, since Muir himself saw the Christian-Muslim encounter as a battle for world supremacy. Indeed, Muir believed that Islam represented Christianity’s “mortal foe.”

In my research I examined two scholars alongside Muir, namely William St. Clair-Tisdall (1859–1928) and John Drew Bate and two alongside Forster, Frederick Denison Maurice (1805–1872) and Reginald Bosworth Smith (1839–1909). I chose Forster, Maurice, and Smith very carefully, because my interest is with scholars whose aim was to make Christian sense of Islam. (Other writers, such as Godfrey Higgins, 1771–1833, and John Davenport, active in the 1860s, wrote sympathetically about Islam but rejected traditional formulations of Christian faith.)

The contrast between the schools is evidenced by two additional factors. Firstly, Forster et al wrote from Britain and, with the exception of Smith who befriended Muslims as a result of his writing and who briefly visited North Africa, they had no personal acquaintance with Muslims. Muir et al claimed extensive encounter with Muslims and wrote from India and the Middle East. Secondly, Forster et al were neither specialists in Islamics nor Eastern languages but rather were accomplished scholars in other disciplines who applied their particular skills to the study of Islam.

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Muir et al were recognized Orientalists, with access through Arabic and Persian to the source texts. Members of the two schools were clearly influenced by certain attitudes that Christians have at times adopted. Muir, for instance, identified strongly with Henry Martyn (1781–1812), whom he called “champion of England’s honour” in first entering the “sacred contest.” He was also influenced by earlier works such as the *Apology of Al-Kindi*, which he translated into English. For his part, Forster was influenced by his awareness of the creative and positive exchange that took place between Christian, Muslim, and Jew in Moorish Spain. He also identified strongly with George Sale (1697–1736), whose memory, he said, had been “very undeniably aspersed by controversial writers.”

In my research, I sought to locate each of the six figures within their specific intellectual, social, and ecclesiological context. In this detailed analysis, the following questions helped me to explore the contrasts between the two schools:
- Is Islam opposed to Christianity or a preparation for it?
- Does Islam promote or oppose civilization?
- Was Muhammad sincere?
- To what extent was Islam propagated by violence?
- Was Muhammad descended from Ishmael?
- Is Islam a spiritual or a carnal religion?
- Does Islam have a place in God’s future?

**Maurice held that Christianity needs the revitalization that contact with other faiths can supply.**

And on balance, the conciliators answered positively, the confrontationalists negatively.

**Charles Forster: Biblical Key?**

Forster was a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, and a protégé of Bishop John Jebb (1775–1833). After assisting Jebb as Curate and later as Chaplain, Forster became Rector of Stisted in Essex and one of the Six Preachers in Canterbury Cathedral. In addition to *Mahometanism Unveiled* he wrote numerous books, mostly concerned with his rather eccentric obsession with palaeography. In his *The Historical Geography of Arabia* (1844), which both Muir and the Muslim scholar Sir Sayyed Ahmad Khan (1817–1898) regarded as an authority, he returned to one of the themes of his earlier book.* His interest in Islam was prompted by an observation of Dr. Johnson: “There are but two objects of curiosity—the Christian world and the Mahometan world: all the rest may be considered as barbarous.” Forster attempted to understand the relationship between these two worlds and God’s providential intentions for humanity. He thus took issue with Edward Gibbon’s secular interpretation of history. Forster believed that God stands behind all history as its prime mover; he suggested that the restoration of God to history could not be selective. Consequently, Islam’s origin, numerical success, and apparent permanence no less than Christianity’s could be explained only with reference to “the one great primary cause and effect of all things, the special superintending providence of God.”

Examining traditional arguments advanced by Christians to explain Islam’s origin and development, Forster found them inadequate. Believing that the Bible contains the blueprint of all history, he looked to Scripture to locate Islam’s origin within God’s providential plan, which he found in his interpretation of the Abraham-Ishmael tradition. God’s promise that Ishmael would receive a blessing represented, he said, a covenant with Ishmael’s seed, of which Muslims are members just as Christians are members of Isaac’s seed. This covenant, though subordinate to the Isaac covenant, carried both spiritual and material blessings. Therefore,

**Noteworthy**

Personalia

William R. O’Brien, former Executive Vice President of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, became the Director of a newly formed global strategies center at Samford University’s Beeson School of Divinity, Birmingham, Alabama, effective March 1, 1991. The center will be staffed by experts from various disciplines who serve as adjunct and visiting professors. The center will develop programs of international research, urban and church renewal, and world evangelization. O’Brien previously served for twelve years as a missionary in Indonesia. His wife, Dallanna, is Executive Director of the Southern Baptist Woman’s Missionary Union.

Graham Kings has been appointed Henry Martyn Lecturer in Missiology—a newly created post—in the Cambridge Federation of Theological Colleges, Cambridge, England, effective January 1992. Serving in Kenya with the Church Missionary Society, Kings is presently Vice Principal of St. Andrew’s Institute for Mission and Evangelism in Kenya, and has been teaching there since 1985.

The United States Catholic Mission Association has appointed Margaret Loftus, S.N.D., as Executive Director, effective July 1, 1991. She succeeds Joseph Lang, M.M. who served in this position since 1985. Sister Margaret was a missionary in Japan for more than 20 years, and more recently served as a member of the general governing board of her religious congregation, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, in Rome.

W. Stanley Mooneyham, former president of World Vision, died June 3. He was 65 years old. Mooneyham was president of World Vision during 1969–1982. Prior to joining World Vision he was special assistant to Billy Graham, and coordinated major congresses on evangelism in Berlin (1966) and Singapore (1968). He led the national Association
said Forster, Islam evidences spiritual fruit and can prepare the way for the reception of Christianity. Similarly, Islam had conferred material benefits on mankind. In her Golden Age, her scholars had developed astronomy, chemistry, mathematics, navigation, and philosophy, while her universities had taught Christian as well as Muslim students. He marshaled evidence, drawn especially from Spain and Sicily, to support this. He explained hostility between Christians and Muslims by citing Genesis 16:12: “With his hand against everyone, and everyone’s hand against him; and he shall live at odds with all his kin” (NRSV). However, he believed that Islam was gradually converging toward Christianity, whose ally it is in the task of enlightening and civilizing the world, so that eventually Isaac and Ishmael would be reunited. This unity will be achieved by “extraordinary providential interposition.”

Forster criticized earlier writers for bending facts to accommodate their theories. “Prejudice,” he wrote, had too often “usurped the place of sound reason.” Too much attention was given to “preconceptions,” too little to “facts.” Christians had spared little thought of the effect on Muslims of a “wrong appreciation of their religious system.” “Christians were wrong,” said Forster, to try Muhammad by a standard he did not know. He knew only a “vile parody of Christianity” and should therefore be compared not with Christ, whom he did not know, but with Moses whom he did know. Thus compared, and given that he “possessed no extraordinary advantage, no superior illumination,” Forster judged that Muhammad had genuinely attempted to raise, not lower, moral standards.

Forster’s work attracted fierce criticism as well as cautious praise and remained a debating point throughout the century. One critic referred to his “infidel theory” as “approaching the verge of blasphemy”; another wrote that if Islam was “truly entitled to the pedigree and praise bestowed it by Mr. Forster . . . our societies ought to . . . [print] cheap Korans [and send] missionary Moulahs to the heathen.”

John Frederick Denison Maurice: A Theological Key?

John Frederick Denison Maurice, described by Alec Vidler as “the most originating of Victorian theologians,” was familiar with Forster’s thesis, which, he said, by attempting to deal fairly with facts that Christians had often perverted, had benefited the Christian cause. The son of a Unitarian minister, Maurice became an Anglican priest and first professor of theology at King’s College, London. He was dismissed in 1853 for alleged departure from orthodoxy but remained throughout his life a serving priest and was later professor of moral philosophy at Cambridge. His single contribution to theology of religions was his The Religions of the World, his Boyle Lecture for 1846.

He began with a premise not dissimilar to Forster’s—that all religions have their origin in the divine. They stem from something that is better than their human followers, which sustains them despite human weakness. This “inner strength” was not due to man’s own spiritual nature or faculties but to what he called “the higher ground” or, anticipating Paul Tillich, “the ground of our being.” Each religion, he suggested, stresses a vital aspect of divine truth while only Christianity holds all aspects together in absolute harmony. Christianity, in contact with other religions, can therefore supply the wholeness they need to become effectual. Christianity, though, like all systems, suffers decay and stands itself in need of the revitalization that contact with other faiths can supply. Therefore, if other faiths need Christianity, Christianity also needs them; thus theology of religions becomes a universal concern. Maurice reacted against Thomas Carlyle’s pantheism, although Carlyle’s psychological portrait of Muhammad as Hero was his principal source. Similarly, though reacting against Gibbon, Forster had made good use of his “Decline and Fall.”

Maurice’s main contribution was the placing of a theology of religions that positively valued other faiths within a wider theological framework. Briefly, this centered on his profound conviction that in Christ God has both created and redeemed mankind. All

of Free Will Baptists in 1962–1965, and also served as director of information and editor of United Evangelical Action magazine for the National Association of Evangelicals. At the time of his death, Mooneyham was minister-at-large for Palm Desert Community Presbyterian Church, Palm Desert, California.

Announcing

The name of the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association (EFMA) has been changed to the Evangelical Fellowship of Mission Agencies.

The United States Catholic Mission Association will hold its annual conference for 1991 at the St. Louis Marriott Airport Hotel, October 25-27. The theme is “Cultures Challenge Mission: The Sin and the Grace.” For additional information, contact: USCMA, 3029 Fourth Street NE, Washington, D.C. 20017 (Tel: 202/832-3112 or Fax: 202/832-3683).

The Latin American Theological Fraternity announces the Third Latin American Congress on Evangelization (CLADE III), August 24–September 4, 1992, in Quito, Ecuador, on the theme “The Whole Gospel to the Whole World Out of Latin America.” For further information, contact: Guillermo Cook, General Coordinator CLADE III, Apartado 6-2050, San Pedro Montes de Oca, Costa Rica. Tel (506) 25-11-75; Fax (506) 31-23-50.

The next conference of the International Association for Mission Studies will be held August 3–11, 1992, at Hawaii Loa College, Kaneou, Oahu, Hawaii. The theme of the conference is “New World, New Creation: Mission in Power and Faith.” For membership applications in IAMS and further information on the conference, write to: Joachim Wietzke, General Secretary of IAMS, Mittelweg 143, D-2000, Hamburg 13, Germany.
are therefore “in Christ” whether they know it or not. Hindus and Muslims as well as Christians stand in a relationship with him. “Unity,” says biographer Florence Higham, “whether in a person or a people, was of the essence” of Maurice’s understanding of the Gospel. Islam’s value, Maurice suggested, was its clear proclamation that God is and that he seeks man out. It degenerates, said Maurice, when it attempts to substitute “visions of His nature” for that fact. This becomes fruitless speculation and results in Muslims becoming worshipers of a “dead necessity” instead of witnesses of a “Living Being.” Maurice found little comfort in beliefs about God. Instead he demanded belief in God, “unobstructed intercourse with the Deity.” However, the Gospel’s picture of God’s nature as incarnate in Christ, if “grounded” in a Muslim’s “original faith” and not presented as a substitute for it, can “preserve the precious fragments of truth” in Islam and, “forming them into a whole,” make it “effective for the blessing of all lands over which it reigns.” Thus for Maurice, as for Forster, Islam possessed spiritual value and occupied a place in God’s providence. Christians need not, said Maurice, “regard its continuance wholly as a calamity.”

Reginald Bosworth Smith: A Historical Framework?

Reginald Bosworth Smith also argued in favor of a conciliatory approach to Islam. After a brilliant career at Oxford, where he became President of the Union, Smith taught at Harrow College. The biographer of Lord Lawrence, he was also well known for his influential letters and articles on public and political issues. A classicist, his contribution in the area under review was to supply a sounder historical context to Maurice’s theological framework. Smith’s Mohammed and Mohammedanism was first published in 1874. As had Forster, Smith criticized earlier writers for writing “to prove a thesis—Muhammad was to be either a Hero or an imposter.” Consequently, he says, we learn much that has been said about Muhammad but comparatively little of Muhammad himself. While acknowledging “paramount allegiance to Christianity,” Smith attempted to penetrate behind the historical records to the facts they describe, believing that God should not be “localised exclusively in one place or creed” but traced “everywhere in measure.” Inspiration in the “broadest sense of the word,” he believed, was “found everywhere in all the greatest thoughts of men, for the workings of God are everywhere, and the spirits of men and nations are moulded by Him to bring about his purposes of love.” Both Maurice and Smith believed in the ultimate triumph of God’s love. Smith wrote of “that . . . unity above and beyond [the] unity of Christendom which, properly understood, all earnest Christians so much desire; a unity which rests upon the belief that the children of the one Father may worship Him under different names; that they may be influenced by one spirit, even though they know it not, that they may all have one hope, even if they have not one faith.”

Like Forster, Smith argued in favor of Islam’s civilizing role. He saw Islam as an ally. Influenced by evolutionary thinking, he tended to regard Islam as suitable for Africa and Asia, and Christianity as suitable for Europeans. (Darwin’s On the Origin of the Species appeared in 1859.) However, he also questioned Europe’s assumption of racial and cultural superiority and suggested that Christian missionaries could learn much from the example of their Muslim counterparts, who “showed forbearance and a sympathy for native customs and prejudices and even for their more harmless beliefs.” Smith explicitly rejected Muir’s verdict that Muhammad was guilty of imposture and that a moral decline occurred after the Hijrah. Instead, a substantial unity can be traced through each stage of Muhammad’s life. From first until last, Muhammad claimed “that title only with which he had begun, and which the highest philosophy and the truest Christianity will one day, I venture to believe, agree in yielding to him—that of a prophet, a very prophet of God.” Additionally, Smith attracted the gratitude, friendship, and appreciation of some Muslims, who found his picture of Muhammad one they could believe. These same writers called Muir an “avowed enemy of Islam.”

Muir on Forster

In his 1845 review of Forster’s book, Muir not only rejected the view that Islam contained any spiritual value but also the idea that it prepared the way for the reception of Christian faith. Instead, it presented an “impenetrable barrier . . . which effectively excludes every glimmering of the true light.” Muhammad, too, should be judged not against Moses, but against Christ and so judged stands condemned: his cruelty, craft, artifice, and licentiousness outweigh his urbanity, loyalty, moderation, and magnanimity. Muir, Tisdall, and Bate all refer to Islam as “anti-Christian.” Tisdall wrote, “Islam is an anti-christian faith, a Christless creed [that] has preserved in the life and character of its Founder an enduring principle of degradation.” Nor, these scholars argued, was Islam capable, as Forster and Smith suggested, of reformation. (Both Tisdall and Bate refer to Smith’s book.) Muir wrote, “The Islam of today is substantially the Islam we have seen throughout history. Swathed in the bands of the Koran, the Moslem faith, unlike the Christian, is powerless to adapt to varying time and place, to keep pace with the march of humanity, direct and purify the social life and elevate mankind. Freedom, in the proper sense of the word, is unknown; and this, apparently, because, in the body politic the spiritual and the secular are hopelessly confused.” Nor had Islam, in their opinion, made any significant contribution to human progress. Tisdall wrote, “no great civilization, no scientist of note, no renowned school of philosophy, has ever arisen on purely Muhammedan ground.” Moorish civilization was explained by a combination of external influences and by its distance from orthodox Islam. Islam, too, was characteristically propagated by violence, a claim which Forster and Smith had questioned.

Muir’s Missionary Legacy.

Among missionaries, Muir’s work was thought definitive. Tisdall and Bate are but two examples of missionary scholars who ac-
known indebtedness to Muir's scholarship. Tisdall was a CMS missionary in India and Persia who received the D.D. from Edinburgh (where Muir was principal) for his many books on Islam and other faiths. Bate, a Baptist missionary best known for his Hindi dictionary, also developed an interest in Islam, unusual among Baptists. His *The Claims of Ishmael* appeared in 1884. He became a member of the Royal Asiatic Society in 1881. Thus, all three "confrontationalists" received academic recognition.

Some historians, however, criticized Muir for allowing theological opinion to influence his historical narrative, and for failing Islam and other faiths. Bate, a Baptist missionary best known for three "confrontationalists" received academic recognition.

Nevertheless, even with his belief in satanic inspiration, Muir certainly portrayed Muhammad more accurately and sympathetically than had most earlier writers in the English language.

**The Primacy of the Theological Task**

In conclusion, I suggest that the very different views of Islam adopted by the two schools were due less to geographical location, encounter or lack of encounter with Muslims, or to scholarly method, than to their theological apriorities. While the British-based writers used secondary sources, they used the very best available and cannot fairly be accused of inadequate scholarship. However, they did begin predisposed to think positively about Islam. They looked for God's hand and found it. Consequently, their picture was, on balance, a positive one, which stressed a genuine spirituality and vindicated Muhammad of many traditional Christian charges. They saw continuity rather than discontinuity between Muhammad at Mecca and Muhammad at Medina and were positive about the value of Islamic sources.

Muir and company began convinced that Islam was morally and spiritually bankrupt and at best of human origin. They therefore deconstructed Islam, assuming deceit and dishonesty of Muhammad and of his biographers. Interestingly, they shared Islam's view of revelation but applied this to the Bible, not to the Qur'an. Forster, Maurice, and Smith, on the other hand, began with a concept of revelation as God's action in history and in experience. God was not confined to one revelation of himself in one place at one time. Rather, revelation was an ongoing process. Revelation through Scripture and through the Christ event is vital but not exhaustive. Smith especially was unhappy with attempts permanently to capture religious experience in formal creeds, since "poetic imagery" too easily becomes mistaken for "scientific exactness." (Here he followed Thomas Arnold). My conclusion therefore argues that theological premise is likely to be a more dominant factor in determining our attitude to another faith than encounter itself. The importance of a theology of religions is consequently underlined. For Forster and Smith, this meant "mystery": chapters of God's providential history remained unwritten, and God alone knew their text. Muir, Tisdall, and Bate, however, could not "Dare to Know" more. Nothing new could be learned or discovered beyond the Christian world, because for them Christianity contained all truth to the exclusion of any other faith.

**Notes**


4. Ibid., p. 45.

5. Ibid., p. 48.


13. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 78.


21. Ibid., p. 23.


23. Ibid., 1876 ed., p. xvi.

24. Ibid., pp. xxv-xxvi.

25. Ibid., p. 344.


32. Ibid., p. 66. See Arnold's *Literature and Dogma* (1873).

33. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) offered "Sapere Aude" (Dare to Know) as the motto of the Enlightenment.
The Legacy of John Livingston Nevius

Everett N. Hunt, Jr.

John Livingston Nevius served for forty years as a Presbyterian missionary in China. An itinerant missionary with great appreciation for the Chinese, their language and culture, he was committed to winning converts and discipling them in systematic Bible study.

Though a missionary in China, Nevius may be best known for his influence on Protestant beginnings in Korea where the pioneer Presbyterian missionaries adopted his church planting concepts. It is doubtful if his method originated with Nevius, but without question it was formative in Protestant beginnings in Korea.

Formative Years

John L. Nevius was born March 4, 1829, in Seneca County, New York, where his family attended the Presbyterian Church of Ovid. His father, of Dutch descent, died when John was only eighteen months old and his brother, Reuben, was four. Sometime later, when his mother remarried, the family went to live for a year in New England. John stayed behind, however, and lived with his grandparents.

As a teenager John lived with his grandparents a second time and attended the Dutch Reformed Church of Ovid, where his grandfather was a member.

He spent seven years at Ovid Academy and then entered Union College, Schenectady, New York, in September, 1845, as a sophomore; John was not yet sixteen years old. In the winter of 1846–47 he left college to teach, then returned and graduated in 1848.

John’s first mention of his future wife, Helen Coan, is in a letter to his brother written October 15, 1848, but there is little evidence of serious life purpose. In a letter to Reuben, John recalls their mother saying that “our education and all our plans for the future have been with a view to our entering the ministry.” John confesses, “We have thus far fooled away our time. If we are ever to do anything in this world, we must begin living on a new system.”

“It was a bitter trial to his mother,” Helen recorded later in her biography of Nevius, “that neither of her sons had avowed his intention of living a Christian life.” When John decided to go south “to seek his fortune,” his mother said, “I cannot.”

John sailed from New York for Georgia the last of October, 1849. He began keeping a journal there in which he reflected on his duty to God: “I have always thought that when I should make the slightest change toward a religious life, I should not stop short of a thorough reformation.” But the only advance he made was “some slight idea of the sinfulness of my nature and my utter weakness.” Finally, John wrote his mother confessing what she had wanted to hear for so long: “I now know that I am not capable, of myself, of the first holy thought or aspiration; that I am indebted for everything to God.”

To Reuben John wrote, “My pride and self importance kept me from God. The Holy Spirit was . . . taking the things of Christ and showing them to me. In a word, I am changed. . . . I now feel my utter inability to take the first step in the Christian life without divine aid. . . . My only hope is in God’s mercy through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Thirteen months after arriving in Georgia, John decided to enter the ministry. Influenced by friends, he chose Princeton Theological Seminary. He left Columbus for Princeton December 4, 1850, and found it hard to change from teaching to studying. “I wish I might run the Christian course without needing the lash,” he wrote in his journal.

While at Princeton John adopted several rules to regulate his life, the first dated December 29, 1850, and the last, April 17, 1851. A sample suggests the tone of them all:

1. To keep my mind impressed with the idea that I am living for God and heaven.
2. To make it my object in my studies to become a useful, rather than a learned man.
3. To look forward to my future life as a continual warfare, and endeavor every day to gain by the help of God, a victory over some evil propensity of my heart.
4. To trust the future entirely to God with full confidence, and exercising humble submission to all his righteous will, to pray that he will direct me in the course which will best promote his glory, and enable me every day to spend my time so as best to prepare myself for the station which he has allotted for me.
5. To cultivate assiduously a kind feeling toward and a pleasing manner in intercourse with everyone.

Included were rules for worship, checks against covetousness, envy and jealousy, rules concerning sleep, exercise and food, use of time, Bible study, procrastination, conversation, and one of special note: “16. Every Saturday night to eat sparingly or nothing at all, and spend a part of the evening in looking over these rules, seeing how far I have transgressed them, how much I can improve them, and myself by them; and in preparation for the Sabbath.”

His journal entry for January 6, 1851, a month after his arrival at Princeton, reads, “I have now an object in life—the glory of God and the salvation of my own soul, and the souls of others.” The week following his first communion at Princeton, John heard a missionary challenge that interested him.

Call to Missions

In the summer of 1852 John and Helen began to develop a deeper relationship. She writes, “It was then that we exchanged brotherly and sisterly friendship of long standing for something much dearer.” September 1852 began his last year of seminary...
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pictured with Dr. C. Peter Wagner is
Jim Drozdick, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Master of Arts in cross-cultural studies, 1991
and an intensifying correspondence between John and his "Nell" in which he reflected on his studies at Princeton, and their future ministry together. He recommended books for her to read, suggested how she should study the Bible, and confessed his problems he was still working on, such as indifference to the feelings of others, plus pride and selfishness.

When Walter Lowrie, Corresponding Secretary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, visited Princeton, John felt stirred once again to consider a life in missions. "I shall not be hasty," he wrote. "I shall wait for more information about other lands, and for the leadings of God's providence with regard to places at home as well as abroad. . . . I want to know where my duty lies. There I shall be successful; there I shall be happy."

Finally, on March 29, 1853, he announced to Helen, "It is my purpose now, if I do not meet with providential hindrances, to be a missionary to Siam or China. . . . I am not enthusiastic, but I can heartily thank God, if he has called me to this work, for the privilege of engaging in it; and I only regret that I cannot bring to it a stronger body, a better furnished mind, and a more devoted heart."

Matters moved quickly when Helen consented to join him. John applied to the Board of Missions, requesting assignment to Ningpo, China. Accepted by the board on April 18, six days later he was ordained by the presbytery.

John and Helen were married at Helen's home in Seneca County, New York, June 15, 1853. Helen's father did not prevent the marriage, but he did not approve her marrying a missionary, especially one going to China.

The Neviuses sailed from Boston September 19, 1853, on the "Bombay," which Helen described as "an old India trader, neither comfortable, nor indeed seaworthy; though, of that fact, we were, at the time, fortunately not aware." They spent six months on board ship in a room three and one half feet wide and not quite six feet long.

The Neviuses arrived in Ningpo in spring, 1854, little more than a decade after the signing of the Treaty of Nanking that ended the first Opium War and allowed foreign presence in five treaty ports: Canton, Amoy, Foochow, Ningpo, and Shanghai.

Shortly after their arrival, the Neviuses began to study Chinese. Both had facility with the language and, according to Helen, enjoyed their study. After eight or nine months, Nevius shared in chapel in an informal way, and in about a year was carrying a normal load of preaching and teaching in Chinese.

Helen was not well and in 1856, just three years after their arrival, she returned to the States for a year and a half. Meanwhile Nevius itinerated, wrote articles on China for new missionaries, and a simplified catechism for Chinese inquirers. Helen returned in 1858, but because it was a time of constant rebel activity, the Neviuses went to Japan to spend eight months with the Hepburns, Presbyterian missionaries there.

The bride's father did not approve of her marrying a missionary, especially one going to China.

Nevius's Ministry Pattern

On May 18, 1861, because of political upheavals and the severity of the weather at Ningpo, the Neviuses moved their mission activity to Chefoo in Shantung Province. During this time Nevius continued to itinerate. He attempted to visit twice a year all the churches assigned to his care for instruction, discipline, and encouragement as well as evangelism. Between the spring and fall tours, Nevius invited church leaders to his home in Chefoo for advanced Bible instruction.

From 1861 to 1864, he wrote tracts and discussed with other missionaries the needs for a theological school and for new methods of outreach. Cholera broke out in 1864. This, along with renewed rebel activity, drove the Neviuses south and for a time back to America.

After three and a half years at home, the Neviuses returned to China in 1869 where John accepted an assignment to teach in the new theological school at Hangchow.

After a year of teaching and after the Tientsin massacre in 1870, the Neviuses requested reassignment to Chefoo where they built a house and lived their remaining twenty-two years in China. They followed moderate living standards, neither trying to "go native" nor remaining stiffly Western.

From 1872 to 1881 Nevius maintained an active schedule of itineration in Shantung Province. He traveled on horseback as far as 300 miles south and 200 miles west of Chefoo, keeping in touch with 60 preaching points.

In 1877 a severe famine struck and Nevius became involved in famine relief, an effort rewarded by increased credibility for his Gospel preaching among the people. But Helen's health was still not good. They were forced to return to the States; Helen in 1879 and John a year later.

Returning to China again in 1882, Nevius resumed his itineration and maintained it for the next eight years or so. From January to April or May, usually with another missionary, he preached, taught, visited, baptized, counseled, and pastored. From June until August, thirty to forty men came from rural areas to the Nevius home where they spent five hours each day in systematic Bible study. Then from September to December Nevius traveled again.

In 1889, the second general missionary conference of China convened in Shanghai and Nevius was invited to speak on his missionary methods. When the Neviuses left for furlough in June of that year, they were invited to stop over in Korea to share his method with Presbyterian missionaries there.

The Neviuses returned to Chefoo in 1892 ready to resume normal work. On the eve of his fall itineration, October 19, 1893, a heart attack felled John at age 64.

What is the Nevius Plan?

John Nevius's plan of mission work evolved over a lifetime of ministry. Of it he says, "The plans and methods made use of in bringing the truth to bear upon the minds of the heathen are various, and may and should be changed and modified according to the different conditions and circumstances."

He considered the "primary and ultimate work of the missionary" to be "that of preaching the Gospel," while also acknowledging the need to meet physical needs. Preaching he defined as "every possible mode of presenting Christian truth." Nevius guarded against following a universal pattern for mission work. "Some . . . seem to regard the heathen as all
belonging to the same class, and conforming to one type; while in fact they differ widely, each nation having a marked individuality of its own."

Nevius held unique views on the use of the Bible. He suggested it was never intended to be distributed among the heathen as a means of bringing them to the truth. He stressed that "it is principally by the instrumentality of the living teacher that God will save them that are lost." Only when they develop a knowledge of Christ, will the Spirit unlock the mysteries of Scripture to them.

Nevius did not minimize the importance of the Bible but rather emphasized that "the Bible should accompany and follow the labors of the missionary, rather then precede them." The church's messengers must introduce Christ's truth "among the natives first and principally by oral instruction in their mother tongues; by acts of kindness and sympathy; by lives embodying and illustrating the Gospel which they preach."³⁸

The Nevius Plan in Korea

The two weeks of instruction Nevius gave the young Presbyterian missionaries in Korea in 1889 formed and focused their work. The Korea mission considered Nevius's suggestions so important that they adopted them as mission policy and gave all new missionaries a copy of his booklet, requiring them to pass an examination on it.

The most extensive work dealing with the Nevius Plan was The Korean Church and the Nevius Methods, written by a Presbyterian missionary to Korea, C. A. Clark. Clark summarizes the Nevius Plan:

I. Missionary personal evangelism through wide itineration,
II. Self-propagation: every believer a teacher of someone, and a learner from someone else better fitted; every individual and group seeking by the "layering method" to extend the work,
III. Self-government: every group under its chosen unpaid leaders; circuits under their own paid helpers, will later yield to pastors; circuit meetings to train the people for later district, provincial and national leadership,
IV. Self-support: with all chapels provided by the believers; each group, as soon as founded, beginning to pay towards the circuit helper's salary; even schools to receive but partial subsidy, and that only when being founded; no pastors of single churches provided by foreign funds,
V. Systematic Bible study for every believer under his group leader and circuit helper; and for every leader and helper in the Bible Classes,
VI. Strict discipline enforced by Bible penalties,
VII. Co-operation and union with other bodies, or at least territorial division,
VIII. Non-interference in lawsuits or any such matters,
IX. General helpfulness where possible in the economic life problems of the people.

Nevius contrasted his method to former patterns: The former depended largely on paid "native agency," while the latter minimized such agency. Both sought the establishment of independent, self-reliant churches; but the old system did so by the use of foreign funds to foster and stimulate church growth in the first stage of their development, gradually discontinuing the use of such funds, while the new system applied principles of independence and self-reliance from the beginning.

Nevius stressed the training of converts. This training could be best accomplished by the convert continuing in his normal place and putting his faith into practice. When he has grown he would then be recognized as fit for positions of responsibility.

Nevius emphasized teaching over preaching. His four-part outline for Sunday observance included teaching a simple Bible story. He stressed local leadership and encouraged informal arrangements, using the home and furniture provided by the group itself, rather than formal church buildings and furnishings.

The Nevius Plan called for a structured local group:

- We have found it necessary, in order to systematize and unify our work, to establish rules and regulations, which have been put in our chapels as placards. Most of these are now embodied in the new edition of The Manual for Inquirers. This Manual, the Catechism, and the Gospels, are the books which I place in the hands of every inquirer, and little more is needed for years in the way of textbooks for those who have not previously learned to read.

- The Manual contains "general directions for Scripture studies; forms of prayer; the Apostles Creed; and select passages of Scripture, to be committed to memory." He offers a selection of Scripture stories and parables, with directions as to how they should be recited and explained.

- Next follow "Rules for the Organization and Direction of Stations; Duties of Leaders and Rules for their guidance; a system of forms for keeping station records of attendance and studies; Form of Church Covenant; Scripture Lessons for Preparing for Baptism; the same for preparing for the Lord's Supper; Order of Exercises for Church Service and Directions for spending Sunday; a Short Scripture Catechism... enforcing the duty of giving; and a short essay on the duty of every Christian to make known the Gospel to others." Specially prepared questions were included to facilitate the teaching and examination of learners. Sometimes a selection of common hymns was bound up with the volume.

- Nevius recommended for all church members six types of study, "Learning to read, memorizing Scripture, reading Scripture in course, telling Scripture stories, learning the meaning of Scripture, and reviews of former exercises." The missionaries' role was to visit the area for examinations, for general instructions, and direction. He found that it was necessary to have the local group send potential leaders for a six-week to two-month advanced Bible Training School. This program included secular subjects as well, and Mrs. Nevius taught music, "with singular assiduity and success."

- The Nevius plan evolved as each stage presented itself with an underlying principle always at work: it should never be other than the natural meeting of the peoples' own needs on their time schedule and within their financial capability. He recognized that these Bible School classes would eventually lead to theological education, but he was in no hurry to introduce such a program.

Discipline formed a part of the plan. Nevius wrote,
We regard the administration of discipline as indispensable to the growth and prosperity of our work, and attention to it claims a large portion of our time and thoughts. We administer discipline as directed by the Scriptures. . . . first, by exhortation and admonition, followed if necessary by a formal trial and suspension; varying from a few months to one or two years, in failure of reformation, by excommunication. 14

Nevius handled discipline himself, thus the importance of missionary itineration. He tried to visit each place at least twice a year and discipline always formed a part of his visit.

Though the Nevius plan was adopted and put into practice by the Presbyterian missionaries in Korea, Nevius's colleagues in Shantung Province were not so enthusiastic.

His most severe critic was Dr. Calvin Mateer who did not favor Nevius's concept of workers supported by the local congregation instead of receiving a salary from the mission. Mateer, known to be a stubborn man, seems to have resented this newly arrived missionary trying to alter the old ways of doing things.

The greatest tribute to John L. Nevius is that the Nevius Plan is the most frequently cited factor in the outstanding growth of the Korean church.

Notes


Bibliography

Selected works by John L. Nevius


Selected works about Nevius's missionary method

The Legacy of Fredrik Franson

Edvard Torjesen

Fredrik Franson (1852–1908) was a true fruit of the nineteenth-century evangelical awakening. He also became one of its great missionary evangelists.

Five of the seven churches that Franson helped to found in Utah, Colorado, and Nebraska during 1880 are still continuing. Fifteen missionary societies and church denominations, whose founding or early history he significantly influenced, also still continue. They are headquartered in nine different countries of Europe, North America, and Asia.

These missions have been meeting occasionally since 1980 for consultations on evangelical missiology. Their fifth such consultation was held in Japan in 1991 on the invitation of the Domei Church Association. This association will that year reach its 100th Anniversary. It will be the eleventh of these “Franson related” missions to pass its centennial.

A Little Known Personal History

The question may well be asked, “How could a man who made such durable contributions to the mission of the church in so many countries around the world be as overlooked in church and mission historiography as Franson has been?” Professor Emanuel Linderholm, a church historian at Uppsala University, was already disturbed by this omission in 1925. He wrote:

Already in the 1870s Franson had set his religious perspectives for life. He had already then become a typical representative of the 19th century American revivalism in Finney’s and Moody's spirit. He is reminiscent of both of them, combining Moody’s love with Finney’s sternness. . . . Yet, how and by what paths he arrived at all this, I do not know.1

Linderholm’s predicament has been that of other historiographers as well. It has also been a predicament for missiologists. Without a knowledge of the factors that conditioned Franson’s life and ministry, how could they understand his legacy?

Franson arrived in the United States as an immigrant from Sweden at age 17. In February 1877, four months short of his twenty-fifth birthday, he set out as an interdenominational evangelist on the American frontier.

From the start this young evangelist was compelled by a clear and well-focused vision of Christ. He lived by the motto: Constant, Conscious Fellowship with Jesus. He was well read and informed on current issues. He was current on the evangelical discussions of the day. His knowledge of the Bible was thorough and immense. He applied this knowledge rigorously to himself and to his preaching. His life and ministry reflected a true and ready expectation of Christ’s imminent return. He also carefully obeyed the scriptural injunction, “Do not go beyond what is written” (1 Cor. 4:6, niv).

Fredrik was the eighth of ten children. However, the family also experienced grief. Three children died before Fredrik was born. Then in 1857 the father died, as did an infant sister and an older brother. The mother, Maria, at 40 was left a widow with five children, ages 3 to 12. Fredrik was 5. Two years later she remarried. The children, however, all grew up with the surname Franson, after their father.

Cues from the Swedish American Spiritual Awakening

Fredrik Franson was born in Sweden in June 1852. His father and mother were both active in the local "Rosenian" pietist awakening (named after Carl Olof Rosenius). This awakening was the Swedish counterpart to the Evangelical Awakening, the spiritual renewal movement that surged through Protestant churches in different parts of the world all through the nineteenth century.

On the worldwide scale, this awakening distinguished itself by its emphasis on 1. the Bible; 2. evangelism and personal conversion; 3. the oneness of all God’s children; 4. holiness; and 5. missions. These factors also characterized the Rosenian movement in Sweden. However, the Rosenian movement was further characterized by its emphasis on the following “in Christ” relationships: 1. the “truth in Christ,” as found in God’s Word alone; 2. every believer’s “new life in Christ,” a concomitant of justification; 3. all believers’ “oneness and freedom in Christ,” each conditioned by the other; 4. every believer’s “gifts and calling in Christ;” and, after Franson, 5. the “hope in Christ,” conditioning every believer’s outlook on and mission in the world.

Franson’s Spiritual Roots

What were the factors that had conditioned this development in Fredrik Franson’s life? Briefly, they were his responses to cues from four sets of impinging influences. These were the Swedish American spiritual awakening; his personal spiritual crisis and its resolution; nurture through his local home church; and nurture through the Moody campaigns.

Franson founded or influenced the early history of fifteen missionary societies and church denominations in nine countries.

Franson’s Spiritual Crisis and Its Resolution

Fredrik’s parents were godly, capable and hard-working. Frans, the father, built a house for his family that still stands today. Fredrik was the eighth of ten children. However, the family also experienced grief. Three children died before Fredrik was born. Then in 1857 the father died, as did an infant sister and an older brother. The mother, Maria, at 40 was left a widow with five children, ages 3 to 12. Fredrik was 5. Two years later she remarried. The children, however, all grew up with the surname Franson, after their father.

Maria must have early seen some unusual promise in Fredrik. She saw to it that he got as good a primary schooling as then
was possible. When Fredrik got to middle school, he completed the four year course in three. He passed the high school entrance exam in 1867. In his freshman year he got A’s in Greek and Latin and B’s in German, math, theology, and Swedish. However, tragedy again struck. In 1868, because of the economic depression, the three older children found it necessary to emigrate to America. Fredrik at the end of his freshman year had to drop out of school. In May 1869 the parents with the younger children (now three of them) also emigrated to America. For the next two years they lived in a dug-out shelter on the Nebraska prairie.

In the first year Fredrik took sick with fevers and chills. He also fell into a deep spiritual depression and was unable to believe in God. Not until after his twentieth birthday—and after long hours of prayer and faithful counseling by his mother—was he able to believe God’s Word and put his trust in Jesus for salvation. In the resolution of this crisis, Romans 10:8 became especially meaningful to him. He began to study the Bible. The vision of Christ began to come into focus in his soul. He also read Christian study materials. However, he did not share his faith with anyone except his mother.

That was still the situation a year and a half later, when in January 1874 an awakening began to spread through the little Swedish Baptist Church in their settlement. One day, when a lady from this church came to visit and asked Franson about his spiritual condition, he suddenly realized what a shame it was that he had not let anyone know he was a believer. He determined that that evening he would get up in the church and tell everyone what Christ had done for him. He did, and immediately “the fear disappeared.” As he himself testified, “That was because God was my strength, and he blessed the testimony.”

**Franson found it unthinkable to work for Jesus without also maintaining constant fellowship with him.**

**Nurture through the Local Home Church**

Franson now came under the spiritual nurture of this local Baptist church. This turned out to be healthy fare indeed. He soon became active as a layman. The church could then begin to draw on his skills and gifts. A pastor from a neighboring settlement took him along on his evangelistic circuit. Soon the church also began to include Franson in its delegations to various interchurch conferences. In some of these conferences he was selected to serve as recording secretary.

**Nurture through the Moody Campaigns**

In October 1875 a totally different period of learning began. That month Dwight L. Moody, after returning from his campaigns in England, began his North America big city campaigns at Brooklyn, New York. Franson went east to work in and to learn from these campaigns. The campaigns climaxed with the Chicago campaign that continued from October 10, 1876 to January 16, 1877. The next month Franson headed out in full-time evangelistic ministry.

During his sixteen-month apprenticeship in the Moody campaigns Franson came into touch with the heartbeat of the Anglo-American revival movement. He experienced denominational cooperation on an evangelical basis. He discovered the use and the biblical basis of aggressive evangelism. He also learned that God honors his Word, that the Holy Spirit empowers for service, that it is the preaching of Christ that counts, that sins need to be addressed and condemned, but that, at the same time, Good News also needs to be proclaimed to the sinner.

Franson also became familiar with the biblical expositions underlying the expectation of Christ’s soon (and premillennial) return, an expectation that had begun to take hold at this time in both the Anglo-American and German-American awakening movements. This expectation—the “hope in Christ”—now also conditioned Franson’s outlook on and mission in the world. He also learned that it is crucial for the Christian worker himself that he keep himself in a constant, conscious fellowship with the Lord. This lesson was to emerge as more important to Franson than any technique or method. Looking back five years later, he wrote, “Fellowship with Jesus and work for Jesus are two preoccupations that we can never assess too highly.”

To Franson it was unthinkable to work for Jesus without also keeping oneself in a constant conscious fellowship with him. Fredrik Franson’s public ministry lasted thirty one and a half years. During these years he kept himself constantly alert to new situations and opportunities. His perspectives and his ministry never stopped developing.

Franson’s ministry on the American frontier showed early the following dual thrust: 1. aggressive evangelism for local church growth and 2. mobilization of the local church for its evangelistic mission. In Minnesota, Swedish Baptist churches as well as churches of the Mission and Ansgar synods—both Lutheran and both Rosetian—experienced significant growth through his ministry. On the western frontier, two Presbyterian churches resulted in Utah, an independent evangelical church in Denver, and four such churches in Nebraska. During a four-month ministry in Illinois that followed, Franson shared in conferences on New Testament ecclesiology and eschatology.

Three premises in Franson’s ecclesiology at this time became significant cues for the Evangelical Free Church movement that emerged from 1884 to 1885. These premises were: 1. The polity we see applied by the churches in the New Testament is the standard for church polity today; 2. Each local church has an evangelistic mission in the world. For this mission the church needs to mobilize itself, including all of its individual members; and 3. The church is Christ’s Bride on earth. The expectation of Christ’s imminent return conditions our outlook on and our mission in the world. “The time is short” (1 Cor. 7:29).

**Widening Horizons of Mission**

In June 1881, a few days before his twenty-ninth birthday, Fredrik Franson arrived in Sweden. His mission: to so preach the Gospel that as many people as possible in the land of his birth should come to faith in Christ and have the assurance of salvation. In this mission he was singularly successful.

However, the Lord soon began to direct Franson’s attention toward peoples that still had not heard the Gospel. Through the 1882 “May Meetings” in London his eyes were opened to the tremendous strategy and planning involved in bringing the Gospel to the various people groups around the world, and he began to apply these insights. Through his campaigns in Norway in 1883, and in Denmark in 1884–85, both the Norwegian Mission
Covenant Church and the Danish Mission Covenant Church came into being. In 1884 Franson conducted four trial evangelist training courses. These courses proved fruitful. He soon incorporated such courses in his regular ministry.

Franson's vision, however, was still being refocused. He heard a message in 1884 by Professor Theodor Christlieb, the Bonn University theologian, at the Evangelical Alliance International Conference in Copenhagen. Through that message Franson heard God’s call to Germany. Despite the readjustments which this necessitated, he arrived in Germany in June 1885. After seven months of fruitful, but not easy ministry, he went on to Switzerland. He studied French, and soon he shared in French language meetings. He then moved on to France. Here for five months he worked with various local Protestant churches and evangelistic missions, a distinct minority in France. Working with these missions and local churches, Franson learned in a new way the reality of the unfinished task still facing the church.

Moving into Italy and to Egypt, then to Palestine and Lebanon, and up along the coast of Turkey to Constantinople, Franson got a further hands-on experience of what was involved in communicating the Gospel to people of different cultures. In Constantinople, however, he met still another world: Armenians, Bulgarians, Serbs, Romanians, Jews from many nations, Greeks and Turks; and to the northeast, the millions of Russians, with many other nationalities among them.

Franson responded with characteristic enthusiasm to each opportunity; however, his attention was becoming increasingly focused on the masses in societies all around the world that still needed to hear the Gospel. When in July 1887 he finally arrived in East Prussia, he articulated his goal for the future as follows: “To be able to do something on a larger scale to help the masses needed to hear the Gospel. When in July 1887 he finally arrived in East Prussia, he articulated his goal for the future as follows: “To be able to do something on a larger scale to help the masses of people who are rushing into perdition.” He was then thirty-five years old.

Franson spent the next twenty-one years of his life implementing this goal. First he thought through various forms of specialized evangelism that he identified as crucial was counseling with concerned individuals in “after-meetings,” which directly followed public meetings.

A second form of specialized evangelism that he now put into use were special purpose evangelist training courses. In 1888 he conducted such specialized courses in Norway, Finland, and Sweden, each course focusing specifically on the training of laypersons for evangelism in remote and unreached communities. In each country a large number of course participants moved out into this type of evangelism, both at home and abroad. The following six organizations particularly benefited: in Norway, the Norwegian Mission Covenant Church, the Evangelical Orient Mission, and the East Africa Free Mission; in Denmark, the Danish Mission Covenant Church; in Finland, the Finnish Mission Covenant; and, in Sweden, the Holiness Union.

In February 1889 Franson, together with Emanuel Olsson, began his long-planned Germany campaign at Berlin. They met much resistance, and progress was slow. In August, however, Franson was able to visit Barmen where he first had served in 1885. He sensed surges of revival, and an evangelist training course was scheduled for November. In the meetings that then ensued, God added his “times of refreshing” (Acts 4:19). The results were that a large number of people turned to the Lord and several of the course participants volunteered to go as missionaries to China. Through this revival the German Alliance Mission came into being. Also, Franson saw the cue for a new thrust in his own ministry: the mobilization of the church for special purpose missions around the world.

On September 7, 1890, Fredrik Franson landed in New York. On October 14 he began an evangelist training course at Brooklyn, with the announced purpose of selecting and sending missionaries to China. He conducted similar courses in Chicago, Minneapolis, and Omaha. About two hundred Scandinavian young persons attended. From those who offered themselves Franson selected fifty. By February 5, 1891, all these were on their way to China, each supported by one or more local churches. Franson then also organized this whole undertaking as a new mission, The Scandinavian Alliance Mission of North America (today TEAM —The Evangelical Alliance Mission).

Reader’s Response

To the Editor:
The article by John A. Patterson on “The Legacy of Robert P. Wilder” in the BULLETIN issue of January 1991 has many merits. However, there are two points that need special emphasis, which were touched on only cursorily.

One of these is the role of the Princeton “band” in Wilder’s achievements. Without detracting from Wilder’s contributions, his role should be put in proper perspective by highlighting the group of Christian students at Princeton of which Wilder was a member. He did not operate in isolation. Following his graduation Wilder was included in the group of twenty-one delegates from Princeton who went to attend the historic Mount Hermon conference at Northfield, Massachusetts in July 1886. It is crucial that we grasp the centrality of this “band” in both the shaping of Wilder and the emergence of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (SVMFM). Although Wilder was the moving force within the Princeton group, the beginnings of the SVM stem as much from the Princeton “band” as from Wilder himself. The recognition of this does not diminish his legacy, but puts it in proper perspective.

Secondly, Patterson’s remarks at two places in his opening paragraph about American Protestantism could give the SVM and Wilder’s legacy a narrow image. The SVM was not an exclusively American preserve and Wilder’s influence was broad.

During the latter half of 1891 and most of 1892, Wilder was instrumental in the extension of the “Volunteer” concept, spirit, and organization in the universities of Great Britain and Ireland. This should be highlighted as another important part of the legacy of Robert P. Wilder.

Watson A.O. Omulokoli,
Chaplain, Kenyatta University
Nairobi, Kenya

Over the eleven-year period from 1890 to 1901, Franson’s ministry influenced significantly the founding or early history of the following ten missions: The Evangelical Alliance Mission (1890); Swiss Alliance Mission (1890); North China Mission of the C&M (1893); Mongolia Branch of the Evangelical East Asia Mission (1897); Himalaya Mission of the Finnish Free Church (1898); China Mission of the Norwegian Mission Covenant Church (1899); the “Borken” Fellowship Deaconess Home of Marburg Mission (1899); Swedish Alliance Mission (1900); Women’s Mission Association of the Finnish Free Church (1900); and Norwegian Missionary Alliance (1901).

From 1894 to 1895 Franson visited mission fields in Asia. He spent seven months in India, two months in Japan, and seven months in China. A total of 149 missionaries were then serving on these fields with missions he helped to get started. Franson visited and entered into the work of nearly every one of these missionaries. In each country he also studied the history and culture of the peoples, as well as the work of other missions.

In 1902 Franson set out on an evangelistic and missiological study tour, which in six years took him around the world. Among his ministries: organizing a Scandinavian church in Norsewood, New Zealand; setting up a seamen’s home in Sydney, Australia; inter-mission evangelistic campaigns in South China; a six-month ministry in Japan; nurturing the first revival surges in Korea; thirteen months of cooperative ministries in North, West and Coastal China; people movements in Burma and India; revivals in Turkey, which greatly influenced the emerging Armenian Spiritual Brotherhood; sixteen months of varied evangelism in South Africa; and nine months of interethic orientation and cooperative ministries in the countries of Latin America.

When Franson landed in Mexico, he had personally evangelized among peoples in most parts of the world. He had gathered a unique body of missiological data from mission work throughout the world. Before leaving Mexico, he wrote an overview of his missiological findings. The title (as translated from Swedish) was Five Different Methods of Missionary Work in Non-Christian Societies.

On June 5, 1908, Franson crossed the border into the United States. His plan was to have some rest and then give himself to work among youth. The Lord, however, had other plans. He called Franson to his eternal rest on August 2, 1908. He was fifty-six years old. He had expended himself fully for the Lord.

Conclusion

How can we summarize the legacy of Fredrick Franson? He may be remembered best for these highlights of his ministry:

1. Reinforcement of and his consistent and rigorous responses to the cues of the Evangelical Awakening.
2. Special emphasis on “constant, conscious fellowship with Jesus,” along with his other emphases on the message and programs.
3. Relating himself positively to all individuals and societies.
4. The dual thrust in his early strategy: evangelism with the local church as its goal; and the local church with evangelism as its goal.
5. The dual thrust in his later strategy: mobilization of the church for special purpose missions around the world; and the continuing reinforcement of evangelism, church renewal, and mission engagement.
6. Two of Franson’s characteristic statements: “That which is Biblical is everywhere appropriate, for all countries and all peoples”; and “I have been occupying myself with a country’s history, geography and politics mainly because of their effects on the cause of God’s kingdom.”

Note

1Emanuel Linderholm, Pingströrelsen i Sverige [The Pentecostal movement in Sweden], (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1925), p. 21.

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Book Reviews

Christian Mission and Interreligious Dialogue.


In November 1988, Cardinal Jozef Tomko, Prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, delivered an address criticizing liberal trends in the theology of religions and soteriological thinking that was heard around the world. That 1988 paper is reproduced in Christian Mission and Interreligious Dialogue, along with responses from ten Roman Catholic and seven Protestant scholars, an introduction and an afterword by the editors, and a reply to the responses by Cardinal Tomko. These papers represent the best discussion of the issues raised by Cardinal Tomko and the subsequent encyclical on mission by Pope John Paul II, Redemptoris Missio, that the present reviewer has read.

The failure to bring into relief the unstated premises that lead the evangelical Protestants and Catholics largely to agree with the Cardinal, while liberal Protestants and Catholics largely disagree with him, is perhaps the only shortcoming of this book.

The evangelicals and the Cardinal affirm the "realism" of the Scriptures and the basic dogmatic tradition, offering irenic but firm interpretations of the second article of the creed (on the Christ as redeemer), maintaining an ultimate eschatological dimension to the Christ and the goal of conversion of non-Christians as intrinsic to mission.

Liberal Catholics do not wish to deny outright these notions, but they have evidently moved to a more "symbolic" interpretation of the second article. Their conviction remains that the experience of the richness of other religious traditions calls into serious question the doctrines of the finality and universality of the Christ in their traditional dress.

Though no one calls it that, what is being debated here is the necessity of a basic new construing of Christian identity in the face of other religious traditions. One senses that each side wants to remain in communion with the other, but a careful reading of these papers leads to the judgment that one side can be seriously right only if the other is seriously mistaken.

—William R. Burrows

Faith Born in the Struggle for Life.


If you think you have a clear idea of what Latin American theology of liberation is all about, think again! Dow Kirkpatrick spent ten years in that continent trying to understand that theology (better, those theologies) with a particular eagerness to communicate to First World readers what he found. He found not just theology, but profound spirituality that in this volume he strives to communicate through the collected writings of twenty-four Latin Americans. Some names are very familiar in the ecumenical world: José Miguéz Bonino, Leonardo Boff, Julio de Santa Ana. Others are less well known outside Latin America. All have something important to say.

The compilation's structure is threefold: a variety of reflections on theologies and practices Latin America has inherited from the past; five essays on how the legacies from the past have been distorted enroute to Latin America, or by Latin Americans themselves; and some analyses that look to the present and future of Latin American theology and praxis.

Each of the essays stands on its own feet. It is left to the reader to draw whatever relationships may exist among the essays. It is not easy to fathom these relationships, but it is fascinating to enter into the thought world of the various authors. There are gems such as Milton Schwantes's essay on "Hagar and Sarah," and Elsa Tamez's "The Power of Nudity." There are articles written in the crucible of recent or current struggles, such as Zwinglio Dias's effort to conceive the meaning of a new Protestant denomination in Brazil, and Lysâneas Maciel's political struggle to relate faith to human rights.

The Methodist background of the editor may account for several essays that wrestle with the theology of John Wesley. At least three (Miguel, Etchegoyen, Arias) are quite positive toward Wesley; others (Assmann, Barreto, Santa Ana) are quite critical. There is analysis as well of Calvinism and Lutheranism, even of current Chilean Pentecostalism. All the writers are engaged in a genuine effort to relate the theology they have inherited to the historical realities of their continent.

In his brief introduction the editor asks: "Is Latin American Protestant Theology relevant for us?" He obviously thinks it is. I think so too, but each reader will have to sort out from a quite diverse gathering of materials what may mean most to him or her. It is worth the effort!

—Eugene L. Stockwell


Paths of Duty is a gripping portrayal of the hardships encountered by pioneer missionary women in Hawaii. Patricia Grimshaw, Professor of Women's Studies and American History at the University of Melbourne, seeks to penetrate beneath the surface and focus on issues that are often overlooked in mission histories—particularly those issues that deal with the private side of life. She gives long-overdue acknowledgment to wives who sacrificially served alongside their husbands in the missionary enterprise.

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Review:

Thirsty for Fresh Ideas?


This volume offers an adapted selection of papers presented at a conference centered on Islamic-Christian themes under the sponsorship of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization in July 1987 in Zeist, The Netherlands.

The first section presents and analyzes important aspects of the contemporary situation of the Muslim community in the world and points out their pastoral—or, to use one of the key terms in the book—their strategic significance.

Five substantial papers in section two consider what is involved in the communication of the gospel: the need for “rethinking” the gospel in response to the message of Islam, especially themes such as God and his prophets, God and his Word, and God and his mercy.

A third group of papers consists of “practical suggestions on witnessing from a number of effective practitioners” (p. 197). It is followed by studies on contextualization and an introduction to and list of research and references.

Christian W. Troll is a German Jesuit who did his doctoral work at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. From 1976 to 1988 he was a missionary in India, teaching Islamics and Christian-Muslim relations in various faculties of theology and seminaries in India. Since July 1988 he has been senior lecturer at the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, Selby Oak Colleges, Birmingham. He is also general editor of the journal of Islam and Christian Muslim Relations, to start publication in June 1990, and editor of the series Islam in India: Studies and Commentaries (New Delhi).
training centers as well as a useful annotated bibliography on Islam. The strength of this rich and quite comprehensive volume is the constant interplay between theological reflection and experience. Regrettably, the question has not been addressed of how Christians can and should combine, on the level of theology and practice, “dialogue and mission,” in other words, proclamation of the Word and service and liberation of the poor and other forms of “holistic ministry,” as ultimately one expression of the apostolic mission entrusted to them.

One also misses in the volume a report on the rich experiences of living and working with Muslims as Muslims and of regularly praying in their presence, assisting at their prayer, and praying with one another, often in multireligious situations—all in the context of trying together to respond to the promptings of God’s will in situations shared as fellow believers in God.

Hopefully, a second edition will eradicate various awkward deficiencies in the editing of this most valuable publication.

—Christian W. Troll, S.J.

A New Agenda for Medical Missions.


This book is a must for every mission executive, medical missionary, and any others who are interested in missions and health. The health care crisis that we know in the United States is far worse in every developing country in the world. The contributors to this monograph are Christian health professionals from various continents and different circumstances, but they present remarkably similar conclusions and recommendations.

The first section of this monograph deals with the conceptual frameworks of modern curative medicine and of the New Testament. The importance of specific diagnostic tests, drugs, and surgical treatments of individual patients is contrasted with “shalom,” “salvation,” and the meaning of persons and community in a “holistic” sense (pp. 9–13).

“God had one Son and he was a medical missionary” (p. 19) is the opening sentence of Dr. David Van Reeken. His analysis of “medical missions and the development of health” comes out of his medical mission experience and the careful analysis of historical and current trends. He enumerates and explains specific principles, in terms of health, that should guide Christian missionaries for the next several decades. Many of the other contributors to this remarkable monograph demonstrate with their own experience how these principles work. Community-based primary health care where responsibility for programs rests more with the recipients than the providers is a recurring theme. All of the authors seem to agree that high technology means more expense and more specialization, and that it requires continuous infusions of money and personnel from outside the community. Even then it is unjust in distribution and fails to address the most crucial issues of health. These issues are the personal and community lifestyles and the value systems that support them. The presence and power of the Gospel deal with these issues and are essential points of departure for health. Dr. Roy Shaffer concludes that “agencies handling Christian, sacrificially given funds should try to allocate these funds to ‘Christ-Based Health Care’ initiatives” (p. 46).

—Roger L. Youmans, M.D.
Crisis in Latin America


The authors of this book are well-known leaders in evangelical circles in Latin America, as well as in other parts of the world. Within the World Evangelical Fellowship, Taylor is executive secretary of the Missions Commission and Núñez is a member of the Executive Council. Both have been active in the Latin American Theological Fraternity, and both are in constant demand as lecturers on theological and missiological issues. This book shows their familiarity with the changing Latin American scene and their awareness of the kind of issues that are important for the English-speaking reader. It is a book written with missionary passion and theological conviction.

Samuel Escobar is Thornley B. Wood Professor of Missiology at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Visiting Professor of Missiology at the Evangelical Seminary in Lima, Peru.

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In the early 1980s there was a disappointing lack of written reflection on the missions obligations of the charismatic churches. It could have been that the charismatic movement was more drawn in upon its own doctrines, experiences, and survival during the 1960s and 1970s than it was given to the application of its newly discovered charismatic renewal across all church traditions in order to facilitate the rapid discipling of the nations by the end of this century? Shibley, the World Missions Director for Church on the Rock, Rockwall, Texas (one of America's fastest growing charismatic churches) would answer with an enthusiastic, "Yes!" He exhibits the same kind of "sense of destiny" evident among early Pentecostals at the outset of the twentieth century, charismatics tended to be more activist-oriented, delaying written contributions owing to more immediate concerns.

Now, to close out the 1980s, David Shibley has given a solid answer to the fundamental question missiologists must ask: Has God raised up the charismatic renewal across all church traditions in order to facilitate the rapid discipling of the nations by the end of this century? Shibley, the World Missions Director for Church on the Rock, Rockwall, Texas (one of America's fastest growing charismatic churches) would answer with an enthusiastic, "Yes!"

This dynamic is what impressed...
Church Growth proponent C. Peter Wagner, who wrote in the foreword to Shibley's book, "It is a book of passion... prayer... and power—the power of the Holy Spirit moving through His people so that they can be a 'force in the earth.'" Shibley evidences familiarity with a number of sources, which he documents, including a brief missions bibliography. It is hoped that this documentation will be the forerunner of more serious and substantial reflections by students of the charismatic movement.

Probably the most groundbreaking contribution of the book is chapter 8, "The Why of the Prosperity Message," in which Shibley offers an objective insider’s critique of the so-called health and wealth gospel. It is his assertion that "I am convinced that the Holy Spirit emphasized prosperity in the 1980s to equip economically the church for global harvest in the 1990s" (p. 121). As one who believes that the charismatic movement can (not necessarily will) not only renew the churches but reconcile all nations, it is my hope that Shibley’s excellent contribution will be catalytic to what appears to be a groundswell cross-cultural missions movement in the Protestant and Catholic charismatic movements.

—L. Grant McIung, Jr.

From Missions to Church in Karnataka: 1920–1950.


This is the first work of its kind on the history of the church in Karnataka. The author was not only an eyewitness to much of it, but he also helped in shaping a part of it.

What has enhanced the value of the work is the author’s copious use of the material in the missionary archives in Europe and India. Somehow Karnataka remained the field of work of the European missionary societies alone, except for the American Methodists who functioned in a part of the Karnataka speaking areas of the former princely state of Hyderabad. The work of the Basel Mission, interestingly, was restricted to this part of India comprising Karnataka and North Kerala.

Though the book is rich in details regarding the efforts of the missionaries and their converts in their struggle to build the church, it does not provide a comprehensive perspective, since it is written as denominational history.

The Wesleyan Methodist mission dominated the work in Mysore, a former princely state. It was common among the rulers of the princely states not to resist the missionaries so as to be in good standing with the British government, because many missionaries were friendly with British officials. This was indeed true in the case of the Maharaja of Mysore and also his prime minister. The London Missionary Society and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) also worked in Karnataka, centered around Bangalore.

The Basel Mission toiled in the difficult area of Bombay Karnataka where the converts, who mainly came from the upper castes, were few. Mass movements in this area began only in 1910 at Motebennur and its surroundings.

The Basel Mission was a pioneer in developing industrial mission projects in India. They invented the khaki cloth that was adopted by the British government for the uniform of the Indian police force. They were also the first to manufacture roof tiles at Mangalore, popularly known as "Mangalore tiles," that came to be used in many parts of India. This aspect of the mission history of Karnataka is missing in the book.

The period from 1920 to 1950, which the book covers, happens to be momentous in the history of modern India, when India’s struggle for freedom found its fulfillment. It was at the same time that Indian Christians, who identified themselves with the nationalist movement, began to demand the transfer of power in the church as well.

The book fulfills a long-felt need and can serve as the basis for future work in this field.

M. D. David is professor and head of the Department of History, Wilson College, Bombay, and professor and research guide in history at the University of Bombay. He is the president of both the Church History Association of India and the Asian Church History Association.
Anthony A missionary formerly in Sierra Leone, West Africa, for seven years, he was born and trained in Britain.

The realization that messages are related to contexts and that people belong to particular sociolinguistic groups was catalytic for "contextualized theology," which struggles to "translate" faithfully both the revelatory message and the biblical text into different worlds of meaning.

There was comfort in considering Revelation absolutized and objectified in Scripture, and "translation" as a simple matter; and as such notions became suspect, fears were inevitably raised about relativizing gospel-truth and compromising with cultures. This book confronts such issues, examining implications embedded in evangelistic approaches, paying deep respect to cultures and languages as vehicles of Revelation and daring to be self-critical. It emphasizes the dilemmas, challenges, developments, and insights of missionaries and missiologists.

Almost all of Fuller's World Mission faculty contribute to this book, which provides for a breadth of interdisciplinary perspectives. Six chapters cover theoretical-theological approaches, then eight more address practical issues of ministry and personal and social transformation.

The volume itself splendidly exemplifies principles underpinning contextual theology: every culture (chapter) is relative, limited, yet worthwhile; the missionary (reader) must learn to understand and respect its reality and perspectives; as one learns from cultures (this book), so one can be "converted" and marvel at unexpected disclosures and revelations; but one does not abdicate critical judgment or moral evaluation. So I read with lively interest and was alternately educated and challenged, vindicated and confronted, sometimes irked, rarely offended, and always engaged. The different styles are mostly accessible, the book well edited, and virtually every chapter strikes a mother lode.

The bibliography and indexes are very helpful, and the tone is irenic and positive. Chapters are sufficiently short and diverse to meet all tastes and to leave no one unaffected. Here is a book for anyone committed to mission or trying to understand "contextualization." Send one to an isolated friend!—Anthony J. Gittins, C.S.Sp.

La Iglesia y los Dioses Modernos. (Historia del Protestantismo el Ecuador).


It is not often that one comes across such a seminal work in the area of missiology as this book. Washington Padilla in his La Iglesia y los Dioses Modernos, a history of Protestantism in Ecuador, has been able to accomplish this in several ways.

The book attempts, for the first time, to write in a condensed form a minimal history of Protestant missionary work and the establishment of the Protestant Evangelical Church in Ecuador, the author having spent several years in collecting and collating materials from different parts of world.

However, the strength of the work does not lie there, but rather in the author's struggle to develop a method and an interpretation of what God and missions were doing in Ecuador. The two, he demonstrates, are not necessarily synonymous.

Padilla seeks to answer to what extent Protestantism has placed itself at the disposal of the "powers that be," rather than to be prophetic, transformational, holistic, and countercultural. He avoids simplistic evaluations of categorizing all missionary work as either "Leyenda negra" or "Heralding Christ Jesus' Blessings." Rather he opens the way for other historians and missiologists to consider that human life is not black or white; it is rather grey. The ambiguity of human works is a reality in which the Church is not exempt as it is also formed by humans who are fallible and limited in their concepts.

He shows us that much of the missionary work was done through wrong
motives: a fear of “isms”—communism, Catholicism, separatism, ecumenism, liberalism, fundamentalism—or through a belief in “manifest destiny” at the expense of the Quichua and autochthonous communities of Ecuador.

In his work and in his example preceding his death in 1990 through cancer, Padilla reminds us that “Perfect love casts out fear.”

—Estuardo McIntosh

**Freedom and Discipleship: Liberation Theology in an Anabaptist Perspective**


Daniel S. Schipani is professor of Christian Education, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, Elkhart, Indiana. Part I of this timely collection consists of eight “appraisals” of Latin American liberation theology “by a group of scholars who stand in the Radical-Reformation believers' church tradition” (p. vii). Part II consists of three responses by Protestant scholars with Latin American connections and three final probing responses to those responses, which for this reviewer proved to be the highlight of the work.

This is an unusual effort. Not only is it “the first of its kind” (p. 176), but it carries within it its own critical review. The last three responses serve this function and should be read first, since they provide the reader with a kind of “hermeneutic of suspicion” that makes for a more careful and discerning reading of the whole collection.

Schipani is right: the theological dialogue begun in these pages “is more than an intellectual exercise or an academic game” (p. 4). It is more than a listening-in on an interfamily discussion. Anabaptists and “antiestablishment” churches in their various journeys have gone through a long history of liberation stories and church renewals (Yoder, p. 164). Along the way they have made important discoveries about the Gospel that have anticipated developments (Baum, p. 4) that are beginning to occur throughout the world. What is happening in Latin American churches (Catholic and Protestant) and in similar contexts around the globe (Yoder, p. 160) is of great import. The divine revelation testified to in these movements may prove so powerful we won’t be able to accept it at all (Baum, p. 12). If we don’t, “the survival of the human race on this planet may be at issue” (Pixley, p. 141). This unique dialogue at least confronts the church at large with an awareness of what is being demanded of us by way of faithfulness and repentance.

—Douglas John Hall

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Douglas John Hall is Professor of Christian Theology in the Faculty of Religious Studies of McGill University in Montreal. He is the author of numerous books, most recently Thinking the Faith: Christian Theology in a North American Context (Augsburg, 1989). A Canadian, he has recently been Visiting Scholar at Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan.


As a researcher of religion in China in the early 1970s, this reviewer was more than grateful for the existence of Donald MacInnis’s earlier work Religious Policy and Practice in Communist China. Now he has completed a far more comprehensive volume. Part 1 provides key documents, articles, and press reports describing the present official policy on religion; and part 2, describes the actual religious situation in China since 1979. To fulfill this latter purpose he uses firsthand interviews, scholarly studies, speeches, and reports by religious leaders and translations of Chinese press reports and journal articles.

Part 2 is especially inclusive and revealing, detailing the current practice of Buddhism, including its unique

Tibetan realities, as well as Islamic, Catholic, and Protestant practice. Russian Orthodoxy, Judaism, and popular religion are treated as well. Finally, there is a good deal of attention given to that Marxist nemesis, superstition, and a concluding focus on many aspects of finding life’s meaning in atheism, socialist spiritual civilization, and Marxism.

The full worth of this remarkable volume will be best appreciated by the researcher and specialist in studies of religion in China. At the same time, the introduction to each section and the arrangement of readings provide a context and a development of themes that even the uninitiated in the sometimes complex reality of Chinese religious practice can find enlightening. A book such as this is a must for anyone keenly interested in the remarkable reality of a Communist state that has a well-delineated policy regarding the practice of religion. It also provides, as Richard Madsen says in the foreword, “no easy explanations for the survival and revival of religion in China.”

—Virginia Unsworth, S.C.

Sr. Virginia Unsworth is the Director of the Humanities Division of the College of Mount Saint Vincent, Riverdale, New York. She served as a Maryknoll Associate in Hong Kong from 1979 to 1982.

The Progressive Church in Latin America.


The Catholic church in Latin America has functioned as that continent’s principal religious institution for nearly five hundred years. It has often acted as a bastion of conservatism, pitting itself against the forces of change. In recent years, however, that role has shifted dramatically. What was once a closed fortress is now a progressive institution in the forefront of change in many countries. Given the rapidity of this shift, there is some confusion about what has happened in the Latin American church. Many see the church in

Curt Cadorette is currently Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Thiel College in Greenville, Pennsylvania. He worked for ten years in Peru.
Latin America as a prophetic Christian body, while others see it as distorted and subverted by political issues foreign to the Gospel. Both positions are simplistic and in need of clarification. The Progressive Church in Latin America provides factual information, with analytical depth, about what is really occurring in the Catholic church in Latin America.

Scott Mainwaring is a senior associate of the Kellog Institute, and Alexander Wilde directs the Washington Office on Latin America. Their editing skills, as well as their knowledge of the church in Latin America, are evident in this timely text. Along with noted Latin American sociologists and political scientists, they provide detailed information about the Catholic church in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Brazil, and Peru. They do an excellent job in showing the unique qualities of each of these national churches, providing details about who comprises them and how they function. For anyone interested in the real nature of the Catholic church in these key Latin American countries, The Progressive Church in Latin America should provide needed information and dispel many myths.

—Curt Cadorette


In his introduction, Michael Shermis claims (p. xiv) that “this reference work is the largest known published list of materials dealing with . . . perspectives, concerns, problems, issues, and themes” in Jewish-Christian relations. The list includes 550 books in eighteen categories, sixty pamphlets, twenty-five articles, and a directory of important journals. In addition there are congresses, conferences, symposia, forums, seminars, colloquia, consultations, and workshops about Jewish-Christian relations held since 1965; sample syllabi from courses taught by rabbis, priests, and ministers; a directory of organizations, and a list of available speakers. One of the most valuable features is a catalogue of audio/visual media. Nearly all items are annotated.

While not explicit in the title, the governing theme is Jewish-Christian dialogue and issues that affect the dialogue, such as “the concern for proselytism, the State of Israel, the Holocaust, the concept of messiah and savior, and the understanding of the natural or supernatural status of Jesus” (p. xiv).

There is little material included from a viewpoint sympathetic to Hebrew Christianity, and half of the twelve books listed in the section on “Mission” are opposed to Christian evangelization of Jews. No information is given about Michael Shermis, except that his address is care of Shermis Unlimited, 1016 Riverton Drive, West Lafayette, Indiana 47906.

—Gerald H. Anderson

African Christian Theology: An Introduction.


As the literature on African Christian theologizing continues to grow, we will discover the thoughts of people other than the first generation of African theologians such as J. S. Mbiti, H. Sawyerr, B. Idowu, or E. Fashole-Luke. This is a welcome sign of vitality. J. N. K. Mugambi, though not a newcomer to the scene of African Christian theology, represents another voice in the ongoing conversation. He is chairman of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Nairobi. During the 1970s he was Theology Secretary of the World Student Christian Federation, Africa Region. In a sense, then, the present book is an outgrowth of his personal participation in African continent-wide theologizing.

Tite Tiernou is Associate Professor of Theology and Missiology at Alliance Theological Seminary, Nyack, New York. He is a citizen of Burkina Faso.
The book is divided into four parts, for a total of twelve chapters. Structurally it is rather unbalanced, as parts 1 and 4 have one chapter each, whereas parts 2 and 3 have four and six chapters respectively. In part 1 the author deals with matters related to the definition of African Christian theology. He devotes the second part to African Christian missiology. He examines Christology and ecclesiology in part 3 and discusses eschatology in African Christian theology in part 4. One is left wondering why he chose to organize the material is such a manner, as he does not explain his reasons anywhere in the text. It is true that chapters 1 and 12 (of parts 1 and 4) seem to stand on their own. The problem with the organization of the material indicates that the twelve chapters are a collection of essays more than a book with an overall theme. This makes a general evaluation of the contents difficult.

Mugambi comes closest to stating a thesis for his book when he writes: “liberation is the objective task of contemporary African Christian Theology” (p. 12, italics in the original). He sees liberation as the fundamental issue in Africa today. He explains that salvation is a theological concept and liberation a sociopolitical one. They are, he says, “two sides of the one coin” (pp. x and 12). Most people will agree that salvation and liberation are indeed related, but some will question whether the concept of salvation is always clearly theological and liberation always sociopolitical either in the Bible or in Christian theological discourse in general. The distinction he makes between the two leads him to suggest that “salvation is an eschatological goal which in the final analysis is utopian but necessary as a corrective check to remind mortal men and women that total liberation is not attainable in the historical dimension of human existence” (p. xi).

Unfortunately, Mugambi does not elaborate on this important point of his book. He states his opinion as a self-evident truth without providing sufficient argumentation to support it. In particular, he needs to answer two questions: on the one hand, if salvation is utopian, why would it be necessary? On the other hand, if liberation cannot be attained in this life, why is it not utopian? In reality such an arbitrary distinction between salvation and liberation cannot be substantiated.

Mugambi’s book is, however, a satisfactory introduction to African Christian theology for those who have little or no background in the subject. In Africa it will be more useful to students than to pastors.

—Tite Tienou

### 1992-1993 Doane Missionary Scholarships

**Overseas Ministries Study Center**  
New Haven, Connecticut

The Overseas Ministries Study Center announces the Doane Missionary Scholarships for 1992-93. Two $2,000 scholarships will be awarded to missionaries who apply for residence for eight months to a year and who wish to earn the OMSC “Certificate in Mission Studies.” The Certificate is based on participation in fourteen or more Mission Seminars at OMSC and writing a paper reflecting on the scholarship recipient’s missionary experience in light of the studies undertaken at OMSC.

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- Residence at OMSC for eight months to a year
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The OMSC Certificate program allows ample time for regular deputation and family responsibilities. Families with children are welcome. OMSC's Doane Hall offers fully furnished apartments ranging up to three bedrooms in size. Applications should be submitted as far in advance as possible. As an alternative to application for the 1992-93 academic year, applicants may apply for the 1993 calendar year, so long as the Certificate program requirement for participation in at least fourteen Mission Seminars is met. Scholarship award will be distributed on a monthly basis after recipient is in residence. Application deadline: February 1, 1992. For application and further information, contact:

Gerald H. Anderson, Director  
Overseas Ministries Study Center  
490 Prospect Street  
New Haven, Connecticut 06511  
(203) 624-6672

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**Communicating Cross-Culturally: Towards a New Context for Missions in the Philippines.**


In this two-part book, Maggay, general director of the Institute for Studies in Asian Church and Culture, deals with “Communicating the Gospel in the Philippine Context.” She points out that “what we know of the Gospel is merely what we have selectively per-
ceived according to the exigencies of our context" (p. 12). In dealing with such selective perception, she asks, "How many dishonoring divisions could have been avoided if people had enough humility to see that theirs was but one reading of a very rich and very vast literature? Would missionaries be so eager to dump on us their systematics and pet formulations if they realized that what they have is but a dim version of a part of the Word, or worse, that it is not the part the Spirit can best use in speaking to this culture?" (p. 17). In two biblical case studies, Maggay draws a number of useful principles for the crosscultural communicator and winds up with a list of do's and don'ts for foreign missionaries coming to the Philippines.

A second part presents three contributions of foreign missionaries. William A. Dyrness, who has years of experience with the Asian Theological Seminary in Manila, points out the need for Filipino church leaders and foreign missionaries to stop talking past each other. Karen Druliner Lampinen, a veteran with the Overseas Missionary Fellowship, provides some insight for incoming missionaries. Miriam Adeney, from a background of service with IVCF, Philippines, explores three alternatives for the foreign missionary: to remain as a permanent tourist, to settle for an expatriate way of life, or to become an incarnate member of the Filipino community.

Maggay, in a postscript, reminds readers that faith was delivered, not interpreted, that word always needs a body to transport it, and that this leaves the church with the task of incarnational mission.

—Donald N. Larson

Another Gospel: Alternative Religions and the New Age Movement.

This interesting story of the development of cults achieves a high degree of historical objectivity by taking into account the vast amount of solid historical research done in recent years from within cultic movements and outside them.

Gordon R. Lewis is Professor of Philosophy and Theology at Denver Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary, Denver, Colorado. He was visiting professor at Union Biblical Seminary, Poona, India in 1972.

Meet Your New Neighbors at OMSC

Announcing 1991-1992 Senior Mission Scholars in Residence

The Overseas Ministries Study Center welcomes into residence this year Drs. Eric J. Sharpe, James A. Scherer, and Harvie M. Conn as Senior Mission Scholars. In addition to sharing in the leadership of OMSC's regular Study Program, these highly respected colleagues will offer to our missionary and overseas residents personal consultation and tutorial assistance. Write for Study Program Schedule and Application for Residence.
torical Heresy: Unorthodox Movements of Past Centuries” tells the story of Montanism, Marcionism, the Albigensians, Beghards, Romuald, Quakers, Ranters, Shakers, Isaac Bullard, John Humphrey Noyes, Strangites, and Christadelphians.

Like many books in “descriptive” fields, this moves without notice from the description of what was or is to normative value judgments of what one ought or ought not regard as orthodox Christianity. Although claiming to leave defense of orthodox Christianity to the theologians, Tucker makes many difficult decisions about what is, or is not, orthodox, ethical, or viable Christianity. An appendix offers a brief report of “Major Tenets of Orthodox Christianity,” but it can hardly be considered adequate justification for all the value judgments necessary to inclu-
sions and deletions or implied approvals or disapprovals of each group’s belief system, values, and ethics.

In brief, Another Gospel has made a giant step forward in historically objective, readable accounts of the origins of the cults, but cries out for more epistemological, theological, and ethical thought about what is essential to authentic Christianity and why.

—Gordon R. Lewis

__MISSION IN THE 1990s__

**Edited by GERALD H. ANDERSON**

**JAMES M. PHILLIPS**

**and ROBERT T. COOTE**

The contributors to this comprehensive resource bring into focus the priorities and central themes of authentic global mission for the 1990s, addressing its task and purpose and the various challenges it will face in the remaining years of this decade, such as religious pluralism, secularization, the preferential option for the poor and liberation theology, the modern Pentecostal-Charismatic movement, and recent developments in Eastern Europe. The book also features encyclopedist David B. Barrett’s unique global statistical table — a striking perspective on the status of today’s church and the extent of its outreach.


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FAX 616-459-6540


This symposium will be of value to New Testament students and to any engaged in Christian work among Jewish people. To the much-debated issue of Luke’s attitude to Judaism a wide variety of responses is given. Jack T. Sanders concludes that for Luke, “God is finished with the Jews as a people,” while Jacob Jervell can infer that the Gospel is only for Jews in Luke-Acts and Gentiles means Jews living among the Gentiles. The conflict between Paul’s condemnation of the Jews and his continued preaching among them is much discussed. Some seek refuge in ambiguity, irony, tragedy, and other fashionable perspectives of literary criticism, but not entirely success fully. Equally unconvincing is the unnecessarily negative verdict on the historicity of Lucan narrative (especially by Michael J. Cook).


What is lacking is a study of the quotations in Luke-Acts as a whole, not merely as support for the theology but as substructure, to use C. H. Dodd’s
term. Such a study would, I believe, yield unexpected dividends.

Finally, more could have been said about the official standing of the Jewish religion in the Roman world and about the status of the Christian movement within Judaism from the Roman standpoint. To the recurrent centurions, for example, Christians are a sect of the Jews. Thus it is fair to say of arguments in Luke-Acts (and indeed in the whole New Testament) that they are not so much anti-Judaic as inter-Judaic apologetic.

—Peter Rodgers

The Logic of Evangelism.


William Abraham may be the strongest mind now addressing evangelism, but The Logic of Evangelism does not quite fulfill this potential. The book, mis-titled, is more polemic than logic; indeed, with contentious tone, the book bombards the reader with many unsupported opinions and assertions, although the last chapter is admirably argued. Furthermore, the book is more about Christian initiation than evangelism; indeed, it contributes little to the practice of evangelism, but significantly to the (neglected) practice of Christian initiation.

The writer sees little need to understand communication or culture; he is confident that academic theologians can rescue evangelism (chapter 1), with some “specialist help” for “cross-cultural evangelism” from “the social sciences” (p. 173). But Abraham’s last chapter boldly addresses evangelism’s great emerging issue: the legitimacy of “ministry . . . directed to the adherents of other religions” (p. 210), and here the reader does encounter “the logic of evangelism.”

—George G. Hunter III

THEOLOGY APPLIED

Witness for Peace
A Story of Resistance
Ed Griffin-Nolan

Graphic and thought-provoking, this book shows how a simple concept of having unarmed U.S. citizens on Nicaraguan soil deterred attacks by the Honduran-based contras. Griffin-Nolan describes how witnesses labored to bring stories of the war back to the United States, and how their efforts saved lives and quite possibly prevented “another Vietnam” from developing in Central America. Paper $14.95

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Reinhold Niebuhr

“In Justice and Mercy, one of America’s most prominent practical and applied theologians reminds religious activists of the need to be better pastors and priests precisely because they are engaged in a prophetic role and sacred mission.” —Rev. Jesse L. Jackson

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July 1991
The traditional North American view of missions is changing; this important work should further that change. By naming, counting, and analyzing the widespread and effective Two-Thirds World missionary movement, researcher Larry Pate has translated the Spirit's work into a language that Euro-Americans can understand.

Despite efforts to clearly define categories and standardize reporting, and despite percentages (sometimes worked out to two decimal points), neat statistical accuracy could not be expected in this massive study. That is not due to research errors, but to (1) unavoidable difficulties in an international study, and (2) applying a Western way of knowing to a non-Western phenomenon. The firmest conclusion to be drawn is that something very significant is happening; something that shows that European and North American missions are not the only (and perhaps not even the primary) channels God is using.

An example of the statistical difficulties is seen in the India section (the "top Two-Thirds World sending country"). Of approximately 145 groups reporting, nearly half gave incomplete data or asked that it be withheld from publication. The diversity of attitudes and sheer magnitude of the task make statistical language inadequate to describe the moving of the Spirit.

The texture of the highly significant Two-Thirds World missions movement is shown in three fine case studies from Malawi, Argentina (with Jon Lewis), and India. These confirm the power of what is happening in a way that numbers cannot.

Spread of the Gospel often occurs when "foreign" missionaries plant the message, and then first- and second-generation converts zealously and sacrificially carry it to the limits of their world. That is once again happening. Larry Pate's work helps immensely in gaining a clearer view of that movement in missions today.

—Donald K. Smith.

Dissertation Notices
From the University of Birmingham, England, 1990


These dissertations were prepared under the supervision of Professor Walter J. Hollenweger, now retired, at the University of Birmingham, England. This list is a sequel to the lists of Birmingham dissertations published in the International Bulletin in July 1982, October 1986, January 1989, and April 1990.
OMSC: A Time and a Place for Mission Renewal
Fall 1991 Workshops and Seminars for teachers and doers of Christian mission.

Sept. 16–18: Building Your Archives. Dr. Stephen Peterson and Martha Lund Smalley, Yale Divinity School Day Missions Library, help you identify, organize, and preserve key mission and church records. Cosponsored by Asbury Theological Seminary. $75

Sept. 19–20: The American Religious Scene Today. Drs. William McKinney and Barbara Brown Zikmund, Hartford Seminary, help returning missionaries and overseas nationals understand the current religious landscape in the U.S. Cosponsored by Hartford Seminary. $75

Sept. 25–28: Cross-Cultural Conflict Resolution. Dr. Duane Elmer, Wheaton College, teaches interpersonal skills for missionaries. Cosponsored by Baptist General Conference, and World Relief Corp. $90

Sept. 30–Oct. 4: Effective Communication with the Folks Back Home. Through this writing workshop Robert Coote, OMSC staff, helps you “connect” with home constituencies. $90

Oct. 8–11: Toward Century 21 in Mission. Dr. Gerald Anderson, OMSC Director, surveys major issues on the eve of the third millennium. Cosponsored by MARC/World Vision, and Mission Society for United Methodists. $60


Oct. 28–Nov. 1: Spiritual Renewal in the Missionary Community. Dr. Samuel Escobar, Latin American Theological Fraternity, reaffirms the biblical roots of our missionary vocation. Cosponsored by Maryknoll Mission Institute. $90

Nov. 4–8: Developing Effective Field Leadership. Dr. George Hunter, Asbury Seminary, outlines principles for cultivating strong local leadership. $90

Nov. 11–15: Biblical Themes and Resources for Mission. Dr. James Scherer, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, integrates the evangelical and ecumenical foundations of mission. $90

Nov. 18–22: Converts and Culture. Dr. Eric Sharpe, University of Sydney, Australia, analyzes the problem confronted by Christian minorities: Does Christian conversion violate one’s cultural identity? $90

Dec. 2–6: After Communism: Mission in Eastern Europe. Dr. Peter Kuzmic, Evangelical Theological Seminary, Yugoslavia, outlines the issues facing the churches of Eastern Europe. Cosponsored by Mennonite Central Committee. $90

Most seminars run Monday-Friday; tuition $90. Where dates or cost differ, consult individual program outlines. Tuition fee non-refundable. Room and meals: $125–$145.
Book Notes

Abraham, K. C., ed.
Third World Theologies: Commonalities and Divergences.

Dorsett, Lyle W.
Billy Sunday and the Redemption of Urban America.

Downes, D. R.
Raising Funds in Kenya: A Survey of Middle to Upper Income Nairobi Churchgoers.

Fuller, W. Harold.
Tie Down the Sun: Adventure in Latin America.

Kaufman, Christopher J.
Mission to Rural America: The Story of W. Howard Bishop, Founder of Glenmary.

Maczka, Romwald, ed., with Mark R. Elliott.

Parker, F. Calvin.

Partee, Charles.
Adventure in Africa: The Story of Don McClure.

Samuel, Vinay and Chris Sugden, eds.

Shaw, R. Daniel.
Kandila: Samo Ceremonialism and Interpersonal Relationships.

Spijker, Gerard van ‘t.

Thompson, Jack, ed.
Into All the World: A History of 150 Years of the Overseas Work of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

In Coming Issues

North American Library Resources for Mission Research
Stephen L. Peterson

Structural Problems in Mission Studies
Andrew Walls

Riding the Third Wave
Douglas J. Elwood

Gerald H. Anderson

Olyphant and Opium: A Canton Merchant Who “Just Said ‘No’”
Robert Charles

My Pilgrimage in Mission—A Series, with articles by
Simon Barrington-Ward
H. Daniel Beeby
Adrian Hastings
Donald R. Jacobs
Louis J. Luzbetak, S.V.D.
Samuel H. Moffett
William Pannell
John V. Taylor
and others

In our Series on the Legacy of Outstanding Missionary Figures of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, articles about
Charles H. Brent
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