Under the Mustard Tree: Church History from a Global Perspective

The past century and a half has witnessed a new level of fulfillment of Jesus' parable of the mustard seed—a small and humble beginning has flourished into a global company of Christian believers. Given this fact, Wilbert R. Shenk, in the lead article of this issue, calls for a new approach to the writing of church history.

Eighteen years ago in the pages of the INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN Richey Hogg credited Latourette's *History of the Expansion of Christianity* with "a larger . . . truer picture of Christianity than many Westerners . . . could see." But even Latourette’s ambitious and comprehensive approach now comes under Shenk’s critique, namely, that “the history of the churches in Asia, Africa, and Latin America is generally assumed to be a subcategory of Western mission history.” More recently our colleague Eric J. Sharpe argued that “it is of the utmost urgency that the missionary view of the founding of churches in the non-Western world should be fully complemented by [non-Western historians]” (“Reflections on Missionary Historiography,” INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN, April 1989).

In the October 1995 issue of this journal William R. Burrows added that the next chapter in Christian historical scholarship should be one of North/South collaboration “to aid the world Christian community to understand theologically the emergence of world Christianity and then to act upon that understanding in a new era of mission.”

Echoing these and other fundamental strands in contemporary reflection about church history, Shenk highlights particularly helpful efforts of the last fifty years and concludes by outlining a model for producing a truly global church history. His agenda will keep church historians—East, West, North, and South—well occupied into the next century.

We return in this issue to our series featuring missionary photography, with an article by Terry Barringer of the Royal Commonwealth Society Collections, Cambridge University. Turn to page 72 for an announcement of a new round of grant awards for missiological research, the result of a program coordinated by the Overseas Ministries Study Center and funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts. Other features in this issue deal with nineteenth-century American women in mission, mission among Muslims, and the mission pilgrimage in China and Japan of our colleague James A. Scherer.
Toward a Global Church History

Wilbert R. Shenk

The great new fact of our time,” as Archbishop William Temple termed it, has been apparent for at least two generations; namely, the Christian church is established on all continents and in virtually all countries. Even now, however, the ramifications of this development are only imperfectly appreciated. In this essay I wish to explore the implications of the geographic extension of the church over the past two centuries for the way we write the history of the church.

In the West, the history of the churches in Asia, Africa, and Latin America is generally assumed to be a subcategory of Western mission history. The development of the non-Western churches is indeed intertwined with the modern mission movement. However, the empirical reality of the Christian ecumene at the end of the twentieth century cannot be comprehended adequately through the category of mission history per se—it is considerably more than that. We must recognize that the global extension of the church represents a different kind of history from what church historians in the West usually write and teach. Typically, they produce studies of the settled life of the church in a so-called Christian culture or where the church has existed for a long time. Such studies are predicated on a parochial and institutional view.

We must move beyond the conventional framework, which is governed by the assumption that what happened in the course of Western Christendom is universally normative for Christian history. This assumption has been reinforced by what Theodore H. Von Laue has described as “the world revolution of Westernization,” which has seemed to undergird the extension of the Western Christian tradition worldwide in the modern period. Thirty years ago the Dutch scholar A. T. van Leeuwen offered a theological rationale for this emergence. Today we must examine these developments from other angles.

The final report of the 1978 International Association for Mission Studies workshop on the history of mission castigated historians for being “prisoners of their own biases and frames of reference,” resulting in inaccurate interpretations. The targets of criticism were Western historians of mission who wrote history from a distorted “metropolitan” viewpoint, secure in their confidence that such an approach was adequate. To overcome such distortion it was urged that church history be written from many perspectives.

What is needed today are historical studies that trace the founding of the church in those places where it was not present before, paying particular attention to the nature of the initial insertion and the issues it raised. Furthermore, we need to trace the historical development of each local church and its multiple relationships, ranging from the local to the global. We must regard church histories that treat only the local, or even only the national, as incomplete. Finally, we will seek a synthesis that brings the many local expressions of the church into global relationship. We are at the point where every Christian community ought to be able to perceive and affirm its relationship with every other Christian community around the globe.

In this essay I review scholarly developments, mainly since 1945, that have contributed to new understandings of ecclesial historiography. I then explore the need for a model for historical work that takes the global church, as it has emerged since the nineteenth century, as the most appropriate framework for historical investigation and interpretation.

A Changed Ecclesial Reality

In order to gain clear perspective on our subject, it is useful to examine what has happened over the past century and a half to a particular ecclesiastical tradition. For this purpose I review my own Mennonite and Brethren in Christ community. Four sets of data outline in broad strokes the state of Mennonite/Brethren in Christ reality as of the mid-twentieth century, the process of expansion up till the present, and the current situation as measured in terms of membership.

1. In 1850 constituent churches existed in eight countries of Europe and North America, with membership drawn from German-Swiss and Dutch stock. Total membership was approximately 120,000 baptized adults.
2. By 1911 membership had grown to 228,000, with fewer than 3,000 members in Asia and Africa.
3. The first venture in mission overseas was initiated by Dutch Mennonites. After a quiet beginning with the sending of one missionary couple by the Dutch Mennonite missionary society in 1851 and several more at intervals during the ensuing four decades, there have been three major periods for the establishment of new missions overseas: 1890–1914, sixteen new starts; 1945–65, sixty new starts; and 1977–92, twenty-five new starts. These initiatives reached to all continents.
4. World membership in 1994 was reported to be some 973,000, with membership in Asia, Africa, and Latin America accounting for 48.9 percent of the total, having drawn almost even with the membership in North America and Europe. Given the present rate of growth outside the West, membership in the continents where mission efforts have been concentrated since 1851 will surpass that of the historic heartland in Europe and North America by the end of this century.

By any reckoning, this history represents a massive redefin-
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tions") inherent in intercultural relations. Fairbank was no apologist for Christian missions, but he was sensitive to the subtleties of human relations that could not be accounted for by the old interpretive framework. He encouraged historians to set aside their prejudices in order to exploit the extensive untapped raw materials generated by modern missions. He foresaw they would discover a far more complex and interesting account of the interactions between the West and other parts of the world than the stereotypes had heretofore indicated.

Andrew Porter’s reworking of the High Imperial period in English history and its aftermath provides another fruitful example. Porter probed the influences that contributed to the formation of missionaries in their home environment, the combination of socioeconomic and political forces that spawned and drove imperialism, and the role and caliber of missionary statesmanship. Porter’s studies reveal a far more nuanced and multivalent phenomenon than has been depicted in the past.

Missiological studies. Maurice Leenhardt, a young French Reformed scholar, went to New Caledonia as a missionary in 1902 determined to strive for “religious authenticity” in his work as evangelist and Bible translator. Despite the pressure from his supporters at home, including his own mother, he refused to sentimentalize, and thereby falsify, the responses of the New Caledonians to the Christian message. At the same time, he declined to accept conventional ethnography as the grid through which to interpret Melanesian life. He came to appreciate the complex and multilayered nature of conversion in Melanesian culture. This attitude required rigorous examination of both “sending” and “receptor” cultures and the interface between the two. As a Bible translator, he grappled with how to express “God” in the categories of New Caledonian thought. Leenhardt recognized that he could not be effective as an evangelist and translator unless he was prepared to participate in “acculturation in two directions”; that is, he had to participate willingly with the New Caledonians in the evangelization process. Maurice Leenhardt’s work represents an important step in relativizing the position of the Western missionary vis-à-vis the host people.

Another step toward achieving greater parity between non-Western indigenous Christianity and Western Christianity involved a fundamental change in the evaluation of indigenous Christian movements. Here and there, missionary researchers began to judge such movements on their own terms, thereby opening the way for the introduction of non-Western categories and standards. Some of the most influential works that have contributed to this reorientation have been based on experiences in Africa. A pioneering study is Bengt Sundkler’s Bantu Prophets in South Africa (1948). The conventional wisdom was that indigenous forms of Christianity in Africa, labeled variously as Zionism, prophetism, separatism, or Independent Churches, were aberrant forms and must be rejected. Sundkler himself originally came to quite critical conclusions, but he later modified his interpretation in order to respect the essential Christian content of these indigenous movements. The fact that a respected European scholar took the phenomenon seriously had the effect of focusing scholarly attention on a hitherto neglected part of the Christian movement in Africa. This resulted in a major new field of investigation that intersects with various areas, including the phenomenology of religion, anthropology, sociology, history (secular and Christian), theology, and missiology.

From another angle, Roland Oliver’s Missionary Factor in East Africa (1952) modeled a rethinking of the role of the missionary in East Africa by placing the movement in its wider social and political context, with African actors taking important roles in the whole drama. Oliver set a new standard and demonstrated the value of an approach that moved away from institutional or promotional histories, which had characterized mission historiography up to that time.

Oliver’s study was soon augmented by the seminal work of missionary scholar John V. Taylor, The Growth of the Church in Buganda (1958). Taylor traced the emergence of the church among a particular people and attempted to take both the missionary and Baganda seriously, allowing for greater parity between traditional Western theology and emerging African theology. Taylor was deeply impressed by the differences in perception that were honestly and sincerely held by both missionary and Baganda, which complicated communication. Taylor observed, “It appears that there is an incalculable gap between the Gospel that is proclaimed and the Gospel that is heard, which has not always been taken into account in discussions about evangelism.” From the beginning the missionaries had faithfully preached the sinful condition of man, the Saviourhood of Christ, the conversion of the individual through conscious repentance and faith, and the offer of sanctification through the Holy Spirit conditioned by the surrender of the believer’s will. Yet the message which was received and implanted and upon which the church in Buganda was founded, was primarily news about the transcendent Creator. “Katonda,” the unknown and scarcely heeded Creator, was proclaimed as the focus of all life, who yet lay beyond and above the closed unity of all existence. . . . It was as though the missionaries preached Paul’s gospel to Corinth, but their converts heard Paul’s sermon to the Athenians mingled with Isaiah’s message to the city of Jerusalem.

Despite this “miscommunication,” a life-altering process was set in motion, and thousands of Baganda people responded over the next decades. Who would dare to say they did not hear the Gospel, even if what they apprehended was quite different from what the missionaries thought they were preaching? Was the message which the Baganda heard any less valid than what the missionaries intended that they receive? The Baganda incarnated the Gospel in their culture as only insiders can do, and the result was that they now acclaimed Jesus Christ as Lord.

Is the Christian ecumene impoverished or enriched by such diversity in hearing the Gospel? F. B. Welbourn contributed further to this shift in the focus of historical investigation from a strictly Eurocentric, unidirectional approach to one of reciprocity and interaction with his study of Independent Churches in East Africa. “The purpose of this discussion,” wrote Welbourn, “is to insist that African response to missionary endeavour cannot be seen simply as a religious’ response to a purely religious message.” African cultures know no division between sacred and profane. The
African intuitively responded out of a “whole” culture and expected the European to do the same. Consequently, the African was not prepared to see the Christian faith in isolation from European culture, in which garb it was brought to Africa. The fragmented nature of modern Western culture, which characterized the worldview of missionaries from the West, was itself at issue in all attempts at intercultural relations. Thus, the cross-cultural communication of the Christian message proved to be far more complex than had been earlier understood.

Studies of this sort by European scholars multiplied rapidly from the 1960s. But an important new phase was emerging as non-Western scholars began to make their own contributions. Africans who had earned their doctorates under Roland Oliver, Andrew Walls, Richard Gray, and others proceeded to publish their own books and essays. This development resulted in authoritative new studies of Christian history in Africa by Africans, including Ajayi, Ayandele, Ekechi, and Tasie.12 These works in turn have led to a fresh reading of history, on the basis of primary sources housed in the archives of missionary societies and church bodies, both in Europe and Africa, which challenged the insular and one-sided view that marked histories written by Western scholars for a largely Western audience.

In an essay entitled “Writing African Church History,” Ajayi and Ayandele argued provocatively, “A bitter pill which the majority of writers on Christianity and missionary activities should swallow is that they have not been writing African Church History.” Ajayi and Ayandele recognized the important work of European scholars in breaking down long-standing prejudices, including that of Sundkler, mentioned above, and Harold W. Turners’ thorough study of a single indigenous church, the Church of the Lord (Aladura).13 But the main thrust of their essay was to describe a program for the reinterpretation of Christianity in Africa by Africans.

Ajayi and Ayandele insisted on a radical definition: “An African Church must necessarily be the product of an organic growth on the African soil, an institution in which Christianity is incarnate within the African milieu.” They cited Bishop James Johnson, a Sierra Leonean who served the church in Nigeria, who said in 1905, “Christianity is a religion intended for and is suitable for every Race and Tribe of people on the face of the Globe.”14 They rejected the assumption made by the majority of scholars that mission-established churches were authentically African. (Indeed, Western scholars typically viewed mission-related churches as the norm by which the Christianism of indigenous forms was to be judged.) Ajayi and Ayandele held that mission-founded churches “remain essentially imitations of their mothers in Europe and America.”

Johnson’s turn-of-the-century appeal was swamped by the rising tide of European imperialism and racism as well as the entrenched assumption that historical Christendom was the fountain of spiritual truth, authority, and normativity. Such Eurocentricism produced serious distortions of history. To take but one example, it screened out such factors as the role of indigenous Christians in the evangelization of their own peoples from the earliest stages of Christian witness. The role of catechists, evangelists, and Bible women, as well as laypeople who used their professions as vehicles for Christian witness, has been largely unexplored, in part because of inadequate documentation, but more important because it has not been recognized by most historians. Yet without the national evangelizers, the story of Christian expansion in the modern era would have been quite different, if indeed there would be much of a story at all.15

African historical and religious studies flourished in the 1960s and 1970s. Innovative research was promoted by scholars such as T. O. Ranger, J. F. A. Ajayi, and E. Mveng, who understood the need to devise approaches geared to the particularities of Africa’s historical and cultural realities. The integral role of religion in African cultural history was stressed.16

What has been said thus far might leave the impression that we should be satisfied that African churches have gained the freedom to work out “their own salvation,” unlettered by Western conventions and prejudices. As Andrew Walls has reminded us, however, the dynamic growth of the church in Africa in the twentieth century is forging a new theological agenda for which there are no predetermined responses. Indeed, African theologians may well discover and “develop aspects of the biblical material which Western theology has left undeveloped simply because Western society was culturally unable to see them.”17 In the course of working out its theological response to African realities, the church in Africa will thereby stimulate and enrich the whole church.

These developments in relation to Africa have underscored the need for new ways of writing history. Sundkler recognized this as he reflected on the phenomenon of indigenous African churches. Whereas he had employed essentially a sociological approach in Bantu Prophets, three decades later in Zulu Zion (1976) he emphasized biography and story, a narrative approach. This change he attributed to a personal encounter:

For me, it all began . . . in a weekday church service at Ceza, Zululand. There were some hymns, a few prayers, a short sermon. After the service, an old woman came up to me, the newly arrived missionary, and said, “Mfundisi, you noticed that I went out during the service? . . . You announced hymn No. 156, and that hymn is too strong for me. So you began to shake. But since many years we are not allowed to shake in Church. So I had to walk away. I went to sit down under that tree, singing and shaking.”

For Sundkler this was a defining moment. Through this woman’s honest telling of her difficulties in conforming to the expectations of European-style worship, Sundkler was drawn into her dilemma. He saw that “the strait-jacket of White worship did not suit her. New forms for the faith had to be found.”18 Sundkler recognized the power of narrative to draw listeners and readers into the experience of indigenous Christians and to illuminate the larger story of the Christian faith as it takes root in the local context.

Parallel observations could as readily have been drawn from the experiences of the churches in Latin America and Asia. All point to the same conclusion: a self-assured Western Christendom could not be adapted to the cultures of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The Christian faith itself requires that the message of the Gospel be incarnated in each cultural environment. Only in this way, and in spite of the risks of misrepresentation, can the
The form and ethos of the church has been transformed as the result of its dispersion “to the uttermost parts of the earth.”

were designed to cover the entire history of Christianity in that region and therefore were to be ecumenical in their scope and execution.

Church History Association of India. In October 1973 the Church History Association of India formed an editorial board and proposed a six-volume history of Christianity in India to be written by a team of scholars drawn from the Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Mar Thoma communities. The association recognized that “the history of Christianity in India has hitherto often been treated as an eastward extension of western ecclesiastical history.” This skewing resulted in one of two extremes. The history of the church was treated from an entirely internal and parochial viewpoint, or it was portrayed simply as a “foreign mission.” Both of these extremes reinforced the notion that Christianity was alien to Indian soil. What was needed was history that located the church firmly in the Indian historical context.

The project set for itself a double task: to reevaluate existing materials and to conduct fresh research. The perspective adopted consisted of four dimensions: (1) the sociocultural, to demonstrate the integral relationship between Christianity and the wider Indian society; (2) the regional, out of consideration for substantial regional or local social and cultural diversities within India; (3) the national, as the main framework for interpretation; and (4) the ecumenical, that is, Christianity as a whole, rather than one particular form of it. (Denominational distinctive were not to be ignored but were to be treated as secondary.) To date, four volumes in this series have been published.

Latin American Project. In 1973 the Roman Catholic Bishops’ Council of Latin America authorized the founding of the Comisión de Estudios de Historia de la Iglesias en América Latina (CEHILA). This was conceived to be an “ecumenical effort on a regional level” that would “research church history from the perspective of the people evangelized as well as from that of the bishops, clergy and missionaries involved.” CEHILA planned an eleven-volume history of Christianity in Latin America written in Spanish by an ecumenical team headed by Enrique Dussel.

The five centuries of history of the church in Latin America have been marked by great inner tensions, since the church has been involved both in the process of conquest and in protest and resistance against it. In its general introduction to the composite volume, The Church in Latin America, 1492–1992, prepared for the five hundredth anniversary of Columbus’s arrival in the Americas, Enrique Dussel wrote:

The programme of the historical mission of the founder of Christianity is at the same time the mission or essence of the church. This programme was set out by Jesus when he unrolled the scroll containing the book of Isaiah (Luke 4:16–21). . . . If “bringing good news to the poor” was his specific historical purpose and that of his church, this must also be the absolute and primary criterion of a Christian interpretation of the history of that church—a scientific interpretation, certainly, but also Christian (based on faith).

The work done to date by CEHILA is noteworthy for its analytical rigor and comprehensiveness. It reflects the critical dynamism unleashed within the Latin American churches in the years since 1968 and the emergence of liberation theology.

Ecumenical efforts. Two broadly ecumenical initiatives emerged in recent years, bringing together theologians from the main ecclesiastical traditions. The first is the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT), which since 1977 has convened a series of conferences on themes of concern to the churches of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. A second initiative was a conference held in Basel in 1981 entitled “Church History in an Ecumenical Perspective,” sponsored by Swiss church historians.

In 1983 EATWOT created its Working Commission on Church History in the Third World, with Enrique Dussel of Mexico as coordinator. Five consultations under the auspices of this commission had been held as of 1989. Proceedings of two of these events have been published as Towards a History of the Church in the Third World: The Issue of Periodisation, and African Church Historiography: An Ecumenical Perspective.

Writing Global Church History

The writing of authentic non-Western church history does not by itself fulfill the vision of a global church history. What I have been arguing implicitly so far I now wish to make explicit: each of these encouraging developments over the last fifty years has made an important contribution but is only a partial corrective. We must now aim to conceptualize and produce a truly global history of the church. As we proceed, we must assure that our efforts incorporate certain essential characteristics, and we must also overcome long-standing obstacles.

The burden of the past. In spite of the ferment and innovations in the study of Christian history over the past several decades, the undertow of tradition remains strong. In the West, for example, church histories continue to be written and taught with little serious attention to what today is the majority church, that is, the church outside Western Christendom. This attitudinal and conceptual barrier is linked to another one, namely, the ingrained bias against mission. Despite the fact that mission has brought about a sea change in Christian reality since 1800, mission is treated with diffidence, if not neglected outright, by many Christians. This makes the task of historical interpretation even more important, for the future of the church is inseparable from the mission dynamic. Where mission consciousness is extinguished, the church dies.
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Developing an approach of parity. One way of presenting global history is to approach it as intercultural history. Such an approach will avoid privileging any one member or group. Regional expressions of Christian faith must be granted parity and be understood on their own terms in order that the integrity of the whole might be demonstrated. In working out this perspective we will confront deeply ingrained habits of heart and mind. We are impelled toward this ideal, however, precisely out of a desire to tell the history of the Christian movement as truthfully as possible. Every account that parochializes the history of the church suppresses the full truth. We need, then, models and methodologies that will help us to elucidate the truth of the whole.

We have noted a cluster of insights arrived at by thoughtful missionaries, social scientists, and historians concerning intercultural communication and relationship. Leenhardt used the term “acculturation in two directions”; Fairbank spoke of “cultural stimulus and response in both directions.” Another term that has been employed effectively is “translation.” The translation model is instructive. No one can translate into a language that is not one’s mother tongue independent of native speakers. Even the most gifted linguist still remains dependent on mother-tongue informants. This fact becomes especially critical when one enters the realm of religious faith, as was illustrated by John V. Taylor in his investigation of the church in Buganda. The only recourse is to admit one’s dependence and ask for help. Even though a translator may not be fully aware of such dependence, translation cannot proceed without continual assistance. Each time the translator asks “What does this mean?” a concession has been made to the authority of the native speaker. To that extent power has been extended to the other. The only way forward is to accept a relationship of parity, reciprocity, and mutual dependence.

Those who argue for this as a sound approach to intercultural relationship and communication point out that this kind of interchange leads to the relativizing of the translator’s control of the message. Ultimately, the host people decide how much of the message they will accept and in what forms. That is, they determine how it will be contextualized, as did the Baganda. A stance of expectant reciprocity will provide a starting point for breaking free of the stereotypes that have governed historical research and writing in the past.

A model for intercultural history. Paul A. Cohen has given us a provocative and illuminating investigation of how the history of China has been written over the past 150 years. He recommends that a “China-centered approach” be adopted in the future, following four basic principles. His suggestions can readily be adapted to our quest for a model for writing global church history.

1. Chinese history begins in China rather than in the West. Cohen therefore insists, insofar as possible, on internal (Chinese) rather than external (Western) criteria as the basis “for determining what is historically significant in the Chinese past.” Applying this requirement to global church history means that we must reject Western Christendom as the starting point.

2. Cohen also maintains that China’s history must be approached “horizontally” in terms of discrete units—regions, provinces, prefectures, cities—so as to show that power flows in multiple directions. Applying this perspec-

tive to global church history means recognizing the parity between the local and the global. The writing of church history is a search for understanding the life and growth of the church in time and space throughout the world, which requires that each local, regional, or national unit of the church recognize that it is incomplete in and of itself.

3. Cohen’s proposal identifies discrete levels of Chinese society and encourages the writing of history that is accessible to the wider populace. Applying this point to global church history will involve writing on various levels and making effective use of the media so that the final product serves the whole people, not only the specialists.

4. Finally, Cohen’s approach embraces “theories, methodologies, and techniques developed” in other disciplines and integrates them into historical analysis. The social sciences, for example, put to good use such tools as narrative and social history. So too will global church history find social history and narrative to be important building blocks.

Marks of a global church history. What criteria may we use to determine whether we are moving toward our ideal of a history that is truly global in spirit and in substance? Four marks seem to me to be essential:

1. Global church history will enable adherents from diverse backgrounds to embrace the larger story as “our history” because it clarifies their identity as members of a common—though culturally variegated—experience over time.

2. Global church history will recognize the local to be essential to the global; there is no global apart from the local.

3. Global church history will recognize the power of narrative and social history to create a universally meaningful story. The global dimension will remain abstract and distant until it is grounded in narrative.

4. Global church history will illuminate the meaning of the church precisely in its capacity to incarnate the life of God as revealed in Jesus Christ among all peoples in all places and in all times. Global church history will celebrate cultural authenticity combined with ecclesial unity.

These principles constitute a challenge of the highest degree. Their implications, which will doubtless become clearer in the process of moving forward, are likely to prove complex and

The people of Christ can no longer afford to live in the era of Western or any other parochialism.

The people of Christ can no longer afford to live in the era of Western or any other parochialism. What is already clear is that the people of Christ can no longer afford to live in the era of Western or any other parochialism. As we enter the third millennium since the birth of Christ, it is a whole new world; the Gospel is now incarnated in virtually every people and tongue. The new reality of the Christian community can be fully appreciated only from a global perspective.
Notes


10. Similar “discoveries” continue to be made by alert and sensitive missionaries. Indeed, one could conclude that such revelations authenticate the missionary vocation.


22. These initiatives arose largely from the Protestant-led ecumenical movement. Roman Catholic historiography has traditionally had its own, distinctive understanding of the history of the church and Christianity. See Hubert Jedin, general introduction to *Handbook of Church History*, vol. 1, *From the Apostolic Community to Constantine*, by Karl Baus, ed. Hubert Jedin and John Dolan (New York: Herder & Herder, 1965).


Nineteenth-Century Single Women and Motivation for Mission

Lydia Huffman Hoyle

The major mission boards of the nineteenth century received numerous letters from women who were ready to be sent to the “uttermost parts” for the Gospel. Until after the Civil War, however, the boards turned down the great majority of the single women who applied. Some were encouraged to find a spouse and reapply; some mysteriously found a man with a similar vocational disposition calling at their door; others were pointed in a new direction—west. Between 1815 and 1865, Protestant mission boards appointed over five hundred women (nearly half of whom were single) to labor in the West and South among Native Americans.1 As noted by R. Pierce Beaver, “Strangely, it was easier for young women to get an appointment to the American Indian Mission [than overseas]. It seems never to have occurred to the directors of the mission boards that the Indian mission might exact a far heavier toll in wrecked health and death than overseas service.”2 Thus, single women who were denied appointment to stations like India or Ceylon were cheerfully recruited and sent to the western territories.

The three mission boards with the largest number of female missionaries working with American Indians during this time period were the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM; nondenominational but composed primarily of Congregationalists and New School Presbyterians), the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions (Old School), and the Baptist Triennial Convention (after 1846, the American Baptist Missionary Union). Although records and correspondence were more carefully maintained in the postwar period, large numbers of letters are extant from the time before the war, providing the reader with a window into the world of nineteenth-century evangelical women and a glimpse at the factors that played a role in motivating women’s missionary service.

“If I can only be useful”

In reading the letters of application sent to the mission boards, one is struck by the likely validity of the primary impulse enumerated by the women. Although a number of motivations seem to have driven the applicants, many of the letters share a common refrain. The women, above all else, wanted to be useful. “Oh, I do want to spend a useful life, and in whatever part of the world I may labor I hope I will be the weak instrument in our Heavenly Father’s hands of doing some little good,”1 wrote Hortense Cogan to the Presbyterian Board. Chloe Bigelow of the ABCFM similarly noted, “I desire to give myself entirely away to the service of my Master and spend my days in His service. I am willing to go anywhere if I can only be useful.”4

Some of the missionary hopefuls had apparently been frustrated by inadequate opportunities “to do good” in their homes back east. In her application to the Baptist Board, for example, Harriet Morse lamented, “I do nothing from Monday morning till Saturday evening for God, for the good of souls.”5 C. B. Downing, a Presbyterian, was likewise troubled when she was forced to leave the Cherokee Mission at the beginning of the Civil War. She dreaded a long stay back home. “Will you not pray for me,” she wrote the board secretary, “that the Lord will give me something to do in His vineyard whether in Vermont or on mission ground. It matters not to me if I can only feel that I am living for the Saviour. Now, day after day passes—and I am doing nothing ‘worth the doing.’”6

It is interesting to note the resounding cry for a useful life that arose from these women in the early to mid nineteenth century. The leaders of the Second Great Awakening called their adherents to an active faith. Many Protestant evangelical women heard and responded. Some were not content with being domestically useful—making their homes “abodes of order and purity”—but rather wanted to be useful in securing order and purity for the world. This desire was bolstered and perhaps, in some cases, initiated by the rhetoric of the female seminaries where the missionary women frequently trained. With “ritual regularity,” the publications of the seminaries advertised that their purpose was to “prepare women for usefulness.”9

There were a number of options available to the evangelically motivated woman. The Sunday school movement, temperance movement, and local mission societies, among others, provided opportunities for women to put their hand of faith to the plow.10 Often, missionary candidates, or those writing in support of their candidacy, would mention previous involvement in such volunteer causes or in general acts of benevolence. In support of Elizabeth Backus, for instance, one reference noted, “She has been for years performing missionary labor in every neighborhood where she has lived.”11

Yet, for these women the growing opportunities for charitable endeavors in their own communities would not adequately feed the fire of zeal that burned within them. The desire to be more useful seemed to drive them forward. Some clearly felt trapped by the futility of “woman’s sphere” and perhaps hoped to escape them by a move to Indian Territory. In a testimonial letter regarding Marcia Colton, an ABCFM candidate, her pastor wrote, “She has great self-confidence and would as soon address a public assembly of men as one of women and indeed at one time she made some little disturbance in my parish, by insisting upon her right to address the brethren of the church and admonish them of their duty.”11 Among the American Indians, perhaps, Colton dreamed of speaking more freely.

The missionary life also offered women an opportunity to be professionally useful. Especially for the single women, whose efforts to develop autonomy were more dependent on vocational identity, the commitment to missionary work may have been particularly attractive. Given that there were few openings for women in religious occupations in the United States,12 the mis-

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Missionary life in the nineteenth century offered women opportunity for professional fulfillment.
sionary enterprise provided a vocational option for those who longed to have a productive Christian existence and who were also anxious to establish an identity separate from their families.13

For a few, the desire for greater usefulness reflected a second step of faith, a deepening of their commitment to God. Lucretia Purchase described her second experience of grace in this way. “I was not fill [sic] with inexpressible joy, but a most ardent desire to do something for God. The world with all its charms faded from my view and nothing appeared essential but the spread of the Gospel and the security of immortal souls from death. I desired in some way to be active and useful in this glorious cause.”14 Susan Thompson, a fellow Baptist and contemporary of Purchase, similarly experienced a religious renewal that drove her to seek a more active involvement in missions. Following a near-fatal illness, Thompson became consumed with the need of “pagans” for the “word of life” and of her duty to provide this word. “Almost continually,” Thompson’s mind was “forced to inquire, ‘Have I done all which duty and conscience require in this cause? Are frequent prayers and small contributions all that I can possibly perform? Shall I spend a life of ease and comparative uselessness when thousands and millions of heathen children, even in America, are rising to manhood as ignorant of the Gospel and the security of immortal souls from death. I have often almost concluded that God had nothing for me to do as the beasts of the field which afford them sustenance?’ ” Thompson answered her questions before they were asked and soon sought missionary appointment.15

Lois Hall believed that serving as a missionary would give evidence of her true commitment to God. “Since the recent revival in this place, I think I have felt an earnest desire to be wholly the Lord’s, and when this subject [missions] was presented, it seemed to me that it was designed to test the sincerity of my consecration.” Hall had been converted some time earlier but had had no “seasons of deep anxiety and distressing convictions of sin that many others speak of.” Thus, she perhaps welcomed an opportunity to do something that gave visible evidence of her faith.16

“I have a call”

Some women spoke more specifically of a direct calling into mission involvement. In seeking appointment by the ABCFM, Hannah Moore wrote, “I think if I am not greatly deceived, I have a call from a higher power than any earthly tribunal, to engage heart and hand in the work of the Mission, to carry the glad news of salvation to the benighted heathen who are perishing for lack of knowledge.”17 Lois Hall similarly proclaimed, “If I mistake not, God has led me by His Providence and by His Spirit to see that it is my duty to enter the field opened before me. There is nothing left for me therefore but to obey.”18 Naomi Diamont of the Presbyterian mission explained her calling in this way to the corresponding secretary: “You would probably like to know how I feel in the Indian country, as you didn’t think I looked much like going among Indians. I don’t wonder that you didn’t think me a suitable person to come out here, for I wonder how I ever came here. The only answer I can give is that Providence sent me, for if He had not I should never have come.”19

The personal and subjective nature of the experience of divine calling makes it difficult to know how the women recognized this direct instruction from above. The extant letters of the women, however, bring some light to the matter. Eleanor Macomber believed God had “imprinted desires” in her heart for the salvation of the heathen. Sue McBeth saw God’s hand in the circumstances that came together to excite her to the idea of missions and to carry her to the field. Still others heard the call of God in voices that sounded peculiarly like those of men. Mary Dix Gray of the Oregon Mission recalled that she had prayed daily for many years that God would show her what he wanted her to do. When William Gray, a complete stranger at the time, came to her and asked her to marry him and go with him to Oregon as one of a “little band of self-denying missionaries,” she could not refuse, for she heard his proposal as the call of the Lord.20

Gray’s experience was much like that of Laura Sheldon, a young single teacher. When Asher Wright, an ABCFM missionary who worked among the Seneca Indians, lost his wife of one year, a minister friend recommended Sheldon as a replacement. Wright wrote Sheldon, whom he had never seen, making proposals to that end. Sheldon responded: “As regards the missionary enterprise I must say I have always taken a lively interest in all its concerns. I have thought of devoting myself to that object ever since I was a child, but as no opportunity has yet offered and no special providence has yet pointed plainly the path of duty, I have often almost concluded that God had nothing for me to do in heathen lands and that my sphere of usefulness was evidently elsewhere.” Wright’s proposal of marriage and missions, however, was soon accepted as providential “pointing,” and the couple met, married, and departed for a long work among the Seneca and Cattaraugus Indians in western New York.21 It is unclear how many missionary wives joined Sheldon and Gray in viewing their fiancé’s proposal as providential direction. It was extremely common, however, for couples to marry and leave within thirty days for their mission assignment.22 For the female side of those couples, the marriage and missions decisions were thus united.23

Although most of the women did not mention a specific call to missionary service in their letters, they often referred more broadly to the general cause of Christ that made it every person’s duty to make known his salvation. Frequently, they spoke of being in the “path of duty” or of responding to the “call of duty.”24 While the missionaries filled their letters with biblical phrases and allusions, they made no direct references to the Great Commission at the conclusion of Matthew’s gospel. Some of the women, however, did speak of their motivation for missions as rising primarily out of the command of Christ. Eliza Hart Spalding of the Oregon Mission described this motive to her sister: “For this object I wish to exert my powers and spend my strength. The command of our Saviour, and the earnest desire of the heathen for the gospel, are sufficient to prompt us to cheerfully take our commission from the bleeding hand of the friend of sinners, and go to the heathen.”25 Although Spalding had not heard the voice of God personally, she believed she was responding to God’s call to all those who followed him.

In many cases, the missionaries looked to the mission boards for confirmation of their sense of divine direction. Trusting that

Women often referred to the cause of Christ that made it every person’s duty to share the Gospel.

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God was in control of the mission boards, many would verbalize confidence that the boards or their secretaries would make the decisions that reflected the will of Providence. Elizabeth Hancock thus wrote, "I have prayed that the answer I receive from the Board may be God’s answer." Nancy Thompson similarly wrote, "I do not consider impressions or a predilection for an employment a sure criterion of duty; but wish to submit my decisions that reflected the will of Providence. Elizabeth Hancock Board may be God's answer.' Nancy Thompson similarly thus wrote, "I have prayed that the answer I receive from the Board, praying that they may have that wisdom from above, which is profitable to direct." In the same spirit, Chloe Bigelow, who was originally turned down as an ABCFM missionary to the Cherokee, accepted her rejection as being "ordered by Providence." The women uniformly expressed a belief in the eternal happiness of the Christian and the eternal damnation that awaited the heathen. Elizabeth Morse was constrained to serve the Indians by thoughts of "the deplorable condition of a deathless soul without the gospel." For Lucretia Purchase, who was engulfed in an internal debate regarding her potential involvement in the missionary enterprise, the plight of the Indian soul was the conclusive evidence that she should indeed head missionward. "I spent much time in revolving the matter in my mind when I was powerfully struck with the idea that whilst I was raising and surmounting imaginary obstacles, many precious souls were perishing for lack of wisdom and suffering for that instruction which through the blessing of God I might be enabled to give them. Here I came to a decision, and after much deliberation offered myself to the Board of Missions." A desire for usefulness, a sense of calling, and a concern for the souls of the heathen were the primary motivating factors mentioned by the missionary candidates. Although occurring

Lost Souls, Distant Goals, and Guilt

Another primary motivating factor in the women’s determination to go to the Indians was their concern for the Indians’ ultimate spiritual well-being. Regardless of their denomination, the women uniformly expressed a belief in the eternal happiness of the Christian and the eternal damnation that awaited the heathen. Elizabeth Morse was constrained to serve the Indians by thoughts of "the deplorable condition of a deathless soul without the gospel." For Lucretia Purchase, who was engulfed in an internal debate regarding her potential involvement in the missionary enterprise, the plight of the Indian soul was the conclusive evidence that she should indeed head missionward. "I spent much time in revolving the matter in my mind when I was powerfully struck with the idea that whilst I was raising and surmounting imaginary obstacles, many precious souls were perishing for lack of wisdom and suffering for that instruction which through the blessing of God I might be enabled to give them. Here I came to a decision, and after much deliberation offered myself to the Board of Missions." A desire for usefulness, a sense of calling, and a concern for the souls of the heathen were the primary motivating factors mentioned by the missionary candidates. Although occurring

Readers’ Response

To the Editor:

I wish to respond to the exchange between Stanley Skreslet and Clifton Kirkpatrick about "Partnership" (July 1995). The real issue here, and it is extremely important, is the definition of "authority" in regard to mission work. Unfortunately, although Skreslet seeks to reinvest the missionary with biblical authority (he says that mission theology and practice in the Presbyterian Church [USA] "guts the missionary program of Paul and the apostolic church altogether," because "partnership" has been substituted for biblical authority), it seems that he really wants is the kind of authority that characterized so much established Western mission work during the colonial era. True biblical authority is that of Christ, who says, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them. ... It will not be so among you" (Matt. 20:25-26), reiterated by Paul (e.g., 1 Corinthians 1).

Robert R. von Oeyen, Jr.
Missionary Associate, Graduate School of World Mission
Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary
Seoul, Republic of Korea

Author’s Reply:

Robert von Oeyen, Jr., mistakenly perceives a concealed motive in my essay on methodology. It is not my wish to dust off and reintroduce discredited notions of missionary superiority. Nor do I seek to reinstate the colonialist order in mission practice. What I "really want" is to encourage ecumenically engaged Christians to distinguish carefully between the means and ends of mission and to be forthright about the basis on which we choose our mission partners. I continue to believe that partnership will play a crucial role in our theology of mission and that passages like Matt. 20:25-26 will need to be raised again and again as we evaluate the appropriateness of our words and deeds done in Christ's name. That said, it still remains for Presbyterians and others to clarify anew what we hold to be the primary aims of mission, if we are to work through the crisis of uncertainty that marks conciliar thinking about mission today.

Stanley H. Skreslet
Missionary in residence with the Synod of Lincoln Trails of the Presbyterian Church (USA), Champaign, Illinois, while on leave from the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo, Egypt

To the Editor:

I appreciate David Barrett's desire to apply statistics to mission in order to understand trends and to facilitate better planning ('Count the Worshipers!' October 1995). Yet, I am afraid this article does little to inspire one to join Barrett in "missiometrics." The basis of my problems is not a belief that counting numbers is inappropriate in Christian ministry. Rather, the major obstacle for me was the way in which the author developed and supported his arguments. Barrett incorporated etymological arguments that were irrelevant to the point he was arguing. For example, the assertion that the English word "count" comes from the Latin computare, "to compute," is irrelevant to understanding the instruction to "count the worshipers" in Revelation 11:1 (p. 154). Similarly, Barrett's argument built around ἐμπτώσεις (p. 157) is an unfortunate admixture of Greek and English word etymologies.

A closely related concern is Barrett's observation of the ways in which English has used the Greek word μετρίκος, a word that he tells us never occurs in the Greek Bible (p. 156). The fact that English has used it in compound words like "thermometer," "optometry" and "psychometrics" is an in-
less frequently, the women also named other motivations that drew them more specifically to the American Indians. Among these was a sense of secondhand guilt regarding the treatment of American Indians by the whites that had preceded them onto the Indian’s land. In a journal written for her mother, Sue McBeth recorded her feelings as she began her work among the Choctaw Indians. She recalled sitting on rocks jutting out of the Ohio River during her childhood, “rocks covered with hieroglyphics traced by Indians when their tribes possessed the land. [I] felt such sorrow for the vanished race and thought that if God spared me to be a woman I would go to the handful that remained and tell them of Jesus and show them the way to a home from which they could never be driven out.” Similarly, Delight Sargent wanted during her childhood, “rocks covered with hieroglyphics traced by Indians. She recalled sitting on rocks jutting out of the Ohio River could never be driven out.”

A small but interesting minority of the women mentioned an additional motivation for serving as missionaries to the Indians. They hoped to prove themselves among the Indians so that they would be considered worthy of being sent overseas. Sue McBeth, for example, was sent to the Choctaw Indians by the Presbyterian Board, but at every opportunity she reminded the board of her desire to go overseas. Shortly after her arrival, she wrote, “If I am very good and work hard here and am given life and strength sufficient and can find a good substitute here, would you send me to Syria—Japan—China or some of those Eastern fields. I am contented to spend my life here—if need be—if not—I can find missionary work to do wherever I am. I only mention this here so that if you need such services as mine in the East—you will know where to send.” Six months later McBeth spoke of her improved health, noting, “I hope soon to be strong enough (Deo valente) to go to Syria!” Within a few months, the offer was repeated a third time.

Beyond those motivations the women recognized as central to their decision to work among the Indians, other factors had an impact upon their decision. These primarily revolved around...
familial and social relationships. Although individually “called,” women often were appointed in conjunction with a family member or close friend. Of those women sent out by the Presbyterian Board, one out of every six of the single women was to work alongside a relative or friend. A collection of short biographies of the missionaries serving the ABCFM similarly reveals that at least 20 of its 144 single female appointees accompanied a father, sister, or brother to the mission.

Beyond those who had the immediate support of family members as collaborators, some had the encouragement of siblings who were involved in the worldwide missionary endeavor. Sarah White Smith, one of the early members of the Oregon Mission, had an older sister who was appointed to a mission in Singapore four years before Sarah’s appointment. Martha Fullerton of the Presbyterian Board had a sister in India. Esther Smith Dunbar, similarly, had a sister who was sent by the ABCFM to Bombay.

Release from family connections and responsibilities, most notably through death, apparently propelled other women onto the mission field. One in every seven women whose offers of service to the ABCFM were accepted mentioned the death of a family member as one of the “providential” occurrences leading to their application. Lois Hall, for example, noted that both of her parents were dead. Even her ties to her childhood home had become weak, she reported, “Tis not my home now, the world is my home. God is my father and every man my brother.”

Although the link between the death and the mission decision was not always discussed, some of the women were clearly responsible for caring for or providing for their ailing parents until their death or recovery. Furthermore, some women, like Theresa Bissell, had been confined to their homes by parents who were unwilling for their daughters to go west, hoping instead that they would marry and settle in their backyard. For such women, death loosed the chain that bound them to their home.

Other women had married men who did not share their missionary interest, thus limiting their involvement in missions to the “home front.” Such was the case for Ann Dana, whose husband was a physician. According to Dana, she had wanted to serve as a missionary for many years, “but Providential circumstances have prevented.” Upon the death of her husband, “Providential circumstances” made mission work possible.

For those whose parents were living, relational responsibilities and commitments were germane to the women’s decisions to seek missionary appointments. Most did not apply until they were convinced that any family needs would be supplied in their absence. Furthermore, most first procured their parents’ acceptance, if not approval, of their decision. The family’s affirmation was viewed as a further sign of providential calling.

The External Call

Regardless of the specific motives mentioned or unmentioned by the women, it is evident that few would have applied to the mission boards had they not first heard or read an appeal for mission involvement. For many, this came through a representative of a mission board. Often, upon hearing an appeal from a mission recruiter visiting their local church, the women would “remember” their previous interest in the missionary enterprise or the Indians and respond to the agent’s urging. One woman, Mary Choate, heard and responded to a secondhand appeal for missions when her pastor read a letter to his congregation from David Greene, the corresponding secretary for the ABCFM. The pastor remarked that the letter ought to be considered a call from the Lord for missionary helpers. Evidently for Choate, it was received as just that. School principals and ministers also proposed the possibility of the mission professions to likely prospects. Other women responded to proposals made by missionaries. Often, missionaries would recruit assistants while visiting the States. Elizabeth Gookin reported that since her conversion she had been deeply interested in the perishing heathen, “but it was not until the appeal was made by the toil worn and exhausted laborers in the Indian field” that she decided to devote herself to the Indians. Perhaps some women felt more at ease going west when they knew something about those with whom they would be laboring. In any case, it was not uncommon for a vacationing missionary to return with extra laborers.

Finally, some women responded to the explicit and implicit appeals made in missionary biographies. Maria Arms thought that her reading of missionary biographies gave her “a sort of romantic wish to be a missionary.” Similarly, Harriet Morse decided to go to the heathen, in part as a result of reading the memoirs of Ann Judson, a greatly admired Baptist missionary to Burma. Together with other motivations and appeals, these heroic tales “formed and increased the latent flame” of zeal for the missionary cause.

Whether through a direct, personal sense of calling, a recognition of the universal call of God, or a belief in a providential arrangement of circumstances, nearly all of the single women who served as missionaries to the American Indians saw their work as a God-ordained act. This understanding empowered them to postpone (or forfeit) marriage plans, to make dangerous journeys to Indian Territory, and to face a substantially heightened rate of mortality. Ultimately, it allowed the women to view themselves as “accountable to a higher authority” and thus freed them, to a degree, from the significant boundaries that otherwise constrained their lives as nineteenth-century evangelical women.

Notes

Unpublished materials cited below appear in the following archives:

American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), Houghton Library, Harvard Univ., Cambridge, Mass. References to microfilmed correspondence files indicate unit, microfilm reel, volume, and individual letter number.

American Baptist Foreign Mission Societies (ABFMS), American Baptist Historical Society, Valley Forge, Pa. References to letters indicate the microfilm reel and volume number for each missionary quoted.

Presbyterian Historical Society American Indian Correspondence (PHSIAIC), Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pa. References indicate box, volume, and letter numbers for each document.

1. Approximately 80 percent of the single women appointed by the ABCFM up to 1860 were sent to an American Indian mission. The board sent fewer than thirty single women overseas (although the ABCFM sent more single women to work in foreign missions than did any other board). See R. Pierce Beaver, American Protestant Women in World Mission: History of the First Feminist Movement in North America (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1968), p. 71. According to Ann White, denominational agencies appointed thirty-eight single women to overseas missions prior to 1850 and a total of ninety-three prior to 1870 (“Counting the Cost of Faith: America’s Early Female Missionaries,” Church History 57, no. 1 [March 1988]: 22).

2. Beaver, American Protestant Women, p. 59. The reason for the mission
The Missionary Impulse in North American History

A Call for Papers

The Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals (ISAE) at Wheaton College has received a major three-year grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts to fund a study of the “Missionary Impulse in North American History.” This project aims to use the missionary impulse as a lens examining aspects of North American culture. These aspects may include religion, culture, society & institutions, and public life & policy. Our aim, in short, is to discover what the missionary impulse in its various forms may tell us about life in North America.

We invite applications from both junior and senior scholars for historical examinations of important personalities, topics, organizations and institutions, controversies, and instructive episodes that will shed light on the role that the missionary endeavor has played in North American history. Grants of $2,500 each will be awarded to support several article-length studies. The deadline for applications is May 15, 1996. For more information on grants contact:

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boards’ reluctance to send single women beyond the American continent is not clear. According to Beaver, “It just did not seem to the average churchman of that day either possible or proper that a woman by herself, without a husband to make decisions and take responsibility, could venture to be a missionary pioneer.”

3. Hortense Cogan to W. Lowrie, December 20, 1858, PHSAIC 5.3.125.

4. Chloe Bigelow to S. B. Treat, October 13, 1851, ABCFM 6.759.6.179.

5. Harriet Morse to W. Peck, August 5, 1843, and August 1, 1856, ABFMS 100-21.

6. C. B. Downing to I. L. Wilson, September 17, 1861, PHSAIC 10.1.305.


10. Lavius Hyde to S. Treat, September 1, 1852, ABCFM Testimonials 20:149. In some cases, it was these Christian activities performed in their own communities that brought the women to the attention of missionary recruiters.

11. E. P. Rogers to D. Greene, October 16, 1845, ABCFM Testimonials 18:92. This report prompted the board to “proceed with caution” with reference to Colton.

12. The proliferation of volunteer opportunities for women in lay ministries was not matched by professional ministry options. A few women made their way writing Christian literature. A tiny minority served as religious teachers or evangelists. One woman, Antoinette Brown, was ordained by the Congregational Church in 1853 and served as pastor for a short time but was followed by few others in the mainline denominations.


16. Lois Hall to Secretary of the Board, August 24, 1851, ABCFM Testimonials 22:3.

17. Hannah Moore to D. Greene, October 1, 1838, ABCFM Testimonials 16:132.


19. Naomi Diament to I. L. Wilson, August 6, 1855, PHSAIC 6.1.33.


22. Five of the six women who worked in the ABCFM Oregon Mission, for example, left for the mission within a month after their marriage.

23. Although in a different form, the marriage and missions decisions were also united for many men. Although exceptions were made, mission boards preferred to appoint married men. The Presbyterian Board, for example, strongly encouraged Francis Lindsay, a male missionary hopeful, to find a wife. Lindsay heeded this advice, meeting his spouse, marrying, and departing for the Wea Mission within three weeks. See Francis Lindsay to Rev. E. McCurdy, n.d., 1835, PHSAIC 3.1.223.

24. See Jane Kelly to S. Peck, August 23, 1843, ABFMS 99-18; and Lois Hall to S. B. Treat, March 8, 1852, ABCFM 6.746.12.43.

25. Eliza Hart Spalding to her sister, March 31, 1834, in Drury, First White Women over the Rockies, 1:178.


29. Elizabeth Morse Information Form, October 18, 1842, ABFMS 100-20.


32. Delight Sargent to D. Greene, October 20, 1836, ABCFM 6.742.8.171.

33. Sue McBeth to I. L. Wilson, May 9, 1960, January 12, 1961, July 9, 1961, PHSAIC 101.1.115, 243, 286. McBeth was never taken up on her offer and spent over twenty years working first among the Chocktaw and later the Nez Perce Indians.

34. This ratio is based on the forty-four single women for whom there is information. Two sets of sisters were appointed, one pair of close friends, and one widow with two unmarried adult children.

35. Drury, First White Women over the Rockies, 1:273; Jacob Smith to D. Greene, January 18, 1836, ABCFM Testimonials 8:52; and Martha Fullerton to W. Lowrie, February 3, 1858, PHSAIC 5.3.80.

36. One-third of the women who taught whites in the West under the auspices of the National Popular Education Board mentioned the loss of a parent in their applications. See Polly W. Kaufman, Women Teachers on the Frontier (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1984), p. 15.


38. Elderkirk J. Boardman to Secretary of the Board, June 20, 1839, ABCFM Testimonials 14:84.

39. Ann Dana to Treat, September 17, 1848, ABCFM Testimonials 21:208. The ABCFM appointed at least seven widows.

40. Only one woman in the written record admits that she took a mission position simply because there was a desperate need for a teacher and she needed a job. M. I. Bissell Smith wrote the ABCFM, at the end of a two-year tenure in the Cherokee Mission, to notify them that she had only taken the position until a more suitable position could be obtained.

41. E. G. Babcock to D. Green, March 1, 1833, ABCFM Testimonials 8:13. Such appeals were also published in missionary journals like the Baptist Latter-Day Luminary.

42. Elizabeth Gookin Information Form, May 1851, ABFMS 98-20.

43. Missionary recruitment was apparently expected of those who visited home for nonmedical reasons. Missionaries would frequently refer to their success or lack thereof in finding potential assistants.

44. Maria Arms to S. Treat, August 23, 1851, ABCFM Testimonials 20:115; Harriet Morse Information Sheet, October 15, 1842, ABFMS 100-21; Susan Thompson to Fisher, January 17, 1827, ABFMS 101-28.
Formerly the *Japan Christian Quarterly*, published since 1901 by Kyo Bun Kwan (the Christian Literature Society of Japan)

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The Drum, the Church, and the Camera:
Ham Mukasa and C. W. Hattersley in Uganda

Terry Barringer

In May 1902, two of the most distinguished converts of the Church Missionary Society (CMS)—Apolo Kagwa (1865–1927) and Ham Mukasa (1870–1956), respectively the Katikiro (prime minister and regent) of Buganda and his secretary—came to England for the coronation of King Edward VII. Mukasa, a licensed lay reader and author of a Luganda commentary on Matthew's gospel, was regarded highly as a writer in missionary circles. He kept copious notes on the voyage and visit, which was extended by several months through the postponement of the coronation because of the king's appendicitis. On his return, he wrote an account in Luganda that was subsequently translated and edited for publication by Ernest Millar, the CMS missionary who had acted as the Katikiro's official interpreter. Millar claimed in his introduction to Uganda's Katikiro in England that Mukasa's account was written for the natives of Uganda as a description of the journey and what was seen on it, and everything is described from an entirely native point of view and not with the idea of any translation into English. The book simply shows what impressions the visitors gained during their visit; some of the impressions are obviously false ones...but I have not attempted to rectify such things as I think they add to the charm of the book.¹

In packaging Mukasa's account for a British readership, Millar chose to illustrate the book not with the photographs that had been taken of the Ugandans in England but with eight photographs of Uganda by a CMS missionary, Mr. C. W. Hattersley. The most striking of these, reproduced here, combines exotic and Christian elements in such a way that it can be said to encapsulate the Baganda story. An unknown youth, wearing a white garment, stands in Namirembe Cathedral, Kampala, a church designed by Europeans for an African context and built by Africans. He stands on a platform, beating a large drum. Near him is a notice, or reading sheet, a reminder of the Baganda passion for literacy, which almost overwhelmed the missionaries. To the European observer, unfamiliar with East Africa, the young man's apparel suggests an ecclesiastical surplice. Subliminally perhaps it suggests the white robes of the newly baptized of early church tradition. It is, in fact a kanzu. This garment was introduced by the Arabs and, despite its Islamic associations, was favored by the missionaries as the most suitable garb for converts, preferable to both the native bark cloth, which was considered unhygienic, and to European clothing. "Nothing," said Bishop Alfred Tucker, "could be more seemly."

The drum does not feature in most published accounts of the building and consecration of the cathedral. J. D. Mullins tells us, "The Rev. Henry Wright Duta has given the Cathedral a huge drum, 5 ft. high, whose booming sound carries an immense distance. The drum is not only effective as a church bell, but far more in keeping with national customs."²

Henry Wright Duta (d. 1913) was one of the first Baganda converts, baptized at Zanzibar in 1882. Narrowly escaping martyrdom in 1885, he survived to be commissioned as a lay evangelist by Tucker in 1891. He was ordained deacon in 1893, one of the first group of native clergy, and priest in 1896. He was George L. Pilkinson's chief assistant in his translation work and played a major part in the production of the Luganda Bible.³

One longs to know more about the drum. Was it made specially for the cathedral, or did it have a pre-Christian past? If the latter, for what purposes had it been used?

Drums in Pre-Christian Uganda

Drums played a great part in the life of the pre-Christian Baganda and gave many proverbs and idioms to their language. A large number of named drums or groups of drums, with their own drumbeats and designated drummers, were associated

¹ Terry Barringer has worked with the Royal Commonwealth Society Library since 1980 and accompanied it on its transfer to Cambridge University Library in 1993.

² It

³ "Drums played a great part in the life of the pre-Christian Baganda and gave many proverbs and idioms to their language. A large number of named drums or groups of drums, with their own drumbeats and designated drummers, were associated
with the ritual of the court of the Baganda king. For example, when the Kabaka ("king") presented a chief with any office, he would give him a drum, and the man so invested would be said to have "eaten" the drum. Other drums were associated with lesser chiefs, clans, and local shrines. Apart from these special drums, any individual might own one. Drums were widely used to accompany singing and dancing and to announce news. In the words of John Roscoe, the drum "had its place in the most solemn and in the most joyous ceremonies of the nation." The Namirembe Cathedral drum is reminiscent of the royal drums described by Roscoe:

The drums were made from hollowed-out tree trunks encased in cowhide; only one end of the drum was beaten upon, and that was always kept uppermost. Some of the drums were beautifully decorated with cowry-shells or beads. It was the rule to suspend them on posts slightly raised from the ground so as to get the full benefit of the sound, and the man stood over the drum with two short sticks for beating it. 6

Given that drums were so closely linked to traditional shrines and the life of a royal court, where human life was held cheap, and that they usually contained fetishes, it seems surprising that the missionaries and converts were willing to countenance their use in Christian contexts. It is not clear from the sources whether the new use of drums arose because of Baganda pressure or whether because of deliberate missionary adoption.

Over the years drums lost much of their importance. Allan J. Lush, writing in 1935, reports that although drums were still used, the majority of young Baganda were ignorant about their names and history. He attributes this to the end of despotic rule and the adoption of Western ideas. 7 Henry Wright Duta's drum, re-covered more than once, is still kept in the drum-house at Namirembe and used on special occasions. It is not normally used to summon people to church; that is done, Western-style, by bell. 8

In Uganda's Katikiro in England the photograph is used to illustrate a particular point in Mukasa's text. One of his recurring themes is admiration of the technological feats of the British, "the cleverness of the English which is never-ending," and he struggles to describe these wonders in ways intelligible to his fellow Baganda. He uses a biblical analogy to describe his difficulty. "The things of the Europeans are always amazing; and I thought to myself that if we were always wondering at these things which we saw while we were still on the way we should be like the Apostle of our Lord who was called St. John the Evangelist, who when he saw the wonders of God, which he had never seen before; and when he wrote them down in his book he had just to compare them to the earthly things they knew, though they were not really like them." 9

However, unlike the apostle, Mukasa could call photography to his aid. The first marvel he encountered was the steamer that took the Katikiro's party from Mombasa to Aden:

Let me tell you about it. Its height is twice as great as that of Silasi Mugwanya's house. . . . With what can you compare a seven-stories ship? It is as wide as Ham Mukasa's brick house. . . . the masts are as big round as the Katikiro's drum. . . . the length is one and a half times that of Namirembe Cathedral, the great tube out of which the smoke comes is as large or larger than the largest drum in Namirembe Cathedral. 10

Back ing the opposite page in Millar's edition is the photograph that is reproduced here, with Mukasa's comparison to the drum as caption.

We are accustomed to the idea that missionary supporters in England were fascinated and influenced by visual images from the mission field. It is less usual to be able to observe the reactions of Africans to these images. Mukasa describes a visit to Herbert Samuel in London:

He took many photographs of our country and of different kinds of people, peasants and chiefs and of the king and of the old kind of houses which are being done away with at the present time and of our different styles of clothing. . . . After dinner he showed us a great many photographs from Uganda and the neighbouring countries. 11

Later Mukasa visited the Millars, and "Mr. Millar showed us a great many photographs of people in our country." 12

The Katikiro and Mukasa obviously relished the many opportunities to have their own photographs taken. They were photographed with British army officers 13 and at the headquarters of the Mill Hill Fathers. 14 Photographs were taken at the door of the Houses of Parliament 15 and at Crewe with a railway engine. 16 On the return journey to Uganda, Mukasa had further opportunities to indulge his passion for photographs. On a visit to Mombasa prison, Mukasa was particularly struck by photographs of the prisoners "which were very well taken." He went on to commend the prison administration's use of photography:

They register the prisoners very cleverly; they first take photographs of them and then write down the height of each man and the size of his chest, and his colour, and his offense, and the length of his imprisonment, and the place he comes from and his name and religion. All this they do to remind themselves about each man, so that when he commits another offense it is always known what he is like in every respect. I thoroughly approved of this, because it teaches us a spiritual lesson. If we men have the wisdom to mark criminals who offend against our human laws, how will it be with the creator of heaven and earth? 17

Back in Buganda, the travelers were besieged by people wanting to hear about their experiences. "We had no rest by day or night; some people went to the Katikiro, others came to me, all wanting very much to learn all about England; and I showed them . . . the photographs which had been taken of us while we were in England and the pictures of the king's coronation." 18 It would be good to know if these photographs survive. But while we may regret that Millar did not share them with the British public, there is no doubt about the quality and interest of the photographs by Hattersley that he used instead.

Hattersley the Missionary Photographer

Charles William Hattersley (1866–1934), despite the influence of his books and photographs and his major role in the development of education in Uganda, is not a well-known figure. Accepted by the CMS in February 1897, he was previously manager of a cutlery works in Sheffield. 19 He left for Uganda in September, and his missionary career had a tragic beginning. On the way up from the coast, Hattersley's rifle misfired, shooting his colleague
E. H. Hubbard in the back. Despite all the efforts of Dr. Albert Cook, Hubbard died at Mengo a few weeks later. No blame seems to have been laid on Hattersley, and his name was suppressed in the published reports of Hubbard’s death.49 Hattersley’s initial duties were to assist Archdeacon Robert Walker “in the business part of the work,” keeping accounts, supervising the stores and the sale of books. Bishop Tucker, having asked Hattersley to implement a system of primary education, writes that he took the task in hand with characteristic energy. (Every-one who wrote about Hattersley commented on his energy.) Later his interests moved from general primary education to the education of sons of the chiefs and the future elite, and he became the founding headmaster of Mengo.20

Back in England in 1902–3, Hattersley married Florence Annie Middleton, who accompanied him back to Uganda. Photographs published in *The Baganda at Home* give glimpses of their domestic life with their infant son Stanley, named for the explorer who first invited missionaries to Buganda. Stanley kept an interest in the progress of the mission and corresponded with Hattersley. A photograph, captioned “Black and White: A Little Negro Boy and the Son of the Author,” shows the two children looking at what could be a photograph album. Hattersley labors his point: “Our picture of the little white boy with his native playmate affords a very good illustration of the safety in which people exist at the moment. Ladies and children live in almost perfect security amongst a people who a few years back were in a state of anarchy, bloodshed, war raiding, slavery, distress and poverty.”21

In 1904 Hattersley’s sister Emily, a clerk in the furnishing business, followed him to Uganda and worked as a teacher until her resignation in 1911.22 Hattersley himself resigned from CMS in 1913 because of a conflict of interest (he was by now a manager of the Mengo Planters Company) and differences of opinion about the teaching at Mengo Boys School. After some years, he returned to England and went into business in London. The business failed in the depression, and tormented by his inability, as he saw it, to provide for his family, Hattersley took his own life.23

In happier days, there was no doubt of Hattersley’s devotion to photographic duty. In 1907 the boy-king of Uganda, Daudi Chwa, paid an official visit to the tomb of his grandfather Mutesa. Here he was to participate in a cleaned-up, Christianized version of a ritual that had previously involved pagan rites and human sacrifice. The prime minister, Apolo Kagwa, invited Hattersley to photograph the ceremonies. Hattersley recalls,

> By half past three in the morning the king’s drums were booming the signal for assembling, I had been asked on this occasion to go up early and take a photograph and had thought that early might perhaps mean seven or eight o’clock. Before six however a special messenger from the Katikiro arrived on a bicycle to say that if I wished to have a photograph I must hurry up because the work was all but completed.24

Hattersley, by dint of his own enthusiasm, had assumed the role of official photographer to the church and court of Uganda. Prints circulated among his fellow missionaries, who then used them to illustrate their own books.25 The print of the Namirembe Cathedral drum reproduced here comes from the Ernest Millar collection in the Royal Commonwealth Society Collections, Cambridge University Library (Y04SL).26 Other Hattersley prints are found in an album of photographs of Uganda ca. 1906–11 (Y045SC), which also contains photographs by the commercial photographer Alfred Lobo and by Protectorate officials. Many of these are reproduced in Hattersley’s published works. An album belonging to Archdeacon Walker, currently in the possession of Walker’s great-nephew, contains examples of his work, and the Hattersley family has photographs of the Hattersley children and scenes in Uganda that I have not seen reproduced elsewhere.

Hattersley’s own books are profusely illustrated with photographs; *Uganda by Pen and Camera* has nearly thirty plates.27 The *Baganda at Home* has “one hundred pictures of life and work in Uganda.” Even the thirty-six page *Erasbus, Slave and Prince* has thirteen photographs.28 This tract tells the story of Erastus Kalamagi, from the Munyoro chiefly family, enslaved as a child, converted, freed, restored to his family as an adult, ready to play his part in the conversion of his people. The photographs in this work are particularly interesting in that they include three—“Slave raider catching boys by night: the glare of burning huts is seen in the background”; “Slave raider and captive”; “Slave raiders surprising a household”—that must have been posed and set up, not without skill.

**Promotional Use of Photographs**

*Uganda by Pen and Camera* is, as its title page declares, “profusely illustrated from photographs.” It is a call to prayer and missionary recruits, and the prose, which oscillates between the pedestrian and the evocative, suggests origins in an illustrated talk or talks. The quality of reproduction is unfortunately poor, but the photographs are not just an added extra. Hattersley makes valiant attempts to integrate text and photographs, using text to explain the photographs, and photographs to emphasize his points.

The quality of reproduction is much higher in *The Baganda at Home*. Hattersley reveals himself as a perceptive, if untrained, field anthropologist as well as missionary propagandist—a distinction he would have seen as meaningless. His camera is pressed into service on both accounts. In the first chapter, “Changes in King and Court,” he describes King Mutesa’s practice of preserving royal umbilical cords and announces with some pride, “The photographs which are here reproduced are the only ones that have ever been taken of these objects.”29 Chapters entitled “The Land and Its Products” and “How the People Live” and a harrowing description of the ravages of sleeping sickness follow, as well as more missionary-oriented and occasionally opinionated chapters on religion and education. The short final chapter, “Look on the Fields,” is a missionary clarion call in which Hattersley emphasizes the spiritual darkness of the non-Buganda peoples of the Protectorate. “We have in our possession a very recent photograph of a wizard and there is no secrecy whatever about his methods.”30 Unfortunately, this photographic evidence is not reproduced.

It is tempting to think that Ham Mukasa learned his appreciation of photographs from the indefatigable Hattersley, although there is no direct evidence for such a conclusion. Hattersley took photographs of the Mukasa family, several of which are in the Millar collection. Certainly, Mukasa held Hattersley in high esteem, and his visit to the Hattersley family in Sheffield was one
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of the highlights of his visit to England. On their return journey he and the Katikiro made a point of inquiring after Hattersley at Aden because they had heard news of his illness. They were much relieved to learn that he was recovering.  

Hattersley was away from Uganda between July 1902 and July 1903, so it seems unlikely that the photograph of the cathedr al drum was taken specifically to illustrate Mukasa’s account. However, its careful composition and lighting suggest that it was specially posed and set up. It is no casual shot. Hattersley took many photographs of the cathedral. Some are reproduced in Uganda by Pen and Camera and The Baganda at Home, and like other missionaries writing for his home supporters, he made a great deal of the dramatic story of the rise and fall (all too literal) of the successive structures at Namirembe. All accounts stressed the sacrificial giving and practical labor of the native Christians.  

Hattersley was also assiduous in recording both pre-Christian and Christian use of the drum. Uganda by Pen and Camera reproduces a photograph of “Lubare instruments—magic wands, horns and drums.” This photograph is in the Millar Collection (Y3045.L23), where it is captioned “Charms etc. brought to England by the Katikiro and the Rev. E. Millar.” The Baganda at Home has a fine photograph of “Women drummers at Suna’s tomb: the women clapping their hands are keeping time to the drums,” with some fairly lurid accounts of the accompanying traditional rites. Another photograph in the same volume explains how “worshippers are summoned to service by the beating of drum.” Hattersley is typical of missionary writers, who rarely lost an opportunity to use the drum as a symbol of the transformation of Baganda society: “One now never hears the drum being beaten to call people to war, nor is the drum heard announcing that a human sacrifice is about to be offered, and victims are being caught on the road. In place of these are the drums beaten every morning calling people to worship in the House of God.” The drum has become a powerful symbol of the conversion of a society.

The drum that once summoned people to war but later to worship symbolizes the transformation of Baganda society.

Notes

1. Ham Mukasa, Uganda’s Katikiro in England: Being the Official Account of His Visit to the Coronation of His Majesty King Edward VII, translated and edited by the Rev. Ernest Millar (London: Hutchinson, 1904). This is the edition cited throughout this article. An abbreviated version, edited with rather heavy hand by Taban Io Lyong, was published in 1975 as Sir Apolo Kagto Discovering Britain, in Heinemann’s African Writers Series. The latter substitutes unattributed pictures of British scenes for Hattersley’s photographs.


7. Personal communication, Paul Beacham.

8. Mukasa, Uganda’s Katikiro, p. 27.


10. Ibid., p. 82. Herbert Louis Samuel, First Viscount Samuel (1870-1963), later high commissioner in Palestine under the British mandate, was then a young MP. He took a particular interest in African questions and had toured Uganda in 1902. On his return, he wrote and lectured on the Protectorate, illustrating his lecture to the Royal Society of Arts “with lantern slides from some of the many photographs I had taken.” He spoke in the House of Commons on the Uganda Railway and was delighted at this opportunity to repay the Katikiro’s hospitality. See Viscount Samuel, Memoirs (London: Cresset Press, 1945), pp. 33-37, 42; John Bowle, Viscount Samuel: A Biography (London: Victor Gollancz, 1957), pp. 46-48; Journal of the Royal Society of Arts 51 (1903): 390-400. A footnote in the Memoirs refers to Uganda’s Katikiro in England as “a frank and delightfully naive picture of our civilization, as seen through the eyes of intelligent Africans who had never before been outside their own remote and isolated country” (p. 35).


12. Ibid., p. 102.

13. Ibid., p. 123.


15. Ibid., p. 170. There are further references to posed photographs on pp. 90 and 127.


17. Ibid., p. 277.

18. CMS Register of Missionaries (Clerical, Lay and Female) and Native Clergy from 1804 to 1904, list 1, 1436.


20. Hattersley’s educational work is in need of study and reassessment. Controversial at the time (Hattersley’s resignation in 1913 was precipitated by disputes over the running of Mengo), it has been variously assessed since. See, for example, John V. Taylor, The Growth of the Church in Buganda (London: SCM Press, 1958), p. 93.


22. CMS Register of Missionaries, list 2, 736.

23. I am indebted to Hattersley’s grandson, also Mr. C. W. Hattersley, for information on his later life.


25. For example, Roscoe, The Baganda, and Mullins, The Wonderful Story of Uganda.


30. Ibid., p. 224.


My Pilgrimage in Mission

James A. Scherer

Nothing in my early background would have predicted a missionary career for me. Born in 1926, I grew up in Fort Wayne, Indiana, in the sheltered conservative confessional piety permeating Missouri Synod Lutheranism. Foreign missionaries were treated with honor and respect, but missionary vocation was still rare and unusual. Twelve years in parochial schools ensured that I would internalize the confessional piety and doctrinal mentality of Lutheran orthodoxy. Some of my classmates already at that stage felt a call to parish ministry. My mother, however, let it be known that medicine would be a better career for me. Winner of a regional scholarship to attend Yale University, I left home for New Haven at the midpoint of World War II, still undecided about my future.

Three years of accelerated wartime study at Yale (1943–46) decisively changed all that. At Yale, where I pursued historical and language studies and abandoned pre-med aspirations, my world suddenly opened up to an ecumenical reality unknown to me in my earlier days. Working as a bursary student and exploring the riches of the undergraduate curriculum, I chose to make Dwight Hall (the Yale Campus Christian Association) my chief extracurricular outlet. Here I bumped into keen young men of every denominational and confessional persuasion and soon found myself praying and studying the Bible with them. I readily accepted invitations to travel to New England college campuses to participate in events sponsored by the Student Christian Movement and the Student Volunteer Movement. All of this came first as a challenge, then as a transforming influence, to my exclusive confessional piety. Without fully realizing it, I was becoming a latter-day legatee of the heritage of earlier student movements that had provided vision and enthusiasm for missionary and ecumenical developments marking the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

A major catalyst was my relationship with Professor Kenneth Scott Latourette, distinguished China expert and preeminent church historian then still teaching at the Yale Divinity School. “Uncle Ken,” a friend of successive generations of Dwight Hall Cabinet members, introduced me to Yale-in-China (as it was then known) and invited me to consider becoming a “Yale bachelor” teacher at the Yali Middle School in Changsha, Hunan. After prayerful consideration, I accepted the invitation, immersed myself in intensive spoken Mandarin, and prepared to sail for Shanghai in the summer of 1946. My three years in China led to marriage with Frances, the China-born daughter of missionary in New York City (1949–51) and at the Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary (1951–52) provided a reflective interval between two Far Eastern immersion experiences. Union was then at the acme of its theological development. I devoured courses by Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Tillich, and eminent biblical theologians and sought occasions to hear great “princes of the pulpit.” Fieldwork with the Interracial Fellowship of Greater New York, based at the Harlem Church of the Master, brought me into contact with Afro-American groups. I later interned in Lutheran parishes in Manhattan’s Central Park West and in Queens.

For the first time I was being exposed to the prophetic dimension of biblical religion and began to see its relevance for China taught me the decisive importance of the social, economic, and political context for Christian mission.

teacher in China

My life in war-ravaged China (1946–49) was the first of two Asian immersion experiences that provided a larger context for my missionary vocation. These experiences predisposed me to continuing relations with the Far East. My stay in China immediately followed the war with Japan, coincided with the Chinese civil war, and preceded the triumph of Chinese Communism. My role was to teach English as a Second Language via the “direct method” to Chinese students and to instill “Yale spirit” in the minds of these junior beneficiaries of Yale philanthropy. The notion that I was engaged in “cultural imperialism” never once entered my mind! Having little basis for comparison, I did not then realize that Yali students were an elite group of the scions of Chinese landlords, businessmen, bankers, and government officials—later to be vilified as persons with “bad background.” Our Yali school compound, in which we enjoyed friendly and egalitarian relationships with Chinese colleagues, was in reality an oasis of international community surrounded by poverty, backwardness, and corruption. Raging inflation, loss of confidence in the Kuomindang, and retreating soldiers were an everyday part of our external environment.

In retrospect, what China taught me was the decisive importance of the social, economic, and political context for Christian mission. In later years I felt compelled to scrutinize “lessons of the China experience.” I came to see the urgent importance of analyzing the theory and practice of Marxism-Leninism, Christianity’s nearest rival, with its secular eschatology and utopian promises. My naively American and individualistic assumptions about faith, conversion, and Christian community were dealt a sharp blow by these years spent as a fledgling missionary teacher in prerevolutionary China.

Three years of theological study at Union Theological Seminary in New York City (1949–51) and at the Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary (1951–52) provided a reflective interval between two Far Eastern immersion experiences. Union was then at the acme of its theological development. I devoured courses by Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Tillich, and eminent biblical theologians and sought occasions to hear great “princes of the pulpit.” Fieldwork with the Interracial Fellowship of Greater New York, based at the Harlem Church of the Master, brought me into contact with Afro-American groups. I later interned in Lutheran parishes in Manhattan’s Central Park West and in Queens.

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a Christian understanding of history. These were years of the Korean War, of worsening U.S.-Chinese relationships, of the condemnation and expulsion of Western missionaries from China, and of startling new developments within the Chinese church.

Frances and I were becoming acclimated to American life, and our two children were born during this interval. My third year of theological study at the small but excellent Lutheran faculty in Chicago prepared me for Lutheran ordination and brought me into touch with the official structures of the United Lutheran Church. I was strongly tempted by an invitation to serve on the parish staff of the large, wealthy, and influential church that had supported me and my family during my final year in seminary. Weighing the priorities, however, and considering my own and my wife’s experience, I ended up declining the invitation.

Missionary Evangelist in Japan

My second East Asian immersion experience took shape as I accepted a call from the Board for Foreign Missions of the United Lutheran Church to serve as an ordained evangelistic missionary in Japan (1952–56). I was assigned to work, after two years of intensive language study in Tokyo, under the direction of the North Kyushu District of the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church. I was aware that Christianity had first made its dramatic entry into Japan on the island of Kyushu under Francis Xavier, S. J., over four hundred years earlier. I knew that a powerful Christian martyr tradition existed as the result of earlier persecutions. But what struck me now, as a minuscule part of the American imperial presence in postoccupation Japan—surrounded by U.S. bases and symbols of American power—was the economic prostration of the country, the religious vacuum created by the emperor’s renunciation of divinity and the abandonment of State Shinto, and the receptivity of Japan not only to Christianity but also to a host of other popular religious movements. I was part of a heavy influx of American missionaries competing for the soul of postwar Japan! A woman missionary friend was teaching English to a royal princess, and in missionary circles it was rumored that the emperor himself, studying the Bible privately, might declare himself a Christian.

In Fukuoka, the metropolis of northern Kyushu, I was appointed minister in charge of four scattered Lutheran parishes served by new graduates of the Tokyo seminary. Recent converts to Christian faith with relatively little Christian background, these neophytes were not yet qualified to administer the sacraments. My role was that of itinerant dispenser of the sacraments, general visitor, problem solver, and link with the national church organization. Endowed with a car, which Japanese colleagues then lacked, I accompanied senior pastors into poor coal-mining

It was rumored that the Japanese emperor might declare himself a Christian.

Noteworthy

Announcing
The Overseas Ministries Study Center, New Haven, Connecticut, announces the 1996 grantees of the Research Enablement Program. Eighteen scholars received awards for research projects in the study of Christian Mission and World Christianity. The Research Enablement Program is funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and administered by OMSC. The grants, which will be dispensed for work in the 1996–1997 academic year, total approximately $266,000.

Gerald H. Anderson, OMSC’s director who also serves as director of the REP and chair of the Review and Selection Committee, states, “The quality of scholarship represented in this year’s selections is truly outstanding. As a major objective of the REP is to promote mission studies in the academy at large, the Committee is particularly pleased to have awarded so many grants to scholars outside the theological and missiological disciplines.”

This year the REP received 141 applications. Twenty percent of the applicants were women, and approximately forty percent were citizens of countries outside Europe and North America. The REP is designed to support both younger scholars undertaking dissertation field research and established scholars engaged in major writing projects. The grantees, listed by category, are as follows:

Postdoctoral Book Research and Writing
Jeffrey L. Cox, University of Iowa: “Religion and Imperial Culture in Punjab”
Fanai Hrangkhuma, Serampore College: “Mass Movement in India: Reasons for Its Discontinuity”
Jeffrey Klaiber, Catholic University of Peru: “The Jesuits in Latin America: Agents of Modernization and Inculturation”
John D. Y. Peel, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London: “The Encounter of Religions in Nineteenth-Century Yorubaland and the Emergence of Yoruba Identity”
I was interim pastor of a congregation whose pastor was sent to America for advanced theological training in preparation for regions to do a kind of industrial evangelism. Once I served for presented by the literature evangelism center, where I helped to organize listener follow-up to Kyushu broadcasts of the Japan Lutheran Hour.

Frances and I were beginning to test the waters for student evangelism through English Bible study and informal conversation with students from the National Kyushu University. The head of our national seminary invited me to assist in developing an English section for the bilingual Japan Lutheran theological quarterly and to offer occasional lectures to seminarians. I felt overwhelmed and challenged by myriad needs and opportunities open to young missionaries in postwar Japan.

In retrospect, the main lessons I learned from the Japan experience probably had to do with the gulf between Christian faith and Japanese culture. Superficially, Japan was a technologically advanced country like America, soon destined to conquer the world economically with its advanced industrial products. Religiously and culturally, however, it remained alien to the Gospel. Christianity was described by one observer as a "stranger in the land." My own experience confirmed this status as I observed family rituals and local shrine practices. What do I do when the representative of a local Shinto shrine comes asking for contributions to support the shrine deity? What do I say, as a missionary pastor, to a church family that requests a Christian funeral for a deceased family member, only to learn that a Buddhist priest was also asked to conduct funeral rites to ensure passage of the soul of the departed to paradise? What response do I give to the Japanese builder of our missionary residence who was invited to conduct the Shinto ceremony? Was being baptized something un-Japanese? I could count the number of Japanese that I baptized on the fingers of two hands. How could this wall of cultural exclusion be penetrated?

In spite of these cultural barriers, I marveled at the steadfast loyalty of Japanese Christians and admired the sacrifices of Japanese coworkers. Among the most memorable moments were those occasions when, seated on straw tatami mats in the home of a believer, we shared simple biblical stories about Jesus and tried to grasp their meaning for our situation. There were moving occasions when we formed a tight circle of communicants around the altar and received Christ's body and blood

**Dissertation Field Research**

Erica L. Bornstein, University of California, Irvine: “Economics of Belief: Christianity and Economic Development in Contemporary Zimbabwe”


Carrie Mary Pemberton, Cambridge University: “Field Study of African Christian Women Theologians”


William L. Svelmoe, Notre Dame University: “Evangelicals Overseas: The Wycliffe Bible Translators in Latin America”

Elizabeth A. Underwood, University of Illinois, Urbana: “MISSIONARY IDENTITIES AND IDENTIFICATIONS: U.S. Missionaries to Korea, 1884–1924”


**Missiological Consultations**


Melville Y. Stewart, Bethel College, St. Paul: “Symposium of Chinese-Western Philosophy and Religious Studies”

**Planning Grant for Major Interdisciplinary Project**


**The North Atlantic Missiology Project (NAMP),** a major new academic initiative funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, began in January 1996. Brian Stanley has moved to the University of Cambridge to direct the project, which includes the universities of Edinburgh, London, Cambridge, Yale, Columbia, and Wisconsin. Wilbert Shenk is coordinating the North American side of NAMP. The aim of the project is to conduct research into the development of Anglo-American Protestant mission theology, theory, and policy in the period 1740–1968, and to investigate how these were affected by their encounter with the non-Western world.

The opening of the project office in Westminster College, Cambridge, coincided with the official opening, on its new site in the college, of the Henry Martyn Mission Studies Library, which is directed by Graham Kings. More information about both NAMP and the Library is available from Westminster College, Cambridge, CB3 0AA, UK.

Vol. 10, **Chinese Theological Review:** Tribute to Bishop K. H. Ting, China Christian Council on his eightieth birthday. Back issues also available. Order from Foundation for Theological Education in South East Asia, 2390 Orchard, Holland, MI 49424. One vol., $10; two, $18; three, $25.
together, using spoons to dip wine from the chalice out of concern for tuberculosis. What a joy it was to unite two Japanese Christians in marriage, for we knew that reproducing the Christian home was the bedrock strategy for maintaining Christian existence in Japan.

Was the memory of ancient persecutions still alive in the minds of these Christians? If the Japanese Christian was an outsider in his or her own culture, then probably I was a double outsider. I left with unresolved questions about the future of Christian faith and the role of the church in Japan.

Mission School Administrator

A major shift in my missionary career occurred in 1956, when I was asked to head up a new Lutheran School of Missions being established in a Chicago suburb for long-term missionary appointees. The comprehensively designed one-year program—state of the art for its time—was the inspiration of my former professor, Joseph Sitlter, with important input from R. Pierce Beaver and Joseph Kitagawa of the University of Chicago. It incorporated academic training in missions with vocational development in a community setting with important features such as child care, inspirational Bible study, retreats, and a disciplined prayer life. Participants brought a rich mix of professional and personal skills to the community. Frances and I felt a strong challenge in molding the outlook of new missionaries during this period (1957–67). We worked closely with a mission faculty team and collaborated with mission board executives. We had the privilege of welcoming a stream of national church leaders and seasoned missionaries to our campus.

My work as dean of the School of Missions required that I complete my own doctoral studies in the area of missiology as rapidly as possible. I began my work at Union Theological Seminary with M. Searle Bates as doctoral advisor and was fortunate to be able to take courses with Hendrik Kraemer and P. D. Devanandan. By another stroke of good fortune, I was appointed as one of two North Americans in the Program of Advanced Religious Studies (PARS), an ecumenical group of twenty-five international church leaders from all six continents. PARS yielded rich dividends in ecumenical contacts. Ken Latourette came down from Yale once a week to spend a day with our group. I was able to dovetail my participation in PARS with work toward the joint Union-Columbia doctorate. Some years later, when J. C. Hoekendijk became professor of missions, I was pleased to be able to complete my doctorate under his supervision.

Abandoning an earlier suggestion made to me by Searle Bates to do a dissertation on the Lutheran Church in China, for which I did not feel adequately prepared, I chose to concentrate on the Lutheran missionary idea from the Reformation up to the ecumenical era. What was Martin Luther’s relationship to Christian mission? Did Lutheran mission possess a distinctive character or quality? Why were Lutherans latecomers to missionary obedience, and what theological or historical obstacles impeded their response? My real (but unofficial) mentor for these studies was Hans-Werner Gensichen of the University of Heidelberg, then granted leave to assist the Theological Education Fund with its Africa Program from a New York office. Under Gensichen’s expert guidance I investigated Lutheran missionary thinking under orthodoxy, Pietism, Moravianism, neo-confessionalism, and later responses to the ecumenical movement.

What I learned, among other things, was that Lutheran orthodoxy had serious problems with the continuing validity of the Great Commission, that Pietism represented a major missionary and ecumenical breakthrough, that Lutheran missions during the nineteenth-century confessional revival were excessively committed to transplanting Lutheran church forms abroad, and that the ecumenical movement had challenged Lutherans to rethink their responses to the call for mission in unity. The major findings were published in my Mission and Unity in Lutheranism (1968), an edited version of my dissertation. A few years earlier, while researching the dissertation, I had published Missionary, Go Home! (1964), a reappraisal of the Western mission enterprise. My small book in appreciation of a personal hero, Justinian von Weltz, also found its way into print (1968).

In 1967 the Lutheran School of Theology moved to Hyde Park, near the University of Chicago, becoming part of an urban, ecumenical, and university-related theological consortium. By 1969 the full-year School of Missions program for career missionaries had unfortunately given way to short-term summer orientation programs. I began moving toward the general area of missiology, with a concern to enlarge the place of mission studies in theological education. I was an early member of the Association of Professors of Mission, and from the 1970s I took an active part in the life of the American Society of Missiology (ASM), serving as an ASM officer and acting as associate editor of Missiology (1983–89). Working with Ralph Covell and Robert Schreiter, I helped screen hundreds of manuscripts submitted to Missiology. As chair of the ASM series editorial committee (1989–95), with Mary Motte and Charles Taber, I was gratified to see the number of volumes published in the ASM series, in cooperation with Orbis Books, rise to twenty–one, with more on the way.

In my capacity as professor of world missions and church history, I acted as adviser for twelve doctoral dissertations in the area of missiology, most of them written by international scholars teaching in theological schools overseas, and assisted with dozens of other degree programs. It was a special privilege to serve on the world mission board of the Lutheran Church in America, for a brief time as its chair. For fourteen years—seven as chairperson—I was an active participant in the work of the Lutheran World Federation’s “Commission on Church Cooperation.” Our commission met annually at the invitation of an LWF member church to map global strategy and share interchurch resources. We held mission consultations and visited local congregations in each area where our commission met. These meetings provided rich opportunities for international fellowship.

In 1992, after thirty-five years of teaching, I retired from full-time work to become emeritus professor of missions but continued part-time teaching, advising doctoral students, and continuing editorial work. It was a special pleasure to be able to accept an invitation to serve as Senior Mission Scholar in Residence at the Overseas Ministries Study Center in New Haven, and later as visiting professor at the Fuller Seminary School of World Mission in Pasadena. More time became available for grandparenting, overseas trips, and interim pastoral ministries. I took on several writing projects and began a comparative study of the growth of
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**Challenges of Missiology**

It had always struck me that the teaching of missions had no clearly defined or adequate place in the theological curriculum of mainline seminaries. Whatever place it once had seems to have further diminished in recent years. This lack of status contrasts sharply with the central place of mission in the New Testament and in the early church, and it contradicts the growing recognition given to mission and evangelism by ecumenical assemblies and by theological education programs in the Third World.

It seems to me that the dominant Western model of theological education is one devised in the late period of Christendom. It presupposes a static condition of Christian community and is geared toward the maintenance of existing congregations and received traditions. Issues such as evangelism, conversion, church growth, witness to people of other faiths, and mission in unity seem largely foreign to it. Ironically, even the alarming decline of Christianity in the Western world, in contrast to the explosive expansion of the church in many Third World regions, makes little impression on it.

Ecumenical conferences issue statements such as “the Church on earth is missionary by its very nature” (Ad Gentes 2), but I wonder about their usefulness, considering the minimal impact such slogans have on programs for ministerial training and on priorities of local congregations. Only as the church in the West is fully engaged in evangelization in its own neighborhood will it be ready to take its part in God’s mission at the ends of the earth.

Work at the academic edges and on the literary fringes of missiology has constituted my major involvement in the mission of Jesus Christ in recent years. Yet I have always felt most at home when visiting new congregations in China, inspecting village projects in India, or greeting local groups of believers in Africa.

With God’s people, I rejoice that the mission of God has entered a new phase as Christians in non-Western lands embrace the task of world evangelization as their own and add their voices to the universal praise of the Triune God. As the church of God begins its third millennium, I look forward to a new missionary partnership between people in all six continents and to the emergence of new forms of missionary obedience that more faithfully reflect the promise of God’s kingdom, which has come in Jesus Christ and continues to be revealed in all its fullness.

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**The Legacy of Karl Gottlieb Pfander**

*Clinton Bennett*

Karl Gottlieb Pfander has been described as the “foremost champion of his age” in the assault upon “the embattled forces of the False Prophet.” One of his own converts, Imad-ud-Din (d. 1901), thought that Pfander had definitively demonstrated Islam’s inferiority and falsehood: “We can now, I think, say that the controversy has virtually been complete . . . [that] the Christians have obtained a complete victory, while our opponents have been signally defeated.” After tracing Pfander’s missionary career and examining his approach to Islam, we shall briefly appraise his legacy, arguing, as Lyle L. Vander Werff has suggested, that Christian mission to Islam after Pfander has either continued, reacted against, or modified his approach. Therefore, whether one accepts or rejects that approach, Pfander’s work “stands as a vital link in the formation of a Christian apology to Muslims.”

**Childhood and Education**

Pfander was born in 1803 in Waiblingen, Saxony, where his parents, leading members of the local pietist congregation, ran the village bakery. At twelve, Pfander entered Latin school; at sixteen, the Moravian Academy at Stuttgart. Already his childhood reading of literature from the Basel Mission had influenced him to think of becoming a missionary. The mission saw itself as a spiritual society, a fellowship within the universal church dedicated to uniting pietist Christians, whether Lutheran, Moravian, or Reformed, in commitment to mission and evangelism. The dominant theological theme of Pietism was the need for individual repentance and renewal, beginning with consciousness of one’s own sin. Only such a process of spiritual discovery could result in salvation. For the pietists, the Bible was the sole source of authority, and its study formed the central plank in the curriculum at their mission training college in Basel (established 1815). The historical-critical method of F. C. Baur (1792–1860), D. F. Strauss (1808–74), and others made no impact at all on the pietists’ understanding of biblical truth. W. M. L. de Wette’s lectures at Basel University, where he was professor of theology from 1822 to 1849, were out of bounds for students of the missionary college. This period predates the “verbal inerrancy” language of nineteenth-century fundamentalism, but this was how the pietists viewed the Bible—as an inspired, infallible, inerrant guide to Christian teaching, life, and work. Nor did the arguments of the philosophers and theologians for and against deism appeal to them; revelation was more important than reason and logic. Only faith mattered.

Pfander offered himself to the society at seventeen, entering the Basel college in 1820. Alongside Bible study, with emphasis on original languages, went instruction in Arabic and on the
Qur’an. The society, whose first missionaries worked in Muslim areas, had early identified mission to Muslims as a priority. Christian Gottlieb Blumhardt (1779–1838) lectured on the Qur’an for five hours each week, while a professor from Basel University taught Arabic. Basel students also received instruction in a skilled manual trade; financial independence became a hallmark of many of the Christian communities nurtured by Basel missionaries. Pfander clearly left Basel with some knowledge of Islam, which, based primarily on the Qur’an, was probably more accurate than that of many of his contemporaries, who relied only on European sources.

**Missionary in Armenia**

In 1825, after completing his course, Pfander was ordained in Lutheran orders and stationed at Shusha, the provincial capital of Karabagh in Russian Armenia. Some colleagues concentrated on reforming the Armenian Orthodox Church, which they believed was corrupt, and therefore salvifically bankrupt (about one-third of the local population were Armenian Christians), but Pfander quickly turned his attention to attempting to communicate the Gospel to Muslims (about two-thirds of the local population). He believed that if Muslims read the New Testament in Persian, their preferred language, they would automatically acknowledge “its truth and superiority” and would abandon Islam as incapable of removing the burden of sin. To master Persian, Pfander made several excursions into Iran and also spent a year in Baghdad. He began to write works of Christian apology that, he believed, would convince Muslims of Christianity’s ineffable superiority. He was well aware that this type of apologia, of Islam to Christians and of Christianity to Muslims, had a long history, but he saw his books as breaking new ground, perhaps in terms of scholarly accuracy, though more probably by attempting to inculturate the Gospel within the linguistic and cultural worlds of his Muslim readers. In this, he succeeded, since not a few Muslim readers thought his books had been written by an apostate Muslim. Pfander also knew Henry Martyn’s *Controversial Tracts*, although any influence “remains conjectural in detail.” The German manuscript of his first book, the *Mizan-al-haqāq* (Balance of Truth), was completed in 1829. Much of his later work was devoted to revising and to translating this first book and its two sequels, *Miḥtaḥ-al-asrār* (Key of Mysteries) and *Tariq-al-hayāt* (Way of Life) into other languages. W. A. Rice commented, “Dr. Pfander was 40 years perfecting his controversial works.” In 1831 the *Mizan* appeared in Armenian; in 1835, in Persian.

In 1833 Pfander received permission from the Basel Mission to take some European leave, mainly because he wanted to find a wife. Perhaps expressing a commitment to acculturation, both he and the society appear to have preferred a Russian wife. He was allowed to go first to Moscow and, if unable to find a bride there, was then to try his luck in Saxony. As it happened, he found a suitable match in Moscow—Sophia Reuss, daughter of a minor aristocrat. They married, briefly visited Pfander’s family in Saxony, then joined the Shusha Mission. Sadly, 1835 was a tragic year. Sophia fell ill and died, while the mission ran foul of the Russian authorities. Some accounts of this development hint that Pfander’s efforts to convert Muslims were to blame, but the incident appears to have been initiated by the Armenian archbishop, who, somewhat annoyed when two young deacons requested instruction at the mission, removed them to a monastery and petitioned the czar to expel the missionaries. Pfander became a jobless widower.

**Anglican Missionary in India**

Pfander’s interest in Islam suggested a stationing in a Muslim country. After visiting Turkey, he was instructed to proceed to Calcutta to explore possibilities of working in a predominantly Muslim part of India. Although the Basel Mission was not operating in any of these areas, several Basel missionaries were already employed by the Church Missionary Society (CMS), a voluntary agency within the Church of England. In Calcutta, Pfander studied Urdu and negotiated employment with the CMS. This proved a lengthy process, involving correspondence between the home headquarters of the two mission bodies. Finally in 1840 the CMS posted him to its Agra Mission. Meanwhile, he worked on the Urdu version of the *Mizan* (published in 1843) and on his *Remarks on the Nature of Mohammedanism* (1840). In 1841 he met and married Miss Elizabeth Emma Swinbourne, who had arrived in India the previous year, designated by the CMS for evangelism among women. The Pfanders ultimately had three sons and three daughters.

Most of Pfander’s energy was devoted to language and translation work and to developing his refutation of Islam. Bishop Stephen Neill has described the *Mizan* as “one of the earliest works of Christian learning in the field” of Islamic scholarship, while the Basel Mission historian P. Eppler refers to Pfander’s “extensive and penetrating knowledge of Islam.” One of his most enthusiastic admirers, Sir William Muir (1819–1905), however, thought that he made too little use of “the historical deductions of modern research.” Pfander does not qualify as a full-blown scholar of Islam, although he was willing to allow observation to modify his views and, in later editions of the *Mizan*, included references to the pioneering work of Gustav Weil (1808–89), one of the first European scholars to apply the historical-critical method to Muhammad’s life. Weil’s *Mohammed der Prophet* was published in 1843, his translation of Ibn Hisham (an early biography of Muhammad) in 1864. Weil pictured Muhammad as a deluded epileptic, a diagnosis that subsequently appeared in many nineteenth-century books about Islam. Pfander accepted, and repeated, this explanation of Muhammad’s trances. Muhammad’s “general conduct shows him to have been an acute and subtle man, yet some of his actions are like those of other unstable minds.” Islam’s military success, with its “spoil, dominion and prosperity,” enabled Muhammad’s companions to “shut their minds to his faults and failings.” Among these failings, Pfander included Muhammad’s multiple marriages and his treatment of conquered foes. Pfander’s *Remarks* include such standard explanations of Islam’s success as the allure of its promise of a sensual paradise. Generally, said Pfander, Islam was a religion of the sword, Christianity, one of peace. He also shared the suspicion of most orientalist scholars of the Hadith (Traditions) as largely fictitious and historically unreliable.

We can best gain an understanding of the flavor of Pfander’s writing by summarizing the *Mizan’s* argument. The introduction establishes the ground rules for the following three sections. First, Pfander proposes that, since both Islam and Christianity claim to be God’s final revelation, one must be right, one wrong. Logic demands, he says, that both cannot be right. Therefore, their respective claims should be tried at the bar of reason. Next, he establishes five a priori conditions of the true faith: (1) the true faith must fulfill the human yearning for pardon and justification; (2) it must contravene neither conscience nor natural morality; (3) its God must be just and holy, rewarding the good, punishing the evil; (4) its God must be one, immortal, immutable,
omnipotent, omniscient; and (5) the way of salvation must be made clear through gradual progress in the knowledge of God; a theophany (revelation) must stand at its center. Section 1 examines the Bible, rejecting traditional Muslim charges of abrogation (naksh) and of corruption (taḥrīf). Section 2 presents Christian doctrines within the framework of his criteria, establishing their rational basis. Section 3 tests Islam’s claim and finds it wanting. Readers thus have a choice: between the Lord Jesus Christ, who went about doing good, and Muhammad the prophet of the sword.

Pfander’s pietist background colors his approach. His aim is clearly to satisfy people’s “spiritual cravings” for forgiveness, renewal, and fellowship with God, but his criteria and tests appear to elevate reason above feeling. Although, in early editions, he emphatically rejected reason as a means to obtain knowledge of God, in later editions he seems to argue more from reason than from revelation, which, given his pietist background, remains something of an enigma. As one subsequent critic says, he wrote not “to touch Muslim hearts but to convince their minds.” Even William Muir thought he wrote of the Trinity as reflected in the natural world’s examples of plurality in unity, so that this seemed to be “an obligatory argument, as if from the nature of things Deity must exist in trinity,” which gave his opponents “unfounded advantage.”

The Debate

At Agra, Pfander’s sequels to his Mizan were rendered into Urdu. All three books were widely distributed. Not only their style and idiom but also their binding were designed to resemble popular Muslim tracts. Muslims soon began responding to his arguments with letters, pamphlets, and articles in the Urdu press. Some of this correspondence appeared between January and August 1845 in the Khair kwhaḥ-i-Hind newspaper. More substantial Muslim rejoinders quickly followed. Sir William Muir described this controversy in an article first written in 1845, later revised; the most scholarly account of the exchange is by Avril Powell. Pfander’s own response was his Hall al-ishkal (Solution of difficulties), published in 1847. In 1854, after a decade of literary exchange (and one private debate with the ulema in his own bungalow), one of the leading Muslim respondents, Rahmat Ali (1818–91), invited Pfander to join him in a public debate, or munazara, of which there was an agelong Muslim tradition. Less than half a century earlier, Henry Martyn had reluctantly accepted the same challenge. In sixteenth-century Agra, Jesuit missionaries had debated alongside representatives of other religions in the court of Emperor Akbar. Perhaps, though, all these debates took their cue from the very earliest period of exchange between Christian theologians and Muslim mutakallimin, in Syria in the seventh and eighth centuries, such as the famous debate between the Nestorian Catholicos Mar Timothy (in office 780–823) and Caliph Al-Mahdi (in office 755–85). As had Martyn, Pfander expressed reservations about this type of debate. “I was well aware,” he wrote to the CMS, “that very little good is done by such public discussion,” although he also welcomed the fact, as he saw it, that “Mohammedans should try to support their religion by proof, and not by the sword.” Nevertheless, he thought it prudent to accept their challenge.

The principal disputants, Pfander and Rahmat Ali, were each supported by a second and by a small team of assistants. Pfander chose as his second the young Cambridge graduate Thomas Valpy French (1825–91), afterward first bishop of Lahore. William Kay (1820–86), later principal of Bishop’s College, Calcutta, assisted. Rahmat Ali chose Dr. Wazir Khan as his second, and several assistants, including Imad-ud-Din. Also present was Safdar Ali, a civil servant. Other distinguished Muslims and Christians gave moral support, the latter including such influential government officials as Sir William Muir, secretary of the local CMS Association, and Judge Mosley Smith. Before the debate, the subjects for discussion were agreed by both sides: the abrogation and corruption of the Christian Scriptures, the doctrine of the Trinity, Muhammad’s claim to prophethood, and the inspiration of the Qur’an. Pfander thought he was on familiar ground, since these were the subjects addressed in his apologetics. What he was not prepared for, though perhaps he should have been from the contents of Kitab-i-istisfar, one of the more scholarly replies to his writing, was his opponents’ use of European biblical criticisms to impugn the integrity and historicity of Christian Scripture. Wazir Khan, while a medical student in London in the 1840s, came “into contact with European works of Biblical criticism . . . and studied Hebrew and Greek.” He read T. H. Horne (1780–1862), J. G. Eichorn (1752–1827), and N. Lardner (1648–1768) and brought some of their books with him to the debate, including George Elliot’s 1847 translation of D. F. Strauss’s Das Leben Jesus, of which Pfander knew nothing. During the debate, Pfander found it impossible not to admit to more discrepancies between the four Gospels than could be explained (as in his writing) by mere copyist error, but he continued to insist that “the essential doctrines, including the Trinity, and those concerning divinity, atonement and intercession, were unharmed by such an admission.” His disputants found Pfander’s argument that the New Testament had not abrogated but fulfilled the Old Testament by transforming its Hebrew ritual into inner principles quite untenable. This “only struck his audience as mere evasion of an unpalatable fact”—that, in its turn, the New Testament had been replaced by the Qur’an.

Pfander accused Roman Catholic missionaries of sabotaging the proceedings by supplying his opponents with these works, which he, and a whole subsequent generation of evangelical missionaries, continued to dismiss as infidel. E. M. Wherry (1843–1927) wrote, “The Muslims were obliged to abandon their own works and endeavoured to save the day by a counter assault, in which they scrupled not to use the stock arguments of European infidelity in their effort to overthrow the authority of the Christian scriptures.” Both sides claimed victory, but as Avril Powell points out, while those Christians present were remarkably silent about the whole incident, Muslim accounts are remarkably silent about the whole incident, Muslim accounts rolled off the presses. No detailed account flowed from Muir’s pen, who had so enthusiastically supported Pfander’s earlier exchanges.

Final Years

Soon after the munazara, Pfander was transferred to Peshawar, which Powell describes as a “diplomatic move on the part of the
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CMS authorities on news of the debacle reaching Calcutta.”  

However, there is no real evidence that the CMS lost confidence in Pfander or disapproved of his attitude toward Islam. Indeed, Pfander was honored in 1856 with the Lambeth doctor of divinity degree in recognition of his endeavors to convert Muslims and, in the same year, was ordained in Anglican orders by the bishop of Calcutta. The subsequent conversion, too, of Safdar Ali (1864), although he did not directly ascribe his conversion to Pfander’s efforts, and of Imad-ud-Din (1866), who did acknowledge Pfander’s influence, were claimed as long-term proof of Pfander’s victory.

Pfander remained in India until 1861, when he was appointed to help fellow Basel graduate S. W. Koelle (d. 1902) establish the CMS mission at Istanbul, a city already familiar to him from earlier travels. Perhaps predictably, Pfander’s strategy was once again to distribute his books, which he did even in the “precincts of the Great Mosque of St. Sophia, the once famous church whose walls had … heard the eloquence of Chrysostom.”  

His Turkish edition of the Mizan appeared in 1861. Throughout his career, even during the violent events in India of 1857–58, he always preached in public places. “Bible in hand, as usual, he took his stand on a bridge or in a thoroughfare, and alike without boasting and without fear, proclaimed the truth and beauty of Christianity while the empire of the Christians in India was trembling in the balance.”

Interestingly, Rahmat Ali was actively involved on the rebels side and fled India for Mecca with a price on his head. Pfander himself believed that the rebellion was Muslim inspired and led. Certainly, both Hindus and Muslims resented not only the imperialists’ presence in India but also their hostility toward Indian culture, including its religion. Lord Macaulay’s infamous memo of 1835 suggests that scholars shared this negativity toward anything Indian.  

Although the East India Company claimed a policy of religious neutrality, the open support given to Christian missions by sympathetic colonial officials looked very much like part of a concerted effort to undermine India’s religious and cultural heritage. Pfander expressed early confidence in “the efficacy of a technologically superior and socially progressive Europe in ensuring the eventual success of the Gospel” and was confident that God would not allow India to revert to Muslim rule.

Rahmat Ali, whose Izhar al-haqq achieved great popularity throughout the Muslim world, appears to have been invited to Istanbul by the caliph to instruct the ulama in anti-Christian polemic. Some think that Pfander and he may actually have met again in debate, but this is unconfirmed. In fact, Pfander’s activities in Turkey were curtailed by the caliph, who in 1864 banned the Mizan, closed down the “preaching hall in the bazaar, and imprisoned those Muslims who … had converted to Christianity.”

Perhaps, tactically, what had worked reasonably well in Britain, under sympathetic government officials such as Sir William Muir and, in his Peshawar days, Sir Herbert Edwardes (1819–68), was less successful when removed from such protection. The CMS mission relocated to Egypt, Pfander went to England (previously visited on leave in 1853) with his wife, who was ill, unexpectedly fell ill himself, and died very suddenly in early 1866. Powell surmises that Pfander left Turkey disillusioned “with the prospect of converting Muslims to Christianity.”

Had not death intervened, however, he would likely have continued his lifelong labor elsewhere. In its obituary, the CMS suggested that since, “so long as there is a Christian Mission to Mohammedan countries, Pfander’s works will endure,” they should be translated “into English, as textbooks for Missionaries and Mission schools in all parts of Asia.”

### Appraisal

Pfander’s approach perpetuated. The first English version of the Mizan appeared in 1867; translations in other languages also continued to appear. Early this century, William St. Clair-Tisdall (1859–1928) revised, and translated into English, all three of Pfander’s books. Tisdall largely continued Pfander’s view, both of Islam as salvifically bankrupt and of Muhammad as morally culpable. A better scholar than Pfander, Tisdall’s own writing contributed to the development of serious Christian thinking about the relationship between Christ and other faiths. Others, including Imad-ud-Din and W. A. Rice, whose Crusaders of the Twentieth Century appeared in 1910, continued Pfander’s approach, virtually without modification. William Muir, inspired by Pfander, surpassed him as a scholar but perpetuated his estimate of Islam. The fact, though, that Pfander’s books remain in print today suggests that some Christians still value his approach. “We do not hesitate,” says the preface to the 1986 edition of the Mizan, “to print such a book of fundamental importance. . . . Islam is still the same, and needs a definitive answer.”

Pfander’s approach modified. Bishop French acknowledged Pfander as his “Master in missions,” as a “worthy successor of . . . Henry Martyn,” but modified his style, pioneering an approach to Muslims that avoided open disputation. He thought that rational argument could never do justice to the mysterium that lies at the heart of Christian faith and aimed not so much to defeat Islam as to win Muslim hearts. Safdar Ali, in his Niaz nama (Friendly treatise), used “the persuasive tone born of love and a strong desire to bring [Muslims] to a knowledge of the saviour of men.” His writing lacked the “acrid and stinging element of some . . . on the subject.”

Pfander’s approach rejected. Lewis Bevan Jones (1880–1960) openly criticized, and rejected, Pfander’s books as “chiefly . . . a guide to something better.” Unable to reject Islam totally, Jones tried to build on what he perceived as its strengths. He aimed to explain Christianity rather than to refute Islam. The bitterly anti-Christian literature that Pfander’s books provoked still colors some Muslim polemic today, for example, the work of Ahmed Deedat, who has acknowledged Rahmat Ali’s influence. However, as Vander Werff says, “Regardless of one’s evaluation of Pfander’s controversial approach, his intellectual abilities, literary skills and Christian dedication remain.” Subsequently, initial training in Arabic and in Islamsics, followed by lifelong immersion in Muslim culture, together with mastery of languages, have been recognized as essential qualifications for any Christian work among Muslims. Whether we regret or rejoice in Pfander’s legacy, he occupies an “honourable place in the history of mission to Muslims.”

Whether we regret or rejoice in Pfander’s legacy, he occupies an honorable place in the history of mission to Muslims.
Notes

2. Imad-ud-Din, “The Results of the Controversy in North India with Mohammedans,” *Church Missionary Intelligencer* (hereafter CMI) 10 (1875): 276.
10. KGP, pp. 9–10.
25. Ibid., p. 260.
26. KGP, pp. 15–16.
27. CMI, April 1866, p. 101, citing Sir Herbert Edwardes, who remembered with affection the “burly Saxon figure . . . beaming with intellect, simplicity and benevolence.”
28. The memo, which cites the support of European scholars, dismisses Oriental learning as worthless.
32. Cited in KGP, p. 16.
34. CMI, April 1866, p. 102.

Selected Bibliography

**Works About Pfander**


** Works by Pfander**


Who would have expected Harvey Cox to write a book about Pentecostalism? But he did, and a fascinating book at that!

In late 1994 I participated in a consultation of thirty Latin American Pentecostal leaders, drawn to Peru by the World Council of Churches. There Cecil Robeck, a Pentecostal ecumenist, handed me a copy of Cox’s book. What I discovered was a sympathetic presentation of twentieth-century Pentecostalism, combined with incisive critique of the movement. If, as Cox notes, in relatively few years world Pentecostal adherents will outnumber Roman Catholics, it behooves those of us outside Pentecostalism to pay attention to this “religious world” most of us ignore.

The book has three parts. First, a historical section, presenting the genesis of Pentecostalism, focusing on the 1906 Los Angeles Azusa Street revival. Literate observers of contemporary American religion should know this history, though one fears most do not.

The second section reviews five aspects of Pentecostalism: primal speech, primal piety, primal hope, women, and jazz music. I was unaware of the role of women and of jazz in Pentecostalism until reading this analysis, though in the Peru consultation I was constantly amazed at the vitality of the Pentecostal women and enjoyed the rhythmic music, clearly influenced by American jazz.

The third section portrays Pentecostal reality in various continents across the world—inevitably selective but perceptive. Cox concludes with his own evaluations of Pentecostalism, a critique that seems to me measured and quite accurate.

Most “mainline Protestants” tend to write off Pentecostalism because of its excessive emotionalism, its divisiveness, its biblical literalism, or its theological narrowness. Cox’s book provides an antidote to such thinking, forcing a review of our prejudices.

At a recent lecture by José Miguel-Bonino, I asked if he thought the future of mainline Protestantism in Latin America depended on a close relationship to Pentecostalism. He replied that mainline churches need not imitate Pentecostalism but that they have much to learn from Pentecostals, as Pentecostals can learn much from the historic churches. If so, Cox’s book is a good starting point to begin our learning process.

—Eugene L. Stockwell

Eugene L. Stockwell, formerly director of the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, is currently on the pastoral staff of Central Methodist Church, Buenos Aires, Argentina.


Four snapshots on the cover of this book—of Muscat, Beirut, Canterbury, and Cairo—suggest the memoirs of a well-traveled mind. But this autobiography gives us much more than that. The Muscat photo is of an aircraft on a primitive landing strip watched by a passerby on a camel—an eloquent symbol of Cragg’s long-standing preoccupation with the changes brought about in traditional society and religion by technology. In The Privilege of Man (1968) he wrote, “The possibility deepens that men may not be big enough for the civilization they have engineered.” Specifically, he has looked for changes in Islam comparable to those in the last 150 years of Christianity. The Beirut picture is not of the ravaged buildings of the last two decades but of the peaceful seaside campus of the American University, where Cragg taught philosophy in the 1940s. The Canterbury picture is of the short-lived Central College of the Anglican Communion, of which he was the second, and last, warden in the 1960s, and which his book mourns as a tragically (and unnecessarily) lost cause. People at prayer in the streets of Cairo form the final image, recalling his lifelong concern with prayer and worship, and with the proper scale of a God who is big enough to warrant it.

The visual testimony informs the reader that this is no mere narrative, but a “story-study,” in the subtitle’s awkward phrase, a life story interpreted by the developing faith that has given it meaning and coherence. It is also (the author is now eighty-two) inevitably an apologia and a verdict on many of the issues that have engaged him for more than half a century. “I tried to think,” he writes, “as one who meant to listen” (p. 235). He has listened, of course, to Muslims in particular, and to those caught up in the tortured history of Israel-Palestine, and to the poets of many nations, as the wealth of his quotations indicates.

None of Cragg’s books is an easy read. His ever-fertile and searching mind constantly turns over old words for new meanings and invests the familiar and the leisured reader will be rewarded with immense riches in theology and the sustained assurance of God’s love in every circumstance. Cragg ends, characteristically, with Browning: “You’ll love me yet (He says) and I can tarry / Your love’s protracted growing.”

—Christopher Lamb

Christopher Lamb is Secretary for Inter-Faith Relations both to the Church of England and to the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland. His doctoral study was of the writings of Kenneth Cragg.
Living Mission: Challenges in Evangelization Today.


James H. Kroeger, the Asia-Pacific area assistant on the Maryknoll Missionaries General Council, has collected in this book a variety of his articles, essays, and "reflective vignettes," plus two summaries of papal documents.

His theological reflections on the Trinitarian, pneumatological, global, and paschal foundations of contemporary Catholic mission thinking (pp. 19-55) alone make this book a valuable contribution to understanding what evangelization is about. The lead theme of his considerations is the following quotation from the papal encyclical Redemptoris missio: "We are obliged to hold that the Holy Spirit offers everyone the possibility of sharing in the Paschal mystery in a manner known to God." Kroeger applies this statement to challenges like inculturation, inter-religious dialogue, the preaching of the paschal mystery, a renewed mission consciousness, and an authentic mission spirituality.

Restricting himself to Asia, Kroeger in one chapter offers a survey of Maryknoll mission work in ten Asian countries. Other short contributions explore some local Asian popular expressions of the Christian faith. An interesting and not often formally considered "blunt and sensitive question" tackled by the author is the issue of how numerous Catholic mission institutes are now sending missionaries overseas to recruit new vocations for their membership in order to make up for the diminishing numbers in their home countries. It is a strategy for institutional survival, and Kroeger rightly asks, "Are we witnessing vocation piracy in some of the young, vibrant churches in Africa, Asia, and Latin America?" (p. 103). He not only offers his own "Guidelines for Mission Societies" on this delicate issue but adds the twenty-five-point list of suggestions of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences of about a decade ago, and a pastoral letter (April 10, 1990) by Jaime Cardinal Sin, the archbishop of Manila, on the same issue. The book offers an interesting, refreshing, and sometimes intriguing collage. (It deserved, however, better editing and proofreading.)

—Joseph G. Donders, M.Afr.

APPLICATIONS INVITED FOR RESEARCH GRANTS IN MISSION AND WORLD CHRISTIANITY

The Overseas Ministries Study Center, New Haven, Connecticut, U.S.A., administers the Research Enablement Program for the advancement of scholarship in studies of Christian Mission and Christianity in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Oceania. Grants will be awarded on a competitive basis in the following categories:

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This program is supported by a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts.
The book describes the work of the LMS and LMS/CWM. It is edited by a well-known leader of the WCC and past general secretary of CWM. The book describes the work of the LMS from 1945 to 1977, a period during which major changes in the mission fields of the world created missiological hurricanes for Western churches.

This volume is a collection of historical reflections by European (and one Australian) missiologists and missionaries. The reflections cover the work of missionaries in Africa, Asia, the Pacific islands, and the Caribbean area, with amazing and theologically provocative detail. Each regional study effectively illustrates both the how and the why of methods employed by missionaries serving under LMS/CWM. The work of Europeans and Two-Thirds World missionaries is extensively described. Chapter 10, which covers the Caribbean area, is a good example of the effective use of theology and the social sciences in mission historiography.

The last two chapters outline the bold and pioneering steps taken by one of the oldest Protestant mission organizations in the world toward mutuality in mission. These steps created a new council structured in ways that enabled member churches from the Two-Thirds World to give as well as receive in global mission partnerships. _Gales of Change_ documents the journey of the LMS from paternalism to partnership in mission. A noticeable weakness in this book is the absence of Two-Thirds World voices among the collection of authors of what is a fascinating global story.

—Anthony S. Bryan

Anthony S. Bryan, of Jamaican birth, is Carson Professor of Christian Mission at Erskine Theological Seminary, Due West, South Carolina.

Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective.


Frontiers of Hispanic Theology in the United States.


The Hispanic Challenge: Opportunities Confronting the Church.


These books, though written from different perspectives, can be considered a breakthrough for Hispanic theology and missiology in the United States, particularly in academic circles. Deeply rooted in the Hispanic community, they build a bridge to mainstream North American culture, as well as to Latin America. Moreover, they also share a concern for pastoral issues in their respective communities, together with an urgency to take the social sciences seriously in articulating both theology and missiology.

Ortiz states that “the Hispanic church must come to grips with the loss of its second-generation young people and find creative ways to allow them to embrace an attainable vision of the church” (p. 180). To that end he presents relevant demographic information, along with missiological issues to focus on leadership training so that Christian Hispanics in the inner city can become models of grace and righteousness.

Deck’s symposium of nine erudite
essays deals with issues vital to Roman Catholic Hispanics, particularly Mexican Americans. Popular religiosity, the contribution of women, and mestizaje (a synthesis of traditional Hispanic elements with the dominant influence of the surrounding society) are major components of Hispanic Roman Catholic theology, though there seems to be an overemphasis on justifying the various expressions of popular religiosity as an integral part of revelation.

González's contribution draws from his vast knowledge of patristic literature, church history, and Scripture to offer unique insights on various theological topics. Many current doctrinal expressions are the product of political and intellectual pressures at work in the church than of a proper understanding of the Bible. This results in a theological primer that also raises quite a few fundamental questions.

These three volumes offer a much-needed introduction to the spiritual longings and vitality of the Hispanic community, the fastest growing minority group in the United States.

—Pablo E. Pérez

Pablo E. Pérez has been a pastor in his native Mexico and is currently a translator for In Touch Ministries in Atlantic, Georgia.


The author, who teaches history at the University of Central Florida, sees the growth of Protestantism as the "second religious conquest" of Ecuador (p. 17). It is treated in two phases: 1896–1931 and 1931–90. Actually, the first phase receives very brief treatment, focusing on the work of the Gospel Missionary Union, the Christian and Missionary Alliance, and the Seventh-day Adventists. These agencies are not considered in the second phase, although they have played a significant role in Protestant growth to the present day.

The starting point for the second phase is the installation of HCJB—the "Voice of the Andes"—in Quito in 1931. Protestant advance is charted in terms of three agencies: HCJB radio (1931–90), Summer Institute of Linguistics (1952–81), and World Vision (1975–90). It is argued that they spearheaded a North American fundamentalist expansion in the country, imposing their own ideology upon converts and endangering their culture and identity in the process. Attention is then turned to the growth of Pentecostal and independent churches (1950–90), and finally to what is called the "Protestant threat" to the Catholic Church and to the country's indigenous peoples. Here again fundamentalist invasion from the North provides the framework for the analysis.

However, as David Stoll and others have shown, the "North American fundamentalist invasion" thesis cannot explain Protestant growth in Latin America, nor can an analysis (at times based on inaccurate data) of mission agencies be equated with an examination of Ecuadorian Protestantism. The study, replete with historical data though it is, fails to interact with Protestantism in any meaningful way. It is based for the most part on secondary sources. As this community prepares to celebrate its centenary, it is unlikely to recognize itself in Goffin's portrait.

—Bill Mitchell

Bill Mitchell is a Translations Consultant with United Bible Societies, based in Quito, Ecuador. He has worked in the Andean region since 1972.
The Nearest in Affection: Towards a Christian Understanding of Islam.


Stuart Brown, from 1983 to 1988, was the secretary for Christian-Muslim relations in the World Council of Churches. From his writings, it is evident that Brown writes from an informed perspective regarding Islam. His bottom-line purpose in authoring this book is to “promote some new measure of serious interaction between the members of the world’s two largest communities of faith” (p. ix). Brown is a gifted writer, though at times a bit overly technical with dates and obscure events.

The first few chapters give an overview of Islamic theology, tradition, and jurisprudence. Particularly helpful is the exposition of the various branches within the ummah (community) of Islam. These “denominations” within the household of faith are often denied by uninformed lay Muslims.

Chapter 5 presents an excellent thumbnail sketch of Islamic mysticism. From Morocco to the Philippines, Muslims give allegiance to a style of folk Islam that often is in conflict with the more rigid orthodoxy of the guardians of the faith. Brown points out the bridge potential between Christians and Muslims who both have this mystical bent in the outworking of their religious devotion.

In 1993 I had the opportunity to attend a seminar at Yale Law School that dealt with the possibility of a reinterpretation of Islamic law to bring it into conformity with the modern age in which we live. The tension between the Muslim modernists and traditionalists who attended was sharp. Brown explores the reform potential in chapter 6 of his book. From my experience, the chance of updating the shari’a to deal with moderating Islamic punishments and giving women greater rights is slim. Brown rightly observes that Muslims and Christians are citizens of one global village. We must find ways to appreciate each other as well as to work together in commonly agreed pursuits. The difficulty of this worthy goal is highlighted by the fact that the same Qur’an which says that Christians are “nearest in affection to Muslims” (5:82) also says, “Take not the Jews and Christians for friends” (5:51).

Be sure to give Brown’s book the reading it deserves.

—Phil Parshall

Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire.


To those of us who are concerned with such issues as the tension between “evangelicals” and “ecumenists,” between
“universal proselytizing mission” and “dialogue with people of other faiths.” Martin Goodman’s book is indispensable. The book, written by a specialist in Jewish studies, enhances our understanding of the origins of Christian mission.

After showing convincingly that the dominant notion in later Christianity of universal proselytizing mission was only one alongside three other types of mission (informative, educational, apologetic), Goodman proceeds to a detailed and radical reconsideration of the evidence for Jewish missionary attitudes in the late second temple (before 100 C.E.) and Talmudic (100–500 C.E.) periods. He challenges the widely held scholarly view (Schürer, Jeremias, etc.) that Judaism at the time of the emergence of Christianity was energetically engaged in proselytizing mission and that the origin of Christian mission is to be explained on the ground of contemporary Jewish and pagan proselytizing practices and attitudes. Goodman also explains the confused and ambivalent rabbinic attitudes to proselytizing, found in the later Talmudic tradition (from second to fifth centuries C.E.) and reflected even in today’s Judaism.

More important, though less convincing, is his argument about the causes of the church’s universal proselytizing mission. Goodman argues that both the eschatological fervor with the ensuing concern about the delayed End and the personality of Paul might have “contributed to the enthusiasm of [the Christian] believers to do something” (p. 168). What caused the adoption by Jesus’ followers of that kind of mission, however, was “internal strife within their own ranks [which] made the inclusion of gentiles the main issue of debate, overshadowing issues such as Christology which were later to become crucial” (p. 173).

—Petros Vassiliadis

Petros Vassiliadis, Professor of New Testament and Missiology in the Theological Faculty of the University of Thessaloniki, Greece, is Secretary General of the Society for Ecumenical Studies and Inter-Orthodox Relations.
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Believing in the Future: Toward a Missiology of Western Culture.


Write the Vision: The Church Renewed.


These two remarkable books are the first in a new series called Christian Mission and Modern Culture. Their size is no measure of their significance.

David Bosch, who until his tragic death in 1992 was professor and head of the Department of Missiology in the University of South Africa, gave this paper in January 1992 to a group of missiologists who have committed themselves to a long-term search for a missiology of Western culture. Despite having just completed his magnum opus Transforming Mission (1991), he felt that he now had to give priority to the new endeavor that arose out of the Gospel and Our Culture movement, which is masterminded by Wilbert Shenk. The two books are closely related.

Bosch begins, “We live in the ‘post-’ era.” Postmodern, postindustrial, and so forth. “We have truly entered into an epoch fundamentally at variance with anything we have experienced to date.” He then describes the new epoch in brief surveys entitled “Post-Modern World” and “The Legacy of the Enlightenment.” The third section, “The Christian Faith in a Post-Modern Age,” is followed by a more detailed “Cortours of a Missiology of Western Culture,” which includes a plea for missionary theology and “mission as social ethics.” Growing religiosity is taken seriously in “The Impossibility of Not Believing,” and a conclusion includes ecology, the place of the laity, and the importance of the local worshiping community.

An adequate review would be at least as long as the book. Bosch’s last words to us are ones that must be read and inwardly digested. Not for the first time he spoke prophetically.

Wilbert Shenk—missionary, mission administrator, colleague of Lesslie Newbigin in Gospel and Our Culture, and missiologist, now at Fuller Theological Seminary—has written a worthy companion to Bosch’s book. Not only is it a companion in theology and in quality, it also comes from the pen of the man who was largely responsible for persuading David Bosch to join the team for whom his paper was prepared.

Shenk’s work is visionary in the best sense because it is the vision of a historian who sees the Western church in crisis and

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yet who looks forward with hope. He begins with the church and ends with the church. The Western church has lost integrity because it has lost its soul to the culture and because the Christian faith is marginalized. It lived too long in alliance with political and military power and forgot its true essence because it lived in the shadow of Christendom, and Christendom does not need mission or real evangelization. They are for elsewhere. So a chapter on integrity is followed by one on mission and another on evangelization. The final chapter—on the church—sees the church, which exists between apostasy and renewal, truly renewed, possessing integrity, and living with a clear sense of mission to its own culture. Bosch and Shenk, true prophets, prophesy woe and live in hope.

—Dan Beeby

Dan Beeby has been a missionary in China and Taiwan, an Old Testament lecturer in England, and coordinator of the “Gospel and Our Culture” project in U.K. He is now Consultant to the British and Foreign Bible Society.

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Christian Missionary Activity in the Early Middle Ages.


The present volume includes six scholarly essays published in professional periodicals and collective tomes between 1953 and 1979. All focus on the spread of Christianity in medieval European nations between the years 500 and 900.

The author has sought answers to some fundamental questions: Who took the initiative to convert Germanic, Slavic, and other tribes of the European continent? What were the particular circumstances that provided the opportunity for Christian missionaries to win converts? What kind of resources were available? What kind of methods did they use to persuade non-Christians to convert?

Sullivan challenges the triumphal tone of scholars who have emphasized that the victory of Christianity was inevitable. He demonstrates that the advance of Christianity was a much more complex phenomenon than researchers had previously allowed. The sources present a major problem: Do they indicate what actually happened, or do they relate what the
pious expectations of church leaders were? While some sources emphasize that Christianity achieved a metamorphosis of pagan cultures, they provide little information about the manner in which the new religion worked to change pagan societies.

Essays 4 and 5 are of particular interest to active missionaries. One demonstrates the impact of conversion on the policies and actions of a newly converted ruler and on the culture of the society over which he ruled. The other discusses not only the different approaches and methods to mission between Rome and Constantinople but also the problems they created between the two worlds of Christendom. For example, the letters of Pope John VIII to Boris of Bulgaria had one motive: “to kindle among the Bulgars a distrust for the Greeks.” The pope’s argument was fairly standard. He believed that the Greek church would lead the Bulgars into diverse heresies, schisms, and errors. Similarly, Patriarch Photios of Constantinople in a letter to the Eastern patriarchs bemoaned the corruption of the true religion in Bulgaria because of the activities of Roman missionaries.

In brief, this important book should be of interest to missiologists, ecclesiastical and cultural historians, and theologians.

—Demetrios J. Constantelos

Demetrios J. Constantelos is the Charles Cooper Townsend Sr. Distinguished Professor of History and Religious Studies at the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey. His most recent book is Poverty, Society, and Philanthropy in the Late Medieval Greek World.

Inside the Community:
Understanding Muslims Through Their Traditions.


Phil Parshall, himself a missionary among Muslims for thirty-two years, is a well-known writer on Islam among evangelicals. His previous books on Islam include New Paths in Muslim Evangelism, Bridges to Islam, Beyond the Mosque, and The Cross and the Crescent. In his new book, the author aims at understanding Muslims by exploring the Hadith, that is, the record of the words and deeds of the prophet Muhammad. This approach is very important for the author, since he sees in the traditions (or the Hadith) of Islam “one of the key components to the attitudes and actions of Muslims” (p. 11). As a basis for his book, Parshall chooses
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The traditional collection of Abu Abd Allah Muhammad Al-Bukhari, which is considered by Muslims to be one of the most authoritative collections. From this huge collection, the author treats twenty-one specific subjects. Some of these topics deal with the pillars of Islam (including prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, and almsgiving), whereas others treat Islamic doctrines (salvation, judgment day, hell, and paradise). While some of the subjects focus on figures like Muhammad and Jesus, others touch on difficult issues like jihad, violence, women, and legalisms in Islam as seen through the Hadith.

Parshall’s approach is a missiological one, since he believes “that it is permissible to utilize Hadith passages in witness to Muslims. This must be done with sensitivity and never in a mocking manner. Muslims will be extremely surprised, and even impressed, that you have a functional knowledge of their Hadith” (p. 14). Knowing the Hadith and understanding Muslims are, for the author, but a preparatory stage to introducing Muslims to Christ as the Lord and Savior (p. 224). While the bibliography at the end of the book is narrow and selective, the index is quite detailed and helpful.

—Mitri Raheb

Mitri Raheb, a Palestinian theologian with a doctorate in theology from the University of Marburg, Germany, is Pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church and General Director of the International Center of Bethlehem, Palestine.

The Crucified Guru: An Experiment in Cross-Cultural Christology.


Despite the popular use of the term “guru” as a Christological title in the Indian tradition, there has not been any significant Christian theological reflection as to the appropriateness and adequacy of such a title. Most Indian Christian theologians have preferred to make use of the Hindu (Vaishnava) concept of avatara (divine descent) as a starting point for their Christological discourse. Thangaraj, professor of World Christianity at Candler School of Theology, Atlanta, proposes an alternative by imaginatively reconstructing the concept of guru as found in the reflective strands of Saiva Siddhanta. The advantage of a guru Christology, according to Thangaraj, is that it can avoid a reified, docetic, or even mythical conception of incarnation implicit in Hindu conceptions of avatara.

Thangaraj proposes a functionalist Christology that looks at the status of Jesus Christ as a guru and whose significance is predicated upon a guru-sishya (teacher-disciple) relationship. In other words, the profound significance of Jesus Christ as guru lies in his ability to engender a community of disciples and in the imaginative vision of the disciples that sees the guru’s functioning as God to the disciples. Such a vision does not require a reified portrait of Jesus, nor does it require one to reject the multiplicity of gurus and saviors in a religiously pluralistic context.

The traditional Christian claim of the finiteness of Christ can be affirmed, argues Thangaraj, not in terms of differences in degree or in kind with other gurus, but only in terms of its practical consequence for building a more humane and just society.

The strength of Thangaraj’s book lies not only in its ability to utilize effectively the biblical titles of Jesus as “teacher” or “rabbi” and apply it to the particular context of Tamil Saivism in south India but also in its creative use of the concept “crucified guru” or “self-sacrificing guru,” which critiques an authoritarian or hierarchical view of guru found in the Indian traditions. A guru Christology can thus stimulate a healthy cross-cultural dialogue between Christians and Tamil Saivites and also between the Western and Indian theological traditions. From the standpoint of Indian Christian theology, this work represents a step forward in bringing together two somewhat divergent commitments to theologizing—those interested in a liberative praxis and those committed to religious dialogue—into a single framework of reflection.

—J. Paul Rajahekar

J. Paul Rajahekar is Professor of Systematic Theology at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
Caminemos con Jesús: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment.


Roberto Goizueta, already known as one of the most accomplished Latino theologians in the United States, has written what is so far his finest book. It is the work of a mature theologian who does not hesitate to write with his heart as well as with his mind, and who has left behind much of the dichotomy between the two that the dominant culture and society have imposed on us.

Given the limitations of this review, it is not possible to do justice to the book by repeating or even summarizing Goizueta’s cogent arguments. Suffice it to say that, on the basis of an analysis of popular Catholic religion among U.S. Hispanics, and relating it both to the experiences of Latin America and to the experiences in the United States, Goizueta develops an anthropology that is grounded on community, not as something we must build or even seek, but as the very “birthplace of the self.” This anthropology is the basis for rejecting the dichotomy between justice and beauty, and between rational and affective, that has plagued Western philosophy and theology. It is also the ground for rejecting the reduction of praxis to poiesis, and for a very convincing section on the need to affirm the domestic, not only the public, as the proper place for true praxis.

This leads to the conclusion that there can be no authentic pluralism as long as there is injustice, and that therefore the preferential option for the poor is not an option against the others but the only viable option out of love for humanity. Furthermore, since the poor must be met where they are, what Goizueta proposes is an urban and domestic theology of accompaniment—thus rejecting, not only the supposed inferiority of the poor, but also the manner in which the dominant culture has polarized reality between the domestic and the public, and between the urban and the suburban.

—Justo L. González

Justo L. González is Executive Director of the Hispanic Theological Initiative, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues.


Paul Hiebert is professor of mission and anthropology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. His Reflections are encompassed in fourteen chapters; all but one are reprints (often updated and expanded) of previously published articles. Unlike many collections, this one is coherent, the total being greater than the sum of its parts because many of the chapters are mutually reinforcing.

The book has three major sections. “Reflections on Epistemological Foundations” deals with historical shifts in ways of understanding the world as they are reflected in mission, from colonialism to anticolonialism, critical contextualization, and metatheology. “Reflections on Planting Churches” deals with selected aspects of culture and worldview that affect the missionary task. “Reflections on Spiritual Encounters” deals with the spirit world.

Hiebert has brought his anthropological perspective to bear, but the book is not narrowly anthropological; it draws from the “triadology” of theology, anthropology, and missiology (p. 11). The discussion is often abstract (although not particularly difficult), dealing with belief systems and worldviews, with only occasional descriptions of their manifestations in diverse human behavior.

The broad-brush strokes that Hiebert uses do sometimes leave me uneasy. For example, he occasionally refers to “biblical worldview” as though worldview is uniform in all respects throughout the Bible: “Unlike the gods of the Canaanites, who are identified with a particular people . . . Jehovah is the God of the whole world and of all peoples” (pp. 210–11). Surely, at the time of the Canaanites and for long after, Jehovah was the God of the Israelites alone, in their worldview. Although foreshadowings are apparent in the later
prophets, not until Peter and Paul did an understanding of God as the God of all peoples fully emerge, exploding with the fierce conflict of worldviews described in the New Testament.

Nevertheless, this valuable book has insights for all, the product of a keen mind and years of reflection.

—William A. Smalley

William A. Smalley is Professor Emeritus of Linguistics, Bethel College (Minn.). From 1954 to 1977 he was a translation consultant for the United Bible Societies in Southeast Asia.

Mission and Meaning: Essays Presented to Peter Cotterell.


Divided into three parts, namely biblical perspectives, historical and theological perspectives, and philosophical and contextual perspectives, this work is very much a “house-product” of the London Bible College, of which Peter Cotterell was the highly esteemed principal. Two of the contributions are by former students, the other eighteen by members of the college faculty. The angle of vision is thus in every case congenial, and as a study of the issues of contemporary mission and theology, it might have profited from a more astringent range of evaluation. The players, we might say, all have ground advantage.

Nevertheless, their themes are wide ranging, beginning with a discursive evaluation of the universality theme in Isaiah 40–55 and concluding with “The Scandal of the Church in the Mission of God’s People.” Without an index, the book has a list of Cotterell’s main publications and details on contributors and abbreviations. Lessons for current missiology are distilled from a wide range of potential sources—the “theology” of Nebuchadnezzar; the Lystra incident in Acts, when Paul and Barnabas were dubbed Mercury and Jupiter; the concept of Jubilee in Jesus’ exegesis in Nazareth of his reading from Isaiah; and “the marginalized” (as the writer sees them) in the Fourth Gospel. In some cases this reader has the impression that issues, from Isaiah to John’s gospel, are making cases between scholars rather than grappling with how the thrust of mission now rides with the thrust of the Bible in the study.

The historical section includes a study of Thomas Valpy French, bishop of Lahore and a septuagenarian dying at Muscat, and another that discusses the relation of language to meaning via a study of Edward Irving’s Christology. A third handles the implications wrapped up in the phrase “soundly converted.”

The final papers, seven in number, range over topics from Indonesia to Africa, from postmodernism to the socioeconomics of English evangelicalism. There is much erudition in this volume and a wealth of missiological stimulus.

—Kenneth Cragg

Kenneth Cragg, now retired in Oxford, England, was Assistant Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem. His most recent books are Returning to Mount Hira’ and The Lively Credentials of God.

Dissertation Notices

Bedford, William Boyd, Jr.

Birri, Debela.

Chuang, Tsu-Kung.

Davis, Charles A.

Fon, Wilfred.

Ganson, Barbara Anne.

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York, J. Russell.
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Hale, Thomas.  
On Being a Missionary.  

Hardman, Keith J.  
Seasons of Refreshing: Evangelism and Revivals in America.  

Karotemprel, Sebastian, ed.  
Following Christ in Mission: A Foundational Course in Missiology.  

Keenan, John P.  
The Gospel of Mark: A Mahayana Reading.  

McAlpine, Thomas H.  
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McGarry, Cecil, ed.  
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Gospel Ferment in Malawi: Theological Essays.  

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