Translation and the Fullness of Christ

“How about the Lancandons?”

A Mexican official once put that question to linguist Kenneth L. Pike. Pike—whose “My Pilgrimage in Mission” appears in this issue—answered Yes, Wycliffe Bible Translators would translate the Bible even for the Lancandons, an ethnic group of only about 150 individuals living in one of the wildest areas on the North American continent. His rationale for dealing with such a small ethnic group? “Ethnic groups are like people... Each has its own personality [with] different characteristics of God showing through... Every culture has a contribution to make” (With Heart and Mind, p. 113).

Every culture has a contribution to make. Some of the more far-reaching implications of this idea are explored in the opening pages of this issue by contributing editor Andrew F. Walls. He asserts that the “fullness of Christ” will not be attained apart from the penetration of the Gospel and the incorporation into Christ’s body of the various cultures of our globe. The Antiochian witnesses (Acts 11:19-21), he writes, made a “daring metaphysical translation” when, speaking to Gentiles, they attributed to Jesus the same term—Kyrios, “Lord”—that was applied to the gods of the local pantheon. As Gentiles came into the community of faith, the Gospel had to be communicated not merely in the words of other tongues but in the deeper worlds of alien thought and culture. The process is not without its risks and messiness, but in the outworking of it all, says Walls, “It is as though Christ himself grows as he penetrates Gentile thought and society... and becomes as thoroughly at home in the Hellenistic Gentile world as once he was in Jewish Palestine.”

The special relevance for our time is found in the new reality of a global Christian community of which non-Western peoples constitute an ever-increasing majority. From his overview of the first 1,000 years of Christian expansion, Walls draws the conclusion, “There are yet further expansions of the understanding of Christ to be expected from [the Gospel’s] engagement with the cultures of Africa and Asia.”

* * * * *

In July the Overseas Ministries Study Center, publishers of the INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN, welcomed Jonathan J. Bonk as the new Associate Director of OMSC and Associate Editor of the BULLETIN. Raised by missionary parents in Ethiopia, Bonk served from 1972 to 1997 on the faculty of Providence College and Seminary in Otterburne, Manitoba. His publications include Missions and Money: Affluence as a Western Missionary Problem (Orbis Books, 4th printing, 1996). He received an M.A. from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, and a Ph.D. from the University of Aberdeen, Scotland. We look forward to his contribution to the INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN.

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Old Athens and New Jerusalem: Some Signposts for Christian Scholarship in the Early History of Mission Studies

Andrew F. Walls

A

At the end of a long and eventful life, the English Puritan Richard Baxter was engaging in the proper Puritan practice of introspection and self-analysis, highlighting the matters on which his ideas had changed, the things he would now do differently. "I was wont to look but little beyond England in my prayers, as not considering the state of the rest of the world. Or if I prayed for the conversion of the Jews, that was almost all. But now, as I better understand the case of the world and the method of the Lord's Prayer, . . . I cannot be affected so much with the calamities of the land of my nativity as with the case of the heathen, Mahometan and ignorant nations of the earth." The old Calvinist confesses astonishment that divine providence has confined its favor so narrowly, and he reflects on the curse of "the division of languages." Could we but go among the "Tartarians, Turks and heathens" and speak their languages, he goes on, there would be no need to lament the recent legislation that had silenced so many English preachers of the Gospel for their nonconformity with the state regulation of religion.

The passage points up some contrasts between Baxter's day and our own. Had he been able to see the world three hundred years later, his puzzlement at the geographic restriction of the knowledge of salvation might have been modified. His Puritan instincts might have found relief in knowing that the majority of Christians would one day live in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific, while the land of his nativity steadily shed its Christian allegiance. He might also have modified his identification of diversity of language as the plague that inhibited evangelization. Language is but the outer shell of a much more fundamental diversity of thought and practice into which the Christian message must be translated. If Tartarians and Turks were to become Christians, the process would take Christianity itself into new pathways.

Baxter was one of the most catholic-spirited Christian leaders of his day and place, and such foreknowledge might simply have taken his thoughts to the New Testament exemplars of that conversion of the nations that burdened the prayers of his last years.

A Signpost in Old Jerusalem

The earliest model of Christianity, as described in the opening chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, is a Jewish one. The earliest Christians apprehended the significance of Jesus in essentially Jewish terms. Everything about Jesus made sense for them in terms of Jewish history and Jewish destiny. They were all Jews by birth and inheritance and were so attached to the Torah that their leader, Jesus' own brother, became known as James the Just—that is, James the Righteous, in the Jewish sense of heartfelt fulfillment of the law. What reason had they to abandon the Torah? Jesus himself had said he did not aim to destroy it; he would not sanction the loss of a single jot or tittle of it. So attached were they to the temple that it seems to have been their regular meeting place, the temple liturgy the staple of their worship. They had not abandoned animal sacrifice but saw it in a new context—the self-offering of the Servant of God. Above all, they saw Jesus as the Messiah, the Agent of God. In doing so, they transformed the traditional concept of messiahship by stressing his crucifixion and resurrection; but this did not destroy the traditional concept. Rather, it enlarged it by tying it to the symbols of Son of Man and Suffering Servant. Jesus, that is, was above all the national savior of Israel, the one who would redeem the nation and make its significance clear to the nations. Jesus for the early Jerusalem Christians was a Jewish savior, whose work could not be fully understood without reference to the destiny of the nation.

The earliest Jesus community did not immediately go into all the world to preach the Gospel to every creature. The believers had enough to do without going anywhere. Certainly, some non-Jews—the household of Cornelius is the example featured in Acts (10:1–11:18)—learned about Jesus, but Cornelius belonged to the fairly small community of Gentiles in Palestine itself who had been attracted to Jewish religion and morality. There is no trace of any program on the part of the early Jesus community to transform the presentation of Jesus to make it intelligible, not to mention applicable, to those who were not members of the commonwealth of Israel.

It was a hugely significant event, therefore, that took place in Antioch when an anonymous group of Jewish believers, expelled from Jerusalem in an attack on Jesus people there, talked about Jesus to “Greeks,” that is, to pagans (Acts 11:20). The process moved the understanding of Jesus to a different plane, for the group presented him, not as Messiah (how could that idea apply to a Greek-speaking Antiochian Gentile?), but as Kyrios (i.e., Lord), the title used by participants in the East Mediterranean religious potpourri for their cult divinities. This daring piece of cross-cultural translation, this spectacular theft of symbols (to use the modern jargon), was transformative for Christian history. It opened the way to a truly Hellenistic understanding of Jesus.

This new understanding by no means superseded the older knowledge about Jesus, for the messiahship of Jesus continued to be recognized in his title “Jesus Christ.” But it took the understanding of Jesus into new realms of thought. Note that this symbol theft was not translation in the narrow sense of word equivalence. There was no difficulty in translating the word “Messiah” into Greek; that had been done centuries before, and thousands of Greek-speaking Jews looked for the coming of “the Christ.” But what could the Christ (i.e., “Anointed One” or “Smeared One”) mean to an Antiochian pagan until it was identified, and thus explained, in terms of something already present in Antiochian religious consciousness? People can take in a new idea only in terms of ideas they already have.

This is where Baxter's view of the division of languages falls short of the reality. Speaking the languages of the Tartarians and

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Turks does not itself produce the communication of the Christian Gospel. That requires not just a translation of the alien words into Tartarian speech but a deeper act of translation whereby the word about Christ is illuminated by something already in the Tartarian consciousness.

This event in Antioch, promoted, as it seems, not by the apostles and leaders of the Jesus community but by people we know virtually nothing about, opened the way for one of the most creative acts of that community: the establishment of a Gentile Mission. This developed, not in Jerusalem, but in Antioch, and its agents worked across western Asia, Greece, and the Balkans, using the Jewish synagogues, with their fringes of Gentile attenders, as launchpads for the preaching of Jesus. Its outstanding representative was a diaspora Jew, a rabbi from Tarsus, who had had an excellent Greek education and who was sure he had been confronted by the risen Lord himself. In Antioch and beyond there was a steady stream of responsive Gentile believers in Jesus, and their background was entirely different from that of the first believing community, for whom the significance of Jesus remained expressed in messianic terms.

The first Jesus community was a messianic community, conscious of living in what the rabbis called the Age to Come, the era of the fulfillment of Jewish destiny. One feature of that time that was strikingly portrayed in the prophetic writings was a flood of Gentiles who recognized the God of Israel. As Isaiah put it, “Many nations would say ‘Come and let us go up to the hill of the Lord, to the temple of Israel’s God’” (Isa. 2:3). It would be natural for Jerusalem believers to see this sign of the Age to Come being realized through Antioch and the Gentile Mission.

Converts and Proselytes

It was not unprecedented for Gentiles to discover that God was to be found among the people of Israel. There was a long Jewish missionary tradition, witnessed to in the widespread belief that the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Scriptures had itself been inspired for a missionary purpose, the conversion of the Gentiles. It was not unprecedented for Gentiles to discover that God was to be found among the people of Israel. There was a long Jewish missionary tradition, witnessed to in the widespread belief that the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Scriptures had itself been inspired for a missionary purpose, the conversion of the Egyptian king. There was also an established procedure by which Gentiles who acknowledged God could be received and incorporated into Israel; incorporation was essential, since God’s promises were to the nation. These promises implied reciprocal loyalty to God in the covenant, reflected in the act of taking on the yoke of God, the Torah. The mark of the covenant was circumcision, received by male ethnic Jews in the first weeks of life, and by Gentiles adopted into Israel when they were ready for the critical step of becoming a proselyte. Before New Testament times it would seem that a further stage had been instituted in the journey of the proselyte into Israel. He was baptized, which was a symbolic crossing over, a symbolic washing away of the dirt of the heathen world.

What, then, of the new Gentile believers in Jesus in Antioch and beyond? Were they not proselytes, enlightened Gentiles entering Israel and inheriting its sufferings and its glory? Should they not be received as such, be circumcised with the mark of the covenant, and be instructed in the duties of the covenant people by obedience to the Torah? Such a proposal would seem entirely natural to many in the Jerusalem community of believers in Jesus, and it is no surprise to find it was strongly urged.

Paul’s reaction to the proposal, however, is indignation verging on incoherence. He refuses to allow it even as an option that someone brought up as an Antiochian pagan should adopt the lifestyle of a Jewish believer, even though these Jewish believers were the oldest, best, most-experienced followers of.
Jesus, embodying a lifestyle that was sanctified by Jesus himself, still followed by those who had been his close companions in life, and abundantly demonstrated in his brother, who still presided over the Jerusalem believers. The dispute was intense; the Epistle to the Galatians shows the agony and heartbreak it caused. Finally, after deep deliberation, the leaders of the Jerusalem community (swayed, in the Acts account, not by Paul's torrid eloquence but by the measured judgments of the seniors who had known Jesus best, Peter and James the Just) accepted the essentials of Paul's argument. Though circumcised, Torah-keeping Jews themselves, they recognized that Gentile believers in the Messiah could enter Israel without becoming Jews. They were converts, but they were not proselytes. 5

It is hardly possible to exaggerate the importance of this early controversy and its outcome; it is a pivot on which Christian history turns. At least three new departures can be traced to it, each of which offers us a signpost for the present day.

First, the abandonment by the early church of the proselyte model of dealing with Gentile converts, well established as it was, guaranteed the future cultural diversity of Christianity; indeed, it built the principle of cultural diversity into Christianity in perpetuity. Maintaining the proselyte model would have established fixed norms of Christian lifestyle, a common pattern of social custom to be practiced by all Christians, whatever their ethnic or cultural background. Its parameters would have been essentially Jewish; a good deal of what appears in the New Testament letters to early Christian communities would not have been needed. Had Gentile believers become proselytes, there would have been no need to raise the question of whether a Christian should eat the meat that a pagan friend served for dinner that might have come from a pagan temple (see 1 Corinthians 8). No pagan would be likely to invite a proselyte to dinner, nor would a Christian proselyte be likely to accept if invited; everyone knew that Torah-keeping Jews did not eat in pagan houses. The Corinthian epistles, in contrast, show the emergence of a new lifestyle among Hellenistic Gentile Christians, not the less Christian for being entirely different from the style and social life that Peter and James the Just took for granted.

This new lifestyle involved a dynamic that creates the second great departure brought about by the decision to abandon the proselyte model. It is best explored by considering again the distinction between proselyte and convert. To become a proselyte is to give up one set of beliefs and customs and take up those of another people. To become a proselyte involves the sacrifice of national and social affiliations. It involves a form of naturalization, incorporation into another milieu. But once the transition has been made, all the norms of conduct are set out; the way forward is safe. Precedent is built into the proselyte model; the proselyte inherits the accumulated experience of others.

To become a convert, in contrast, is to turn, and turning involves not a change of substance but a change of direction. Conversion, in other words, means to turn what is already there in

| Conversion doesn't substitute something new for something old but redirects toward Christ what is already there. |

a new direction. It is not a matter of substituting something new for something old—that is proselytizing, a method that the early church could have adopted but deliberately chose to jettison. Nor is conversion a matter of adding something new to something old, as a supplement or in synthesis. Rather, Christian conversion involves redirecting what is already there, turning it in the direction of Christ. That is what the earliest Jerusalem believers had already done with their Jewish inheritance. Turning that inheritance toward Messiah Jesus transformed the inheritance but did not destroy its coherence or its continuity. On the contrary, it produced a model of thought and life that was "Christian" because Jesus was at its center; yet it remained essentially and inalienably Jewish. The same process and principles applied to the world of Hellenistic believers would introduce a whole range of awkward questions of etiquette and social custom that would have been avoided by retaining the proselyte model. Conversion opened up Hellenistic social and family life to the influence of Christ. It forced people to think of the implications of daily life in terms of social identity and Christian identity, disturbing, challenging, altering the conventions of that life, but doing so from the inside. It was an essentially risky process, with many areas of doubt and difficulty. Had the proselyte model been followed, it is almost certain that many fewer Gentiles would have become Christians. For those that did, however, there would not have been nearly so much scope for things to go wrong. Risk, tension, and controversy are essential to the process of conversion; it is a process that proselytization avoids entirely by cutting the knot.

The Hellenistic Translation of the Faith

The dynamic of turning toward Christ what was already there led to a development that marks the third great departure instituted by the abandonment of the proselyte model. It led to an expanded process of Christian understanding. The Rubicon was crossed when the unnamed believers of Acts 11 decided that Jesus had something to say to their Greek pagan hosts in Antioch, something that could not be heard using the venerable conceptual language of messiahship—even though for them personally that old conceptual language may have expressed the heart of the Good News. Once they started to speak of Kyrios Jesus, parallel to Kyrios Sarapis, they reached the realms alike of comprehension and of danger. No doubt many of their more cautious and conservative brethren recoiled at the syncretistic possibilities opened up. But that daring act of metaphysical translation, like the question of what Christians did about the meat at a pagan's dinner table, could not be left as a simple matter of word equivalence. The concept needed explanation, qualification, supplementation, and definition as the identity of Jesus was explored in terms of Hellenistic language and thought. In other words, conversion had to enter the whole realm of Hellenistic intellectual discourse, opening that discourse toward Christ. The process would take many generations, but there is a hint of its profound significance for the Christian future given as early as the Epistle to the Ephesians. That letter describes the emergence of a single community, the church, from the separated communities of Jew and Gentile and indicates how, as the Gentiles enter the community, the full stature of Christ becomes attainable. 6 It is as though Christ himself grows as he penetrates Gentile thought and society in the persons of his people and becomes as thoroughly at home in the Hellenistic Gentile world as once he was in Jewish Palestine.

It is possible to identify three stages in the conversion...
process of the Hellenistic world of thought. The missionary stage is represented by Paul, most open and accommodating of missionaries, who saw clearly that the new councils would need to chart a way of life quite different from that of the first generation of Christians in Jerusalem and who was prepared for the essential missionary experience of living on terms set by someone else ("with Gentiles, I live like a Greek," 1 Cor. 9:21). Following along the path of the believers from Cyprus and Cyrene who came to Antioch, he undertook substantial symbol theft from the Gentile world. Thus he can boldly seize the Hellenistic idea of pleroma, the totality of emanations between the transcendent God and the material universe, and identify it with Christ (Col. 1:19). The thought of Christ as the pleroma of emanations lifts the understanding of his cosmic function into a realm far beyond what the old categories of messiahship could ever convey. That is to say, even in the missionary period, the need to use the conceptual vocabulary of the Hellenistic world extended the whole understanding of who Christ is.

But beyond the missionary stage lay another level of translation: the convert stage. Justin Martyr is a good representative.

An intellectual whose pilgrimage began in the intellectual and religious quests of the Hellenistic world as he sought the vision of God that Plato declared to be the true end of philosophy, Justin describes his increasing disillusionment and frustration at the inability of the traditional philosophical sources to bring him to that end, until he eventually found a new source in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. By introducing this scriptural source into philosophical discourse, Justin was able to spend the rest of his life as a teacher of philosophy, until he sealed in martyrdom his conviction that Christianity was the true philosophy.

Justin’s struggle is that of identity: how to maintain his Christian identity within the Hellenistic intellectual identity, which he could not abandon because it had shaped his life and his mind. Kwame Bediako has shown how central is the question of identity for a whole range of converted Hellenistic thinkers; he has also shown how African Christian thinkers of the twentieth century have followed a parallel path. Justin’s struggle is outside Paul’s experience, for though Paul has known the Hellenistic thought world from his youth, he lives in it essentially as an outsider. He can steal its symbols with aplomb, but all the time he knows that his real homeland is Israel, that he was circumcised the eighth day, that he is of the tribe of Benjamin, that he has sat at the feet of Gamaliel (Rom. 11:1; Acts 22:3). Justin, however, has no other homeland that he can go to; he has to bring Christ into the only one he knows.

So the Scriptures become for Justin a principle of critique, a source to correct his other sources. By their aid he affirms some parts of his heritage, modifies others, and rejects others with revulsion. But if the Hellenistic symbols go on a voyage of discovery in his company, so do the biblical. Justin seizes joyfully on the Logos concept, but to take Johannine language into Justin’s thought world is to give it a set of valencies almost certainly beyond the intention of the Fourth Evangelist. That is not to say, however, that these valencies are incompatible with the witness of the Evangelist or with the earlier Christian tradition. When Justin apprehends Logos not only as Word but as Reason, he can point triumphantly to the work of God in the Greek world before the incarnation. He can affirm with Paul that the God of Israel is God of the Gentiles also, but he appropriates the consequences in a way Paul never needed to. Whatever is in the true sense in accord with logos/reason must ultimately come from the Logos, who brought the world into being and sustains it. At one stroke he has demonstrated the pre-incarnate activity of Christ in the world that he belongs to (while fully acknowledging the perversions and horrors of that world) and opened up another dimension of the understanding of the work of the Divine Son in relation to the origin and purpose of the world.

The third stage of translation—what we could call the refuguration stage—could be initiated only by a generation beyond that of the converts, a generation that had grown up in the Christian faith and yet was reconciled to its pre-Christian inheritance and was not afraid of either. Origen, the most encyclopedic thinker of early Christianity, well represents this generation, even though his early date means that much of his activity is tentative, experimental, and provisional. No one better illustrates the challenges—and the risks—involved in the attempt to open up a whole shared universe of thought to the influence of Christ. Origen’s work is carried out within the Greek intellectual universe, and he moves with absolute confidence along its highways and bypaths, and yet he is utterly at home in the Christian Scriptures, utterly assured of their applicability within his universe. Origen embodies the attempt to refigure the entire Greek intellectual and scientific inheritance in Christian terms. A magnificent statement of his purpose is embedded in a characteristic piece of biblical exegesis. Think, he says, of the gold in the tabernacle. How was it possible in the wilderness to make the gold cherubim that symbolized the divine presence? Or whence came the gold pot that held the manna, or the vessels in the Holy of Holies? All this precious metal could have come only from the spoiling of the Egyptians. And the tabernacle curtains must have been made from Egyptian cloth. The work of Christians, he concludes, is to take the materials of the heathen world and fashion from them objects for the worship and glorification of God.

As fresh cultural entities are incorporated into the community of faith, the full stature of Christ’s body is revealed.
The barbarians were at the gates.

What actually happened is an extremely complicated story. For sense of doom, of impending disaster. Many feared the collapse of all that the conversion of the Roman Empire seemed to offer. The barbarians were at the gates.

The Signposts Point North

What actually happened is an extremely complicated story. For the wider history of Christianity the most striking effect was a transformation of the faith from one at home in the urban, literate, and technological culture of the Mediterranean basin to one that could take root among peasant herders and cultivators, military elites and semisettled raiders in western, northern, and eastern Europe. In the twists and turns that occurred, there are signs of a process at work parallel to that we have observed in the Hellenistic world. Like that process, it had its missionary stages and convert stages, and also stages when a generation of people nurtured equally in Christian faith and local culture sought to reconceive their total heritage by turning the existing shared ways of thinking toward Christ.

The story is less well known than its Hellenistic analogue. For one thing, it is harder to chart; there are so many stops and starts, and such a network of peoples and allegiances. There is also still a tendency to think of the period between the collapse of the Western Roman Empire and the High Middle Ages as a dark age. In fact, it was a period of rich Christian creativity and of cultural transformation. Another unhelpful perspective is to see it in terms of the survival of late Latin culture. From a Christian point of view it is a period of immense significance in which the traditional cultures of various peoples of the North and West were comprehensively rethought to give them literary expression, intellectual vigor, and a degree of Christian integrity.

Two areas of intellectual activity in particular developed in this period as a by-product of the interaction of the Christian faith with the cultures of those the Romans had always designated “barbarian.”

The first was law. We must remember how frequently Christianity was adopted among the northern peoples in terms of customary law. It was essentially a communal affair, for it affected social custom, festivals, and sacrifices. The decision whether to adopt the new faith was thus frequently a consensual one, determined by the judgment that its adoption would be for the benefit of the community as a whole. Tribal societies are bound by custom and held in place by spiritual sanctions; since the spiritual and natural worlds interpenetrate, the sacred and secular realms cannot be separated. To change the customs of such a society thus goes to its very heart; to adopt new festivals relates to its vital rhythms. Prohibiting a long-standing practice is a critical decision involving spiritual powers, feasible only in the shelter of a Power still greater.

The acceptance of Christianity by the peoples of the North thus involved the adoption of the faith into the frameworks of customary law of a multitude of peoples, a fact that was to shape European Christianity up to the Enlightenment and beyond. The process was reinforced by the adoption, under Christian influence, of Roman law and the habits of mind it induced. The transposition of Christianity into a Hellenistic setting had required the translation of central Christian convictions into Greek, which in turn raised Greek questions about Christ that required Greek answers. The subsequent transposition of the faith into a European setting raised questions about Christian affirmations that arose out of the central importance in those societies of law and custom. Western European Christians, for instance, demonstrated more explicit interest in the doctrine of the atonement than early Christian writers had thought necessary. Anselm’s classic exposition of the basis of atonement makes sense in the categories of traditional Germanic law, with its principle of necessary compensation and its assumption of kinship solidarity; it makes sense also in terms of Roman law. It would probably not have occurred to a Greek thinker at all; it is an answer made from Western materials to a question raised by Western conditions. It nonetheless helped to open up a new area of understanding of the significance of Christ’s work.

The legal framework that the conditions of western Europe applied to theology made possible a new activity that had not occurred to early Christian writers, nor apparently ever to Eastern Christians. This was the exercise of systematic theology: the codification of Christian affirmations in the way that laws can be codified, and the development of doctrine along the lines that legal theory worked. It was an exercise that essentially issued in such movements as Aquinas’s Summa and Calvin’s Institutes.

History Writing and Early Mission Studies

The other branch of intellectual activity that developed anew under the impact of Christianity upon the northern cultures was historical writing. The entry of peoples into the faith gave them a stimulus to set out their histories. Histories of the Franks, the Goths, and the Lombards are literary milestones of their kind; greatest of them all, perhaps, is Bede’s history of the English. These works give a significance to the local that the great tradition of imperial Roman history never knew, yet this local consciousness is infused, as Bede so clearly demonstrates, with a much wider sense of Christian belonging. Bede’s great work is a history of the English church and the emergence of the English people; he sees it as a single story that is part of the wider Christian story. The native historians of early Christian Europe set their local histories within the history of the universal church, in which, for instance, the deeds of the Franks are related to the history of Rome. But since Roman history itself has its true significance in the conversion of the empire, Roman history itself is set in the framework of biblical history. The events that give the Franks, the Lombards, and the English their identity have to be seen in relation to the wider and longer story of salvation. This outlook gives a basis for comparative history and comparative chronology, and the processes of this period make possible a Christian philosophy of history as the events of the recent past are studied within the history of redemption.

In this respect, Bede was responsible for another scholarly landmark, namely, his development of the system, well nigh universally adopted by the ninth century, of “A.D.” dating, a complete system of chronology based on the incarnation as the pivotal fact in the human story. It was a historiographical as well as a theological statement. It greatly facilitated the development of reasonably accurate comparative dating of events in different areas. The separate local identities with their local histories could be related to one another because each was seen as taking place within the total history of redemption. The Christian Roman Empire, with all its resources, political and literary, seems never to have attempted this. It is the fruit of the attempt to think the history of one’s own people into the history of God’s saving activity.

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the meeting of the northern peoples with the Christian faith, we may take the work of Isidore, bishop of Seville from approximately 600 to 636, written from the heart of the Visigothic kingdom of southern Spain. In some ways it is an unrepresentative choice, since that kingdom was itself overturned by the Muslims, and the attempt at a Christian presentation of a comprehensive view of knowledge gave place to an Islamic one. But the influence of Isidore lasted much longer than the kingdom in which he lived, and his thinking and his systems of knowledge were to guide generations of people whose homes were far from Spain. Isidore was a systematizer, a codifier, a preserver and verifier of tradition. His Etymologies, read all over Europe, provided a sort of Christian encyclopedia, uniting information on grammar, agriculture, mining, medicine, even accounting, with theological commentary. They even furnish a guide to pre-Christian literature; as Isidore puts it, there may be dangers in studying the literature of paganism, but there are greater dangers in ignorance. Isidore’s encyclopedia is set in a framework of Christian theology and church law; it is a guide to proper method and practice in every sphere of life.

Isidore’s particularly significant contributions come in the realm of history and political theory, and in each case we can observe the attempt to root these in a universal Christian worldview that took account of the realities of Gothic political life.

Isidore wrote a history of his own Gothic people. He also wrote a work of much wider scope and influence, generally known as the Sixth Age of the World, an attempt at a Christian philosophy of history that precedes and anticipates Bede. In Isidore’s chronology the sixth age of world history began with the accession of Augustus because that reign saw Christ’s incarnation. The work offers a comparative history and chronology of events sacred and profane. The special significance of the sixth age is that during it Christ’s rule was established in the various kingdoms of the world, in the Roman Empire and beyond. These kingdoms become thereby membra Christi (limbs of Christ), equal before God and under his judgment. The criterion of judgment of the nations is their degree of conformity to the law of Christ. This view leads to a new theory that stands on its head the old idea of the divine emperor, to which Eusebius had tried, with unhappy results, to give a Christian shape. For Isidore, the king is no divine figure but shares utterly in the human condition. He leads his kingdom, not by domination, but by example—by displaying justice, service to his people, mercy even to those who plot against him, readiness to reverse the evil ways of predecessors, and careful observance of church discipline. The kings of Visigothic Spain fitted this ideal no more closely, perhaps, than the rest of their kind, but can one imagine Constantine or Theodosius or Justinian prostrating himself before a church council to implore the prayers of the fathers that he might properly perform his duties? That is what King Sisenand did at the Council of Toledo in 633. It was not Hellenistic or Roman Christianity, but what Greeks and Romans would have called barbarian Christianity, that laid the foundations of a Christian political theory by opening up its central institutions—custom and rulership—to Christ.

The Signpost at Reichenau

Isidore’s works appear again and again in the great monastic libraries of middle Europe—at Reichenau, Saint Gall, and Würzburg. Some instructive studies have been done in recent years on those libraries and their catalogs. The Reichenau catalog alone could be used to demonstrate the development of mission studies in the critical centuries between late Roman and developed medieval Christianity. It shows, for instance, the close connection of the learning process with the missionary processes of the evangelistic and pastoral role of the community. Equally close is the connection with the institution’s school (whose teaching function was by no means confined to clerics or intending clerics). The Reichenau library was obviously used as a source of reference, research, and record. (Isidore and Bede were well represented in the library.) Its scriptorium was effectively a publishing house that made books available; Reginbert, librarian of Reichenau, was personally responsible for copying at least forty-two works during his tenure.

The catalogs of Reichenau and the other great houses also reveal the careful systematizing of knowledge, the care given to accessibility. It now appears that the catalogs are works of reference in which the order of entries gives the discerning and knowledgeable reader an indication of the resources of the library for each branch of learning. They reveal also the relation of sacred topics to those one might assume to be secular. We learn, for instance, that Virgil is preserved because Christian poetry must emulate the greatest masters and employ the purest language.

The libraries reveal an international Christian consciousness, where Christian scholars feel and acknowledge the influence of colleagues and mentors from other parts of the Christian world. They reveal also the different uses of Latin and vernacular literature, for there are representatives of both, and even interlinear translations of some.

And, very strikingly, the libraries reveal the existence of scholarly networks. They loaned books to, and borrowed books from, one another; they compiled lists of books they wanted, made copies of works they needed, and welcomed visiting readers and researchers.

Europe in the eighth and ninth centuries was a turbulent place, but the libraries of its Christian institutions reveal a busy intellectual life and a remarkably catholic approach to the organization of knowledge. We do great injustice to the achievement of these Christian scholars and intellectuals if we see their work as rescue archaeology, gathering such fragments of late Roman culture as they could garner for preservation in dark times. In fact, it was a new chapter in Christian scholarship and understanding, and like its Greek predecessor, it arose out of the interaction of the Christian faith with a new cultural complex, in this case the networks of customary thought among the northern peoples.

There were other chapters to come; Christian history in the West and beyond has been especially affected by the chapter that resulted from the Christian interaction with the European Enlightenment. But there is an equally crucial chapter now in the process of writing.
The Signposts Pointing South

To return to the point with which this article began: the substantive difference between the Christian world of Richard Baxter around 1691 and that of our own day is that the majority of Christians are now Africans, Asians, Latin Americans, and Pacific Islanders—and the proportion is rising daily. Christianity is now primarily a non-Western religion and on all present indications will steadily become more so. If the considerations urged here have any validity, the critical processes to observe in contemporary Christianity are those that reflect the turning of the mental and moral processes of Africa, Asia, and Latin America toward Christ.

The Christian consciousness of Africa and Asia is likely to reflect the pre-Christian cultural processes, including the pre-Christian religious processes, of these continents. On all past showing, these processes are not replaced—that would be the way of the proselyte. They are redirected, for that is the way of the convert. Christian theology—active, working Christian theology—is constructed under the Spirit's guidance from pre-Christian materials. The vessels and hangings of the tabernacle, and Egyptian cloth. The most urgent reason for the study of the religious traditions of Africa and Asia, of the Amerindian and the Pacific peoples, is their significance for Christian theology; they are the substratum of the Christian faith and life of the greater number of the Christians of the world.

The signposts of the past reoriented the Athenian high road toward Jerusalem. They pointed it through Reichenau and beyond. They began in the Old Jerusalem and will end only in the New.

Each stage of the journey has seen expanded understanding of the significance of Christ as he was translated successively into the languages and cultures of the peoples where he was received by faith. The study of the signposts irresistibly suggests that there are yet further expansions of the understanding of Christ to be expected from his present engagement with the cultures of Africa and Asia. They assuredly indicate also that the faith of the twenty-first century will require a devout, vigorous Christian scholarship rooted in the soil of Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

If this be so, what should be our hopes, what our fears? The huge disabilities under which the crucial undertaking is to be pursued make the fears real enough. But the hopes are still greater. They lie in what Richard Baxter called "the method of the Lord's Prayer" (Hallowed be thy name ... thy Kingdom come . . . thy will be done on earth) and in the knowledge that the coming of the New Jerusalem means also the revealing of the full stature of Christ. In the meantime, there is the evidence of the library of Reichenau and the witness it bears to an international network of busy, practical, Christian scholars preserving and extending both learning and the faith, sharing their resources, borrowing, lending, composing, and copying their books for the sake of the kingdom, in the midst of war and tumult, plague and famine.

Notes

2. This seems the likely force of the definite article in "the prayers" in Acts 2:42. In Acts 2:46 we learn that the believers met daily as a group in the temple, and in 3:1 we find Peter and John going to the temple at the prayer hour.
3. Thus the elders of the church ask Paul to demonstrate publicly his respect for the traditional sacrificial rituals by paying for the purification of four of their number (Acts 2:21–26). The ritual in question involved animal sacrifice (Num. 6:13–21).
5. The key passage is Acts 15. Paul's white-hot indignation at the proposal to treat Gentile converts as proselytes comes through the broken sentences of Galatians (e.g., 1:19; 5:1–12).
7. Justin describes his conversion to Christ, which takes place in the context of philosophical debate, in the early sections of his Dialogue with Trypho.
9. Apology 1.46.
10. Origen's letter to Gregory Thaumaturgus (= Philokalia xiii), 2.
13. On Isidore's influence, see ibid., pp. 233–49.
14. See McKitterick, The Carolingians, esp. chap. 5, on the organization of written knowledge and the place of the libraries.
Mission, Renewal, and the Future of the Church

Wilbert R. Shenk

The heart of the problem facing the church today is: how can we Christianize such a vast number of nominal Christians? How can we evangelize a world which has become, to a large degree, post-Christian?

—Cardinal Suenens, “The Spirit of Renewal”

Today church renewal is an urgent priority for churches the world over. Among Protestant Christians the theme of reformation, revival, or renewal is common coin. Indeed, “reformation” is integral to Protestant identity historically and theologically. In the twentieth century all ecclesiastical traditions in the West have been concerned with renewal.

Furthermore, most churches in Asia, Africa, and Latin America founded as a result of the modern mission movement are now several generations old. The vitality and commitment of the third and fourth generations, and these churches are now confronting the problem of nominality.

This should not surprise us, since the model and practice of church taken to Asia, Africa, and Latin America was that of Christendom, and nominality has cropped up wherever Western missions have gone. Describing the situation in East Africa at the turn of the twentieth century, Roland Oliver noted that “if missionaries found that belief in Christian doctrines came easily to Africans, they soon discovered also how difficult and foreign was the practice of Christian morality.” It made little actual difference whether the message bearer was Roman Catholic or Protestant. German Pietists and British Evangelicals, who emphasized personal conversion, were no more successful than Catholics and Scottish Presbyterians, working with a pedagogical model of mission, in preventing African converts from lapsing into culture Christianity within the first generation after the coming of the missions.

What is not well established is the inherent linkage between mission and renewal. Historians are familiar with the way the Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century was a seedbed for the modern mission movement, but these are widely regarded as independent variables. The one has to do with revivifying the spiritual life of the individual, and the other is concerned with motivating individuals to offer themselves for cross-cultural ministry.

For the churches in the heartland of historical Christendom, the challenge of renewal is enormous. A fundamental question that must be answered at the outset is how we are to conceptualize renewal. The typical reaction when the subject of the renewal of the church is broached is that the urgent need is to stanch the widely reported decline in membership, boost sagging contributions, or make worship more engaging. I submit that these are all secondarily considerations—possibly symptoms but hardly the root cause. Genuine renewal is concerned with something more fundamental: Renewal becomes a priority concern when the church has ceased to engage its culture missionally so that its presence in society no longer invites people into a reconciled relationship with God or witnesses against injustice and unrighteousness.

To begin to envision a church renewed and prepared to face the future is to do so in relation to a particular cultural context and the missional challenge that context poses. The church does not exist in the abstract or in general. It is always situated in particular cultures. Neither was the church instituted to pursue its own interests. Renewal that is not linked to the raison d'être of the church lacks footage and will wither. In North America this means we must take stock of the relationship of the church to modern culture and how the church can engage this culture missionally.

The argument I advance here is that renewal will not come by way of incremental revisions of structures and liturgies inherited from the past. Renewal will not be realized by modulating dissonances between culture and church. And neither can it be achieved by urging the restoration of the original New Testament pattern or by appealing for the reinvigoration of tradition, regardless of how noble a particular variety may have been. New structures, appreciation of culture, the original New Testament pattern of the church, and respect for ecclesiastical traditions are all important. But none of these options offers an adequate basis for revitalizing the church that now subsists in the lengthened shadow of Christendom. Each falls short of what is required. Authentic renewal will combine a return to the theological roots of the church in Scripture with missionary engagement of its culture.

Modernity

The rise and flowering of modern culture coincided with the decline and disintegration of historical Christendom. The course of the relationship of the church and modern culture is of great importance if we are to understand where we are today. Furthermore, modernity itself increasingly shows signs of aging and of being superseded by a new stage in culture. In other words, we face a double crisis—ecclesial and cultural.

Modernity began as a European phenomenon but has become global. No part of the world today remains untouched by the forces of modernization. A key characteristic of modernity has been its relentless demand for innovation. Modernity marks the breakup of traditional society and its displacement by the new. Due to the extensiveness and intensiveness of modernity, traditional societies have been unable to insulate themselves against the forces of modernization. Neither at the societal level nor at the personal level has a shield of protection been found.

The Enlightenment shaped the modern worldview with its strong emphasis on human rationality, a historical watershed that redefined the way all other aspects of modern culture, including religion, would henceforth be understood. “The Enlightenment is the high point at which the integrated religious world view is confronted with an integrated secular world view, the presuppositions of which are mutually exclusive,” argues Wolfgang Schultze. The Enlightenment was imbued with a strong sense of missionary purpose, and the French philosophers believed the fruits and benefits of this movement would redound to the improved well-being of all humankind. Although some

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modernities, which, in turn, are linked to a particular place and people. All time was “local” inasmuch as it was “our” time. “When” was tied to “where.” The introduction of the mechanical clock changed all this. It was now possible to separate time and space at will. The mechanical clock could be used by anyone, anywhere. The clock was augmented by the introduction of the calendar and standardized time zones worldwide. Time and space were thereby emptied of their traditional meaning and separated from one another. Human activities could now be conducted without reference to place. Abstract and distant forces were now able to act upon the local without any apparent relationship. Time and space were treated instrumentally.

2. Disembedding of social systems. Similarly, modernity has severed the traditional connection between social relations and the local contexts in which they were formed and embedded, restructuring social relations without reference to particular time and space. This signifies more than simply “differentiation” and “functional specialization.” The relationship between time and space has been fundamentally disrupted by the use of key mechanisms. Money and expert systems are two such key mechanisms that have been used to disembed social systems. The modern monetary system enables international trading between multiple parties who will never meet. Transactions are conducted entirely without regard to the social dimension. Similarly, modern life is highly dependent on a host of expert systems delivering everything from high-speed air travel to mass communications to pharmaceuticals, any one of which is understood by only a small number of experts. Systems of professional ethical codes and consumer protection regulations intervene to guarantee a measure of safety to users of these goods and services, but it is assumed these systems of expertise require anonymity rather than face-to-face relationships typical of traditional societies.

3. Reflexive ordering and reordering. At no point is the shift from traditional to modern society more apparent than in the changed locus of authority for making decisions. Traditional cultures value the past, and decisions are made in light of how the present can be made to conform to historical precedent. Modernity reverses the perspective. Decisions are made with an eye to the future. New information and projections into the future become authoritative. Modernity demands continual reflection and evaluation with an eye to bringing actions into line with the future. This is inherently destabilizing. Facts are continuously scrutinized and treated with skepticism until “proven.” Nothing remains settled; new possibilities are always being canvassed.

These powerful forces have shaped the modern consciousness that has displaced traditional ways of understanding and interpreting reality. People look to the future rather than to tradition for authority. Doubt and skepticism have been institutionalized. Knowledge grows through a process of continual revision, insistently discarding what seems not to have worked, incorporating new data. The dynamics of modernity are centrifugal, moving ever outward. Culture is in continual flux.

Apart from the far-reaching and fundamental changes modernity has introduced into the modern economy and production processes, it has also resulted in extensive changes in human relations and institutions, including religion. What effect has modernity had on the church? How has the church responded?

The Crisis of the Church in Modern Culture

In the 1960s Karl Rahner, a European Roman Catholic theologian, began speaking of the church of the future. He developed his vision of the church of the future in terms of (1) present Roman Catholic reality, especially its hierarchical structure and elaborate institutionalization devised to ensure control; (2) the dominant trends in modern culture, especially the growing suspicion of authority and institutions; and (3) the expectation that increasingly moribund traditional ecclesiastical institutions and patterns would be replaced by the emergence of new forms of church appropriate to the emerging context, namely, “little flocks” of lay people in local communities and the consequent irrelevance of traditional hierarchical superstructures to actual ecclesial life. Rahner’s discussion points up two key issues with which we must be concerned: (1) the changed social location of the church in modern culture, and (2) ecclesial institutionalization and the need for reform.

As is well known, until about 1970 sociologists had a ready explanation of secularization and religion. The process of secularization was irreversible and immutable. Religion had no future; the future belonged to secularization. In the years since, a new generation of studies has attempted to explain the surprising persistence of religion in spite of secularization. The earlier straight line linking the inevitable triumph of secularization to the demise of religion got lost in the thicket of empirical evidence. The effects of secularization were clearly visible in modern culture, but religion continued to survive, and even thrive, in surprising ways. Nonetheless, the institutional church has steadily lost status over the past several hundred years. The church no longer plays an authoritative and prominent role in public life, and millions of people in the West, particularly in Europe, have formally disaffiliated themselves from the church. Furthermore, the way the church functions in the lives of those who remain members has also been changing.

Robert Wuthnow has done much to elucidate the changing role of religion in the United States. Wuthnow summarizes his main findings in The Restructuring of American Religion, noting:

Many religious beliefs and practices remain much in evidence, contrary to simpler predictions that have envisioned a sheer decline in religious vitality. These beliefs and practices may have retained their vitality in fact by accommodating to the contempo-
The wider social forces noted above have deeply affected religion, with the result it has adapted to prevailing cultural trends, and the interest in symbolic representation has led to greater subjectivity and individualism in religious experience. Consequently, "religious expression has become increasingly appropriate and viable. Secularism may have lost much of its appeal, but the secularization process has fundamentally changed people describe themselves as religious but are not active in a church or synagogue. Furthermore, it is taken for granted that in the public realm, in view of the growing cultural and religious pluralism of modern national societies, only a secular ethos is appropriate and viable. Secularism may have lost much of its appeal, but the secularization process has fundamentally changed society by claiming the dominant place for the secular and relegating religion to the backwater.

The Church in modern culture has been on the defensive for several centuries, grieving its loss of social position and power. Whether it was ever in the best interest of the church to have had this role is not under debate here. We only note that this changed social location in the modern period has taken its toll in terms of loss of morale and identity. If we are to think constructively about renewal of the church, we need to recognize the gravity of this historical development.

Ecclesial Institutionalization and Reform

The issue of social institutions, understood as major structures and organizations, was moved to front and center of public life in the turbulent 1960s. It is still there. Modern society is an endless complex of institutions. A widespread perception is that institutions are not serving us well because of inefficiency and bureaucratic red tape. One aspect of our situation that is not well understood is the way in which institutions come into conflict with one another, contradicting and working at cross purposes, rather than relating in mutually reinforcing ways. Although government institutions bear the brunt of this public censure, the church shares in this blame.

Discussion of renewal of the church must include the issue of institutionalization and reform. We have at hand abundant materials for such a study. The most recent and extensive is the seven-volume Presbyterian Presence series, edited by Coalter, Mulder, and Weeks (1990–92), which probes a wide range of issues and dimensions of Presbyterian history and practice. While not designed to be a study of institutionalization per se, it can legitimately be read from this standpoint. On the one hand, structures, programs, practices, and values that once served to give Presbyterians identity and furnished channels for church life are regarded as archaic and dysfunctional. On the other hand, the Presbyterian churches have sustained steady losses in membership and other forms of support since the mid-1960s. In spite of repeated attempts to respond to these trends, reorganization and restructuring have been to no avail. Apparently, the problem is not simply structures. Institutions are more than structures. Two recent studies by Robert Bellah and his colleagues throw light on other important dimensions.

Modern culture raises two issues relative to institutions. First, a central value in modern culture is the autonomy of the individual. Increasingly, this value has been equated with individual rights. Constraints on the individual are to be challenged and thrown off. Institutions, by definition, curtail or infringe on individual rights. Second, modern people have misunderstood what an institution is and does. At every level, from membership in a family to being citizens of a nation, all members of modern society depend on a wide range of institutions. As Bellah puts it, "We live through institutions." To some extent, the widespread hostility to institutions is misdirected and self-defeating.

In Habits of the Heart, Robert Bellah and his colleagues hold up a mirror to American society and show how individualism has become a dominant value. The "community of memory," so vital to corporate well-being, cannot be preserved by individuals. If left unchecked, individualism will continue to undermine the very meaning of society. Concerned to counter this cultural trend, Bellah and his colleagues, in The Good Society, address the theme of institutions. We must learn to think constructively about institutions. We cannot live without institutions; they are indispensable to us in a multitude of ways.

Sociologically, "an institution is a pattern of expected action of individuals or groups enforced by social sanctions, both positive and negative," the function of institutions is to "mediate the relations between self and world." In the popular imagination, the concept of institutions connotes large-scale organizations set up to deliver particular services or products. Such institutions may be private or public, government or business corporations. This is one meaning of institution. But sociologists apply "institution" to the entire range of human activity, from basic social conventions regulating how the individual behaves in family and community to large-scale and complex organizations.

The Presbyterian study offers a variety of examples of the process of institutionalization in the church, institutional crisis and change, and the need for adaptation in a time of cultural flux. But it also points up the need for more than new structures. Structures that do not express deeply held values and missionary purpose can be detrimental and distracting. Two examples will be mentioned here.

The first has to do with Sabbath observance. Benton Johnson has argued that the changing attitude toward Sabbath observance among Presbyterians is a "paradigm of decline." He starts with the historic Presbyterian commitment to careful Sunday observance (i.e., a well-institutionalized practice), outlines organized efforts, such as the Lord's Day Alliance, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to reinforce Presbyterian conviction, and ends with its formal abandonment after 1945. The struggle was largely over by the 1930s because of the steady erosion of commitment to this agenda. Making Sunday an issue seemed to trivialize it; Sunday observance, however, is integral to spiritual practice. A religious tradition always rests...
on three pillars: basic teachings, morality, and spiritual practice. The last “waters the roots of the soul and thereby enlivens the spirit.”  
All three pillars must be attended to if a tradition is to be kept vital. The secularization of Sunday was part of a more general weakening of commitment, says Johnson, that has contributed to declining membership.

The second example concerns the changing patterns of financial support within the Presbyterian denominations. Cultural trends since the 1950s have fostered alienation of the individual from institutions that are perceived as remote and unresponsive. The steady weakening of support for denominations is a part of this wider trend. Since the 1950s the Presbyterian General Assembly and program agencies have pursued multiple agendas. The meaning of mission became diffuse and unfocused for people in the pews. The long-term consequence has been a shift in financial support from denominational programs to the local congregation. Church members threw their support behind causes in which they took ownership. By the mid-1980s Presbyterians were spending more than 86 percent of all income at the local level, while the portion allocated for denominational mission declined from 10 percent to less than 2.8 percent.

The institutionalization of an activity is of critical importance. If a form is appropriate, it will undergird group goals. But if an institutional form is archaic or dysfunctional, it will thwart participation. For example, organizations or groups that insist on hierarchical structures in late modern culture are communicating a clear message: they put a premium on protecting and preserving authority and maintaining control. In a culture where these values are suspect, such a group is likely to attract and hold only the minority who share these values. Accordingly, Karl Rahner assumed the church of the future would be institutionalized largely by lay people who would take a great deal of responsibility for the life of the church at the primary level. The issue here is not that the church ought to reflect cultural values in order to gain acceptance. Rather, institutional forms are needed that undergird the life and witness of the church.

### Strategies of Renewal

Over the past generation a wide range of studies of the condition of the church in modern culture have been produced. Parallel to these studies many strategies for church renewal have also been offered. These renewal strategies fall into essentially four groups, with different fociuses: (1) reaffirm tradition, (2) restructure, (3) “mainstream” the church, and (4) restore the primitive model. I will characterize each option in terms of the assumed primary source of renewal and the goal and then evaluate briefly. Finally, I will propose a fifth, alternative strategy of missionary engagement.

#### Reaffirm Tradition

- **source of renewal:** ecclesiastical identity
- **goal of renewal:** preservation of the church

The strength of this option is its clarity and logic. It calls for the church to be renewed by recapturing the genius and integrity of its tradition. It appeals to the past for authority in adjudicating change. While the church is *semper reformanda*, reformation means recovery within the tradition.

Renewal is indeed necessary to preserve the church, but it is primarily a matter of spirituality. The thrust of this option is inward and ecclesiocentric, defending and promoting tradition. Historically, fresh thrusts in mission have occurred at those points where traditional patterns have been breached in order that new possibilities might be attempted. Indeed, tradition has been a great inhibitor of missionary obedience.

#### Restructure

- **source of renewal:** efficient and effective ecclesiastical organization
- **goal of renewal:** streamlined church

This option is sensitive to the fact that structures do become sterile. In a culture that values efficiency, ineffective structures discredit the church. To be a credible and effective witness in society, the church needs to maintain up-to-date structures.

The Presbyterian experience indicates that restructuring per se, however, is not sufficient to bring about renewal. The past fifty years of restructuring can, in fact, be correlated with decline. Restructuring does little to stimulate vision and commitment in the church. Most people recognize that the church is not simply an organization competing for a share of the market.

#### “Mainstream” the Church

- **source of renewal:** culture
- **goal of renewal:** church actively participating in culture

In its heyday, a key commitment of liberalism was to cooperate fully with the culture, undergirding and supporting social uplift and advance. In this view the church was most effective when it adapted itself to the cultural mainstream. Renewal of the church meant finding the place of the church in culture. Today “mainstreaming the church” is taking other forms. In a culture where religion is one among many commodities, the church is being packaged and marketed in socially acceptable terms.

Dean R. Hoge has revisited the Kelley thesis (1972) and confirmed that “denominations most embedded in the surrounding culture are most subject to favorable or unfavorable shifts in that culture.” In other words, the “culturally embedded” church is reactive and lacks the motivation to be a distinctive presence in society.

#### Restore the Primitive Church

- **source of renewal:** the primitive/apostolic model
- **goal of renewal:** replication of the original

The restorationist option has played an enduring role in Chris-
A church's vitality can be measured by its missional engagement with the world.

be manifested in intensified witness in the world to the reign of God. This must be the clue that guides the (re)institutionalization of the church at each particular moment in history.

We make this assertion at the outset in order to counteract the prevailing ecclesiocentric understanding that Roger Haight has described as the “established” church.²³ By “established” Haight means “a theological category which characterizes a church whose mission has ceased; an established church is at peace within society and content with and in its own forms and inner life.” Haight argues that “mission” is the constitutive symbol for the church. The “mission” symbol is not to be equated with concepts such as model or image. “The symbol ‘mission’ is not a type, not a paradigm, not simply a disclosive image. It is not a theology or a description of a theology but the basis for a theology.”²⁴ Models, images, and paradigms must be validated in light of their responsiveness to this constitutive symbol.

Because the church was constituted for mission to the world, the criterion by which we will evaluate its vitality is whether the church remains missionally engaged with the world. Mission focuses on the primal alienation between humankind and God and also among humans. At the heart of mission is the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:11–21) and witness to the reign of God. The church is that community earnestly seeking, albeit imperfectly, to embody the justice/righteousness of God’s new order.

Missionary engagement acknowledges the priority of context over structure. In the apostolic model of witness the “other” is invited to set the terms of interaction, whether it is an appeal for healing or exorcism or the solution to a perplexing issue. The presence of the witness is essential in making such an exchange possible at all, but whether it actually takes place depends on the attitude and initiative of the other. Giving priority to the context in contemporary culture means two things: (1) an agenda reflecting the heart cries of this culture will emerge; and (2) reading Scripture in light of the angst of contemporary culture will draw us into the Word in new ways.

Conclusion

Authentic renewal of the church cannot be separated from mission; the two are integrally linked. Both arise from the same theological foundation: God’s covenant with Abraham was for the blessing of the nations, and this covenant was renewed and reaffirmed in Jesus Christ. The people of God exist because of God’s salvific intention for the nations and the role they are to play in God’s mission.

Church renewal must include institutional renewal, but this should not be interpreted narrowly as structural change. Institutions are moral communities shaping character and vocation. Institutions play a normative function because they are based on a vision of what is right and good. The church was instituted to witness to the reign of God in a world of unbelief, injustice, and unrighteousness. There have been times in history when the institutionalization of the church has militated against this world-directed purpose, either because the church has compromised itself by its worldliness or because its heart was closed to the world. The renewed church will embrace its call to missionary engagement through appropriate institutional forms.

Should someone ask what an awakened church looks like, we can do no better than cite four points Hans Hoekendijk once made in a classroom discussion. After listening to students wrestle with problems associated with cultural diversity and authenticity, Hoekendijk intervened, saying that a church is authentic when (1) it has developed its own way of sharing its faith in Jesus with other people, (2) it is composing and singing its own songs, (3) it conducts its ecclesial life in a culturally appropriate, rather than exotic, manner, and (4) it manages to spawn a heresy or two.²⁵ In attempting to apply the Gospel in a new context, it risks the possibility of “getting it wrong.” A moribund church is notably free of heresy because it has effectively insulated itself from the hurly-burly that attends every effort to engage a culture for the sake of the Gospel. That is the risk and the promise of mission. Without it, the church will not throw off its nominality and be renewed according to its constitutional purpose.

Notes

4. This section follows Anthony Giddens, The Consequences of Modernity (Stamford, Calif.: Stamford Univ. Press, 1990), chap. 1.
5. In a review of Jack Weatherford’s History of Money (New York: Crown, 1996), Robert Heilbroner quotes the author: “Coin and paper account for about eight percent of all the dollars in the world. The rest are merely numbers in a ledger or tiny electronic blips on a
My Pilgrimage in Mission

Kenneth L. Pike

I grew up in a godly home, with prayers and worship and Christian commitment by my parents. For them the pressure of living was enormous. Mother had to take care of eight children in a house without a bathroom or electricity or central heating. In addition, she was father's secretary, finance officer, and even telephone operator. At the time I was born, in 1912, Dad was a country medical doctor for the Woodstock area of eastern Connecticut. The telephone was a party line, with many people using the same line.

In the winter, Dad kept three horses in the barn, rotating them daily as they got tired, and in the summer he had to grow hay for them. So Dad too was very busy. On Sundays, though, he would take us to church, and on Sunday afternoons he scheduled time to play with us outdoors and read the Bible to us. On top of the complicated work, he was not strong. In 1900 he had gone as a medical missionary to the Tsimshian Indians at Metlakatla in southern Alaska, but his health broke in just one year. It took months before he could practice medicine again. Later, a physically weak constitution threatened me as well.

I have an early memory of being in Mom's arms and wanting her to sing me a certain song. I couldn't say the name, but I kept gesturing toward the bookshelf. Finally she went over, pulled down a book, and opened to the song I was hoping for: "There Were Ninety and Nine That Safely Lay." The missing sheep touched my heart, a feeling that later grew to a concern for tiny, unreached people groups. These preliterate peoples were desperately in need of alphabets, dictionaries, written literature of their own, and Bible translation.

I accepted a grocery job in Providence, Rhode Island, for a year. Then, since I did not have the initiative to handle it myself, my mother registered me to go to Gordon College in Boston. But the very hour I was to leave by train to Boston, Dad got very sick. I told Mom that I could cancel plans for college. "No," she said, "it's awfully easy to quit!" So I jumped into the car that had come to take me to the station and went off to college.

A Mission Disappointment

At Gordon I studied New Testament Greek for four years, with Prof. Merrill Tenney (who later went to Wheaton College). At some point during those years, I read a book from the nonmedical shelves of my Dad that captured my attention: a biography of Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission. Later,
Taylor's daughter and son-in-law spoke to us at chapel at Gor­
don. I decided that God wanted me to be a missionary to China's
millions. So in December 1932, at the age of twenty, I applied to
the mission for membership. During the following summer I
went to their headquarters to see if they would accept me. I was
totally convinced that they would. For several years I had been
relying on inner feelings for guidance by the Holy Spirit, in
matters large or small. So I was confident that there would be no
problem here.

But there was—the CIM rejected me! Later, I could see
several factors that explained my surprise and showed the
mission's wisdom. First, I had thought that the decision to go to
China or not was mine, to be based on my feeling as to the Lord's
don. I decided that God wanted me to be a missionary to China's
mission for membership. During the following summer I
several factors that explained my surprise and showed the
mission's wisdom. First, I had thought that the decision to go to
China or not was mine, to be based on my feeling as to the Lord's
guidance to go there, not anywhere else. But my youthful
ignorance kept me from seeing that the final decision as to God's
guidance was rightly the mission's, not mine. Second, I had not
given sufficient attention to the problem of possible inherited
physical weakness from my father's side or to the thought that
the mission ought carefully to consider that. Third, my youthful-
ness kept me from noticing social factors, such as my nervous­
ness, that could have affected my service abroad. A fourth item
impressed my sister later, when I told her about it. I was taking
a class on Mandarin Chinese for a couple of weeks or so, and the
teacher once said to me: "Pike, the only trouble with you is that
you cannot hear the aspirates.” That is, I could not distinguish
sounds that differed only in having or lacking a puff of breath.

**Cameron Townsend and Wycliffe**

Several good things grew out of this rejection, for God always
uses stress as a building block. First, I was devastated and
wondered if I should give up belief in God. Instead, I chose to
resist all “internal leading” for a year, except via the Scriptures and suggestions from advisers, until I could regain balance.
Second, it turned me away from a task that, at least then, would
have been very difficult for me, one involving multiple daily
social contacts with foreigners. Third, it allowed me to build up
my physical strength by taking an outdoor job with the Citizens
Workers' Administration of helping to eliminate gypsy moths from
New England, which were destroying its forests. I had to
climb trees (even though I was afraid of heights) to paint moth
eggs on the undersides of branches. Finally, it let me return to
Gordon College for a further year. There by the grace of God I
met student Sam Fisk, who told me about Camp Wycliffe, which
Cameron Townsend had started the previous summer (1934) in
Sulphur Springs, Arkansas, to train Bible translators. Sam and
other friends advised me to look into that role, which eventually
proved "built for me.” I could use my academic ability without
having to face the nervous strain that service with the CIM would
have involved.

I wrote to Townsend and decided to go to Camp Wycliffe
that summer of 1935. I hitchhiked to Sulphur Springs from
Connecticut, since I was short on money, and at the same time I
used the social contacts along the way to improve my personal­
relations skills. After five days, at three hundred miles per day,
I got to Rolla, Missouri, where my brother Galen was in forestry.
He drove me the rest of the way down to Arkansas and also gave
me $35, which I badly needed for expenses. The course was in a
village over the ten-thousand-foot pass. And I continued to try
to help the carriers of hundred-pound grain sacks to take one to
their store. But I slipped and fell, breaking my left leg. I was taken
to the home of a friend, but no doctors were there. I prayed,
asking God where I had sinned. The only answer was that I had
been told to write phonetics and had not done so. Twenty-three
hours later, the train came to go to Puebla. They put me on it and
there in the seat facing me was the old American man I had met earlier. It turned out he was a bone surgeon from the Mayo Clinic, and
he did his best to help me get comfortable. Another ten hours, and
we were in Puebla, where folks from the hospital met me. They
put my leg in a "basket" (too late for a cast), and I woke with
a high fever, with malaria coming on. But I started writing
phonetics eight hours a day in bed! And that became the first half
of my book *Phonemics* (1947), which was to help people make
alphabets.

**Formal Study of Linguistics**

In the summer of 1937 Townsend had me go to the University of
Michigan at Ann Arbor to study linguistics with the famous
Professor Edward Sapir, with whom he had had earlier contact.
Sapir showed me how he had analyzed the tones of Navaho years
before, by finding words, differing by pitch, that came in the same
unchanging context, so that the contrast between them
would show clearly. I returned to Mexico in the fall and during
the year applied that technique to figure out the tones of Mixtec.
Later, the material grew into my book *Tone Languages* (1948). But Professor Fries, my mentor in Ann Arbor, pushed me to publish my dissertation (on phonetics, published in 1943), in which I attempted to describe all the sounds of all languages that I had read about or heard or was able to imagine. Then in 1942 he asked me to help show how to teach phonetics to students from abroad who were studying English at the English Language Institute. Some of them had difficulty with the pitch of “ordinary” English. So I applied what I had learned about tone languages to the pitch of English, publishing it as *The Intonation of American English* (1945).

Thus from 1935 to 1947 I not only worked with colleagues (including Donald Stark of the United States and Angel Mercecas of the Mixtecs) to draft the translation of the New Testament into Mixtec (published in 1951) but moved into the phonetic component of linguistics, to help colleagues to work on translations into languages in other parts of the world. These translations were highly important to the locals, not only because they could help them to find God in Christ, but also because of factors unforeseen by me. Many of the locals had been told that they were “not people” because they had no alphabet. But after they had been given alphabets plus dictionaries plus books in their own languages, they would sometimes say, “Now we are people!” Self-identity and self-esteem grew from translations as did the linguistic understanding involved in getting the translations to them.

**A Holistic Approach**

But my linguistic theorizing was not finished with my phonetics. In 1948 I was brought on to the faculty at Michigan to pass on to students the things I have mentioned above. And I wanted to write more. But I had become bored with phonetics and wanted something different. So I moved into grammar and began seeking likenesses of theory to build from phonemics to sentence structure to text and ultimately to language in society as a whole. I used the idea of contrast in hierarchy from word to sentence and to social interaction with language, as before I had studied hierarchy from sound to syllable to poem. This led to my theoretical grammar–social decade, paralleling my phonetic one. It resulted in my largest work, *Linguage in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior* (1954–60). Meaning had to be included, to link grammar to sound, and both as related to socially relevant behavior. I needed and developed a holistic approach to language and behavior and thought and knowledge, to help Bible-translating colleagues in the places where I worked with them. I eventually served as a consultant analyst in more than a hundred languages, for colleagues in over forty countries.

For me, language theory needed to be tied holistically to practical language analysis, rather than being split into modules supposedly treatable by themselves. This led in 1954 to the creation of the words “etic” and “emic.” These terms describe two perspectives in analyzing language or any other social system—that of a scientific outsider who takes no account of the structural significance of units in the system vs. that of an insider who is aware of how the units are structured. These terms, derived from the common words “phonetic” (concerning the “raw” sounds of a language) and “phonemic” (concerning the structural units in the sound system of a language), have allowed the contrast to be generalized from phonology to all of human behavior.

Soon afterward, a different view began to capture the attention of many scholars: Noam Chomsky’s so-called transformational grammar. In his *Syntactic Structures* (1957), Chomsky emphasized a mathematically formal approach to the structure of the sentence. I chose not to “buy into it,” since (at least in that early work of Chomsky) it did not include meaning, nor did it go up the hierarchy to discourses and texts, all of which were needed for my colleagues to understand some of the problems of Bible translation. During the sixties, my “mathematical decade,” I tried to understand some of the problems of mathematics and in fact used a mathematical approach to help study the patterned changes of languages across dialects over time.

In the 1970s, my wife, Evelyn, and I focused on the development of pedagogical techniques to teach grammatical analysis to students. This resulted in our book *Grammatical Analysis* (1977). Then in the early 1980s, we published *Text and Tagmeme* (1983), with some of our most detailed analysis. She gave an extensive description of a short historical text. I gave my most extensive analysis to date of the pitch and voice quality (hierarchically analyzed) of a poem.

**From Philosophy to Poetry**

In the late 1980s, I changed my attention again. I wanted to capture in more explicit philosophical terms and concepts the elements that I had already been treating holistically, which I had partly summarized in *Linguistic Concepts* (1982). This, I felt, was needed if I was to explain to scholars of a more modular bent the reasons why I wanted the holistic view. So with encouragement from various philosophers, I wrote *Talk, Thought, and Thing: The Eemic Road Toward Conscious Knowledge* (1993). The emic material also led to a public three-hour debate with anthropologist Marvin Harris before an audience of other anthropologists.

But language and philosophy are not the end of life—or its center. Somewhere, one must note and feel and discuss the personal reaction to beauty, joy, love, hatred, power, greed, good, pain—and the worship of Almighty God, which involves working with him to build the house he has planned (Ps. 127:1). In *With Heart and Mind* (1962) I published many articles about such matters. But such essays are not enough. Poetry is needed to capture many of the reactions of the heart. My most recent focus, in the mid-1990s, has been on poetry. I close with my “Flaming Candle” (first published in 1958), which emphasizes that I want my life to be a witness to people in the dark, as we are all walking in our own weariness:

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**Flaming Candle**

Sharp cut lamps of night—
By strength of Mighty God
Lighted with eternal fire,
Placed in candlestick of naught—
And roaring with energy transformed—

So we would shine,
Transformed from nothing, set apart
To light worlds with Glory
Born beneath a candle
Set o’er Bethlehem’s morn.
The Legacy of James Johnson

Jehu J. Hanciles

Alas! How the power even of a most righteous man depends upon the times in which he happens to live!
—Epitaph to Adrian VI (pope 1522–23)

In nineteenth-century West Africa, national (i.e., colonial) boundaries were less determinate than today, and a considerable movement of people and ideas helped shape an authentic West African identity. That period spawned men of considerable stature whose contribution and influence pervaded the region with greater ease than is conceivable today. One such man was James Johnson.

Johnson and a twin were born in 1839 or 1840 to “recaptive” Yoruba parents not far from the village of Waterloo in the Sierra Leone colony.1 Both parents were technically Christian converts who, reflecting a prevalent practice, still held firmly to pre-Christian tribal customs. These prescribed the death of twins, and Johnson’s chronicler affirms that he owed his survival solely to the fact that he had been born under the British flag.2 In reality, the entire colony formed an uncomfortable blend of showpiece Christianity and traditional religious practices that had “weathered the storm of alien transplantation” and proved conspicuously resistant to the sanctifying operation of the Gospel.3 Johnson’s early life was thus spent in an environment that was self-consciously Christian (by the time he was in his teens, “no less than two-thirds of the population . . . [was] professedly Christian”),4 yet it was thoroughly informed by tribal beliefs and customs. The dynamic tension and ambivalence that these two influences generated was exemplified to a great degree in the lives of many “colony-born” Christians like Johnson, who, though imbued with an English-styled Christianity, instinctively (and often agonizingly) explored their African heritage for self-identity.

In 1847 the young Johnson entered the CMS school in St. Matthews Parish, Waterloo, where he was force-fed a diet of Scripture passages, hymn singing, and catechism. He displayed remarkable traits even then and, to the amazement of his teacher, precociously attacked the idol worship practiced by his parents.5 Intelligent, independent minded, and evincing a deep spirituality beyond his years, Johnson was destined for a career in the church. In 1851 he proceeded to the CMS grammar school founded six years earlier “to provide secondary education for boys from the new middle-class families”—where the curriculum was essentially a replica of contemporary grammar schools in England (apart from daily stints in farming and a course in navigation).6 On June 1, 1854, Johnson entered the Fourah Bay Institution. It had been founded by the CMS in 1827 and by then was the society’s chief means of training “native” ministers in West Africa. He duly graduated in December 1858 and took up the curacy of the prestigious Pademba Parish, where he was transferred to the grammar school, where he held a tutorship for two to three years. By then, his intense Christian devoutness and puritan propensities had become all too manifest. Nicknamed the Bishop, he tried three times a day and withheld students’ dinners when they so much as neglected to do “some algebraical problems.”7 To his credit he refused to be tempted away from his position as CMS tutor to a situation that offered him 50 percent more in salary, on the grounds that he was content with his connection with the society.8 Ordained a deacon in March 1863, he took up the curacy of the prestigious Pademba Road Church, under the superintendence of a European missionary.

Johnson’s connection with the Pademba Road District lasted eleven years and arguably marked the second major turning point in his life. “Henceforward,” writes Ayandele, “the holiness that was to be attached to him was incredibly visible . . . . Theology became his main mental pre-occupation [and] morality . . . an absolute reality.”9 The parish, which included the “purely heathen” Brookfield’s Mission, was a veritable center of non-Christian practices, notably Shango worship; a goodly portion of Johnson’s parishioners were numbered among the clientele of the local “heathen” priests and oracles.10 Idealistic, impetuous and maverick, but impelled by a unique sense of godliness, Johnson embarked on a crusade against the evil around him with unconventional and confrontational zeal. He preached in the open, sought out backsliders, and attacked the cults in a manner that was almost quixotic. His relative youth made the task difficult, but his reputation increased considerably when “a Shango worshipper died not long after [Johnson] had rebuked him for disturbing an open-air service.”11 Conspicuous among the fruits of his evangelical labors was the conversion, in October 1863, of King John Macauley (of the Aku), a prominent Muslim who reveled in immorality and “heathen practices” until he fell seriously ill and was persuaded by Johnson to embrace Christianity and turn away his many wives.12 Johnson’s stature increased, not least in the eyes of his patrons, the CMS. Still a curate, he strove to impose a puritanical system on the Christian community under his care, which many members found too rigorous for their liking.13 The district prospered, and in December 1866 Johnson was elevated to the priesthood. Contrary to Ayandele’s claims, he never had full control of the district;14 increasingly, however, he gained recognition as the most energetic and enterprising native minister in the colony.

A Young Man of Much Promise

Johnson’s appointment to Kent signaled the commencement of his lifelong dedication to CMS service.9 About two years later he was transferred to the grammar school, where he held a tutorship for two to three years. By then, his intense Christian devoutness and puritan propensities had become all too manifest. Nicknamed the Bishop, he prayed three times a day and withheld students’ dinners when they so much as neglected to do “some algebraical problems.”10 To his credit he refused to be tempted away from his position as CMS tutor to a situation that offered him 50 percent more in salary, on the grounds that he was content with his connection with the society.11 Ordained a deacon in March 1863, he took up the curacy of the prestigious Pademba Road Church, under the superintendence of a European missionary.

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Johnson was high-minded to the point of being antisocial, and so punctilious in his personal life that he was in danger of not marrying at all. It was not until his late twenties that he eventually met a lady worthy enough, whom he married. At his urging, she went to England for training in a mission school, and Johnson "literally starved himself" to maintain her at Alcocks Green in Birmingham. Tragically, she died of a feverous cold in 1868. The blow was severe. Twenty-seven years passed before Johnson eventually married another—Sabina Leigh, the daughter of a prominent businessman in Yorubaland.

Johnson and the Native Pastorate

The CMS Sierra Leone Mission was the testing ground of the native pastorate experiment, which was aimed at the organization of independent, self-reliant, native churches. Henry Venn, the chief architect of the scheme and CMS secretary from 1842 to 1872, enunciated the revolutionary concept that the ultimate objective of a mission was "the settlement of a native Church, under native pastors, upon a self-supporting system." The Sierra Leone experiment proved to be a painful and perplexing process; in its early stages it inspired native aspirations that clashed irrevocably with European ethnocentrism.

Retained as a missionary in CMS employ throughout his stay in Sierra Leone, Johnson was not directly affected by the native pastorate scheme. However, the experiment coincided with an incipient African nationalism in the colony, spawning desire to have an independent church," he asserted, "closely follows the knowledge that we are a distinct race, existing under peculiar circumstances and possessing peculiar characteristics . . . and that the arrangement of foreign churches made to suit their own local circumstances can hardly be expected to suit our own in all their details." He confidently predicted that "the use of our own liturgy and canons is a mere question of time." To all this was added a demand that Fourah Bay College be constituted a West African university. For all his polemics, Johnson did not enunciate any clear strategy for the realization of his ideals, and the reality remained unchanged. The pastorate's chronic dependence on CMS financial assistance ensured the continued domination of European missionaries, many of whom were openly opposed to Venn's scheme and viewed native aspirations with ill-disguised contempt. Meanwhile, nationalistic sentiments intensified and translated into rampant anti-Europeanism. The resulting race controversy pitted entrenched European ethnocentrism against a bellicose cultural nationalism and catapulted the outspoken James Johnson into the limelight.

The race controversy, which can hardly be treated here, lasted from 1868 to 1873. Johnson's Ethiopianism animated clergy and laity alike and crossed denominational barriers. The movement was bolstered by Edward W. Blyden, an archetypal African nationalist with whom Johnson struck up an alliance and who exerted considerable influence on Johnson's thinking. But Johnson remained the undisputed champion of the native pastors and the leading figure in the agitation for ecclesiastical independence.

Undoubtedly, the clamor for an independent African church was premature and ill fated. Powerful European opposition—almost single-handedly managed by the newly appointed Bishop Cheetham—and strong dissent from among the ranks of the native pastors themselves frustrated the movement. As already noted, not even the heady rhetoric of Ethiopianism could obscure the fact that the native church owed its continued existence to the life support of foreign aid. Still, James Johnson's Ethiopianism challenged entrenched European structures and attitudes and, drawing inspiration from the African heritage, called attention to the need for an authentic African ministry. The thought unsettled European missionaries accustomed to notions of indispensability, although at CMS headquarters, where the spirit of Henry Venn still lingered, it evoked a sympathetic response, and Johnson was summoned to England.

Heightened expectations surrounded Johnson's visit to London in 1873, although its immediate aftermath was distinctly anticlimactic, not least because it resulted in his (vigorously protested) transfer to the Yoruba Mission. But the ideals he had championed had far-reaching consequences, some unintended. CMS resolved that Africans should join the staff at Fourah Bay College, which was in turn to be elevated to a fee-paying university that "any well recommended Christian African" could enter to study for vocations other than the ministry. This latter move eventually led to the institution's affiliation to Durham University in 1876. More significantly, CMS policy with regard to the Sierra Leone Mission switched to an emphasis on African leadership and the systematic withdrawal of all foreign support. Strategic city churches, hitherto thought too important for African control, were foisted on the native pastorate, along with other remaining districts. In 1875 a Sierra Leone missionary society was established under intense CMS pressure, and by cajoling and coercion, CMS hastily ceded most of its missions to the unfruged body. Within seven years after Johnson left the colony, the Sierra Leone [Anglican] Church was distinctively
African in personnel if not in polity. The only office occupied by a European was that of the bishop.

**Johnson in Nigeria**

With Johnson's transfer to Lagos in June 1874, the Ethiopian movement's center of gravity effectively moved to what was in many ways a more hospitable environment than Freetown. Yoruba society was less dependent and beholden to Britain, and there existed in Lagos a vigorous, if incipient, nationalist movement with which Johnson immediately identified. He became its leading and most outspoken figure. Furthermore, Breadfruit Church, placed under his charge, was home to the most ardent nationalists among the population. It was also "the wealthiest and most important church in Lagos." Johnson's influence in church and society was considerable. He became a member of the Legislative Council from 1886 to 1894 and enjoyed a preemi-

Johnson was the leading figure in the agitation for ecclesiastical independence.

nence among Nigerian Christians that would have been difficult to attain in the Sierra Leone colony, where many of his colleagues were more experienced and better educated. In Yorubaland, only Bishop Samuel Crowther was more popular.

Johnson entered into his labors with characteristic fervor and found fertile ground for his brand of Christian nationalism. He strove to learn Yoruba, the only language the majority of his congregation (and the Lagos populace) understood, and he combined effective pastoral ministration with determined efforts to win converts from among Lagos's predominantly Muslim population. Reaction to his energetic leadership and fanatical Ethiopianism tended to divide along racial lines. To the native Christians he was an inspiring figure eulogized as Holy Johnson, but among European missionaries his influence and proclamations provoked deep apprehension and resentment. As in Sierra Leone, his rhetoric whipped up considerable anti-European feeling. Now more than ever before, racial considerations and African nationalism defined Johnson's attitude, activities, and relationships.34

CMS plans for a Lagos native pastorate (based on the Sierra Leone model) were implemented a year after Johnson's arrival, in the face of strenuous European opposition. Johnson dominated the pastorates' affairs from the onset (though his church was added only in 1881). Experience in Sierra Leone had taught him that self-support was the key to ecclesiastical independence, and his own Breadfruit Church became the pastorate's financial backbone. By 1889 the pastorate had absorbed all but one of the churches in Lagos and as early as 1882 had a missionary arm with stations outside Lagos. With Johnson as prime mover, the Lagos native pastorate even superseded its older counterpart in aspirations and innovations.35 Africanization and self-government formed overarching objectives, and "Africa for the Africans" became a rallying cry. "Indigenous white-cap chiefs" were embraced by the Breadfruit community, and prayers for the native kings were substituted for prayers for the queen of England in the prayer book.36 Alarmed European missionaries predicted a secession. In truth, Johnson's militancy did little to allay such fears.

In 1876 the CMS made Johnson (still in his thirties) superintendent of all its stations in the interior of Yorubaland, an unprecedented move and a tribute to Johnson's outstanding ability. The only African occupying a higher position in the CMS West Africa Missions was Bishop Crowther of the Niger Mission. In fact, CMS faith in Johnson's capabilities was such that the original suggestion was that he should be made a native bishop "exercising jurisdiction in Abeokuta and the Yoruba country."37 Some, including Bishops Crowther and Cheetham, thought he lacked sufficient experience, but neither bishop doubted that he was destined for that office.

Johnson's superintendency lasted four years, generated a storm of controversy, and ended in his removal. The details can hardly be discussed here.38 Intrepid, zealously pioneering, and uncompromising, Johnson was in some ways a victim of his own success. His aggressive evangelism produced some surprising results, and in Abeokuta at least, the native church experienced spectacular growth and made tremendous progress toward self-support and self-government.39 Everywhere he fought against slavery and ostensibly purged the church of polygamy. Ayandele argues that his ignoble withdrawal was the result of a European missionary conspiracy and "unconcealed racial prejudice."40 Still, Johnson made enemies as well as converts—the former notably among polygamists and slaveholders. His dogmatism and propensity for autocratic leadership offended the rich and powerful and alienated not a few of his converts. An unsettled political situation did little to help. Neither did the CMS, which, faced with an increased European presence and pressure, showed little stomach for defending its prodigy.

Upon losing the superintendency of the Lagos pastorate, Johnson returned to Breadfruit Church. His image and popularity among West African Christians remained undiminished. In Sierra Leone leading clergymen (including the European principal of Fourah Bay College) tried to persuade the CMS that Johnson should be appointed archdeacon of the Sierra Leone Church, to provide leadership for the native clergy.41 In 1886 he gained appointment to the Legislative Council in Lagos.

**The Native Episcopate**

As the 1880s progressed, there were increasing calls, in both Sierra Leone and Nigeria, for a native bishop (suffragan or diocesan) to be appointed in CMS West African dominions. The society had itself repeatedly argued in favor of a Yorubaland bishopric, with an African incumbent. On a visit to England in 1887, Johnson set forth his views on native self-government in a powerful statement entitled "A Memorandum on the West African Native Churches and Missions and Native Episcopacy."42 Described as "an impassioned and coherent argument for a native bishop,"43 the document focused on Sierra Leone and asserted that over seventy years of CMS labor in that colony "more than warrants the existence of native supervision long before this time." Johnson's eloquence impressed, but the CMS determined only to pursue the Yoruba option. In the event, the move toward a native bishopric was stymied by a maelstrom of conflicting opinion, resurgent racial tension, stiff European missionary opposition toward Johnson's candidacy (there was no recognizable alternative), and, more decisively, the financial impediment. Almost as a concession, in 1888 Johnson was appointed a member of the Lagos-based CMS finance committee.
Is This Effective

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WHERE SHARING THE GOSPEL MEANS SHARING YOUR LIFE
In truth, the readiness of the church in West Africa to be completely self-supporting and self-governing must remain debatable. But the evidence suggests that by the late 1880s CMS policy was being dictated less and less by the exalted ideals of Henry Venn's vision. Change was in the air. In 1889 the youthful Bishop Ingham of Sierra Leone denounced the native pastorate scheme as ill conceived and unsound.44 With the increased deployment of better-educated missionaries, many of whom were not immune to the spirit of the colonial "scramble era" (for African territories), attitudes of European superiority resurfaced with a vengeance. But Ethiopianism remained vibrant, fueled unceasingly by the fires of nationalistic fervor. European missionary domination and control was no longer tolerable. When European missionaries were introduced into the hitherto all-African Niger Mission under Bishop Crowther, seething racial tension erupted into major controversy.

The Niger crisis of the 1890s has received much scholarly attention and varied interpretation.45 A review is unnecessary. The Niger Mission with its African bishop embodied (in a way that Europeans underestimated) the hope of West African Christians. The mission had failings but successes too; the sudden infusion of European missionary control produced convulsions that led to separation.

Among West African Christians the incident was conceived almost exclusively in racial terms. Disillusionment and uniform umbrage at the treatment meted out to the aged Bishop Crowther fueled secessionist sentiments. Johnson was galvanized into renewed calls for an independent African church. But rather than founding one (as many expected), he threw his considerable influence behind the separatist movement in the Niger Delta. The Niger Delta Pastorate came into existence in April 1892, but after six years of promising existence, it faltered and returned to the CMS fold. With that, Johnson's vision of an independent African church headed by an African bishop evaporated. A European had already been appointed to succeed Crowther. And in what appeared to be a glaring compromise of his Ethiopian ideals, Johnson accepted the position of assistant bishop of the Niger Delta in 1900.

It is possible to argue, as Ayandele does, that far from being inconsistent, Johnson saw his assistant bishop position as a means toward his ultimate goal.46 Certainly the £10,000 endowment fund that he initiated (on his consecration) was geared toward the creation of an independent African diocese. But despite his immense popularity and prominence, Johnson was something of an enigma, and the observer is struck by the contradictions of his life, not only in the area of ecclesiastical independence. When, in October 1901, two-thirds of his Breadfruit congregation seceded on his behalf to form the independent Bethel African Church, he denied them his leadership, thus eschewing a golden opportunity to implement his Ethiopian program.47 He also remained a staunch opponent of the United Native Africa Church, founded in August 1891 in response to the dismantling of the Niger Mission; and in later life he joined the colonial government in attacking emerging prophet movements in the Niger Delta. Opposed to European customs, dress, and names for the African church, he neither changed his own name nor abandoned the vestments of the Western church. Hastings adds that "the advantages of not seceding ... for an educated man and still more for a cleric or a bishop, were too considerable."48 But perhaps it is best to view Johnson as a transitional figure who embodied the contradictions of his times.49 Unwaveringly loyal to the CMS throughout his life, he may have been blind to the inherent contradiction at the heart of his vision: an independent African church that remained true to the Anglican Communion. The inspirer of many secessions from the Anglican Church thus himself remained its loyal servant, though his trust was often betrayed.

The remaining years of James Johnson's life were spent as assistant bishop of Western Equatorial Africa and were filled with incessant missionary activity. He died, in active service, on May 18, 1917. His legacy lived on in the African church movement, which continued to challenge missionary Christianity, and in African nationalism, which grew so naturally out of Christian missions. Indeed, African Christians today who are engaged in the continuing exploration of an authentic African Christianity—not as an end in itself but as a part of the unfolding Christian story and a basis for mission—walk in his footsteps.

Notes
1. In Rev. E. Jones's 1854/55 "Report of the Fourah Bay Institution" (CMS, C A1/O 129/88), Johnson's age is given as fifteen years. The Sierra Leone colony, founded as a Christian experiment in 1787, subsequently became the home of thousands of freed slaves (known as recaptives or liberated Africans), who formed captive audiences for European missionaries, notably agents of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), from 1816 onward.
14. Fyfe, History of Sierra Leone, p. 351; Sanneh, West African Christianity, p. 84.
15. Fyfe, History of Sierra Leone, p. 351; Ayandele, Holy Johnson, p. 29.
18. Ayandele’s claim (*Holy Johnson*, p. 25) that in 1854 Johnson’s name had been romantically linked with a certain Rachael Garton is based on uncertain evidence and seems specious.
19. Henry Venn, “Minute upon the Employment and Ordination of Native Teachers” (First Paper, 1851); see Wilbert R. Shenk, *Henry Venn, Missionary Statesman* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1983), Appendix 1. For more details about Venn’s concept and its implementation, see C. Peter Williams, *The Ideal of the Self-Governing Church* (Leiden: Brill, 1990); Hanciles, “Sierra Leone Native Pastorate Church.”
20. For a detailed treatment of the forces unleashed by the experiment (and their implications), see Hanciles, “Sierra Leone Native Pastorate Church.”
21. The term was derived from the scriptural proclamation that “Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God” (Ps. 68:31), interpreted as a prediction that Ethiopia (symbolic of all Africa) would once again embrace Christianity. Ayandele correctly argues that this West African Ethiopianism was “quite different from the popular one associated with Central, Eastern and Southern Africa” (*Holy Johnson*, p. 44).
23. Sermon preached at Trinity Church, Kissy Road, on May 13, 1867, on behalf of the Pastorate Auxiliary, by Rev. J. Johnson, CMS, C A1/O 9/3.
27. Cheetham to Wright, March 7, 1873, CMS, C A1/M 19, p. 76.
28. Johnson, for instance, once remarked in the heat of passion that it was “a natural impossibility for a white man to love a black man” (Minutes of Half Yearly Conference, April 2–3, 1867, CMS, C A1/02/232).
30. Blyden has been extolled by his biographer as “easily the most learned and articulate champion of Africa and the Negro race in his own time” (H. R. Lynch, *Edward Wilmot Blyden: Pan Negro Patriot, 1832–1912* [London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967]).
32. For a full argument, see Hanciles, “Sierra Leone Native Pastorate Church,” pp. 318–19, 332–35.
34. See Ayandele, *Holy Johnson*, p. 94.
41. See Sunter to Lang, March 6, 1882, CMS, G3/A1/O, no. 34; Macauley to Wigram, June 22, 1882, G3/A1/O, no. 68.
45. More recently, Professor Ogbu Kalu has argued that the young European missionaries, whose arrival and activities are often deemed a major cause of the troubles, were “the true indigenizers” (“Beyond Nationalist Historiography: White Indigenizers of the Igbo Church, 1876–1892,” paper presented at the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World, Univ. of Edinburgh, November 1992).
47. Ibid., pp. 319–24.

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**Works About James Johnson**


Ayandele’s volume is the only major work on Johnson, but the following studies also contain significant biographical details:


The Legacy of Pierre Jean de Menasce

Adrian Hastings

Jean André Moise de Menasce was born in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1902 into one of its richest and most distinguished Jewish families. His father, Felix de Menasce, the head of the Alexandrian Jewish community, was also an Austrian baron. His mother was French. After studying at the French School of Law in Cairo, he went on in 1921 to Balliol College, Oxford, to read philosophy, politics, and economics. In Oxford he made many close acquaintances and friends, particularly through being a welcome guest at Garsington Manor, home of Lady Ottoline Morrell, among them T. S. Eliot and Lady Ottoline’s lover, Bertrand Russell, whose *Mysticism and Logic* he translated into French (Paris, 1922). From Oxford he went to the Sorbonne to spend a further year studying philosophy. In this period he ceased to be a religious believer. Instead he threw himself into militant Zionism, and Haim Weizman made him secretary of the Zionist Bureau in Geneva.

De Menasce, however, soon returned to Paris, where he underwent a decisive spiritual crisis. It was at this point that he made some of the central friendships of his life—with the Thomist philosopher Jacques Maritain, his Jewish wife, Raïssa (both converts from agnosticism twenty years earlier), and, more than anyone else, Louis Massignon, an Islamist and author of the phenomenal study of the Muslim mystic and martyr Husayn ibn Mansur Hallaj, which had been published in 1922. This new circle of friends provided the human context within which de Menasce discovered God and Christ and, quite hurriedly, received baptism on May 19, 1926, and with it the additional name of Pierre, though all his life he was known mostly as Jean. Massignon alone was present to witness that moment of supreme symbolic change. It is worth noting that Bertrand Russell’s *Why I Am Not a Christian* was published just one year later, in April 1927. Was he perhaps driven to write it by news of the Christian conversion of his brilliant young Jewish philosopher friend?

De Menasce, for his part, spent the first months after baptism writing an exceptionally beautiful study of Jewish Hasidic holiness, *Quand Israel aime Dieu* (published only in 1931). It was, in a way, his farewell tribute to the religion of his ancestors, but one feels that he was able to make it only after he had rediscovered the God of Israel through the discovery of Jesus as Messiah. He also returned to Egypt for two years, at the wish of his father, but in 1930 he entered the Paris province of the Order of St. Dominic and was ordained priest in 1935. For him those were years of intense assimilation both of Thomist theology and of the Catholic spiritual and mystical tradition.

**Scholar of Religions**

From 1936 to 1948 de Menasce was professor of the history of religions and of missiology at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland. While extending his deep knowledge of Islam and publishing a very useful bibliography of works on Arabic philosophy in other than Oriental languages, his principal scholarly activity was now in the field of Iranian studies, in which he developed an expertise particularly in early medieval Mazdaism. At the same time, he published a series of short but exceptionally perceptive missiological articles, several of them in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft*, which he helped found in 1945 and which Stephen Neill later described as “the best missionary research journal in the world.” Almost certainly there was no one else in the Catholic Church at the time with a comparably subtle approach to the nature and dimensions of missionary activity, yet it has to be said that these articles were relatively slight exercises with the single exception of his 1945 critique of Hendrik Kraemer’s theology of mission. Valuable as they were, and worthwhile as was their reprinting in book form in 1967 entitled *Permanence et transformation de mission*, de Menasce’s major contribution to missiology needs to be understood not as something apart from the study of religions, which came to occupy him entirely when in 1948 he moved back to Paris to teach for the next twenty-five years in the École Pratique des Hautes Études. Yet it was in itself an almost missionary move to leave the protected intellectual atmosphere of the Catholic University of Fribourg and work instead in the essentially secular world of the École Pratique, the very heart of francophone learning.

De Menasce was never very strong, and it was frequently necessary to protect him from situations of strain, though for some years he was able to lecture at Princeton University as well as teach in Paris. From the early 1950s he lived an almost eremitic existence for much of the year in a charming little building, formerly a hunting lodge of the Orleans family, at Neuilly in the grounds of Dominican nuns who looked after him devotedly. Here, not so far from the heart of Paris, he combined research, contemplation, and the visits of countless friends with a remarkable correspondence, of which extracts were published in a book soon after his death. As a linguist, he was almost incomparable, so much at home in French, English, German, Arabic, Hebrew, and Italian, together with a range of other ancient languages: Greek and Latin, ancient Iranian, Pahlavi (middle Persian), Ara­maic, and Syriac. Even that is not a complete list. He suffered a major stroke in 1959 and another in 1969, each of which severely incapacitated him for a time but from both of which he struggled back, even relearning speech and continuing his studies. An important volume on the Mazdaean worldview (*Le troisième livre du Denkart*) was published in 1972 only a year before his death.

A humane Thomist by training, friendship, and conviction, he shared the theology and philosophy of his friends Charles Journet and Jacques Maritain. Fully at ease with the best of Catholic biblical scholarship of the time, he edited and translated the Book of Daniel for the *Bible de Jerusalem* (1955). The security of the faith he had come to embrace left him with little desire to question traditional Catholic theology from within in the way that in the 1950s the proponents of the so-called *nouvelle théologie* were beginning to do. De Menasce always insisted that missiology was a section of ecclesiology, but he remained perhaps less critical than he might have been of, say, the ecclesiology of...
Journet, the Swiss theologian and former colleague at Fribourg who was later to be created a cardinal by (pope) Giovanni Montini. Perhaps it is only with postconciliar hindsight that a Catholic is likely to find such work—immensely much better as it was than the standard textbook ecclesiology of the preconciliar period—unsatisfying, still too institutional and too confident in its answers as to what the church really is or should be. If de Menasce ever felt like that, he did not say so. While in his final years he refused to give way to the almost anticonciliar revulsion of some of his friends, he did share some of their nostalgia for the preconciliar church as he had known it at its very best. He was not far from Maritain’s mood in Le paysan de la Garonne.

Essentially, however, his mind was so engaged in the intellectual and spiritual frontiers separating the great religious traditions of the Middle East that he had not the time to engage it extensively in other areas, where, for most of his life, it could only have encountered ecclesiastical frustration. Once baptized, he never again felt the temptation to rush into things like a fool. As a convert and an irenic contemplative by nature, he remained a particularly loyal Catholic, but since his heart lay in an exploration of the intellectual interrelationship and spiritual intercommunion of the great religions, his closest friends and colleagues were people equally deeply engaged in that same enterprise—in particular, Islamists like Massignon, Louis Gardet, the Franciscan Abd El-Jalil (a Moroccan convert from Islam), and the Egyptian Dominican scholar George Anawati. It was to this remarkable group of people that de Menasce most clearly belonged, scholars whose intellectual work was inseparable from an intense spiritual life.

Massignon, in all the awkwardness of his exasperatingly uncompromising commitment to interreligious understanding, was the group’s primary prophetic figure. Fiercely devout as well as formidably learned, his commitment to the Arab world brought him not only to demonstrate in the streets against France’s Algerian policy but also to embrace it liturgically by leaving the Latin for the Melkite, Greek Catholic Rite, whose liturgy was now in Arabic and in which, despite being married, he was able to be ordained a priest, in Cairo in 1950. But behind Massignon stood the no less prophetic figure of Charles de Foucauld, by whom in early life he had been much influenced. Louis Gardet was not only a scholar of Muslim theology, he was also a Little Brother of Jesus, the society founded in the 1930s by Père Voilamue to live according to the spirit of de Foucauld. Jacques Maritain himself, when old and a widower, joined the Little Brothers. De Menasce’s final missiological article, a short piece for the International Review of Missions in 1967 entitled “The Contemplative Life and the Missions,” harks back quite emphatically to the missionary significance of de Foucauld. It was in a real sense de Foucauld who invented the missiological tradition to which he belonged.

I first encountered de Menasce when, sometime early in 1954, I read an article of his entitled “Nationalism in Mission Lands” that he had published in 1947 in the Neue Zeitschrift. Rereading that article forty years later, it still seems to me a quite remarkably fresh and penetrating discussion of Afro-Asian nationalism, written in the year of India’s independence, when missionaries, for a large part, were trembling negatively enough at what fate the victory of nationalism might everywhere bring to their work. In rejecting that mood of gloom, however, he was by no means trying—as many liberal Christians inevitably were—to jump simplistically onto the nationalist bandwagon, a “hyper-trophied patriotism . . . no more to be encouraged when it is Chinese or Indonesian than when it is French or German.” He continued, sharply enough, “These autarchies all speak the same language, using identical terms to defend values which strive in vain for diversity.” But he did not stop there, suggesting instead, with a remarkably prophetic insight, that the very upsurge of nationalisms that might frequently close the door for Western missions could also open it for new missionary movements deriving from the young churches themselves. “I was recently informed of the apparently defeatist remarks of a missionary returned from Central Asia, but his conclusion was stupendous: ‘It is the Chinese who must be the apostles of these peoples.’ That seems to me a profound observation. . . . The day must not be long delayed when we shall see Hindu priests occupying themselves with the salvation of the primitive tribes of India, Annamite priests with that of the Thos, Chinese priests with Central Asia.”

Brief as this ten-page article was, it shone with a perception of world history and of how, within the postwar period and the imperialist debacle, mission could be transformed and restructured. It suggests an eye more far seeing than almost any other at work in the 1940s.

Response to Kraemer

Two years earlier he had published in the Neue Zeitschrift of 1945 an analysis of Hendrik Kraemer’s Christian Message in a Non-Christian World, the specially commissioned text of the International Missionary Council for its Tambaram conference in 1938. Kraemer, both an experienced missionary in Indonesia and an academic, represented neo-conservative Protestantism at its most authoritative and unyielding, in his insistence upon the total otherness of “biblical realism” from all that the world religions had to offer. For him they were basically an expression of human sin, even, and indeed especially, in that which appears most spiritual and transcendental within them. Kraemer’s theology proved very far from acceptable to most of the participants at Tambaram. However, in its stark reaction to the liberal Protestant approaches to other faiths that had appeared so prominently in previous decades, it had swung around to become the polar opposite, not only to the latter but also to Catholicism. Indeed, in good Barthian manner, he very explicitly rejected the Thomist “gratia non tollit sed perficit naturam.”

The reply of de Menasce, politely but firmly analyzing the theology of Kraemer with extensive extracts from his text, represents—at least for that period—a very rare piece of genuine Catholic-Protestant dialogue. Here was the most subtle Catholic missiologist of his time confronting the greatest of Protestant missiologists. De Menasce had, as he said in commencing his article, “read, re-read and meditated over four years Kraemer’s ‘great book’.” Its finest pages had given him great pleasure. It had, indeed, a “captivating” character. The analysis de Menasce made of it was, then, anything but hasty, and its seriousness was at once recognized. Henri de Lubac included large sections in his Le fondement théologique des missions, and it is likely that, across de
De Menasce’s theology flows from a great Yes to God, to creation, and to all the ways in which grace brings nature back to God.

truth, from which every other system does, like a heresy, take parts that remain essentially reasimilable within Catholicity. Again and again de Menasce stresses how much that is stimulating can be found in Kraemer’s pages. He is always the generous dialogist, but he is also here, more than anywhere else in his writings, an acute theologian. What comes across from his analysis—more clearly, perhaps, than in any other work of missionary literature—is the profundity of the contrast between an intrinsically Catholic and an intrinsically Protestant understanding of the relationship between nature and grace, a relationship upon which the whole nature of missionary work must depend.

Mazdean Apologist

The principal scholarly achievement of de Menasce in 1945, the year the war ended, was not, however, the response to Kraemer but the publication of his translation and commentary of the Skand-Gumanik Vicar (The decisive solution of doubts), a ninth-century work of Mazdean apologetics. The scholarly core of de Menasce’s work had become the study of Iranian religion, particularly of Mazdaism in its last major phase following the Muslim conquest of Iran. Remote as this must seem from the concerns of contemporary mission, for him it was not so. On the contrary, it helped rather to provide a vantage point, independent of the three-branched “Abrahamic” tradition (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam), of still one other of the major underlying traditions of the Middle East, from which to interpret the whole play of interreligious connectedness and disidence. The fascination of the Skand-Gumanik Vicar lay precisely in its carefully argued critique of Islam, Judaism, Christianity, and Manichaeanism too. Here was the presentation of the case for a moderate dualism and a well-argued assertion of the implausibilities to be found in alternative systems of belief.

In the argumentation of the Skand-Gumanik Vicar and the rather earlier Denkart, whose important third book he at last published in translation and commentary in the final year of his life, de Menasce recognized something of universal value. Here, and especially in regard to the central issue of the interpretation of evil, he contended that “Mazdaism touches upon universality and holds its place within the discordant ensemble of theologies which speak a common language, make equal use of reason and turn when need be even to philosophical concepts.” What in the end his scholarship produces is not a sense of the bewilderingly remote otherness of a tenth-century Iranian religious apologist but rather of a real proximity to one’s own central concerns. Here, as everywhere, the sensitivity and precision of de Menasce’s analysis of discordant religions, as of discordant Christian theologies, did not lead him to a final pluralistic contention that “anything goes” but, on the contrary, to a strengthened conviction that a rationally defensible truth can and must be sought.

On Daniel and Augustine

The Book of Daniel is one of the more eccentric inclusions within the Bible. Its story set in Babylon, its atmosphere and even in part its vocabulary that of Babylonian court culture, its theme is one of confrontational miracles and apocalyptic prophecy about world history. That is obvious enough. What seems less apparent to the commentators is that it is a very missionary book—perhaps the most overtly missionary work in the whole of the Old Testament—in that so much of it is about unswerving public witness to Hebraic monotheism given within a different, polytheistic, culture. Both for Iranian and missiological reasons, de Menasce could not but feel at home in a work in which is found the sort of intellectual confrontation, if not exactly dialogue, between two religious and theological systems that he delighted in: the assertion of a unitary faith within a thoroughly pluralistic religious context. His translating and editing of Daniel for the Bible de Jérusalem in 1954 was the natural contact point at which his own scholarship could contribute directly to biblical study. It fitted him.

So, too, did the publication in 1956 of a truly remarkable article “Augustin manichéen,” the last of his writings we will consider. It was, again, his natural contact point with patristics, but it is valuable for us precisely because it focuses once more upon the relationship between two systems of belief—in this case Catholic Christianity and Manichaeanism—and conversion from one to the other. As de Menasce himself suggests, patrologists have often failed to take Augustine’s nine years of committed Manichaeanism seriously enough. He came to the subject as a Mazdean scholar and one might perhaps have expected him to argue, like some others, for an “Oriental,” more or less Mazdean, character to Augustine’s Manichaean religion. In fact he does just the opposite. He suggests quite brilliantly that what held Augustine within the Manichaean Church for so long was most probably precisely its Christocentric piety and, even, its very “catholicity” in terms of geographic spread—so very different from the localized Church of Donatism. What made him abandon his long-held commitment was the intellectual conviction, arrived at via Neoplatonism, that dualism was a metaphysical error. Passionate as Augustine was by temperament, his conversion both to Manichaism and from it was essentially a matter of the reason, while his piety and his conception (as apart from his practice) of morality changed relatively little. This is not what
many of us imagined, but it is extremely convincing. He achieves it by a sensitive examination of texts, including the then recently discovered Manichaean Psalm-Book (by which he was fascinated: I remember his taking it off his bookshelf when I visited him in 1956 and reading from it with great delight). The Christocentric devotional life experienced as a Manichee, Augustine saw subsequently, de Menasce explains, as a “stolen good,” now to be restored to its place of true belonging, the Catholica, where alone it could find its full meaning.

Augustine’s conversion from Manichaeism to Catholicism is, or can be, a key datum in a missiology that would understand the reality and possibility of conversion from one large vision of things to another—a subject always close personally to de Menasce. But in his analysis of what happened, he both manages to give a more positive and attractive picture of Manichaeism, almost from the inside, than we are normally given, and uses it as an implicit illustration of his thesis, as argued against Kraemer, that any other faith than the Christian is not totalitarian but contains certain pierres d’attente, elements great or small (in this case very great, despite the absurd follies of its cosmology) that can and must be recognized and retained across the process of conversion.

De Menasce’s Love for “the Other”

The Book of Daniel, Augustine’s Confession, the Skand-Gumanik Vicar, Kraemer’s “great book,” and, to add one more example, the Hasidic texts that constitute the latter half of Quand Israel aime Dieu such as “Dialogue between a Hasid and a Rabbinist,” constitute a remarkable range of texts through which de Menasce was exploring with both rigor and sympathy the nature of the interface between religions at their best. His preference is to dig deep at specific points where both spirituality and the fundamental structure of thought is most revealable. Implicitly, at least, a missiological dimension is never very far from what he was doing, but behind both his studies in the history of religion and the specifically missiological pieces is a commitment to the primacy of love—a discerning love for other religions in their otherness but also the requirement of Christian love still to go out evangelistically to the other. Love remained for him the driving force behind mission. It was the subject of the first chapter of Permanence et transformation and of some of the finest lines of its final chapter written in 1964, near the end of the Second Vatican Council. De Menasce gently pled that, despite a rightful shame about the often arrogant missionary evangelization of the colonial era, it would be a failure in love “to be silent on principle,” to banish the apostolate to the mind.

It is not very surprising that Jean de Menasce is little known in missiological circles, sad as it may be. Perhaps today he is little remembered in any circles other than those of his surviving friends. As regards the English-language world, he published next to nothing in English, and few are the anglophone missiologists who pay much attention to what is written in French. But a certain fastidiousness in scholarship as in life, something verging on contempt for the fashionable and the self-publicist, as also an awkwardly wide spread of publications, many of them quite short, have made him an almost forgotten figure, even perhaps in the field of Zoroastrianism, to which he made in point of fact a quite massive contribution in his translating and analysis of major texts. Yet, if he wrote very little of a formally missiological nature after moving back from Fribourg to Paris, the publication of Permanence et transformation de la mission in 1967, during the last phase of his life and despite profound ill health, demonstrates his continuing concern for the understanding of mission, especially in regard to the relationship between Christianity and the great religions and cultures of East and West. As regards the divide between “East” and “West,” as an Alexandrian Jew, Oriental and Westerner, an Iranian scholar and a Paris Dominican, Jean was and felt himself to belong to both and neither. His exceptionally sensitive understanding of “the other” in the history of religions had, however, brought him not at all in the direction taken later by John Hick or Wilfred Cantwell Smith. On the contrary. He had no hesitation as to the final divine sovereignty within human religion of the Christianity of the Catholica.

A modern text in which he took great delight, seeing in it some expression of his own lifelong experience of the unified diversity of incarnate divinity, is G. K. Chesterton’s magnificent poem “Ubi Ecclesia.”

Our Castle is East of the Sun
And our Castle is West of the Moon
The Bridge called Both-and-Neither...
And a Fool walks blind on the highway
And finds it soon.

It is not included within Chesterton’s Collected Poems but was printed separately and is little known. I heard it first when Jean read it to me and I was so thrilled by it that I included it as an introductory piece to the symposium I was editing at the time, The Church and the Nations (London and New York: Sheed and Ward, 1959). Perhaps nothing else in English expresses quite so well the ecclesiological and mystical missiology of Jean de Menasce.

Notes

3. Ibid., p. 164.
4. Ibid., p. 102.
7. Ibid., p. 87.
Bibliography


Becoming All Things to All People:
Early Moravian Missions to Native North Americans

Karl-Wilhelm Westmeier

In the fall of 1744 Governor George Clinton of New York forwarded to the Board of Trade in London—without any explanatory comment—the New York Assembly Act of September 21, 1744.1 The act officially closed the Moravian Mission to the Mahicans at Shekomeko, a settlement close to the northwestern Connecticut border in the British colony of New York, and compelled the Moravian missionaries to leave. If Count Nikolaus von Zinzendorf, in his capacity as sponsor of the Moravian church, had not requested an explanation, most likely the act would have gone unnoticed.

But Zinzendorf protested, charging that Presbyterian clergy and their adherents were engaged in the persecution of the Moravian missionaries. He argued that religious persecution in the Americas was a particularly grave matter since many of the people who emigrated to the Americas were in search of religious freedom. No one—and especially not the Native Americans, Zinzendorf contended—should be hindered from joining whatever Protestant denomination he or she might choose.2

Earlier in 1744, when the act was discussed in the New York Assembly, several of its members had been in open disagreement. Assemblyman George Thomas, for example, felt it was unjust and silly. Judge Thomas Jones expressed his displeasure by sarcastically labeling it “the Persecution Act.” And assemblyman Richard Stillwell shouted, with unrestrained venom, “Hang them as your fathers hanged the Quakers.”3 On December 23, 1744, James Hutten wrote to Count Zinzendorf from England, “May it please your Lordship ... it is with sorrow, and vexation, and shame for my countrymen, that I have seen the Governor and Assembly of New York have passed an Act of Assembly [against the Moravians]. ... This incivility and inhuman usage must not be attributed to the whole English nation ... I am sure an English Parliament would never have done so, except ... in such time of anarchy and confusion as unhappily beset England in the last century, when bigoted and hot headed Calvinistic preachers ...”4 Following the same line as Hutten, Zinzendorf exploited the old tension between religious dissenters and the London government and made the Calvinist-Presbyterian clergy responsible for the New York troubles.

In response, the London authorities asked the governor to present reasons for the action.5 In 1746 Clinton replied that the act had been adopted because (1) itinerant preachers had caused ecclesiastical as well as family divisions. (2) The act constituted a measure against Spanish agents who infiltrated and subverted the colonies. (3) The Moravians had been too closely related to Whitefield, who while in America, Clinton alleged, had collected incredible sums of money to fill his own pockets. (4) Referring to Zinzendorf’s conciliatory stance on religious matters, the governor objected that the Moravians did not clearly distinguish between Protestants and Catholics. (5) Clinton was afraid that the continuous influx of Moravian settlers would soon outbalance the English subjects. (6) Their teachers were simple illiterate artisans. (7) Particularly irritating was their relationship to the Native Americans; the Moravians not only resided with the native people, they even intermarried with them. (8) This gave rise to the suspicion that they would seduce the Native Americans from their fidelity to the government. (9) The Moravian missionaries had even threatened the government with their hold on the Native Americans, intimating that the native people would follow them wherever they went. (10) The Moravians prevented Clinton’s enlisting the Native North Americans in his army, which was especially detrimental in times of war (i.e., during King George’s War, 1744-48).6
Becoming All Things to Native Americans

The issues Governor Clinton addressed in his reply give insight into both the colonial religion and the dynamics of the early Moravian missions. Taking Paul's injunction from 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 literally, the Moravians, it appears, opted to become all things to the native people. Their level of contextualization was astounding.

One form of contextualization was rooted in the ancient Moravian peace emphasis which, on the one hand, barred them from taking up arms during King George's War and, on the other, corresponded amazingly well with a centuries-old Native American peace vision. It is obvious that these emphases were bound to collide with the religion of the English establishment and its interests.

As we shall see, however, within a few years, in response to the "Moravian persecution," the Moravians opted for assimilation into the white American ethos in order to ensure the survival of their church in North America—a "contextualization" that could not but curtail their missionary outreach to the native people.

Moravian Mission and Colonial Religiosity

For the colonial authorities, it must have been difficult to cast the Moravian mission into traditional molds since neither their church nor their mission was officially recognized. As a fiercely persecuted Protestant minority in Europe, the Moravian church had roots reaching back to the Czech Reformation. The Moravians had taken on an identity that challenged society and government. They were nonjurors, refusing to participate in the larger society's forms of government; and many of them were pacifists and, as such, had been suppressed by both Catholics and the more militant followers of Jan Hus.

The old Moravian Unity had also absorbed Waldensian emphases. They had been influenced by the writings of Peter Chelcicky, who, similar to the Waldensians, had taught that any kind of unity between church and state was an abomination. No state, Chelcicky argued, could possibly exist without coercion and violence. But force and violence were unchristian and therefore contrary to the Gospel. Christians were motivated by love, not by force. The Christian method of diffusing its message was loving persuasion. Everything else was evil. Consequently, it was impossible for a Christian pilgrim, who was a stranger in this world and at home in the next, to participate in the affairs of the state. Christians could never be soldiers; neither should they become magistrates.

Out of their experience of persecution in Czechoslovakia the Moravians had come to Count Zinzendorf's estate in Saxony. Those who left Saxony for other parts of the world ventured to share the Gospel of Christ's love with other oppressed people—in this case, with the Native North Americans.

One of their missionaries wrote: "I was deeply moved about my [Native American] brothers. I saw how they stood among the white people and how the whites deal with them. They do not treat them differently from a . . . [not readable] and as people without brains [die keinen Verstand haben] and with whom they can do as they like. And they cheat them at all corners. And yet they take the Native people as if it would be their obligation to work for them. That cut into my heart." The missionaries were determined to identify with those to whom God had sent them and the plight of the native people became the plight of the missionaries.

The tensions between the religious nonconformity of the Moravians and the official religion can best be illustrated with their run-in with one of the most outstanding representatives of the established faith, missionary David Brainerd. On August 12, 1742, Brainerd stopped close to Schaghticoke, a Native American community approximately twenty miles east of Shekomeko. According to the entry in Brainerd's diary, he was spiritually at a low ebb. He wrote, "I had in a great measure lost my hopes of God sending me among the Heathen afar off." Brainerd felt surprised "that the people did not stone" him, let alone "that they would ever hear [him] preach." He continued, "Yet . . . the [Schaghticoke] people came over, and I was forced to preach. And blessed be God, he gave me his presence and Spirit in prayer and preaching; so that I was much assisted, and spake with power from Job xiv.14. Some Indians cried out in great distress, and all appeared greatly concerned. After we had prayed and exorted them to seek the Lord with constancy, and hired an English woman to keep a kind of school among them, we came away about one o'clock."10

In spite of this amazing response, several months went by without anything further being done. It was perhaps in reaction to this uncertain interest on the part of the white Christian community that the Schaghticokees persuaded the Moravians to station resident missionaries among them for both church and school work.11 When Brainerd visited Schaghticoke a second time in March 1743 to hold services, the die had been cast in favor of the Moravians.12 (Could Brainerd's lifelong resentment against the Moravians have had its roots in his frustrated experience at Schaghticoke?)

It is difficult to read Brainerd's diary without being moved by his deep, intense spirituality. But it is also apparent that he wanted to build God's kingdom among the native people within the established religious and social parameters of his own society. Contrary to many of his white countrymen, who were set to wipe out the Native American communities, Brainerd firmly believed that the native people could be converted to the Christian faith. Yet Brainerd's Savior would culminate his work of grace in the hearts and lives of his brown children when they took on the manners and customs of white Christians. This assumption can be seen on the occasion of his exploratory trip into Pennsylvania, where he intended to establish a mission. According to Spangenberg's Moravian journal of 1747, the "Presbyterian Brainerd" had also visited the location where he and his companions were staying. Brainerd had admonished the native people to come together for church services on Sundays, just "as the whites do, and pray as they do. Hence he would build a house for that purpose, and stay with them two years. The Governor had given him orders to that effect, and he would be glad to see the Indians hearken to him. [But they answered him,] 'We are Indians, and don't wish to be transformed into white men. The English are our Brethren, but we never promised to become what they are.'"13

As R. Pierce Beaver has observed, "David Brainerd, too, was
a colonizer." Beaver referred to Brainerd’s later mission in New Jersey, where he brought the people together to be settled in a town according to the colonial pattern, thus facilitating their becoming like godly white Christians. In contrast, the Moravians worked hard to become like Native Americans, to such an extent that at times they were taken to be native people. Norman Pettit has pointed out that one of the determining motivators of David Brainerd’s mission was to counteract the missionary work of the Moravians, which was alienating the native people from white Christianity and which, for Brainerd, could be nothing but a corrupted version of the Christian faith.

After returning to Europe from his visit in fall 1742 to the North American missions, Zinzendorf, in line with Peter Chelcicky, succinctly critiqued the methodology of the English missions: "Therefore we directly oppose the Conversion of the Heathen Nations to the Profession of the Christian Religion; and likewise the Methods hitherto made Use of in the Conversion of both Jews and Heathens. For if Christian Princes and Divines should go so far as to convert the Heathen Nations to their Customs and Ways in our Days, they would thereby do the greatest Piece of Service to the Devil. Therefore I do not in the least believe that the Devil would oppose any one in such an Undertaking, but wo’d rather help them as much as he co’d."

Shekomeko and the Moravian Peace Tradition

The missionaries in Shekomeko operated, as far as we can tell, in accordance with the old Czech principles that discouraged the bearing of arms. Although pacifism was blurred in their own minds and therefore was never made explicit, the Moravian missionaries demonstrated a compelling philosophy of peace, which the Shekomeko Mahicans readily accepted.

Providentially, from the perspective of the methodology of missions, the Moravian peace tradition coincided with ancient Native American peace yearnings. The Iroquois prophet Dekanawideh had stated: "I, Dekanawideh, and the confederate lords now uproot the tallest pine tree and into the cavity thereby made we cast all weapons of war. Into the depths of the earth, down into the deep underearth currents of water flowing into unknown regions, we cast all weapons of strife. We bury them from sight forever and plant again the tree.”

Ilse Loges demonstrates that the Native Americans understood wars to be terrible accidents that occurred outside the order of the world. In some Native American groups, holy men were prohibited from killing other humans, and warriors were barred from officiating at sacramental activities. In light of the lifestyle and preaching of the missionaries, the step from prophet Dekanawideh’s peace contract and the eschatological peace vision of the missionaries’ Bible was small: The nations "shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Mic. 4:3). Whatever the reason, and although it may contradict much of what we have heard and read about Native Americans, the fact is that the converts of the Moravian missions did not have any major difficulties in accepting pacifism. Neither did their non-Christian Native American neighbors find any essential fault with the peace vision of the missions people. The only objection they raised was the fear that some day the white people would come and murder them all.

Eventually, the Moravian converts became more pacificist than their teachers. The Moravian leaders at the mother community in Bethlehem stressed pacifist convictions as options for individual believers; nevertheless, they drew the entire community into defending Bethlehem with arms during the French and Indian War (1754–63). At the same time, the mission's Native Americans confessed their unequivocal commitment to their Creator and Redeemer and to his principles of preserving the life that he had created, including their refusal to go to war:

We will know no other God but the one and true God, who made us and all creatures, and came into this world in order to save sinners; to Him alone we will pray. . . .

We will honor father and mother, and when they grow old and needy we will do for them what we can. . . .

We will not admit rum or any other intoxicating liquor into our towns. . . .

Whenever corn is needed to entertain strangers . . . we will freely contribute from our stores.

We will not go to war, and we will not buy anything of warriors taken in war.

Were these biblical ethics or a constellation of a Native American peace dream? What surfaces seems to be a reinterpretation of the themes of Moravian gospel preaching and Bible reading in light of Native American peace traditions, placed into the contours of universal validity.

Becoming All Things to the White People

To Count Zinzendorf and his missionaries, the "Moravian Persecution" in the colony of New York had been a nightmare. It included eight clashes between the missionaries and the civil authorities, with two trials in New York City. In order to avert similar incidents but also in order to assure the survival of the Moravian community on North American soil, Zinzendorf began lobbying in London and eventually achieved official recognition for his church on April 16, 1749. The bill recognizing the Moravian Church was passed in its third reading in the House of Commons. The Upper House passed the bill on May 12, 1749, and the following month, on June 6, it was signed by the king. The bill granted Moravians everywhere exemption from swearing and from serving on juries in criminal cases. Conscientious objectors would also be exempt from military service in the American colonies.

It is noteworthy that the outcome not only permitted Moravians to become naturalized in the Americas and exempted them from swearing and military service; now they were actually encouraged to settle in America. This meant that they were granted much more than toleration. The Moravian church had actually achieved a more privileged position than that held by the Protestants who had persecuted them. In turn, the Moravians began to relax and to accept the society that had accepted them.

In time, the mutual acceptance became complete. Instead of being taken as a menace to government and its interests, the Moravians became valuable to the crown. For the London government, the work of building towns in Pennsylvania, to-

Zinzendorf assured the survival of the Moravians in North America at the price of assimilation into the main society.

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gether with their successful agriculture and artisanship, demonstrated that they had the skills necessary for effective colonization. And their successful missions to Native North Americans gave proof that they would also be able to “conquer Native America” by transforming its lands into European countrysides. At the same time it was hoped that they would convert the “savages” from their French allegiance to a pro-British stance. (The “French and Indian War” would erupt only a few years later.)

It must be noted that the bill for recognition faithfully reflects the discussions by the Moravian representatives in London. In their fear of further persecutions and their eagerness to become acceptable to colonial society, some of the reasons given for their recognition were essentially anti-Native North American. On his return to Europe after visiting the Native American missions, Zinzendorf had vehemently condemned all missionary work under the auspices of the government. But now, according to the London act, Moravian missions would function as a vanguard for government interests. In this exchange, Zinzendorf assured the survival of the Moravian Unity in North America but paid the high price of assimilation into the main society.

Several decades would pass before this assimilation would affect the Native North American missions. The pivotal point would be what has become known as the Gnadenhütten (Ohio) incident. On March 8, 1782, at the end of the Revolutionary War, American militia murdered an entire Moravian mission village, including women, children, and old people. The slaughter was carried out even though the resident Moravian missionaries, although officially neutral, had been friendly to the Revolution; missionary Heckewelder had even furnished intelligence to the American commander at Fort Pitt. To Heckewelder, as a loyal American, the massacre occurred as a tragic accident.

To the native people, however, Gnadenhütten was no accident. There had been massacres before, and others would follow throughout the nineteenth century. Consequently, to the extent that the established order’s courtship of the Moravian Church progressed, the missionary outreach of the Moravians to Native Americans waned. By the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Moravians and their missions had become reconciled to the white ethos of the newly emerging United States. When it became apparent to the native people that the Moravians had essentially accepted the value system of those who had disowned them, despite the massacre of their Christian brothers and sisters at the Gnadenhütten mission, they turned away from the missionaries. Elma E. Gray presents evidence that many of the Moravian Native American Christians who “had fled . . . after the Gnadenhütten murders . . . lapsed into heathenism, some believing the missionaries would ‘tame’ them [with the Christian faith] and [then] sell them to the whites to massacre.” Native American James Lone Bear Revey draws the circle wider. The Gnadenhütten massacre, he claims, constitutes the pivotal turning point in relations between whites and Native North Americans. Thus, Gnadenhütten signals more than the end of the Moravian missions outreach. From that point onward, the native people began to seal themselves off from all Christian missions, thus marking the end of any generally effective missionary outreach to Native North America.

After the Gnadenhütten massacre in the spring of 1782, Native Americans began to seal themselves off from all Christian missions.

Notes

2. Ibid, p. 2856.
7. The Waldensians “reject any kind of oath. Based on the absolute prohibition to kill, they condemn kings and authorities who decree the death penalty in their laws and judgments” (translated from art. 72 from the report of Inquisitor Petrus, as cited in Jaroslav Goll, ed., Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Böhmischen Brüder, vol. 2 [Prague: J. Otto, 1882], p. 38).
9. Gottlob Büttnner and Hagen et al., Master Diary [of the Shekomeko Mission], December 31, 1739–July 5, 1746, MS Bethlehem Archives, box 111, folder 1, p. 173; see also p. 188, and box 112, folder 2, item 2, p. 4. All MSS classified with a box and folder number are kept in the Bethlehem (Pa.) archives of the Moravian Church.
perspective, the Mahicans at Shekomeko were under the jurisdiction of the Iroquois Confederacy.


20. Which indeed happened in the 1782 Gnadenhütten massacre.


22. Cited in Joseph E. Weinland, The Romantic Story of Schoenbrunn, the First Town in Ohio (Ohio Historical Society, n.d.): 13, emphasis author’s.


27. See note 30 for documentation.


31. This does not mean, of course, that there was no further Protestant missionary work among the native people. In fact, future works even gained sporadic success. But as R. Pierce Beaver points out, “The tremendous investment of lives, time, and money has produced . . . [only] small numerical results.” Beaver argues that this was because “the missionaries sought to ‘civilize’ as well as convert, and assimilation to the white pattern was usually considered to reveal the reality of conversion” (R. Pierce Beaver, American Missions in Bicentennial Perspective [South Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1977], p. 308).
Book Reviews

Christianity in China: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present.


This collection of twenty essays by twenty-one authors takes the study of Christianity in China to new interpretive heights and presents novel information from rich archival and other sources helpfully laid out in a common bibliography. While not a comprehensive survey, this volume nonetheless permits a wide-ranging view with "a focus on Chinese participants" (p. x). By the mid-eighteenth century, Christianity had become an established Chinese popular religion. Although it created tensions among neighbors in Chinese communities under the Qing dynasty, Christianity itself as a rule was not the basis of local conflicts; in contrast, in post-treaty China the tendency of Chinese Christians to seek legal protection under the foreigners' privileges and to withdraw from local community customs caused rifts in Chinese society.

The editor of this volume is professor of history at the University of Kansas and was the director of the History of Christianity in China Project, funded by the Henry Luce Foundation; the project's symposia papers are the bases of the book's chapters. Bays has arranged the essays in four topical groups (Christianity and Qing society, ethnicity, women, and indigenization) tied together by his well-crafted preface and introductions to each part. The groupings reveal that Christianity in China offered welcome alternatives to women and ethnically marginal groups, encouraged new social alliances, increasingly took evangelical form, and played a role in Chinese nationalism (which later came to separate Chinese Christians from their missionary mentors).

While essays vary in strength, the volume is powerful testimony to the significance of Christianity in Chinese history and its value as a means of understanding change in modern China. Space prevents mention here of particular authors, but collectively they enable a much broadened perspective and shift the emphasis from missionaries to converts; Chinese Christianity has taken many forms and has been both Catholic and Protestant, urban and rural, elite and non-elite. This book justly deserves appreciation by a wide audience.

—Suzanne Wilson Barnett

Suzanne Wilson Barnett received her Ph.D. in history and East Asian languages at Harvard University and teaches Chinese and Japanese history at the University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, Washington.


Collections of essays like this one read like an issue of Harper's or Atlantic Monthly. That's because there's not one theme, but four, and no building of a consistent case from beginning to end. That does not mean we can afford to skip them. The editors have achieved their twin goals of providing heavyweight essays packed with provocative pointers to the future and of honoring their esteemed colleague Ted Ward.

"Development" here includes theological education, how we do mission, community development, and pastoral training and ministry. The essays were written by twenty of Ward's former doctoral students at Michigan State University and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. The book also includes three chapters by Ward himself, but only the first is new. In it he bares his soul, not only about education in general, but also about his leap from the secular university to Christian higher education. After forty-six years of teaching, he has not changed his mind. He still calls for lifetime learning, including dialogue, culture learning, and spiritual development.

The essayists develop their own specialties, offering a host of prescriptions for doing better in the next century. Readers can graze at a buffet of some of the most creative thinking around. The "slash and burn" tone of some of the essays, however, is not appetizing. Do we have to treat our past like the Illinois prairie and burn it every spring before new life sprouts? Surely, the twentieth century wasn't all bad. If the twenty-first is to be better, we will have to build on some of the accomplishments of the twentieth.

For those who want to feast on Ward, there's a fourteen-page list of his works that reveals how significantly this distinguished educator and lover of God's world mission has stimulated and provoked our thinking in world missions. This book is a well-deserved tribute.

—James W. Reapsome

Christianity in a New Key: New Voices and Vistas Through Intercontinental Communication.


In this book, which is a new initiative in looking at the mission of the church globally, the author endeavors, albeit in a modest way, to depict a "polycentric" Christianity, being fully aware of the shift of the axis of centers of Christianity from the North to the South. He tries to highlight the peculiar role played by the churches in the South in revitalizing global Christianity; he depicts the church in
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(p. 17) the evangelical tradition’s “bad news, good news” sequence for presenting the Gospel, rather than the “good news, bad news, Good News” sequence of Scripture. Again, he assumes the traditional “three basic steps” involved in conversion: (1) explaining the gospel, (2) encouraging a decision, and (3) welcoming the new Christian into fellowship—ignoring the Celtic Christian wisdom that faith is “more caught than taught,” that fellowship often precedes, and enables, the experience of faith.

The writer’s interests sometimes skew his project. He sees John Calvin as enormously important to the whole apostolic enterprise. He devotes two pages to Asbury, a chapter to Freelinghuyzen. He sees public preaching as the supreme key to evangelism, with little recognition of the role of literature, music, small groups, indigenous forms, compassionate ministries, social networks, or the laity in reaching people. Moreover, the great evangelists were less wonderful than he says, and they have more to teach us than he says.

Nevertheless, it’s a worthy introduction.

—George G. Hunter III

George G. Hunter III is Dean and Professor of Evangelism and Church Growth, School of World Mission and Evangelism, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky.

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The Practice of Presence: Shorter Writings of Harry Sawyer.


Harry Sawyer was one of the triad of the first generation of Africans in theological education in West Africa—E. Bolaji Idowu of Ibadan University, Nigeria; Christian G. Baeté of the University of Ghana; and Sawyer himself from Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone, Freetown—or, as he preferred to put it, on Mount Aureol. The fact that Sawyer belonged in the first generation makes any collection of his writings significant, especially when we try to understand the genesis of theology in Africa.

The foreword to the volume is by Andrew Walls, who used to be Sawyer’s colleague at Fourah Bay College, and the book is edited by John Parratt, associate director of the centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World at the University of Edinburgh, who also spent a number of years in southern Africa. These two Westerners have drunk deep of the stream of theology flowing in western Africa and are endeavoring to share it more widely. The effort by these two scholars illustrates, if it verifies, a statement Sawyer made that “a Theologia Africana . . . should provide a common medium by which Africans and non-Africans, but even more so, the multiplicity of Christian groupings, could begin to think together, first in the African continent and maybe, in the providence of God, in other parts of the world” (p. 28).

Sawyer published some significant and well-known monographs, including Creative Evangelism (1968), God: Ancestor or Creator? (1970), and with W. T. Harris, The Spring of Mendes Belief and Conduct (1968). The present volume assembles some of the most important writings, originally published in journals that may not be easily accessible. The essays may be grouped in two parts. The first, focusing on West African religions, tackles the issues of the nominous, the religious interpretation of the abnormal, ancestral communion-worship-veneration, death, and the soul and healing. The second part of
the collection focuses on theological issues, including African theology, soteriology, and mission.

The essays reflect erudition, breadth, and depth of scholarship and are insightful. The language, however, is not ponderous but is manageable and friendly. The study is not just phenomenological; it also attempts interpretation and illumination with and of psychology, sociology and other fields. In one essay Sawyerr makes an unapologetic and nondefensive case for Theologia Africana, which is to be "the rigorous pursuit of systematic theology, based on a philosophical appraisal of the thoughtform of the African People" (p. 99). It is sympathetic to African worldviews and culture and sensitively critical, where necessary. His personal insights are not confused with what the religionists themselves say. Even when we disagree with Sawyerr, we can respect the argument and careful research of the statement he makes.

Permit me to end on a very personal recollection. Toward the end of Sawyerr’s long service at Fourah Bay, some of his past students turned on him, which gave him great pain. I invited him to Ghana, and we struggled through the experience and discovered that in another capacity I could help relocate him in the Caribbean for a while. When it came to pass, I had the opportunity to visit him there. On this occasion, he said to me, “John, thank you for saving me from oblivion and disgrace.” I recall this incident to say that this collection of essays does a better job of saving Harry Aphonso Ebun Sawyerr (1909–1986) from oblivion and disgrace. If I had my way, this would be compulsory reading for all who would dare to interpret the Word of God. The editor is to be most warmly congratulated for this work.

—John S. Pobee

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Between Two Cultures: Ecumenical Ministry in a Pluralist World.


In this book, the Indian theologian Stanley Samartha tells us the story of how interfaith dialogue gained a permanent place on the agenda of the World Council of Churches. It is a personal account, focusing mainly on the 1970s, when Samartha became the first director of the WCC subunit on dialogue. He gives firsthand insights into the processes and the persons behind it that led to the acceptance of dialogue as a crucial issue for the churches. This story, which is the backbone of the book, is set within the context of the author’s own pilgrimage between two cultures, Western and Asian.

The book consists of three parts: “Early Years,” “Sojourn,” and “Return.” Though the book is not an autobiography in the strict sense, we see the emergence of an Indian ecumenical theologian, and we understand the motives that have driven Samartha to dedicate himself to interreligious relations. He describes himself now as a liberal Christian. “I am Hindu by culture, Christian by faith, Indian by citizenship, and ecumenical by choice” (p. 161). The story in the middle part of the book, which describes several important landmarks on the way to the adoption of a set of guidelines on dialogue, has been told many times. What makes this part so interesting is that all these important moments are set in perspective by a man who has been directly involved in this process.
In the last chapters, Samantha focuses on three theological subjects: the uniqueness of Jesus Christ in a religiously plural world, the future of interreligious relations, and the question of the Holy Spirit and people of other faiths. Those who are familiar with his writings hear well-known tones. This book is the personal counterpart of his Courage for Dialogue (1981), a volume with articles on ecumenical issues in interreligious relationships. Together with his One Christ—Many Religions: Toward a Revised Christology (1991), it gives us a thorough insight into the contributions of Stanley Samantha.

—Eeuwout van der Linden

Missiology and the Social Sciences: Contributions, Cautions, and Conclusions.


This book, comprising papers given at a meeting of the Evangelical Missiological Society, is an attempt to explore the important interface between missiology and the social sciences. It includes a number of useful insights but suffers from a number of serious weaknesses.

First, there is no single list of “the social sciences” several authors offer lists, but they are not identical. There is a heavy emphasis on the linguistics/cultural anthropology/communications nexus, which is dealt with in several papers (Allison, McEhanon, Wan, McQuilkin, Hiebert). This set of disciplines has been heavily used by missionaries and missiologists. The other social sciences (sociology, psychology, economics, political science) have been of much less use to missions in the past and are therefore largely neglected. One paper (Corwin) by title addresses sociology, but in fact it constitutes an indictment of a certain mode of missiological research rather than dealing with the discipline of sociology. Similarly, a paper on psychology (Lundquist) deals only with the use of this science in counseling missionaries. And a paper supposedly about economics (Koestenberger) discusses Christian concerns relating to economic behavior but ignores the discipline of economics. Political science is not so much as mentioned.

Second, the disciplines dealt with are considered almost exclusively from a pragmatic perspective—what can they contribute, how have they contributed, to missions? How have they been used or abused? A number of theological and biblical considerations are invoked but the philosophical foundations of these modern Western sciences are never seriously tackled, so that it remains unclear why abuses occurred and what the real nature of the problem was.

To conclude, there remains a great need for a book falling somewhere between this rather hit-or-miss survey and the massive and abstruse Theology and Social Theory of John Milbank.

—Charles R. Taber

Charles R. Taber, a contributing editor, is Professor of World Mission at Emmanuel School of Religion, Johnson City, Tennessee. He served as a missionary in the Central African Republic and as a translations consultant of the United Bible Societies in West Africa.
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There are many books dealing with church planting, but none that focus on church planting in the urban context and none that provide a global perspective on the issue—until now. In Planting and Growing Urban Churches a group of urban missiologists explore strategies for urban church planting. Contributors include Ray Bakke, Craig Ellison, Viv Grigg, Robert Linthicum, and Roger Greenway.


Kenneth Cracknell’s new book, following on from his Towards a New Relationship (1986), deserves a much fuller and more detailed review than is possible here. In his preface the author tells of his dialogic awakening when, as a young Methodist missionary in West Africa, he became convinced of the inadequacy of what he calls the “theological framework” with which he had been provided and set about rectifying it. His reading led him back beyond Barth and Kraemer to the generations of theologians and missionaries active between 1846, the year in which F. D. Maurice gave lectures in London entitled “The Religions of the World and Their Relations to Christianity,” and the outbreak of the First World War. There he found gold, perhaps not fully refined, but gold for all that.

The three major sections of this book deal with (1) five theologians—two Englishmen, one Scot, and two Americans; (2) eight missionaries, five of them active in India; and (3) the material submitted to Commission IV of the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of 1910. The book is rounded off with a chapter on two more pioneers, W. H. Temple Gairdner and James Hope Moulton, and a postscript in which a sequel is promised.

Cracknell’s book is thoroughly researched and well written. It is not, however, quite as “pioneering” a study as the blurb claims, at least not in the eyes of this reviewer, who was working on precisely this material, including the Edinburgh 1910 manuscripts, in the early 1960s. Good as this book undoubtedly is within certain limits, however, it is presented as history, and it is as history that its shortcomings are most obvious. Its theologians and missionaries remind one of snapshots in an album rather than actors in a drama. Overall, the story lacks depth and perspective and seems curiously short on sympathy for those who were (and are) doubtful about the liberal, and later the dialogic, approach—not because of anything they might feel about Hindus or Muslims, but for reasons connected with the integrity and continuity of Christianity itself.

In a paper from 1993, published in Current Dialogue 26, Cracknell said that in working on this present book, his chief concern had been with scholars and theologians who had discovered “that their received theologies about other religions were wrong.” Well, yes, I suppose they did discover that, in part and in varying degrees, depending on what those theologies contained in the first place. It will be
interesting in this connection to see what Cracknell makes of A. G. Hogg (barely mentioned here, though his best work in India was done before 1914), who was the one who had thought the most penetratingly on this issue. For that and many other reasons, I look forward to the promised sequel to this book.

—Eric J. Sharpe

Eric J. Sharpe is Emeritus Professor of Religious Studies in the University of Sydney, Australia.

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**Christianity in Africa in the 1990s.**

These thirteen papers—first given at a 1992 conference in Edinburgh—appear in the shadow of Africa’s numerous crises. The authors—Africans and expatriates, scholars and religious workers—agree that Christianity is a vital force in these crises but differ on its quality and effectiveness.

Among the more pessimistic authors, Adrian Hastings deplores the mainland churches’ declining commitment to Africanize Christianity, while Aylward Shorter describes an authoritarian, out-of-touch Catholicism surviving only from “injections of foreign funds” (p. 24). James Wilkie recounts the fading of African ecumenism, and Louise Pirouet shows the failings of church-run programs for refugee resettlement.

Edith Blumhofer and Matthews Ojo report more positively on the burgeoning Pentecostal and charismatic movements, as do Kwame Bediako on African theology and D. Zac Niringiyse on parachurch Christian organizations. Stan Nussbaum describes how African grassroots Christians, working with Western scholars, have produced Bible commentaries for Africa. And Lamin Sanneh, illustrating the intellectual vitality of African Christianity, mounts a Christian critique of the African state.

One wedges between several authors is their assessment of Pentecostalism and revivalism, which several regard as hostile to African traditions or overly tied to the United States. By contrast, Ojo and Blumhofer (and Niringiyse writing of evangelical organizations) stress the African nature of these movements, notwithstanding their international ties.

The optimists are generally supported by Andrew Walls, whose introduction and conclusion to the volume place African Christianity in a global context. In a few brilliant pages Walls assesses the links between pre-Christian and Christian Africa, arguing, for example, that Pentecostal and revivalist groups “oppose traditional [African] practice but do so in traditional terms” (p. 6). He asserts, moreover, that African Christianity is a new “tradition of Christianity” comparable to Catholicism, Protestantism, and Orthodoxy (p. 148); it is, in fact, “the standard Christianity of the present age” (p. 3).

Though unevenly documented and marred by typos, this book abounds in valuable insights on Christianity in contemporary Africa.

—Richard Elphick

Richard Elphick, a Canadian specializing in South African history, is Professor of History at Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut.
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Global Communication: Is There a Place for Human Dignity?


An Argentine journalist specializing in church issues, Plou reports on the 1995 congress of the World Association for Christian Communication held in Metepec, Mexico. The participants agreed that the rapid growth of new media, especially television, and the creation of giant new media monopolies are threatening human freedom and dignity worldwide and that this presents a challenge to every Christian community.

The fundamental problem is the current tendency to turn information into a commodity, rather than a social good. The result is monopoly. "In many countries you can buy a newspaper, listen to the radio and watch a television program produced by a single private multimedia company and receive the same information, the same opinion, the same analysis" (p. 1). Four news agencies, located in the United States and Europe, control 96 percent of the entire flow of the world’s news.

But the wealthy nations seek to maintain this disparity, and UNESCO has been cowed into avoiding the problem altogether. Who will take responsibility for preventing the exclusion of whole segments of populations from communication—from being heard and hearing—if not Christian communities?

Plou reports on a number of approaches being used to free people from the restrictions imposed by monopoly media, including media education, the creation of small, independent radio stations, encouraging the use of small-group media such as plays, dances, and storytelling. The Catholic Church in Chiapas, Mexico, discovered that through marches, public demonstrations, and especially the use of the Internet to inform journalists, they could get worldwide media attention focused on their plight.

This process of “globalization from below” has slowly begun to gather momentum in recent years. Plou challenges Christian communities everywhere—and especially in the wealthy West—to join in the fight for communication to be used to enhance human dignity throughout the world.

—William F. Fore

William F. Fore was director of visual education, United Methodist Board of Global Missions, then head of communication for the National Council of Churches, USA. He most recently taught communication at Yale Divinity School and is teaching at United Theological College, Bangalore, India, in 1997.
Giving Wings to the Gospel: The Remarkable Story of Mission Aviation Fellowship.


Dietrich Buss, professor of history at Biola University, has written an interesting history of Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF). Founded during the closing days of World War II, this affiliation of flyers with a vision for serving evangelical missions became “the largest private air fleet in the world” (p. 332). It evolved into an organization that serves national churches, as well as expatriate missionaries, literally around the world.

Buss wisely includes brief histories of the independent but interlinked MAF organizations in England and Australia. The reader is given a sense of both the thrill and the danger of flying missionaries to remote locations and is introduced personally to many of the dedicated pilots and their families. Anecdotes from the field are interspersed with the narrative of the developing organization’s growth and policy decisions.

Giving Wings to the Gospel has the strengths and weaknesses of “providential” history writing. MAF’s constituency and other evangelicals interested in missions will find the story stimulating and faith affirming. Those with a professional (as well as personal) interest in missions will find much useful information but are likely to be frustrated by the use of providence as an explanatory device and the lack of in-depth exploration and analysis of significant larger issues, such as inter- and intra-mission conflict and controversy, the difficulty of operating within faith-mission parameters in a capital-intensive organization, or the role of Western missionary technicians in developing countries. Betty Greene’s story, that of a woman finding her way in a “man’s world” as a pilot and leader in an evangelical organization, seems a natural fit in an account of MAF’s history, but these aspects of her career are not fully explored. Despite these drawbacks, the book is an important reference for the library of anyone interested in the development of twentieth-century missions.

—William L. Svelmoe

William Svelmoe is a doctoral candidate in history at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana. He grew up in the Philippines, where his parents served with the Wycliffe Bible Translators.


Histories of various national Baptist unions have been written across the years, but “this is the first attempt at... a quick reference work to give a bird’s eye view of Baptists in every conceivable geographical area of the world,” explains Denton Lotz, general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, in the foreword. Editor Albert Warden, emeritus professor of history at Belmont University and president of the Southern Baptist Historical Society, states that “the work has attempted to include a
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Baptist body if it carries the name ‘Baptist,’ has a historical relationship to other Baptist bodies, and maintains basic Baptist beliefs” (p. xxxi).

Strengths of this work include a Baptist history “tree” featuring Particular, General, and Separate Baptist branches with their multiple offshoots; sections on Baptist identity and Baptist expansion that provide foundational understanding of Baptists as a people; data contributions by forty-nine resource persons from an “on-the-ground” perspective; and a list at the end of each section detailing countries with the dates Baptist work began. Particularly moving are the narrative historical cameos about Baptist work in each region. It reads like a type of missions history through a Baptist framework.

Although the Baptist tree grows increasingly complex through division of old branches and added new ones, Wardin claims that Baptists have retained as cohesive a body as any denomination in the world. The Baptist World Alliance umbrella covers 180 diverse member bodies numbering 40 million members. This work enables smaller unions to see themselves within a larger community of Christians called Baptists, while reminding older, larger unions of the importance of all the parts, regardless of size. For non-Baptists, this book provides an understanding of the role of this stream of the Christian church in the scope of the world Christian mission.

—William R. O’Brien

William R. O’Brien, Director of the Global Center, Stanford University’s Bessey Divinity School, was a missionary to Indonesia.

Religion and the Variety of Culture: A Study in Origin and Practice


This brief study is a revised and expanded version of chapter 1 of Sanneh’s Encountering the West: Christianity and the Global Cultural Process: The African Dimension (1993). The author is the D. Willis James Professor of Missions and World Christianity at Yale University, and also chairs the University’s Council on African Studies. In the context of a critique of modern Western concepts and formulations of culture, and the representation of religion as a barrier to the development of freedom, reason, and progress in cultures, the author argues for a recovery of the mutual reciprocity of religion and culture. He rejects ideological definitions of culture that seek to exclude the human sense of tran-
scendence from serious consideration or to present culture as an enlightened alternative to religion. Over against the conventional viewpoint that missionaries are at best cultural mediators and at worst may have endangered the cultures they penetrated, the author does not seek to discount the negative aspects of missionary activity but argues convincingly for a more realistic assessment that takes account of all the evidence available.

Alongside a general argument that missions may have aided indigenous cultural values to survive the impact of Western technological superiority, Sanneh makes the striking point that the immense missionary effort put into mother-tongue literacy and Bible translation represents a clear affirmation of cultures as viable, valuable, and continuing vehicles for local and national consciousness. This very brief study is a valuable introduction to the issues of religion and culture, and to the work of an important writer in this field.

—Simon Rae


The central question pursued in this welcome study of one mission station in China is how the foreign missionaries of the Southern Presbyterian Church received praise from local Chinese at the very time nationalism was surfaced. Lawrence D. Kessler, professor of history at the University of North Carolina, explores other questions as well, such as: What is the relationship between the secular activities of the missionaries and their religious message? Or how did this one community handle the pressure to transfer authority to Chinese control?

As Kessler notes, missionaries challenged traditional China with Western values and were consequently "among the first to experience the Chinese (and Japanese) reaction to that penetration" (p. 3), as had been predicted by early nineteenth-century advocates of an evangelical rather than a social gospel approach to mission work (p. 158).

Kessler, however, leaves a number of issues undeveloped. He notes that contemporary Chinese are analyzing the missionary effort in China, but he offers no assessment concerning what these Chinese scholars conclude about the beneficial or destructive aspects of such work. Another lost opportunity is the source of training of the Chinese medical staff who assume control at critical moments. Discussion of this issue would shed additional light on the scope of missionary impact. A theme appearing throughout this well-written study is the effort to create an independent Christian church and the unwillingness of the Western community to let go. Kessler persuasively argues that it was the social gospel message that impeded the creation of an indigenous Chinese church in China. However, the existence of an apparently viable, independent Chinese Christian community in China today is curiously not examined. Are there remnants of the earlier Christian community in the Jiangyin vicinity? If so, are they playing any role in a renewed Chinese Christian church?

—Adrian A. Bennett

Dissertation Notices

From the University of Birmingham, England, 1993-1997

1993
Seigel, Michael.

Taylor, Malcolm.
"Publish and Be Blessed: A Case Study in Early Pentecostal Publishing History."

1994
Lewis, Harold.
"No Alien Race, No Foreign Shore. Towards an Historical and Theological Understanding of the Mission of Black Episcopalians."

Enno, Simon Pau Khan.
"Nat Worship: A Paradigm for Doing Contextual Theology in Myanmar."

1995
Goh, Moo Song.
"Western and Asian Portrayals of Robert Jermain Thomas (1839-1866), Pioneer Protestant Missionary to Korea. A Historical Study of an East-West Encounter through His Mission."

Ramambason, Laurent.
" 'Mission Doers' in Madagascar: A Contribution to the Subject Matter and Method of Missiology."

1996
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"Reconstructing a Korean-Ecumenical Missiology in the Plurality of the Oekumene."

Parry, John M.
"The Word is Not Bound. The Encounter of Sikhs and Christians in India and the United Kingdom."

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"Gospel and Culture in Latin American Protestantism: Toward a New Theological Appreciation of Syncretism."

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These dissertations were prepared under the supervision of Werner Ustorf, Professor of Mission, Department of Theology, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, England.
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