Dialogue in Mission: Stance or Compromise?

It was a minor incident but not soon forgotten. Two missionaries, each with a lifetime of Christian witness in Muslim societies were in the room. One addressed a community of missionaries, the other sat in the audience. The speaker referred to Islam and its societies in unrelentingly negative terms. The listener squirmed silently in acute embarrassment and protest, for his Christian witness in Muslim societies had been one of dialogue and cooperation wherever possible. Not the kind of confrontation described by the speaker.

Which missional approach is most effective and faithful to the Gospel? Is dialogue as a missionary stance hopelessly naive and prone to compromise?

In this issue Archbishop Marcello Zago, O.M.I., with many years of experience as a missionary in Asia, helps us see the place and possibilities of interreligious dialogue as a responsible stance for a faithful gospel witness. “Dialogue,” says Zago, is “motivated by the understanding of the way God himself deals with us and acts in our midst. God enters into dialogue with every person in order to make his plan of salvation operative.” Dialogue is appropriate close to home as well as far away. Zago reminds us that Paul VI envisioned dialogue moving from the center outward, “with the other members of one’s own confession, with other Christians, with the followers of other religions, and even with atheists.” In other words, commitment to dialogue is a commitment to love and respect others. Dialogue as practiced in some times and some places may indeed be naïve, fainthearted, and compromised, but what Zago advocates is a stance, not a compromise.

One of the long-term goals and benefits of dialogue, as Zago notes, is authentic inculturation of the Gospel. Kwame Bediako, in this issue of the INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN, presents a brief but penetrating case study of the dynamics of inculturation. Western theologians may choke on a Ghanaian Christian’s prayer to “Nana Yesu” (Ancestor Jesus). But Bediako explores the biblical and cultural foundations that warrant such localized expressions and that signal the development of authentic inculturation of Christian faith.

Stephen Bevans and Dale Bruner enter into dialogue on an age-old debate as it applies to mission: the relation between Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit. Bevans wishes to emphasize the priority of the Spirit’s revelation to peoples of all faiths and cultures; Bruner champions the traditional priority of the Son in Christian witness.

Issues of inculturation, dialogue, and sensitive cultural engagement will also be observed in our ongoing “Legacy” and “Pilgrimage in Mission” series. The stories of Adoniram Judson, Harry and Susan Strachan, and our contemporary Robert V. Finley of Christian Aid Mission help us put flesh on the issues treated in these pages.

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Mission and Interreligious Dialogue

Marcello Zago, O.M.I.

The concept and practice of dialogue is the great new missionary reality of the postconciliar era. It has changed the method of mission and even the identity of the missionary. Before dealing with dialogue in its interreligious and ecumenical expression, however, it is necessary to appreciate fully its ecclesial value and the outlook and attitude it requires.

Dialogue is in fact motivated by the understanding of the way God himself deals with us and acts in our midst. God enters into dialogue with every person in order to make his plan of salvation operative. God also works out a history of saving love not only with regard to individuals but also with regard to peoples and religions. The church as a whole and each individual missionary must take their inspiration from this divine way of operating and dealing with us.

This is the outlook reflected by Paul VI in his encyclical Ecclesiam suam (1964). He envisions dialogue moving in circles with all human beings, according to both persons and groups: with the other members of one’s own confession, with other Christians, with the followers of other religions, and even with atheists. Basically, dialogue flows from love and respect for others. It sees not only the values present in others but the working of the Spirit in others. The Spirit is always the principal agent of mission, as Pope John Paul II’s missionary encyclical, Redemptoris missio (1990), states. Dialogue not only respects what is good in persons and groups but also enriches the missionary and the church. As a result of dialogue the participants assume human values and the fruits of grace, thus fostering a process of ongoing inculturation.

This outlook influences the whole of missionary activity, which must start from the concrete situation of the people not only for methodological reasons but for theological reasons as well. No person and no group can be regarded as uncultivated ground, deprived of culture and the action of God. The Spirit is already present. He was there before the missionary arrived and in one way or another has caused his gifts to be fruitful. The missionary is destined to be the discoverer of this ancient story of salvation so that he or she can cooperate with it by bringing the gospel message and causing it to grow. This does not reduce the urgency of mission. Rather, it qualifies it by requiring respect and discernment with regard to persons and groups.

When we speak of dialogue, we do not mean merely talking together but a cultivation of interpersonal relations among individuals and groups to gain a better understanding and appreciation of one another, working together and enriching one another and thus promoting greater unity among peoples and religions. The dialogue method must be manifested in the whole of missionary and pastoral activity. It is through dialogue that an authentic church can emerge, one that promotes communion, evangelization, and inculturation and that serves as a sacrament of salvation, the sign and the instrument of unity. It also has an influence on the way we live together in this world, moving us to make it a more fitting dwelling place for human beings. This is the global context into which dialogue fits.

Ecumenical Dialogue

There are three forms of dialogue: ecumenical dialogue, Christian-Jewish dialogue, and interreligious dialogue. Their theological foundations are distinct from one another. In the history of the missions we find that there has been tension and struggle among the missionaries of the various churches. They have competed with one another to be the first to arrive in certain places and to convert certain peoples to Christ. Non-Catholic Christians were first to address this situation. It was in order to remedy the spirit of competition that the ecumenical movement was born and that the missionary conferences began at the end of the nineteenth century. From that, in turn, came the International Missionary Council (1921), theological movements such as Faith and Order (1927), ecumenical movements such as Life and Work (1937), and finally the World Council of Churches (1948). The activities of this last-mentioned organization have been many and beneficial. It has also had its times of crisis, such as in the mid-1970s when the conservative evangelical movement accused the WCC of being more interested in social action than in evangelization.

An early manifestation of ecumenism among Catholics can be seen in the Uniate churches beginning in the sixteenth century. In more recent times ecumenical attitudes and activity have focused on the unity of churches and not only the integration of individuals. Although forerunners have not been lacking in the Catholic field, ecumenism reached full flower only in the establishment of the Secretariat (now Council) for Promoting Christian Unity (1960), and the decree Unitatis redintegratio (1964) of Vatican Council II. In his letter Ut unum sint (1995) on ecumenical commitment, Pope John Paul II outlined the road that has been traveled so far and the distance that still must be covered. The most consistent successes have been made on the theological level bilaterally, that is, between the Catholic Church and other traditional churches. There is also progress on the popular level, as was evident in the ecumenical assembly at Graz in 1997. Getting the whole community involved is essential but difficult because of nationalist and historical prejudices. The fundamental basic condition for ecumenism is faith in Christ the divine Savior and in the Trinity.

In the area of missions the ecclesial commitment to ecumenism has brought many changes. Relations with the churches of the Reformation have improved, leading to a lessening of tension and competition. Various forms of cooperation have developed...
in the fields of social welfare, of human promotion, and the promotion of peace. There are also some initiatives in the religious field such as mutual visitation among ecclesial communities. In Indonesia, for example, the priest or pastor visiting scattered communities will often visit the communities of other confessions. There have also been developments in ecumenical prayer and in the objective knowledge of other confessions.

Simultaneously, a destabilizing movement of proselytism by the evangelical-charismatic groups and the sects has increased. The missionary encyclical sums up the situation in these words: “Ecumenical activity and harmonious witness to Jesus Christ by Christians who belong to different churches and ecclesial communities has already borne abundant fruit. But it is ever more urgent that they work and bear witness together at this time when Christian and para-Christian sects are sowing confusion by their activity. The expansion of these sects represents a threat for the Catholic Church and for all ecclesial communities with which she is engaged in dialogue. Wherever possible, and in the light of local circumstances, the response of Christians can itself be an ecumenical one.” This concerned and somewhat defensive judgment of the situation reflects the experience of missionaries in the field. The very prevalence of proselytism, though, has fostered a rethinking of the present pastoral approach. As a consequence, the new pastoral approach emphasizes a more intense sense of ecclesial identity, the promotion of small communities and of local leaders, and a giving of greater attention to the needs of the people and to inculturation. This difficult situation shows how close are the links between mission and ecumenism. If the latter is missing, then the mission is hindered.

**Dialogue with Jews**

The question of relations with Jewish believers is not one that is often raised by missionaries, because the Jewish presence is very limited in mission countries. However, an understanding of the nature of this dialogue has consequences for missionary activity and in the understanding of some of its aspects. Jewish-Christian dialogue is theologically closer to ecumenical dialogue than to interreligious dialogue. Ancient Israel as a people and as a religion was the custodian of the promise of a Messiah and enjoyed special divine protection. The nation received revelation and the Scriptures; it began the privileged way of alliance with the God of Abraham. Consequently the Catholic Commission for Religious Relations with Jews is part of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and not the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

Relations between Christianity and other religions can be modeled on those between Christians and Jews. As a category, the story of salvation can be applied to any people and, in a way, to any religion because God is concerned not only with individuals but with groups and peoples. However, this comparison is not meant to suggest a universal equivalence, for God established a special covenant with Israel. The scriptures of other religions cannot be placed on the same level as those of the Jews. The Hindu or Buddhist scriptures may not be used liturgically in the same way as those of the Old Testament.
also gives a wider meaning to the concept and the purpose of mission, for mission not only must evangelize to convert and build up the community but also must try to extend the values of the kingdom beyond the confines of the church and attract all peoples toward the eschatological kingdom. Interreligious dialogue may therefore become a specific missionary activity, complementary to proclamation and to the formation of the community. In some instances it is the only form of activity possible and justifies the missionary presence.  

This view of dialogue as a specific, autonomous activity, justifying a real missionary presence, is new. The founder of my own order, Saint Eugene de Mazenod, in 1850, withdrew his missionaries from Algeria because they were forbidden to do direct evangelization among the Muslims. The dialogue attitude allows us to have a new type of presence and opens up the Christian community to the cultural and religious context. In Asia, for example, the Christians used to live in a sort of ghetto, withdrawn from their own culture. In Africa, the practice was to establish Christian villages separate from the traditional centers, and the catechumenate in particular was organized in a separate location. Nowadays contact with other religions makes it possible to give a more penetrating witness and fosters a progressive inculturation.

There have been forerunners of this form of dialogue in Asia. It was, however, made official and promoted by Vatican Council II in its document Nostra aetate (1965) and was given even greater emphasis by some solemn gestures such as the day of prayer for peace held in Assisi in 1986. Popes Paul VI and John Paul II have proved to be convinced promoters of this form of dialogue through their travels, their meetings with delegations of other religions, and their teaching. The magisterium constantly insists on the twofold requirement of dialogue: openness to others and a deepening of one's own Christian identity.  

The Secretariat for Non-Christian Religions (1964), now known as the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, has played an important part in the promotion of dialogue. During the first twenty years of its existence, it engaged in dialogue by directly organizing meetings with various religious traditions, promoting a knowledge of other religions among Catholics, and generally laying the foundations for dialogue. During the past fifteen years it has promoted dialogue at the local level, involving local churches. The great turning point was the 1986 day of prayer in Assisi. On that occasion the local churches were involved in the preparation and in accompanying the delegations of the various religions and churches. Documents such as Dialogue and Mission (1984) and Dialogue and Proclamation (1990) have been prepared to clarify the issues. They have had a theological and pastoral influence, which is reflected even in the more solemn magisterium, such as the missionary encyclical Redemptoris missio.

Forms of Interreligious Dialogue

Experience shows that dialogue may be expressed in a wide variety of ways. Conversational dialogue and formal meetings are not the only or even the most important ways. The most common form is that practiced by ordinary people in the situations of everyday life. It is called living dialogue or dialogue of life. In practice it consists in respecting persons as believers on a neighborly basis and establishes constructive and positive relationships, not so much in spite of religious diversity as because of it. In that way it is possible to acquire a deeper understanding of other people’s experience and consequently of their religion as they live it. That approach also fosters mutual witness. This form of living dialogue is necessary in today's pluralism. It requires a deeper understanding of one’s own religious identity in order to avoid lapsing into relativism. During the 1970s I was a promoter of this form of dialogue in Laos, where I tried not only to create a greater theoretical awareness among the Christian community but also to promote meetings between groups of ordinary Christians and Buddhists.

Another form of dialogue is that of cooperation among people of different faiths with a view to fostering common projects for human promotion, mutual understanding, or peace. This can be done between groups with a certain specialization, for example in the area of education, agriculture, or health care. It can also be done among ordinary people who aim to solve a particular problem. Cooperation of this sort is more effective if motivation and religious affiliations are freely acknowledged, not bypassed or hidden. The role of dialogue by cooperation is to integrate the religious dimension in all aspects of life and to make the religions open to the common good and mutual respect. For example, in Senegal I saw that cooperation in agricultural projects enabled minority Christian communities to be recognized and respected by the Muslim majority. It is the sort of dialogue that, generally speaking, requires an initiator or animator, but lay participants in development can have a decisive role in promoting it.

The dialogue of religious experience is another area for mutual relations. It takes the form of exchange or participation with regard to religious experience. It may take a very solemn form, as on the occasion of the day of prayer for peace in Assisi, or in structured meditation or prayer meetings, as happens quite often in India and Japan. It may also find expression in more simple form, such as presence for the celebration of a birth, marriage, or funeral, or showing signs of respect for what the other person regards as sacred, or taking part in the festive celebrations of others.

In particular, I recall two personal examples of the dialogue-of-experience type. When I was living in Southeast Asia, I wanted to acquire a better knowledge of Buddhism as it is really practiced. I went to the school of a Buddhist teacher of meditation and took part in a period of contemplation in his center. At the end of my week's retreat the monk asked me to tell what I had experienced and how I understood it. I told him how my experience of emptiness had brought me closer to God, who is the Absolute, completely different from everything that is limited or created. He was impressed. He asked me to give witness to my religious experience in the presence of the hundreds of lay Buddhists who were going to meet on the following Sunday for a day of meditation. From then on, I was invited every month to take part in a day of meditative retreat for the lay Buddhists of the city, and I always gave the Christian outlook on the theme propounded by the master himself. This went on for two years until the Communist government expelled all missionaries from the country and some time later sent the master to a reeducation camp.

In 1974 I organized a seminar for the study and practice of meditation, both Buddhist and Christian. About fifty people of

Dialogue requires a deeper understanding of one's own religious identity to avoid lapsing into relativism.
both religions took part. The result was a greater appreciation of the methods and aims of meditative prayer in both traditions. A number of Christians, including several missionaries, made a more decisive choice of meditation as a form of prayer and witness.

Sometimes dialogue of cooperation and dialogue of religious experience are integrated and foster the dialogue of life. In the Diocese of Kaolak in Senegal, especially during the 1980s, agricultural development projects brought together Muslims and Christians. There were interreligious, mixed groups of young people who took their inspiration from the Catholic Youth Movement and became part of it. During the formation meetings there were always moments of focus on faith and on the experience of God. In the first part, all shared their common faith. Then in the second part Christians and Muslims separated to go more in depth into their own specific aspects of faith.

Theological dialogue is important for understanding certain aspects of religious faith and for gaining mutual knowledge. It can be fostered by interpersonal discussion among believers who have developed mutual trust. It is the most effective form because it is more discreet and does not oblige the participants to take any social precautions, which can sometimes be very inconvenient, especially with Muslim counterparts. It is the way in which to reveal a living faith at a deeper level. I have had some very in-depth experiences in this field not only with Buddhists but even with Muslims who are normally very reluctant to express certain truths and experiences in public.

It may also take place in formal meetings that are more or less public, between experts and authorities. It has a social importance and impact. Expressions of the faith content are in line with what is publicly professed and is “politically correct,” especially where there is tension. Muslims are more attentive to this form of dialogue, which they consider to have a political and witness value. This type of dialogue has been promoted by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and by the World Council of Churches, and also by universities and by spontaneous groups of specialists. There have been some negative experiences in the history of official dialogue as, for example, in the Christian-Islamic conference held in Tripoli in 1974. However, even this form of formal dialogue can take a humanly positive turn. It enables people to meet. It fosters more open decisions by the authorities, as happened in Libya and elsewhere following the Tripoli meeting.

Official dialogue among religious authorities has a symbolic value and normally promotes other forms of dialogue. It is the type of dialogue that is promoted, for example, by the pope’s journeys abroad. It can sometimes take spectacular forms as for instance in Morocco in 1985, when the pope spoke to 80,000 young Muslims. More often it takes place at a local level, when leaders and representatives of the different religions visit one another, especially on the occasion of special events in the community.

The various forms of dialogue are better expressed when there is internal or interior dialogue. Persons and communities are immersed in their own milieu and are influenced by it in understanding and living their own faith, especially if they are a minority group or have recently joined a new religion. As regards Christians, we must take into account that if they are Japanese, they are influenced by the religious environmental outlook of Buddhism-Shintoism and the associated culture. If they come from a traditional African religion, they are influenced by its values and outlook. Therefore all believers must necessarily have an interior dialogue with their religious cultural roots in order to clarify one’s Christian identity and consciously inculturate one’s faith. This is a personal exercise that can be more easily done by those who have the maturity and ability to evaluate and discern. Interior dialogue may also apply to the community, that is, to an entire group. This form of dialogue is necessary for a deeper understanding of the faith and its inculturation in a specific context. We are still only beginning to break ground in this field.

Every form of dialogue has cultural implications. There is no religion that has not been influenced by culture, and there is no traditional culture that is not touched and animated by religion. There is, in fact, a Laotian Buddhism, a Cambodian Buddhism, a Sri Lankan Buddhism, and so forth. Each one of these is a synthesis and a cohabitation of the Buddhist way with the local culture. Islam, which tries to spread the message of Mohammed together with a unifying Arab culture, also has cultural peculiarities. We need only mention African Islam with its confraternities. This is all the more true of traditional African religions, which pervade the ethnic cultures. Throughout all of this area there can be no worthwhile interreligious dialogue that is not simultaneously intercultural dialogue and that does not take account of the cultural dimension. It can be seen, therefore, that interreligious dialogue must inevitably be conducted in a particular cultural context.

Dialogue has to overcome many challenges. One of them is that it must change according to the situation. There are two clear examples in recent years. In Algeria and in the southern Philippines, Christian-Muslim relations were excellent until the mid-1980s. At that point the situation changed completely, for a number of reasons. This means that the evolution of dialogue does not always occur at the same pace and that changes must be expected, usually linked with the political or social situation.

Dialogue can become ecumenical, that is, it can be promoted in agreement with the other Christian churches. This happens at an upper level between the authorities of the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, who meet once each year. The leaders of these communities have produced documents that provide common guidelines on the subjects of prayer and interreligious marriages. They also have organized interreligious meetings on an ecumenical basis. At the base level, this is less common and more difficult.

Systems are not suitable interlocutors in dialogue. Dialogue is with real persons. It requires constant personal formation to clarify one’s own identity and to find ways of respecting, listening to, and cooperating with others. Dialogue presupposes a progressive spirituality nourished by personal values and asceticism. Only then can methods of dialogue in mission be fruitful.

Notes
1. See Redemptoris missio, para. 28–29.
2. See Gaudium et spes, para. 92.
4. Redemptoris missio, para. 50.
5. See ibid., para. 57.
God Inside Out: Toward a Missionary Theology of the Holy Spirit

Stephen B. Bevans, S.V.D.

Most theology conceives of the Spirit in what we might call Johannine terms: God (theos) sends Jesus, who sends the Spirit. God's Holy Mystery is incarnate in Jesus and continues to be present in creation through the Spirit. This, for example, is the perspective attributed to Aquinas and Barth, and is evident in the first chapter of Ad gentes (para. 2–6) and chapter 3 of Redemptoris missio (RM). With Elizabeth Johnson, however, I have come to see that it is indeed the Spirit that we know first, who precedes Jesus not only in our own lives but in the history of the world and in cultures that have not known him. And it is the Spirit whom Jesus reveals to us as the Holy Mystery that is only dimly intimated in the fabric of history, culture, and life.

Johnson is not the only theologian to point out the priority of the Spirit's presence in our knowledge of God. In 1972, at the beginning of his book The Go-Between God: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission, British theologian John V. Taylor urged Christians to recognize that the Spirit needs to become "so central to our thoughts about God and about man that when the name 'God' is used our minds go first to the Spirit, not last." To cite another important expression of this insight, Jesuit theologian Frederick E. Crowe has proposed, as an interpretation of the thought of his mentor Bernard Lonergan, a thesis that, he says, also finds some resonance in both Augustine and Aquinas:

We have simply to reverse the order in which commonly we think of the Son and Spirit in the world. Commonly we think of God first sending the Son, and of the Spirit being sent in that context, to bring to completion the work of the Son. The thesis says that, on the contrary, God first sent the Spirit, and then sent the Son in the context of the Spirit's mission, to bring to completion—perhaps not precisely the work of the Spirit, but the work that God conceived as one work to be executed in two stages of the twofold mission of first the Spirit and then the Son.

Implications of the Change in Perspective

This change in perspective, emphasizing the Spirit's chronological and experiential priority, has profound implications for the theology of Christian mission. To discover some of these implications I offer a two-fold proposal.

The first part of my proposal corresponds to the first part of the title of these reflections: "God Inside Out." I intend this title to be reminiscent of Johannes Hoekendijk's challenging ideas in ecclesiology and in particular of the title of one of his books, The Church Inside Out. Hoekendijk insisted that the essential nature of the church (its "inside," its ad intra nature) is not to be discovered by focusing on the church but on the church's mission (its "outside" or ad extra character). The church is radically "eccentric" and "centrifugal." In a way that I believe supplements Hoekendijk's insight, I would propose to apply this same logic to God. Echoing Rahner's now-famous dictum about the immanent and economic Trinity, I propose that God's "inside" (i.e., God's mystery) can be known only from God's "outside" (i.e., God's movement to creation in mission). Furthermore, in the light of the insights of Johnson, Taylor, and Crowe recalled above, this movement is accomplished in the first place through the action of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit precedes Jesus not only in our own lives but in the history of the world and in cultures that have not known him.

The Activity of the Spirit

What is the Spirit's activity in the world? From the Bible, Christians associate the Spirit first of all with creation, where God's Spirit sweeps like "a mighty wind . . . over the waters" (Gen. 1:2, New American Bible), or, in Elizabeth's Johnson's description, "hovers like a great mother bird over her egg, to hatch the living order of the world out of primordial chaos." The Creator Spirit is also the Life-Giving Spirit (Gen. 2:7); as Elihu attests in his speech to Job, "the spirit of God has made me, the breath of the Almighty keeps me alive" (Job 33:4). The Spirit endows prophets with authority so that they can speak the Word of God (Ezek. 2:2; Mic. 3:8), calling Israel back from unfaithfulness (e.g., Hos. 10:12) or announcing God's healing, forgiveness, and freedom (Isa. 61:1–3). It is the Spirit that renews and restores life, giving flesh and breath to dry bones (Ezek. 37:1–14) and turning hearts of stone into hearts that beat again (Ezek. 36:25–28). It is the Spirit by whose power Mary conceives Jesus (Luke 1:35), who is poured upon Jesus (Matt. 3:16), and who sets the agenda for his ministry (Luke 4:18–19). The same Spirit that guided Jesus is

The second part of my proposal corresponds to the second part of my title and relates specifically to the missionary implications of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as God Inside Out. I propose that the church will live out its mission worthily only to the extent that it allies itself with and is transformed by the Spirit. Only in this way can it live in fidelity to its Lord, who himself was allied to the Spirit in his mission and was transformed by the Spirit's power. If the church is the first way that God sends and is sent, the Spirit's activity becomes the foundation of the church's own missionary nature. If the church is to express its nature, therefore, it needs first to look to the Spirit's activity. Its task is, like that of Jesus, both to follow the Spirit's lead and to be the concrete "face" of the Spirit in the world.

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promised to be given to the disciples, and in that Spirit they will understand all of God’s purposes (John 14:26). The Acts of the Apostles, often called the Gospel of the Holy Spirit, is a theology of history that reflects on the role of the Spirit in the coming-to-be of the church. Acts is the amazing story of how the Spirit challenges and stretches the early community’s prejudices and presuppositions and calls it beyond anything it dreamed possible—or, as Donald Senior puts it, how the Spirit “drives” the community to universal mission and to its identity as “church.”

Paul attests that the early communities are not only “formed by the Spirit”; they are “a fellowship of the Spirit” as well.

In contemporary theological interpretation of the work of the Spirit, J. V. Taylor calls the Spirit the life-force of creation. “From within the depths of its being [the Spirit] urges every creature again and again to take one more tiny step in the direction of higher consciousness and personhood; again and again he creates for every creature the occasion for spontaneity and the necessity for choice, and at every turn he opposes self-interest with a contrary principle of sacrifice, of existence for the other.” In his powerful article in Mysterium Liberationis, José Comblin says that “Latin American Christians recognize the God of liberation and feel the presence of such a God in their very midst, acting in their own actions and commitments. This Dios Liberador is the Holy Spirit—whether known by name or not.”

Frederick Crowe argues that, since the Spirit is the way that God is present to humankind from the beginning of its emergence, we Christians are already in relation to women and men of other religious ways. Among many other references that could be quoted, let me cite, finally, John Paul II’s encyclical Redemptoris missio: “The Spirit offers the human race ‘the light and strength to respond to its highest calling’: through the Spirit, ‘humanity attains in faith to the contemplation and savoring of the mystery of God’s design’ (Gaudium et spes, para. 10, 15). . . . The Spirit, therefore, is at the very source of humanity’s existential and religious questioning, a questioning which is occasioned not only by contingent situations but by the very structure of humanity’s being.”

The Spirit’s activity, to summarize this quick tour of the Bible and contemporary theological reflection, is creating and life giving, prophesying and renewing, empowering and uniting, freeing and inspiring.

Jesus and the Spirit

Jesus’ mission, thus it would seem, is to align himself with the Spirit’s work, and thus make historically concrete and visible what God had been doing through the Spirit since the creation of the world. Jesus is the “face” of God’s Holy Mystery in history, the mystery hitherto known through the Spirit’s powerful yet “anonymous” presence. In a concrete human nature, within the parameters of a concrete human culture at a very particular time in human history, Jesus is led by the Spirit to perform acts of life-giving healing, to say words of prophetic insight and renewing forgiveness, to live a life of freedom within the Mosaic law, to draw people together in a table fellowship that included those who had been excluded, and to show by his death the depth of God’s love for humanity. The same creative, prophetic, life-giving and death-negating power that characterized the Spirit in the history of Israel is active in Jesus, who is raised from the dead by the power of the Spirit and who lavishes that Spirit in a concrete and focused way on those who believe in his name.

The Church and the Spirit

The community of believers—women and men who share and continue Jesus’ mission in the world—are, in Paul’s image, the body of Christ. As such, they continue to be the “face” of God’s Holy Mystery in history and to give concrete shape and focus to the creative, life-giving, challenging, renewing, uniting power of the Spirit that has always been loose in the world. It is as the body of Christ and the “face” of the Spirit that the church discovers its mission in the world.

In view of the priority of the Spirit’s activity, however, the word “mission” needs to be understood in a particular way. The church is not so much “sent” as it is simply part of God’s embrace of the world, an embrace made flesh in Jesus but accomplished already in the past, present, and continuing presence of the Holy Spirit. As John Paul II has said forcefully, the Spirit is indeed “the principal agent of mission” or, in the words of John V. Taylor: “Our theology would improve if we thought more of the church being given to the Spirit than of the Spirit being given to the church.” The church’s task is therefore not so much to “do it all” as it is to point, name, witness to, and cooperate with God’s powerful and transforming presence. As Jesus made this visible in his life, death, and resurrection, so the church makes this visible in its community and its commitment to God’s creation. Proclaiming Jesus is proclaiming, as Taylor insists, not knowledge about Jesus but knowledge of Jesus; and the knowledge of Jesus is to be transformed, like him, by God’s out-reaching love in the Holy Spirit.

Mission and the Spirit

The Spirit’s activity as God Inside Out in the world might be expressed by the notion of transcending immanence—transcendence because God is totally and thoroughly involved and interwoven within cosmic and human history, transcending immanence.

It is as the body of Christ and the “face” of the Spirit that the church discovers its mission in the world.

God’s presence and activity is beyond the capacity of human beings to predict, control, grasp, or express. The Spirit is God so involved in the world (immanence) that we need constantly to be amazed and challenged by God’s presence (transcendence).

Transcending immanence. The transcending immanence of God Inside Out means that, in Johnson’s words, “Spirit-Sophia is the living God at her closest to the world, pervading the whole
and each creature to awaken life and mutual kinship.”21 As the Spirit works, so must the church. Since nothing is foreign to the Spirit, nothing need be foreign to the church. Since the Spirit pervades all things, so must the church. The task of the church is to be in the midst of history, to be partners in God’s creation, to be a living sign in its community of creation’s future. The church’s mission is world mission in the fullest sense; one might even speak of cosmic mission. Nation building, earth keeping, ecological action, education, preserving and transforming culture, enhancing the quality of life, cultivation of the arts—all these are the fields of activity for those who are given to the Spirit. The church’s mission, like God’s mission, arises out of passion for all that is and can be. It does not replace God’s mission, of course, but it points to and cooperates with God’s activity with all its heart.

God’s transcending immanence means that God is genuinely involved in the world and its history—“not existence over and against but with and for, not domination but mutual love emerges as the highest value as the Spirit of God dwells within and around the world with all its fragility, chaos, tragedy, fertility and beauty.”22 Mission proceeds not through “strategies”—a military term—nor by alliances with “worldly powers”; its procedure is that of the persuading, cajoling presence of the Spirit, with the power that comes from vulnerability and openness. The passion for mission is the passion of relationship, and relationship is defined not by being and doing “for,” but being and doing “with.” Reinhard Hütter writes about the church’s task as paraklesis, or “comforting appeal.”23 “Comforting appeal,” however, is neither feeble nor passive. It is a challenging, disturbing presence, the presence of the prophet. “The Spirit is the Spirit of freedom, partial to freeing captives rather than keeping them bound, biased in favor of life’s flourishing rather than its strangulation.”24 To be church, therefore, “is to be agonizingly aware of the contrast between what is and what should be,”25 and so to be committed to calling itself and the world in which it lives to constant renewal and reform, and to the development of systems and structures that combat the forces of death and enhance the emergence of life. Aligning ourselves with the Spirit, therefore, is to oppose injustice, to be involved in the political process, and to build communities of solidarity and resistance. And to align ourselves with the Spirit is to take the risks involved in hope, in joy, and in fearlessness.

The transcending immanence of God Inside Out bears witness to creation’s holiness. Grace is grace, and sin is sin precisely because of this fact. Calling people from sin is always calling them to grace, and no call to repentance is worthy of the name without it being done out of a conviction of the sinner’s basic goodness and tragic “missing the mark” in his or her life. The universe, work of the Creator Spirit, can only be holy. Physical creation is holy and is to be revered, protected, and developed; human life and human bodies are holy and are to be respected; human cultures are holy and need to be celebrated in our expressions and activity of faith; even human religions are holy and need to be studied, appreciated, and critically evaluated. The church’s mission, as given to the Spirit, is as much about being evangelized by the cosmos, the earth, and other human beings as it is about a commitment to their welfare and cultivation. My colleague Claude-Marie Barbour speaks of this as mission-in-reverse.26

In this spirit of reverence of and obedience to the transcending immanence of the Spirit’s holy creation, we can devote ourselves to inculturation and interreligious dialogue, and see them as truly essential parts of mission. Through efforts of inculturation we come to the full meaning of God’s embrace of the world, and by engagement in dialogue (at all levels) we become aware of how thorough is the Spirit’s presence and just how wondrous are the magnalia Dei to which we witness and which we proclaim. What Frederick Crowe says of the Christian attitude toward other religious ways can be said of our attitude toward the world’s cultures as well: “We cannot shrink that task [of evangelization]—woe to us if we do not preach the gospel (1 Cor. 9:16)—but our approach will be modified by our new understanding of the situation.”27 Mission carried out in obedience to the Spirit is the “mission in bold humility” that David Bosch wrote about so eloquently and lived so convincingly: “We know only in part, but we do know.”28 Jesus is indeed the face of the Spirit; in his concreteness we encounter mystery, but we never fully grasp it.

Transcending immanence. Consider also the transcending immanence of God Inside Out and its implications for the church’s mission. The mystery present in the midst of creation and human history is nonetheless mystery, and the church, like its Lord, must be obedient to the Spirit as it leads in directions that seem strange and uncomfortable. “Unless the missionary movement can be responsive to the unpredictability of the Holy Spirit,” wrote Max Warren, “it will cease to be a movement.”29 Mission in obedience to the transcending immanence of God’s Spirit can avoid the danger of what William R. Burrows calls the overobjectification of the Christ-event, that is, preaching the Gospel as if one controlled its message, or as if that message could be exhaustively expressed in objective, rational categories. “Although,” says Burrows, “theology in the West has generally confined the Holy Spirit to the status of mysterious energy making for the efficacy of ecclesiastical activities, ‘Spirit’ func-

Mission in partnership with the Spirit might reveal depths to salvation that human minds could never come to by themselves.

Mission in partnership with the Spirit might reveal depths to salvation that human minds could never come to by themselves.
with and obedience to God Inside Out might reveal depths to that “logic” that human minds could never come to by themselves. Who in Jerusalem, through their own insight, would have concluded that even Gentiles could be saved? What would have happened if Rome had recognized the Spirit working through Martin Luther or through Matteo Ricci? What might the African church look like if we take more seriously the Spirit’s work in the African Independent Churches or the Spirit’s work in healing and exorcism?

“To think deeply about the Holy Spirit,” writes John V. Taylor, is a bewildering, tearing exercise, for whatever he touches he turns inside out. The Spirit is the Spirit as God turned inside out; the Spirit given to Jesus turned him inside out and opened him up to the vision of God’s reign among women and men; the Spirit lavished through Jesus turns his disciples inside out as they include unthinkable people and go to unthinkable places. Thinking missiologically about the Holy Spirit can turn the church inside out, perhaps making it more responsive to where God is really leading it in today’s world.

Notes
14. Ibid.
17. Dotzel, “The Face,” p. 8
The Son Is God Inside Out: A Response to Stephen B. Bevans, S.V.D.

F. Dale Bruner

How can a Protestant not like a Roman Catholic’s article on the Holy Spirit when the article ends so generously by asking, “What would have happened if Rome had recognized the Spirit working through Martin Luther?” Father Bevans’s celebration of the Spirit’s sovereign freedom and world service is indeed appreciated by this Christian in the Reformation tradition. However, I missed what I think is the New Testament’s primary teaching on this important subject: the Spirit’s principal and ongoing work is a radical Christocentricity, which center in turn sends us into the cosmic circumference laid out so impressively in Bevans’s essay. The Son, not the Spirit, is God Inside Out, and it is the Spirit’s good pleasure to make the Son, not the Spirit, primary.

Is Bevans, like good Martha of old, distracted by much service and insufficiently focussed on the “one thing needful” (Luke 10:42)? I think it is the apostolic consensus that the Holy Spirit’s almost entire mission is, in the Lukan Jesus’ programmatic sentence, to empower those endued with the Spirit to be witnesses to Jesus in the whole world: “When the Spirit comes upon you . . . you will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8, with an emphatic mou martyres, “my witnesses”). Luke’s Acts, then, is in fact a commentary on the Spirit’s Christocentricity, where Christ is the theme of every sermon. (The Spirit is not the center of the Acts’ sermons.)

The Fourth Gospel gives us the most comprehensive canonical picture of the work of the Holy Spirit, particularly in the great Paraclete teaching in the upper room. John’s teaching, like Luke’s, is distinguished by a searing Christocentricity:

1. It is Jesus who sends “another Paraclete” from the Father to be with the disciples forever (John 14:16).
2. The Paraclete’s special mission will be to teach the disciples “everything” (panta), that is—as Jesus amplifies—to “remind you of all that I have said to you” (14:26).
3. The Paraclete will, in summary, “bear witness to me,” promises Jesus (15:26).
4. Then in the most extended discussion of the Spirit in the four gospels, Jesus teaches the church that the Paraclete will convict the world of three great Christological errors related to sin, righteousness, and judgment—failure to believe in Jesus is the great sin; failure to see that Jesus’ career is the meaning of righteousness, is the great error; and failure to see that his work defeated the evil one is the great oversight (16:8-11).
5. The Paraclete will guide the church “into all the truth”—not in independence, for, Jesus adds, the Spirit “will not speak on its own, but whatever it will hear [through the Son from the Father] it will say” (16:13).
6. The Paraclete, says Jesus in global summary, “will glorify me, because the Spirit will take what is mine and explain it to you” (16:14).
7. The Holy Spirit, Jesus concludes, will teach the Christocentric truth that, in turn, teaches God, for, as Jesus concludes, when Jesus is talking about “what is mine,” he is actually talking about what is God’s: “Absolutely everything the Father has is mine, and that is why I could say to you that the Spirit will take what is mine and explain it to you” (16:15).

In a word, Jesus is theocentric, and the Spirit is Christocentric. Together, in Trinitarian unity, the church is moved out in service to the world—but this service is always the precipitate of the Father’s and the Spirit’s blazing Christocentricity first! I think it is fair to say that the Holy Spirit, according to the apostolic witness, is almost monomaniacally Christ-centered. Luther once said of this focus of the Spirit, “The poor Holy Spirit doesn’t know anything else!” We are in the presence of the Holy Spirit not when we hear much about the Holy Spirit (for the Holy Spirit does not bear witness to the Holy Spirit); we are in the presence of the Holy Spirit when we hear much about Jesus Christ and his words and work. And the world service to which the Holy Spirit moves us is indeed as varied as the many laudable works of the Spirit that Bevans outlined; but first of all, as the motor that moves us to all these services, the Spirit exalts Christ. The major service the church does for the world is the service of patiently and graciously bearing witness to Christ.

Pope John Paul II, in Redemptoris missio, pinpointed the problem of a church too stretched out and stressed out in a rootless Martha-like “service” when he made his famous correction against a one-sided, horizontalist liberation theology:

It is Christ-invigorated churches that are eager to do the cosmic mission of social justice that Bevans rightly wants; without this Christocentricity, work in the world becomes almost unbearable. Mission is exhausting work.

I believe that Bevans makes a fundamental mistake in placing the sending of the Spirit before the sending of the Son. He admits that Johannine teaching places the Son before the Spirit: It is the Son who, with the Father, sends the Spirit in John’s Gospel (and also in the Western church’s filioque, where the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son). We recall the Johannine explicit sequence: “The Spirit ‘was’ not yet, for Jesus had not yet been glorified” (John 7:39); and it is then Jesus who breathes the Spirit on the disciples Easter evening (John 20:22). The Son precedes the Spirit; it is not the other way around. When the apostolic sequence is reversed, the church becomes pneumatocentric—the Montanist error, which has historically meant that the church was driven dizzy in a thousand “spiritual” directions at once. But when the Son is given the priority, as happens in Scripture and tradition, the apostolic Spirit unfailingly points the church in its worship services to her uni-center, True North, the Lord Jesus Christ, who in turn fortifies, ener-

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gizes, and sends the church out, again and again into her thousand-point world service. Thus I contest Bevans’s “first the Spirit, then the Son”; I believe that this orientation is exhausting the church today. “Spirit-centeredness” is like the proverbial rubber nose that can be twisted into a hundred different shapes by the spirit of the age; “Christ-centeredness,” the central work of the Spirit, keeps the church constantly focused on and refreshed by the historical, canonical, justice-seeking Jesus of Nazareth.

It is not the Spirit who is “God Inside Out,” it is the Son. “No one has ever seen God; but God the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has exequed God” (John 1:18). It is the work of the sovereign, free Holy Spirit to keep pointing us to this Christocentric truth. Bevans would have been better advised to follow the John-Aquinas-Barth sequence of Son-Spirit, which he admitted he consciously replaced with what he felt was the superior Spirit-Son sequence of some modern teachers.

After his thesis of “First Spirit, then Son,” Bevans’s main subtheses are three: First, “I propose that God’s ‘inside’ (i.e., God’s mystery), can be known only from God’s ‘outside’ (i.e., God’s movement to creation in mission).” Yes! We know God’s “inside” only by God’s “outside,” but that outside is Jesus, not creation. Meanwhile, God the Holy Spirit belongs to God’s mysterious “inside.” The one great Outside of the Holy Trinity is Jesus of Nazareth.

Second, “If the Spirit is the first way that God sends and is sent, the Spirit’s activity becomes the foundation of the church’s own missionary nature.” No, I think Scripture and tradition uniformly teach us that the Son is the first way that God sends. The Spirit is subsequently sent by the Son from the Father to make the Son’s activity the foundation of the church’s missionary nature.

Third, Bevans asks, “What is the Spirit’s activity in the world?” He then answers with a survey of scriptural and other texts on the varied works of the Holy Spirit. But isn’t the central and ongoing work of the Spirit—the work that moves Christians to all other works of the Spirit—the gift of faith in Jesus Christ? Isn’t it true in the New Testament that the Spirit’s main work is Christocentricity, a Christocentricity that sends us out into the world with the many-colored charisms of Christian mission? I missed Christ in Bevans’s description of the Spirit’s “God-to-creation” dynamic. “Whatever the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples ... can only be understood in reference to Christ” (John Paul II, Redemptoris missio, para. 29).

I felt, in other words, that Bevans’s description of the Spirit throughout the essay drew the circumference, and, while his essay did not altogether omit Jesus, it seemed rather consistently that it drew Jesus off to one side. But Jesus is Center—the Spirit’s Center, too. Perhaps Bevans assumed this Center in Christian readers. But the Center should never be assumed; it should be asserted. The cosmic mission to which Bevans bears witness is a reality, and I can repeat his description of that mission with approval: “Nation building, earth keeping, ecological action, education, preserving and transforming culture, enhancing the quality of life, cultivation of the arts—all these are the fields of activity for those who are given to the Spirit.” Yes, but the world does many of these laudable services too, and sometimes does them much better than the church. But there is one thing the world cannot do better than the church: tell the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The centripetal work of the Spirit (to point us to Christ) moves us to the Spirit’s centrifugal work (world service) and does so, I think history demonstrates, more effectively than any other reality. The Spirit has been teaching us now for two millennia, beginning with the apostolic record, that Jesus is “God Inside Out.” Let us hear what the Christocentric Spirit is saying to the churches.

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**Jesus, Face of the Spirit: Reply to Dale Bruner**

*Stephen B. Bevans, S.V.D.*

What disappoints me in Dale Bruner’s response to my article is that I think he fails to see the Christocentric dynamic running all the way through it. Perhaps this is my fault; perhaps I should have been more explicit in expressing how central faith in Christ is in my own life, and in the perspective on mission that I presented in my article. But perhaps the miscommunication is due not to lack of clarity on my part but to the way I understand faith in Christ. For me, submission to the lordship of Christ is not primarily submission to a doctrinal formula. Rather, it is submission *with* Christ to his vision, the reign of God; it is commitment to carry on his work, which is proclaiming, serving, and witnessing to that reign. This is the point of my concluding paragraph, which sums up my article: “The Spirit is the Spirit as God turned inside out; the Spirit given to Jesus turned him inside out and opened him up to the vision of God’s reign among women and men; the Spirit lavished through Jesus turns his disciples inside out as they include unthinkable people and go to unthinkable places.” My thesis is that mission is to do what Jesus did: be totally committed to making manifest God’s presence in the world. God’s Spirit has been present in the world since the first nanosecond of creation (Gen. 1:2); that Spirit was upon Jesus (Luke 4:18) as he began his ministry; Jesus is the human concretization of that Spirit in human history, the one who gave God’s “anonymous” presence a human face.1 Faith in Jesus is to be, like him, a witness to God’s mystery finally made manifest (Col. 1:26-27)—in himself, surely, but also in the warp and woof of history and the struggles and victories of humanity. I would concede that Jesus, too, is “God inside out,” but I think it is much more theologically rich to speak of him as the “face” of the Spirit, the “face” of God’s mysterious presence “inside out” in history and human experience.

Bruner says my fundamental mistake is placing the sending of the Spirit before the sending of the Son. He is certainly correct in seeing this as the foundation of my approach, and I admit that my position ventures into some relatively unexplored territory. I certainly am open to be corrected here.

Several factors, however, give warrant to my position. First, the scriptural witness is more multifaceted than Bruner alleges.
He shows clearly what I also acknowledge: the Johannine witness speaks of the Son sending the Spirit, and of the Spirit “not yet” (John 7:39). What are we to make, however, of Luke 4:18, where Jesus, quoting Isaiah 61, clearly applies the text to himself? Can’t we see the text as the Spirit leading Jesus in his ministry? The same seems to be the case in the Matthean (3:16) and Marcan (1:10) accounts of Jesus’ baptism. Or consider Mark 1:12 (paralleled in Matt. 4:1), where the Spirit is said to send Jesus out toward the desert. Finally, in Acts 10:38, in his discourse to Cornelius, Peter says God anointed Jesus “with the Holy Spirit and power,” obviously at the beginning of his ministry. As Elizabeth Johnson judges, “when the totality of biblical witness is taken into account, it becomes apparent that theology has been highly selective in its focus on the Father-Son-Spirit pattern, for other options are also realizable.”

Second, Crowe suggests in the exploratory lecture to which my article refers that the “reversal” in understanding the missions of the Son and the Spirit is “not so much a new doctrine, as a rearranging of doctrines already widely held. . . . not really a novelty, but just another instance of a general pattern and principle also widely held.” The doctrine Crowe refers to is that of the visible mission of the Son and the invisible mission of the Spirit; the pattern and principle is that “what is first in our eyes is last in itself, and what is last in our eyes is first in itself.” Naturally, the visible mission of the Son is what we discover first (and what we proclaim in mission), and that leads to the recognition of the invisible mission of the Spirit. “But is it altogether fantastic, is it not rather to be expected, that the real order is the exact opposite?” Love isn’t love, Bernard Lonergan says, until it is declared—this is analogous to the incarnation of the Son. But the declaration is of something that is already there, the presence of God inside out through the presence of the Spirit.

This leads me to a third consideration. In the actual history of the world, even before Christ and before he is explicitly proclaimed, God is present through the Holy Spirit. “It is the Spirit,” writes John Paul II, “who sows the ‘seeds of the Word’ present in various customs and cultures, preparing them for full maturity in Christ” and “who ‘was already at work in the world before Christ was glorified’” (Redemptoris missio, para. 28 and 29, the latter quoting Vatican II’s Ad gentes, para. 4). If this is the case, why can’t we speak of the Spirit preceding the Son, and the Son being the “face” of the Spirit, bestowing the Spirit in turn with greater focus? Perhaps rather than a rigid procession, we need to understand the Trinity in interweaving patterns of “giving over and receiving back, being obedient and being glorified, witnessing, filling, and actively glorifying.”

Mission must proclaim Christ, but it must always be careful to proclaim Christ under the guidance—even challenge—of the Spirit. This, I think, is what happened with Peter in Acts 10 and 11. The Christ he proclaimed was different from the Christ he felt comfortable with as a practicing Jew. This is also what happened as those unnamed evangelists preached Christ in Antioch in Hellenistic terms (Acts 11:20). As Andrew Walls has pointed out in his lectures and writings, we do not yet know the fullness of Christ; but as we follow the Spirit in mission, and as all peoples come to know the Gospel, we will know him more and more fully. It is this open-endedness of our understanding of Christ that my article attempts to promote. Trust in the Spirit will always lead us to Christ; this is the “logic of salvation” about which I speak in my article. But faith in Christ will always open us to the Spirit, who will lead us to Christ in ways we may not ever have imagined. I propose no “rubber nose” that can be twisted to the spirit of the age; I propose openness to a missionary God “inside out” in this world, whose face is Jesus, and whose mystery is encountered in the surprising movements of the Holy Spirit.

Notes
2. Elizabeth Johnson, She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Dis-

Correction: The editors regret an error in the large-print display on page 75 of the April issue of the INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN, in which the Chinese evangelist Liang Fa was identified as a convert of Robert Morrison. In the text itself author J. Barton Starr properly identifies Liang Fa as a co-worker of Morrison. Starr offers readers of the BULLETIN this further clarification of Liang Fa’s relationship to Morrison: “Liang Fa was employed as one of Morrison’s earliest co-workers, engaged in printing the Bible and other religious materials. He went to Malacca with William Milne in 1815 and was baptized by Milne in 1816.”
The Doctrine of Christ and the Significance of Vernacular Terminology

Kwame Bediako

Anyone familiar with the writings of contemporary African theologians will be aware of the preference for referring to Jesus Christ in terms derived from African tradition, terms such as Ancestor, Healer, Chief, and Master of Initiation. In response, some theologians (mainly non-Africans) have expressed concern about this prevalence of "African" images that appear to relegate to the background biblical terms for Christ. It has even been suggested, following surveys done at the grass roots, that African Christians in fact prefer biblical titles for Jesus, such as "Savior" and "Messiah" to those derived from African tradition. The question may therefore be asked whether there is a contradiction here, or whether other factors need to be considered in order to arrive at a more accurate understanding of the dynamics of the perception of Jesus Christ in the African context.

One major factor to consider is the equivalents of biblical titles for Jesus in local languages and the resonances of those equivalents. With regard to "Chief" and "Ancestor," for example, my own experience in Ghana is that while hardly anyone will pray in English to "Ancestor Jesus" or "Chief Jesus," many will readily pray in Akan to "Nana Yesu." (Nana means "ancestor" and also serves as the title for ancestors.)

This simple illustration demonstrates how subtle and nuanced the discussion needs to be in this area, for it shows that the meanings of biblical concepts and biblical vocabulary are not established simply by word equivalents. For example, of the two titles "Word" (Logos) and "Son" applied to Jesus in the New Testament, can we say that the second is more biblical in view of the prehistory of the first in Greek philosophy? Indeed, is that the important question? Is "Nana Yesu" less biblical as a way of addressing Jesus simply because Nana translates "ancestor" in English? Is it not the question, rather, whether the experience of the reality and actuality of Jesus as intended in Christian affirmation can inhabit the Akan world of "Nana" in the same way that it could inhabit the Greek world of "Logos"?

In this specific case, even though Nana recalls the category of "ancestor," and so, in that sense translates the term, in actual fact it is not adequate to leave it at that. For whereas "ancestor" is a generic term in English, "Nana" is both a title and a personal name, in the same way that "Christos" (Christ) was both a title and a personal name in early Christian usage. This means that in point of fact, "Nana" is a more satisfactory term for speaking of the actuality of Christ than "Ancestor." It should therefore be clear from this that the real theological problem here has to do with the English word "ancestor" and not with Nana.

Indeed, the matter should not be about words and their equivalents at all. It is rather about discerning and recognizing what is happening creatively in the context as people encounter, live out, and attempt to express their experience of the reality and actuality of Jesus Christ.

This example from contemporary African Christianity recalls parallel developments within the New Testament itself, as I have hinted already in my reference to the use of "Logos" for Jesus. Andrew Walls recently described the process in the pages of this journal: As the early preachers "started to speak of Kyrios Jesus, parallel to Kyrios Sarapis," that "act of metaphysical translation" was inevitably followed by "explanation, qualification, supplementation and definition as the identity of Jesus was explored in terms of Hellenistic language and thought." It is as though, Walls continues, "the full stature of Christ' becomes attainable" as the Gentiles enter the community of faith, "as though Christ himself grows as he penetrates Gentile thought and society in the persons of his people. . . . The full stature of Christ is revealed only as a fresh cultural entity is incorporated into the church, which is his body" ("Old Athens and New Jerusalem . . . ," International Bulletin of Missionary Research 21, no. 4 [October 1997]: 148-49.)

I would therefore suggest that perhaps the exegesis of biblical words and texts is not to be taken as completed when one has established meanings in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek; instead, the process needs to continue into all possible languages in which biblical faith is received, mediated, and expressed. If this makes the task infinitely more difficult than any one person or group of persons can achieve, then it shows all the more how tentative, provisional, and contextual all our theological efforts are.

This becomes even more important in view of the increasing significance of non-Western Christianity and of the fact that it is posing all sorts of questions and producing a whole range of problems for which our theological knowledge, gained through the study of theology as shaped by Western Christian history and experience, has not prepared us.

This is not to say that non-Western Christianity has resolved all the new problems. In many instances it is itself working at identifying the questions, and there is nothing to suggest that the endeavor should be any less arduous than the parallel process has been elsewhere. All this means that culture, and especially the new cultural entities that are becoming incorporated into the church worldwide, will continue to have a decisive impact on the shaping of Christian thought.

Yet reflection about Christ that is carried on in the interface of the reading and hearing of the Scriptures and the experiencing of the actuality of Christ in the life situations of believers in the world will be subject to the necessary constraints of the tradition of the community of faith, to ensure that the result is recognizable and owned by the world Christian community. However, since we are dealing with a translatable faith and translated Scriptures,
mother tongues, new languages, and the potential for new idioms become central and are crucial in opening up fresh insights into our common understanding of the doctrine of Christ.

On this side of the modern missionary movement and its intense commitment to Scripture translation, we may be tempted to take the subject for granted. We now recognize the critical impact that the Scriptures in the mother tongues of converts have had in the spread of the Christian faith. But it is important to realize that it is the modern expansion of the faith into the non-Western worlds of Africa, Asia, the Pacific, and Latin America that has alerted us to this phenomenon.

What still remains to happen, however, is the realization that this major event can have a significant impact in the actual Christian idiom in which we articulate our experience of Jesus Christ. In relation to Africa, Lamin Sanneh has argued that Scripture translation “imbued local cultures with eternal significance” and “endowed African languages with a transcendent range.” But this meant also that African pre-Christian religions had a theological significance in the whole process, for the centrality of Scripture translation points to the significance of local religions for providing the idiom for Christian apprehension in the new languages and cultures in which Christian faith now finds a home.

In this respect the second century and its similar (convert) stage in the conversion process of the Hellenistic world of thought can throw light on the processes involved in the shaping of Christian affirmation in the new cultural contexts and cultural idioms of Africa in which biblical faith is now beginning to be expressed. In this task, the early Church Fathers of the second century are truly our masters. They made the Gospel their own to such an extent that it became for them a key to interpret the religious meanings inherent in their heritage, so that they could decide what to accept and what to reject. The Gospel was for them also an all-encompassing reality and principle of integration that enabled them to understand themselves and their past and to face the future, because the Gospel of Jesus Christ became for them the heir to all that was worthy in the past, while it held all the potential of the future.

The study of non-Western Christianity needs to show a similar deepening awareness of the impact of culture upon Christian thought and to pay greater attention to the contribution that the new languages of Christian experience make to the development of Christian thought. We thus anticipate the vision in Revelation 7 of what the church will look like at the end: the multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language standing before the throne of God and singing, in their varied languages, the one new song of praise and adoration to the one Savior of all the redeemed, the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ the Lord.

Mother tongues and new idioms are crucial for gaining fresh insights into the doctrine of Christ.
Conversion and Community: Revisiting the Lesslie Newbigin–M. M. Thomas Debate

George R. Hunsberger

In India in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Bishop Lesslie Newbigin and M. M. Thomas debated the nature of conversion and Christian community. The importance of the subject was underlined by the findings of sociological research that in major urban centers such as Madras there were thousands of Indians who believed in “Jesus as the only God” though they had no visible connection with the Christian church. The Bangalore theologian Kaj Baago sharpened the issue by asking, “Must Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims become Christians in order to belong to Christ?” Baago wished to advocate the kind of Christian witness that might lead to “the creation of Hindu Christianity or Buddhist Christianity.”

On the occasion of the March 1966 Nasrapur Consultation on mission Newbigin launched the debate by responding first to Baago. By 1969 the debate became focused in published discussions between Newbigin and his friend M. M. Thomas. The following essay reacquaints us with the issues as Newbigin and Thomas saw them. As we approach the twenty-first century in Christian mission, the issues taken up in the Newbigin-Thomas debate remain as relevant as ever.—Eds.

The so-called Thomas-Newbigin debate between M. M. Thomas and Lesslie Newbigin grew out of long years of appreciative association between the two men. Newbigin’s assisting role in the inauguration of the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, with which Thomas was associated from its inception in 1955, the deep involvement each had had in various facets of the work of the World Council of Churches, and their common efforts to stimulate the theological and missiological reflection of the Indian church made them frequent companions. Their mutual respect gave them freedom for critical and creative interaction on the most pressing of issues.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s they drew each other into dialogue on the issues of conversion and community.1 The debate emerged from discussions that each had begun to have independently. At the Mexico City 1963 meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) of the WCC, Thomas had begun an exchange with Hendrikus Berkhof on the subject of “the form and content of the salvation which Christ offers men in the secular world.” Paul Löfler urged that the dialogue be carried forward in print, and under his editorial guidance this was done.2 Newbigin’s contribution to the 1968 Festschrift for Bengt Sundkler offered an assessment of that dialogue.3

On the other side, Newbigin had given an address at the Nasrapur Consultation of the National Christian Council of India (NCCI) in March 1966. His contribution on the subject of conversion stood over against the position of Kaj Baago, whose views appeared that summer in the International Review of Missions in an article entitled “The Post-Colonial Crisis of Missions.” This article drew out the lines along which Newbigin would engage the issue further.4

Thomas entered the discussion while carrying forward the matter of salvation in the secular world with the publication of his book Salvation and Humanization.5 Because he took issue with Newbigin at several points in the book, Newbigin gave it an extensive review in Religion and Society, and the debate was on.6 A published exchange of letters and other material that never made it to publication produced a vivid display of the pregnant issues touching “conversion and community.”7 While the debate proper soon dissipated, the issues raised continued to receive the attention of each.8

The major theme of the debate—the nature of koinonia and the forms of the church9—may best be approached by beginning with Newbigin’s response to the challenge of Baago concerning whether “membership in the visible fellowship” is integral to conversion. If the purpose of God cannot be identified with the “aggrandisement of the community,” as Newbigin’s case against a “church extension” model had shown, “in what sense, then, is membership in the visible fellowship integral to conversion?”10 Is baptism, incorporation into a Christian organization, the acceptance of the label “Christian,” and the adoption of the traditions and customs of the “Christian community” required for one to “belong to Christ”?11

Repeating Baago’s question “Does a Hindu have to become a Christian in order to belong to Christ?”11 Newbigin recognized


in this question the challenge raised for Christians by the biblical notion of election: “Can you really think that you, of all people, are entitled to invite the whole world into your fellowship?”12 Newbigin did not hesitate to affirm, “This inward turning immediately and intrinsically . . . involves membership in a community.” “The New Testament knows nothing of a relationship with Christ which is purely mental and spiritual, unembodied in any of the structures of human relationship.” The essential confession of every new convert embraces belief not only “in the finality of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, but also in the necessity of this community as part of the response to that revelation.” If the biblical description of “conversion” as Jesus introduced it early in his ministry is to be followed, it must be so. For it is a “visible community” that takes shape because of the deliberate, concrete, and sovereign call of Jesus that converted the first disciples, and every disciple thus converted is placed in it.13

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Turned another way, the question asks about mission strategy, “Does fidelity to Christ require us also to try to draw men into the fellowship of the visible church?” What Newbigin says about refusing to adopt a church extension model would seem to lead to a negative answer and give preference to unselfish service to those outside the church. But, for Newbigin, to say that conversion must not be a mere extension of the church does not mean that it does not include incorporation into a visible community. True conversion involves both a new creation from above, which is not merely the act of extension of an existing community, and also a relationship with the existing community of believers. The real question is What is the relation between these two?

This was the issue in the important case of the church council in Acts 15. The outcome affirmed not only that the extension model was being refused but also that the Spirit’s freedom beyond the existing church was being acknowledged. The Gentiles were baptized and fully embraced. “While there was no question of making the gentile converts mere extensions of Judaism, they were certainly incorporated into a visible and definite community.”

It is in respect to Newbigin’s affirmation that true conversion to Christ necessitates participation in a visible Christian fellowship —and Baago’s apparent denials that “the Church is essential”—that Thomas enters the debate. His concern is to raise the question that lies between these positions, the question concerning “what form the Church should take.” He criticizes both Baago and Newbigin for “confusing and mixing” the two questions. He believes that Newbigin “misses narrowly” the most crucial issue, that of “the transcendence of the Church over religious communities, which makes possible the Church’s taking form in all religious communities.”

The debate that ensues is a real one precisely because Newbigin’s treatment of Baago’s challenge had included a strong caution against the “domestication” of the form and structure of the church and affirmation of the “radical independence” of the new convert. Both he and Thomas wrestle with the limits, or boundaries, of the new convert’s independence. They jointly pose two questions: What lies within the legitimate range of choices regarding the form of the church in any cultural “place”? And what necessary continuity must there be with former choices made in other parts of the Christian community? In other words, is there more, or is there less, that must comprise the essential givens of genuine “belonging to Christ”?

The points taken up in the debate concern 1) the relation between the “new humanity” and the “church”; 2) the relation between “freedom” and “transcendence”; and 3) the relation between “religion” and “culture.”

The “New Humanity” and the Church

Thomas sees much of the “new humanity” in the present, while Newbigin looks to the future for tangible realization of the “new humanity.” Unfortunately the extent of the difference of meaning the two attach to the phrase is never clarified. But it lurks in the background and obscures the discussion on many points.

It seems to be this issue that Paul Löfler picks up and asks them to address. Arguing that different New Testament Christologies are attached to different approaches to mission, he links a basileia orientation to Thomas’s “Christ-centred secular fellowship outside the Church” and a salvation orientation to Newbigin’s formulation of a company of people “at the centre of this saving purpose.” But this distinction of ecclesiologies—a kingdom “team of messengers who spread the news of the beginning kingdom” as over against a salvation-oriented “clearly recognizable community of the church”—neither clarifies nor resolves. On one hand, it would seem just as appropriate to relate Thomas’s “secular fellowship” to the salvation motif with its concern for making whole the land and social structures, and for securing justice and peace—in other words, its humanizing dimension. On the other hand, the kingdom motif, which stresses yielding loyalty to God over all other rivals, would as easily tend in the direction of Newbigin’s explicit Christian community and the breaking of other solidarities. Newbigin himself denies the link Löfler suggests between his view and the salvation theme by showing that his view of the church grows in direct relationship with the kingdom orientation. The presence of the kingdom is attached to the call to follow Jesus. Therefore, “the creation of concrete human community bound to Jesus is the immediate implicate of the announcement of the kingdom.” Newbigin quotes Pandipeddi Chenchiah, an earlier Indian theologian, to illustrate what he calls “the ultimate absurdity of attempting to drive a wedge between Church and Kingdom.” Chenchiah asserted that the Day of Pentecost was “a fatal day to the Kingdom, and a glorious day for the Church.” But “if this is so,” says Newbigin, we would obviously “have to push the fatal day farther back and say that it was a disaster for the Kingdom when Jesus called men from their work and said ‘Follow me.’”

If Löfler’s paradigm is inadequate, at least his probing underscores the lack of sufficient common definition. For Newbigin, the new humanity is that to which God is moving the world of his creation as the consummation of his reconciling and saving purpose. It focuses upon the ultimate destiny of human-kind in the final restoration and summing up of all things in Christ. But for Thomas, the phrase appears rather to focus upon the maturing (evolving?) nature of what it means to be human in the current process of historical development. It is not a destiny of which we have the firstfruits now so much as the reality that is now in operation and maturing toward its ultimate expression.

A fundamental difference in eschatology is at the foundation of the disagreement. Although each shares some elements of the eschatology of the other, Thomas sees much more “new humanity” realized in the present than does Newbigin. For Newbigin,
it is the future that holds the more tangible realization of the “new humanity.”

The most problematic dimension of this ambiguity lies in Thomas’s insistence that koinonia, biblically speaking, “does not refer primarily to the Church or the quality of life within the Church, but that it is the manifestation of the new reality of the Kingdom at work in the world of men in world history.”21 But, as Newbigin points out, that hinges on an undefined identification of New Testament language regarding re-creation and renewal in the image of God with the process of humanization that Thomas observes in contemporary India. Herein lies the crux of the matter.

Thomas writes that in India, “when the idea of religious fellowship in Christ, of the Christian congregation, led to the idea of a secular fellowship in the total village or the total college community, humanisation was already at work. It soon had its impact on the larger Indian society.”22 But he equivocates by simply equating an observable manifestation of a process of humanization with the “new humanity,” which is God’s goal and the “final destiny of man.”23 Why the current manifestation is to be taken as the goal and not merely a fruit of the outworking of the goal through the identifiable Christian community is not clarified or defined.

Freedom and Transcendence

The second major issue that arises in the debate is the relation between “freedom” and “transcendence.” The latter is Thomas’s word (used variously and therefore sometimes confusingly in the debate). He argues for “the transcendence of the Church over religious communities.” His first principle upon which he founds Newbigin confesses, “I still feel that you are really docetic in your thinking about the Church. You seem to envisage a form of Christian corporate entity which never has existed and which never could exist.”24

As he does in regard to many other Docetic ecclesiologies, Newbigin refuses any sense of “transcendence” for the church that would remove it from the necessities of actual historical life, and this cannot but mean that it will be an actual, recognizable fellowship. What becomes clarified during the debate is that Thomas’s sharp reaction, which appears to work against that notion, is due to the particular character of “religious community” in the Indian context. Thomas agrees with Newbigin that the ghettoizing communalism that Christianity inherited in India “was forced upon it by the religious communalism of Hinduism.” But he insists that an approach is needed that will not reinforce but “break the traditional communal pattern of religious life.”25

Thomas’s suggestion that Newbigin is not as keen on achieving this does not mean that Thomas himself is immune from the problem. The rationale for his “secular fellowship within the Hindu religious community” argues from the acknowledgment that the Hindu as well as the Christian religious community is a “socio-political-religious” whole, and he seeks a fellowship that can remain within that “solidarity.” Newbigin points out that the nature of such a proposal makes it obvious that Thomas also supports the sustaining of a communally knit “unity of religious, cultural and social bonds.”26

Religion and Culture

Newbigin would not object to Thomas’s desire to break down the communalist pattern that segments off the Christian community. His difficulty is more with the strategy by which that is proposed and with Thomas’s failure to account in a clear way for the relation between “religion” and “culture.” Thomas believes that the transcendence of the church over religious communities makes possible “the Church’s taking form in all religious communities.”27 The critical question Newbigin asks is about the meaning Thomas attaches to the word “religion.” Thomas gives two examples of a “Christ-centred Secular Fellowship” of people involved in “the struggles of societies for a secular human fellowship.” Newbigin is not persuaded by either of the examples. The first fails to convince Newbigin because merely being “open to transcendent forgiveness” does not demonstrate “Christ-centredness”; furthermore, the people in the example cited by Thomas would certainly deny such a designation. The second example speaks of “adherents of other religions ... who have gone beyond the recognition of Christ as the Ideal to the faith-response, however partial, to Him as Person as ‘decisive for their existence.”’ In Newbigin’s judgment this “Christ-centred Fellowship of Faith in Hinduism” cannot avoid the implications of such a “faith-response,” whatever the degree. Newbigin points out that this case is “totally different” from the first in that it is “religiously separating itself decisively from Hinduism.”28

Newbigin challenges Thomas’s contention that the Christ-centered fellowship he envisions within Hinduism is “within” it

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Can the church take form as a Christ-centered fellowship of faith in a Hindu community?

this idea is that the new humanity, “the humanity which responds in faith and receives the liberation of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour,” is transcendent over the church.24 “Once we acknowledge that the Christ-centred fellowship of faith and ethics transcends the Christian religious community, are we not virtually saying that the Church can take form as a Christ-centred fellowship of faith and ethics in the Hindu religious community?”25

For Newbigin, to ask the question does not answer it, as it appears to do for Thomas. He answers from the perspective we have noted, that the form of the church is a matter that has continual freedom and must of necessity be subject to the full range of cultural dynamics in a particular setting, including prior religious ones. It must be open to the surprises the Spirit brings. The freedom of the church is rooted in its own nature as a social, historical, visible, actual community. Therefore, it is unclear to Newbigin what could be meant by the transcendence of the church “over religious communities.”

There seems to be a kind of spiritualization of the church here which I cannot accept. I think that the Church cannot escape from the fact that it is an institution which shares many of the characteristics of other human institutions (including the tendency to be more concerned about its own self-aggrandisement than about the purpose for which it exists). I do believe that the Christian faith is, in a sense, transcendent over other faiths. . . . But I also believe that this Christian faith has to be embodied in an institution which is a human institution among other institutions and cannot claim a kind of “transcendence” which sets it free from the limitations and temptations which beset all institutions.26
religiously as well as otherwise. He questions whether this is “sociologically realistic.” A form of the church that breaks no solidarities is impossible if there is genuinely an explicit link of faith in Jesus. If someone is religiously, culturally, and socially a Hindu and “at the same time, his allegiance to Christ is accepted as decisive, as—therefore—over-riding his obligations as a Hindu, this allegiance must take visible—that is social—forms. He must have some way of expressing the fact that he shares this ultimate allegiance with others—and these ways will have to have religious, social and cultural elements.”32

Thomas’s own distinction between “religion” and “faith” includes the recognition that faith “always expresses itself in Religion. . . . Religion always changes its form to express the central Faith.” If that is so, he should concur that a Christ-centered faith within Hinduism will express itself in that religion of which it is a part and the result will be disruption in some form. Newbigin makes that case by pressing Thomas on the example of Roberto di Nobili. Di Nobili employed the principle that has been typical in Christian movements across cultural and religious lines, namely that the “specifically religious elements in the total socio-cultural-religious complex” were distinguished from the rest. In di Nobili’s arguments with the Franciscans, he “distinguished between practices which were religiously neutral and those which implied a religious belief incompatible with the Christian faith.”33

This would lead to an unspoken criticism of Thomas’s view as quietistic. It becomes unrealistic, in the long run, to imagine or support a form of the church within Hinduism that would not be disruptive on this point. Newbigin warns of this when he guesses at the sectarianism that a proliferation of such movements, disconnected with one another or other expressions of the church, might produce. In a hundred years, might there be “a litter of small Indian sects embodying in a fossilized form the particular ideas about secularisation, dialogue, etc., which happen to be fashionable just at the moment?”34

The critical problem lying behind these issues is the definition of “religion.” Thomas follows Paul Devanandan in his definition, which emphasizes the cultic practices and communal expressions of religious faith.35 In that sense a new faith might conceivably not alter those external forms. Under that definition, culture as well is less than holistically conceived but understanding of religion as well. It involves elements of the culture that lie at its very heart. It connotes “those beliefs and practices which are concerned with what we believe to be ultimate and decisive.”36 His definition reflects more a cultural anthropology than a theological or philosophical one.

In his review of Thomas’s Salvation and Humanisation Newbigin made some important observations about the nature of evangelism, observations with which Thomas did not take issue and that therefore were little discussed in their debate. However, this passage of the review contains one of Newbigin’s most important critiques of Thomas’s views. Newbigin’s two points, both integral to his understanding of conversion, are that “(a) The Gospel is greater than our grasp of it; (b) the human situation is more varied and complex than any generalisation of ours can cover.”37 Thomas’s view, says Newbigin, is in danger of missing these points by taking “humanisation” as a generalisation of the need of our time, and making of it an absolutizing of the Gospel. In fact, it may not represent the particular need of thousands in our time, and it may not represent what in another time must be stressed. In other words, to identify the Gospel as humanization is to overparticularize and domesticate what can never be so much in our control. It may do in a new form what Thomas critiques the communalized Indian church for doing in the past.

As the debate continues, Thomas seems increasingly uncomfortable with what Newbigin considers to be the essential minimum of the Christian faith. Thomas wishes for the net to gather a wider circle. From an earlier and fairly clear statement that “‘Christ-centredness’ in the sense of acknowledgement of the centrality of the Person of Jesus Christ is the essence of Faith,” he moves on to speak of “partial but real acknowledgement.” He

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To identify the Gospel as humanization is to domesticate what can never be so much in our control.

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service, witness and justice.42 “The true relation between the word and the deed is that both must be visibly rooted in the same reality; namely in that new community which is created and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. . . . [T]he word illuminates the deed, and the deed authenticates the word, and the Spirit takes them both to bear His own witness to the Resurrection.”43

In this sense we are to understand the central role Newbigin assigned to the church in his later apologetic formulations. Addressing the question of authority, and especially what authority the Bible has in the encounter of the Gospel with modern Western culture, he affirms that “the Bible functions as authority only within a community that is committed to faith and obedience.” The hermeneutical circle operating within the community means that “tradition and Scripture are in a constantly developing reciprocal relationship.” Therefore, “it is not the Bible by itself but the church confessing the mystery of faith that is spoken of as the pillar and bulwark of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15–16).”44

**Notes**

1. For a full survey of the literature involved in the debate and the pattern of the responses back and forth, see below following the Notes.


15. Ibid., p. 104.


23. Ibid., p. 18.


28. Ibid., pp. 78, 88.

29. Ibid., pp. 73, 77–78.


31. “Baptism,” pp. 70–77. It is interesting, in light of this aspect of the debate, that in a more recent treatment of these issues Thomas expands and clarifies his suggestion. The impact of the debate with Newbigin is clearly visible when he speaks of “three levels of koinonia in Christ: first, the koinonia of the eucharistic community of the church, itself a unity of diverse peoples acknowledging the Person of Jesus as the Messiah; second, a larger koinonia of dialogue among people of different faiths inwardly being renewed by their acknowledgment of the ultimacy of the pattern of suffering servanthood as exemplified by the crucified Jesus; third, a still larger koinonia of those involved in the power-political struggle for new societies and world community based on secular anthropologies informed by the agape of the cross.” See Thomas, “Christology,” p. 108.


33. Ibid., pp. 70, 79–80.

34. Ibid., p. 81.


38. Ibid., pp. 70, 72, 74, 90.

39. Ibid., p. 78.


41. Lesslie Newbigin, “Reflections on an Indian Ministry,” *Frontier* 18 (1975): 27; Lesslie Newbigin, “Cross-currents in Ecumenical and biblical image of death and birth.”45 Conversion as a boundary marker, and the community as that which the boundary marks, are intimately tied to the witness that the Spirit continues to give to the Gospel.

**The acceptance of Jesus Christ as decisive creates a solidarity among those who have this acceptance in common.**


44. Ibid., pp. 70, 72, 74, 90.


45. Ibid.

The Literature of Lesslie Newbigin’s Debate with M. M. Thomas

Published Portions of the Debate


   b. A letter dated November 17, 1971 (but compare the date of “18-11-71” at the conclusion of the letter, which is the correct one), from Newbigin to Thomas (pp. 75–84).


   d. A letter dated December 20, 1971, from Thomas to Newbigin (pp. 87–90).

Unpublished Materials of the Debate

Several unpublished items, including those listed below, were originally intended to be incorporated with some of the published materials and published in a separate volume, a project that was ultimately abandoned.


10. A letter dated January 30, 1973, from Paul Löffler to both Thomas and Newbigin, complaining that they had come too quickly to “a near agreement on all essential points” and raising questions to foster further debate (3 pages).

11. A mimeographed manuscript by Newbigin entitled “The Church and the Kingdom” containing extensive comments by Newbigin in response to Löffler’s letter (12 pages). In it Newbigin interacts further with Thomas (December 20, 1971) and Krass (undated and January 3, 1972) but especially engages the articles of Duraisingh and Taylor that had appeared in the March 1972 issue of *Religion and Society*. (The last page of the draft bears the date “July 1972,” but that must surely be an error for July 1973, since the letter of Löffler to which it responds was dated January 30, 1973. Löffler’s letter could not have been misdated for an actual “30 January 1972” because it makes explicit reference to the March 1972 issue of *Religion and Society* in which the original exchange of letters between Thomas and Newbigin appeared.)
My Pilgrimage in Mission

Robert V. Finley

Born in 1922 in Charlottesville, Virginia, I was called to God’s service even before I knew the Gospel. At the age of fourteen, because of my father being ill, I stayed out of school for a year and worked on the farm to support my three younger brothers and two sisters. During long hours alone I began, secretly, to read a pocket New Testament. It frightened me so much that I purposed to devote my life to God in hope of escaping eternal death.

I was so shy, however, that I mentioned my soul’s awakening to no one. My family never guessed that I was praying continually while alone. My parents led me to join their local Presbyterian church at age fifteen, but nothing was said by them or the church about personal salvation.

Because we lived in poverty, my father insisted that I stay home and work on the farm after graduation from high school. But at age seventeen, being certain that God had revealed to me that I should go south, I ran away that summer (August 1939) and hitchhiked to Miami, Florida. Years later my father told me I had done the right thing.

My personality changed when I got away from those who knew me. I began to lose my shyness. Along the way to Miami I urged everyone I met to save their souls by doing good works. Of course I was trying to save my own soul by preaching to others.

The Way Prepared

Our Savior said, “When he putteth forth his sheep, he goeth before them.” It is clearly evident that God had prepared several key people to shepherd me in Miami, just as Aquila and Priscilla took an interest in Apollos and “expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.”

A young Baptist preacher, talking with me one day in the parking lot where I worked, mentioned “assurance of salvation,” a concept I had never heard before. Bernard Bowker, a recent graduate of Practical Bible Institute in Binghamton, New York, arrived in Miami just when I did and rented a room across the street from the parking lot. He told me the difference between churches that were known as fundamentalist and those that were modernist. He steered me to Shenandoah Presbyterian Church in Miami, whose pastor, Daniel Iverson, was a graduate of Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. There I met Clifton L. Fowler, recently retired founder of Denver Bible Institute, who took me under his wing as Paul did Timothy.

Through these and other believers I came into a joyous understanding of salvation by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ Jesus our Lord and was impelled by his Spirit to share this good news with everyone, everywhere. All the while I continued to devour the Scriptures day and night, memorizing hundreds of verses, many chapters, and some books of the New Testament.

As Christian friends observed my growth, they urged me to attend a Bible institute or Christian college. But I felt that God wanted me to begin Christian witness at once, and therefore in September 1941 I returned to my home town and enrolled in the University of Virginia. There I lived in a dormitory named Randall Hall, better known as Scandal Hall. Out of forty residents, thirty-nine claimed to be atheists, agnostics, or skeptics. As the lone believer, I set to work evangelizing the other thirty-nine. God blessed, and one by one I began to see my classmates come to Christ. Soon I had a regular Bible study going in my room, and then I started them in other dorms as well. No longer the bashful farm boy, I was emboldened by the Spirit to share the Gospel with my family and saw my three younger brothers accept Christ and devote their lives to his service.

During the two years I worked in Florida, I had saved enough money to get me through the first year of university. By persistent study I was able to make the dean’s list, which earned me enough scholarship assistance to pay my tuition the second year. I earned my room and meals by working three to five hours daily as assistant manager of the university dining hall.

The big winter sport at that time was college boxing. Perhaps 200 people might watch a basketball game, but up to 10,000 attended boxing matches. I had boxed for three years in high school, and after much prayer I felt led of the Lord to join the University of Virginia boxing team, which was regarded as being one of the best in the country. By God’s grace I remained undefeated and in 1944 won the NCAA intercollegiate championship in the middleweight division.

Introduction to Mass Evangelism

Just at that time huge evangelistic youth rallies were being held all over the country. Christian athletes were very few, so I began to receive invitations from far and wide to speak at these rallies. On the day after I received my degree from the university I was in Chicago speaking to 25,000 people. Torrey Johnson invited me to join his team as a second field evangelist (the first was Billy Graham) with the newly formed organization called Youth for Christ (YFC).

For the next two years I toured the United States and Canada speaking in rallies, evangelistic meetings, church services, Bible schools, seminars, radio broadcasts, and other meetings. Most weekdays were spent on university campuses conducting specialized evangelistic meetings for chapters of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF). All the while I continued to immerse myself in the Scriptures, and I discerned that the top priority revealed in the New Testament was foreign missions. More and more I urged young people to volunteer for foreign missions. As many as 10,000 of them responded to that call through my ministry between 1944 and 1948.

At the University of Virginia, I lived in a dormitory named Randall Hall, better known as Scandal Hall.
While visiting universities, I became increasingly aware of the tremendous missionary potential represented by foreign students, especially those from countries that were closed to missionaries from America. At every opportunity I sought to win them to Christ, and I encouraged student leaders in IVCF chapters to concentrate on reaching students from unreached nations.

I became aware of the missionary potential of foreign students, especially those from countries closed to American missionaries.

For nine months beginning in September 1946, I enrolled as a graduate student at the University of Chicago in order to live in the International House, a residence for 600 foreign students from 100 countries. The first one I met was Kao Shang-yen from China, who accepted Christ and joined with me in starting a Bible class in International House. When he returned to China two years later, he declared his intention to be an ambassador for Christ.

Personal Influences

At every opportunity I attended churches where I could hear outstanding preachers such as A. W. Tozer and Harry Ironside. But usually on weekends I was busy speaking at YFC rallies and IVCF chapters. In June 1947 I resumed full-time ministry with these two organizations.

While in California, I developed a special bond with Dawson Trotman of the Navigators and Hubert Mitchell, director of YFC in Los Angeles. Ten years earlier Mitchell had been the song leader for evangelist Paul Rader, who had sent him to Indonesia as a missionary. War with Japan had forced Mitchell’s return to America, but in 1947 he went to Calcutta to start the first branch of YFC in India. His brother-in-law, David Morken, went to Shanghai to start YFC in China.

Two other influences in my life were David Adeney of England, who had served in China with the China Inland Mission, and Calvin Chao, who worked with university students in China in association with what would later be known as the Chinese Native Evangelistic Crusade. Knowing my zeal for foreign missions, Adeney and Chao directed me toward China. War with Japan had forced Mitchell’s return to America, but in 1947 he went to Calcutta to start the first branch of YFC in India. His brother-in-law, David Morken, went to Shanghai to start YFC in China.

In the summer of 1948 I sailed for Europe along with other Youth for Christ leaders to attend a World Congress on Evangelism, speak at YFC rallies, and attend IVCF student conferences. While crossing the Atlantic, Dawson Trotman and I spent many hours discussing, among other things, the need for specialized ministry among foreign students in the United States. On a train trip across France three weeks later, J. Christy Wilson, Jr., outlined a written proposal for such a ministry.

After two months of conferences and meetings in Europe, I teamed up with Gregorio Tingson of the Philippines, whom I had known as a foreign student in the United States, and together we conducted special meetings in Greece, Cyprus, and Lebanon before flying on to India. There we had evangelistic meetings that had been arranged by Hubert Mitchell.

India was a totally different world to me. Following independence and partition, millions of Hindu refugees from newly created Pakistan (East and West) lay starving along roadways, in railroad stations, and on streets, sidewalks, and vacant lots. The poverty I had known as a child suddenly seemed like the horn of plenty. Foreign missionaries appeared to be fabulously rich. All my perspectives were turned upside down. I traveled more than 5,000 miles third-class on India’s railways during the six weeks I was there, visiting mission stations, churches, schools, conferences, and conventions. I couldn’t help but notice that Indian missionaries appeared to be ten times more effective than those from America, even though the Indians had less than 10 percent of the financial support that the foreigners had.

One man of God who influenced me tremendously was Bakht Singh, a former Sikh who had found eternal life in Christ while a foreign student at the University of Manitoba. I had met him at a student missionary conference sponsored by IVCF in Toronto in 1946. Without the benefit of any Bible school or theological studies, Bakht Singh had been used of the Lord to plant hundreds of local assemblies of Christians all over India and West Pakistan. His first supporters were friends in Canada who received copies of his newsletters, which were mimeographed and mailed out by John and Edith Hayward of Winnipeg, in whose home he had found the Lord while a foreign student.

After a few weeks of meetings with Greg Tingson in the Philippines, I went on to China in December 1948 to minister at a student conference in Canton under the leadership of Calvin Chao. He also arranged meetings for me in Hong Kong, after which I went to Shanghai to work with David Adeney and David Morken. We often had 10,000 people at open-air evangelistic meetings in those days, even though Communist forces were moving progressively southward toward Nanking.

Communist sympathizers were everywhere, especially in the universities. But what impressed me most about the Communist movement was that nine out of ten of its top leaders had been converted to Marxism while away from home as foreign students. When they returned, they lived as simply as the poorest peasant in order to gain followers. Communism flourished as an indigenous atheistic religion in those days, while Christianity was identified with (comparatively) rich foreigners who were thought to have been sent by the CIA. It is easy to see why God allowed all 5,000 foreign missionaries, myself included, to be swept out of China, along with our 300 foreign denominations and mission organizations.

New Approach to Mission

Two powerful influences in China changed forever my thoughts concerning missionary work and church growth. One influence was meeting the younger brother and other disciples of Dr. John Sung, who had turned to Christ while a chemistry scholar in the United States. Without any theological education Sung returned to China as a powerful evangelist and became known as “the father of ten thousand churches.” The second was when I became...
I discovered that out of the thousands who responded in Japan, few understood what it meant to be a Christian.

universities. We had crowds of about 20,000 daily in great outdoor meetings in Seoul, Inchon, and other cities. Over 50,000 filled the stadium in Taegu for one meeting at which several thousand came forward to confess faith in Christ. Apostolic miracles occurred at some of the meetings, where dozens of "incubables" were made well instantly by the power of God. (This preceded the arrival of Pentecostals in Korea.)

What impressed me most about the churches in Korea was learning that the first believers were traders who found Christ in China while away from home and then returned with the Word of God and started churches. Believers were active in that closed land for forty years before the first foreigners were allowed in. Many Korean Christians told me it would have been better if the foreign denominations had never come.

When Communists from North Korea invaded South Korea in June 1950, foreign missionaries could work there no longer, so I went to Japan. We had big meetings there also, with thousands of Japanese coming forward to "accept Christ." But after working with them in individual follow-up, we learned that not one in ten understood what was involved in becoming a Christian. Their patriotism had motivated them to accept America's gods so these deities might enable Japan to win its next war. Those who came forward in meetings had no intention of dishonoring their ancestors by breaking with family traditions. I concluded that the most effective way to win Japanese to Christ was to reach them while away from home, so that they could begin a new life outside the restrictive environment of family loyalty and Japanese social customs.

In 1951 I was joined by Dawson Trotman while having meetings in Taiwan. He asked me what had happened to the plan for starting a ministry among foreign students in the United States. I had no answer. Later we met again in Tokyo, and he said he believed it was time for me to go home and start such a ministry. I began to realize it was the will of God.

Beginning of ISI

In 1953 International Students, Inc. (ISI) was formally organized with Dawson Trotman and Hubert Mitchell (forced to return from India) on the board of directors. Several members of the Navigators staff were loaned to ISI to be our first workers. Billy Graham, who had supported me financially while I was overseas, made the top floor of his film ministry building in Washington, D.C., available to provide our first headquarters. He also gave us our first $1,000 gift to launch the ministry.

Several returned missionaries joined the ISI staff. Irving Sylvia came on board after having served in Pakistan and Turkey. He had a consuming passion to penetrate closed lands with the Gospel. Howard MacFarland had served in Congo with the Christian and Missionary Alliance. When the country gained independence, church leaders asked the foreign missionaries to please go home so the churches could be independent too. Bill Vickman had served in Japan and realized that it was much less difficult to win Japanese to Christ here than there. Robin Marvin came to us after serving in Thailand.

All of these missionaries had raised their support before going overseas. But when they came back to work from this end, they lost that support. They were no longer considered to be missionaries. Some were urged to confess the sin that was keeping them from "going back to the field." When we tried to promote ISI as a bona fide foreign mission board, we were deluged with criticism from traditional missions. It took forty years to gain a fair measure of acceptance as a strategic form of foreign missions. From the very beginning days of ISI, our concern was to place native missionaries on the foreign fields of the world. Three steps were involved. First, win foreign students to the Lord while they were studying in the United States. Second, nurture them to spiritual maturity and knowledge of God's Word. Third, send them back equipped to serve our Savior. Dr. Wei Sia went back to Taiwan in 1954 and assisted in setting up a hospital to treat tuberculosis victims. Oh Ki Hyung was assisted in setting up a study center for displaced Christian students when he went back to war-torn Korea that same year. And Dr. Conrado Quemada went back to the Philippines with a brand new Chevrolet pickup to be outfitted in Manila as a mobile clinic that he used as a medical missionary in the jungles of Mindinao. We supported these and many others who returned as missionaries to their own people.

Launching Christian Aid

This aspect of the work was called the AID (Assisting Indigenous Developments) division of ISI. After seventeen years it began to

When we promoted ISI as a bona fide mission, we were deluged with criticism from traditional missions.

cause problems in the ranks. We found that God's people would give much more freely to help overseas projects than to support pioneer missionaries who were reaching foreign scholars from closed lands in places like New York or Chicago. So we felt led of the Lord to separate the AID division from the outreach among international students. It was therefore spun off as a new corporation called Christian Aid under my leadership. ISI moved its headquarters to Colorado Springs in 1972 with Hal Guffey as president.

During the 1970s I made numerous trips overseas to search out indigenous ministries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. I
Is This Effective

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We live in an instant society. Microwaves, remote controls and the Internet give us what we want in seconds. So it’s not surprising that many Christians long for instant conversions, too. But this instant mentality can lead to insensitive encounters that may look more like drive-by shootings than heavenly appointments.

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WHERE SHARING THE GOSPEL MEANS SHARING YOUR LIFE
was astounded by the phenomenal growth I discovered everywhere I went. Conventions with 25,000 in attendance were commonplace in southern India. I found over 1,000 indigenous missionary ministries based in the state of Andhra Pradesh alone. Two of them had more than 1,000 missionaries on the field. In Africa I discovered Nicholas Bhengu, who had returned from

I believe we should reach people while they are away from home and support indigenous missions rather than traditional missions.

study in the United States with a gift of $1,000 from Ben Coleman, a railroad worker. He used it to conduct six months of evangelistic crusades with about 50,000 people in daily attendance. So many people were converted that the churches could not baptize them all. More than 1,000 new churches were born out of that one series of meetings.

These experiences have made me bold in calling for change in the way missionary work is done by my fellow Americans. I sincerely believe that we should phase out traditional forms of missionary work and do two new things instead: (1) reach people from closed lands while they are away from home, and (2) help indigenous missions financially without trying to influence or control them.

Christian Aid has opened lines of communication with more than 6,000 indigenous missionary ministries that have a combined total of 250,000 missionaries either on the field or ready to work full time as soon as minimal support ($50 per month average) becomes available. Tens of thousands are out serving our Savior right now with no support at all. If Christians in the United States and Canada would get behind these mighty works of God with our tremendous financial resources, we could complete in our generation the unfinished task of planting a witness for the Lord among every tongue, tribe, and nation.

With annual contributions exceeding $4 million, Christian Aid is currently sending financial assistance to about 400 indigenous mission agencies that have a combined total of 30,000 missionaries on the field. None are totally dependent upon this support. In many cases when political changes cut off our support, the work has continued, though at a slower pace.

God has blessed us with an excellent team of field missionaries who evaluate each ministry being supported. Slavik Radchuk of Ukraine travels all over the former USSR, preaching in Russian and visiting the ministries we support there. Our two Chinese field surveyors are house church veterans who were imprisoned by the Communists, one for ten years and the other for twenty. They have approved thirty Bible institutes for support in China. Other field staff are responsible for Southeast Asia, India, Eastern Europe, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East.

I do not travel overseas much any more, but I am truly thankful that our Lord has brought together a consecrated team of fourteen missionary scouts to search out and evaluate indigenous ministries in every "mission field" country of the world. Most of my time now is devoted to finding additional contributors, with the prayer that we may yet be able to send some financial assistance to the 5,600 ministries, and their 220,000 missionaries, that we haven’t been able to help thus far—especially those thousands of barefoot apostles who, with no support at all, are winning souls and planting churches among unreached peoples.

The Legacy of Adoniram Judson

William H. Brackney

Intelligent, vigorous, visionary, and dedicated to his calling, Adoniram Judson was for several generations of American Protestants the first among American overseas missionaries. His premier standing was earned by the chronology of his appointment and service, as well as the quality of his work and devotion to service; his heroic stature has been enhanced by the literary interpretation of his life from the 1820s through the conclusion of the nineteenth century.

Judson was the first child of Adoniram Judson, Sr., and Abigail Brown. Born August 9, 1788, in the parsonage of First Congregational Church of Malden, Massachusetts (his father's first church), young Adoniram was the older brother of Abigail and Elnathan. His father was a graduate of Yale College and known for his evangelical views in accord with his mentors, Samuel Hopkins (1721–1803) and Joseph Bellamy (1719–90). His mother was a homemaker and Christian activist in her local congregation.

Adoniram, Jr., grew up in Wenham, Braintree, and Plymouth, Massachusetts, the locations of his father’s subsequent ministerial appointments. As a young person, he rejected the faith of his parents and prided himself in being a skeptic.

Adoniram went to the College of Rhode Island (later Brown University) at age sixteen. The school, under the denominational patronage of Baptists, was the preferred choice of his father, since Harvard was theologically unacceptable and Yale was suspected of infidelism by many contemporary evangelicals. Adoniram entered the sophomore class and graduated three years later in 1807 with the highest honors in his class. His youthful religious skepticism was enhanced by a close friend at college. Later, when that friend died, Adoniram had a crisis experience and sought the counsel of Moses Stuart (1780–1852), a theological professor at Andover Seminary.

Adoniram completed his education at Andover Theological Seminary, matriculating on Stuart’s recommendation in September 1808. He graduated two years later, in 1810, in its first class. During his seminary studies he became a believer and pursued an interest in overseas mission that soon became a passion.

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During this time he met and married Ann Hasseltine, a school teacher from Bradford, Massachusetts. On February 6, 1812, Judson and five of his friends were commissioned missionaries by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, and they sailed for India immediately. Ann and Adoniram sailed with Samuel and Harriet Newell on the Caravan from Salem the next week; Samuel and Roxanna Nott, along with Gordon Hall and Luther Rice, embarked from Philadelphia on the Harmony some two weeks later. En route, the Judsons converted to Baptist principles and sought the support of the Baptist community in the United States. Originally intent on service in India, or more properly Madagascar, the Judsons went to Burma, and Adoniram served there for almost four decades as the first appointee of the newly formed Baptist Board of Foreign Missions and the General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States.

Adoniram and Ann settled first at Rangoon, where they lived from 1813 to 1823. They moved next to Ava (the royal city), where in 1824 Adoniram was taken prisoner as a suspected spy for the British government, then at war with Burma. Upon his release in 1826, they returned to Rangoon and eventually to Amherst. After Ann’s death later that year, Adoniram moved between Moulmein, the new chief city of the Province of Tenasserim, and Prome and Rangoon. In 1834 Judson married the widow Sarah Boardman and moved permanently to Moulmein. There they remained until 1845, when Sarah died and Adoniram returned to the United States on furlough for 1845-46. Upon his return to Burma with his third wife, Emily, Judson returned to his home at Moulmein, and except for some time spent at Rangoon in 1847 to finish his dictionary project, there he remained until his final voyage.

In November 1849 Judson contracted a fever that greatly diminished his strength. Upon the advice of his physician, he took a voyage down the Burman coast, and in April 1850 he embarked for the Isle of France to continue his recuperation. On April 8, he succumbed to the illness and was buried at sea. Judson was married three times. His first wife, Ann Hasseltine (1789–1826), served with him until her death from fever; they had two children. In 1834 he married the thirty-three-year-old widow Sarah Boardman, who bore him seven children. Sarah died of complications of childbirth. Finally after a furlough in upstate New York, in 1846 he married the fiction writer Emily Chubbock (1817–54), and they had one child. Emily survived Adoniram and helped to write his biography and create his heroic profile.

Spiritual Triumph Through Adversity

Like numerous young people who mature in the family of a minister, Adoniram rebelled and in his college years traveled extensively and caroused. He was shocked into reconsidering his moral condition in the summer of 1807 when, in a New England country inn, he happened upon a classmate who fell ill and died during the night. Within a year he reversed the direction of his life, turned aside a teaching position at his alma mater, and committed himself to a life of missionary service. Two of the most influential books Judson read were Claudius Buchanan’s Star in the East (1809) and Michael Symes’s Account of the Embassy to the Kingdom of Ava (1810).

Health difficulties plagued the pilgrimage of Adoniram Judson. In 1815 and again in 1817 he suffered an eye infection that required him to sit still for hours. He used the opportunity to dictate to a servant for the dictionary project. In 1838 he contracted an irritated throat condition, which continually limited his primary activity to study and writing rather than public speaking and evangelism. He was continuously laid low by loss of voice, sore throat, and painful breathing, which his biographer termed consumptive.1 But most trying of all was the grueling experience in 1824–25 during his imprisonment and forced march. Turned into what Ann called a “haggard, unshaven scarecrow,” he suffered a fever, was deprived of food, was subjected to cut and bruised feet through undergoing a long march, and was confined to a death prison in intense sunlight, filth, and degradation. During his darkest moments of incarceration, he devised a plan to continue his translation work and protect the manuscript by hiding it in a pillow on which he slept. Upon his release, he returned to his work of translation and actually served as an emissary of negotiation between the British and Burmese treaty agents.

Death was an important factor in spiritual maturity for Adoniram Judson. When his wife, Ann, died in 1826 at Amherst, Adoniram was facilitating diplomatic negotiations in Rangoon. He learned of her sufferings and death and her attitude of resignation from a “black-sealed letter” that bore the ill tidings that “Mrs. Judson is no more.” Following intense grief, he plunged into new projects: writing astronomical and geographic catechisms, translating the Psalms, and working on missionary living quarters. Similarly in 1845 when Sarah died, he returned to the States and traveled ceaselessly in the interests of the board and his work. The four children Judson lost in childbirth also caused a good deal of sorrow for Adoniram, out of which grew increased dependence upon God’s inscrutable purposes and a resignation to do the work to which he was called. When Roger Williams Judson died in his crib in 1816, it caused the parents to conclude that their attachment to their children had been too great. In 1841 when one-year-old Henry died from convulsions and fever at Serampore, Adoniram assuaged his grief by evangelizing the ship’s company on the return from Calcutta to Port Louis.

Like most chronically sick persons, depression set in frequently for Judson. On one occasion in 1839 he admitted, “I have lived long enough, I have lived to see accomplished the particular objects on which I set my heart when I commenced a missionary life. And why should I wish to live longer?”

As a young man, Adoniram rejected the faith of his parents and prided himself in being a skeptic.

In 1838 Judson contracted a throat condition that limited him to study and writing rather than public speaking and evangelism.
The biographers of Adoniram Judson found in him a paradigm of missionary service. First in Judson’s persona was a lifelong commitment to missionary service. At the time of his acknowledged call and interviews by the Congregationalist board, Judson expressed his desire to devote himself to a “mission for life.” The tenor of his departure for India in 1812 was that of a permanent commitment; when his wife, Ann, became ill in 1825, he sent her back to the United States but remained on the field himself. Even after losing his second wife in 1845 and suffering from his chronic throat ailment, Judson felt obligated to return to Burma to resume his duties. Upon reflection on his career, he wrote to potential missionary candidates back in the United States, “Let it be a missionary life; that is, come out for life, and not for a limited term.” The correspondence between the missionary and his Baptist board in his declining days in 1849–50 leaves the distinct impression that he had finished his life’s major work but would remain in Asia.

Second, Judson was a denominational missionary, and he understood how polity and process worked in a churchly context. His initial inclination to become a missionary was expressed to the Bradford Congregationalist Association. Having met with a half dozen pastors and a layman, he and five others were the catalysts for the formation of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. With little financial support for his ideas, Adoniram went to Great Britain in early 1811 as an emissary of this board to negotiate with the London Missionary Society, an interdenominational organization heavily supported by Congregationalists, for a possible American appointment. Following successful negotiations with the London connection, Adoniram returned to the United States to secure support among fellow Congregationalists.

Judson’s conversion to the Baptist persuasion could have been a hurtful turn of events for both the young missionary and the New England base of support, not to speak of his parents in the Congregational ministry. Judson, however, followed an ethical pathway and resigned from the service of the board with full disclosure. He then wrote of his new convictions to friends in the United States, hoping for a positive response. Only afterward did he announce his readiness to accept an appointment from an “appropriate society.” His friend Luther Rice (1789–1836), a consummate publicist, actually maneuvered Judson into a favorable light in the American Baptist community, which was rapidly developing an interest in supporting overseas missions.

Committed to both the field of Burma and Baptist principles, Judson waited patiently for support to materialize, and he wrote tirelessly of his work to American Baptist editors and a board he did not know. The Baptist community in the United States owed an incalculable debt to Judson, for he gave them not only an overseas missionary program but also a sense of national denominational identity and purpose. The Baptist family, originally organized to support the Burman Mission, split asunder in 1844–45. At the time Judson was caring for, and later grieving, his second wife, Sarah. His position on the divisive issue of slavery was mildly antislave, and his support for the Baptist board was unwavering. The great catalytic figure who rallied denominational forces in 1813 came to be associated with the Baptists of the North after the schism. His deceased colleague Luther Rice became the Southern Baptist ideal of missionary promotion for having spent the final years of his life itinerating in the South. Few Southern Baptist histories gave more than passing attention to the work of Judson for this reason.

Perhaps it surprised many of his own family in New England, but when Judson returned in 1845 for his only furlough, it was spent largely visiting the Baptist community and recuperating from a throat ailment on the campus of Baptist-related Madison (later Colgate) University in upstate New York. Here he became fast friends with many of the leading northern Baptist educators of the era, including Nathaniel Kendrick (1777–1848) and William Colgate (1783–1857).

From an administrative point of view, Judson was an ideal appointment. Unlike William Carey, he did not become involved in troubling employment outside the mission, and he seemed to follow instructions respectfully. Rather, he pledged not to engage in secular employment and to relinquish all private rights to remittances from America; all money and property were placed in the mission fund. He corresponded regularly with the board, which in turn published his letters and journal. The correspondence reveals much dependence of the board upon Judson for advice and insights into foreign service. The board could rightly take deep pride in Judson when their emis­saries returned or wrote of observing his work firsthand and finding that things were as they should be. He became the folk hero of American Baptist life in the nineteenth century.

While one could argue that there were few if any alternatives to denominational service in Judson’s era, there was the real possibility, exhibited by William Carey, of support from other sources of income, as well as the starting of a new society like the Church Missionary Society, or among the Bible society enthusiasts, a new organization based upon theological distinctiveness. He could have followed the example of his one-time friend J. Lewis Shuck, who transferred his allegiance from the Baptist board to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. Instead, Judson chose to remain in the mainstream.

Missionary Translator

One of the most important facets of the Judson legacy was his identification of translation as a primary task of pioneer missionaries. The first indication of his interest in language came in 1808, when he published an introductory textbook for use in academies, Elements of English Grammar. This interest was enhanced when he met William Carey, Joshua Marshman, and William Ward at Serampore, India, and viewed firsthand their long-term efforts in translation of Scripture and other language tools in Indian languages and dialects.

Upon his arrival in Burma, Judson planned to conduct evangelistic and church planting ministries but soon realized the enormity of the language and cultural differences. This led him to make the first priority of his work translation of Scripture and suitable tracts for evangelical purposes. He wrote to a friend in the United States of his singular purpose: “My only object is to prosecute in a still, quiet manner the study of the language, trusting that for all the future, God will provide.” His own
contribution in this regard was very large. In 1826 he published the first edition of his Burmese dictionary, followed in 1840 by a translation of the entire Bible, which he considered his major literary accomplishment. He either translated or assisted in several other Bible projects, including Karen, Pekuan, Pali, and Toungoung. At the end of his life he was near completion on a Burmese-English dictionary, which his friend and protégé Jonathan Wade completed. Having most of his linguistic work behind him in 1840, he reported to the board that he was returning to evangelistic preaching and itinerant work, which he believed was then greatly facilitated by his lifelong efforts in language-tool preparation.

But Judson's leadership in translation went beyond his own work. He set forth rules in 1839 for translation by other missionaries under appointment by the Baptist board. He was the chief catalyst in the appointment of the first American Baptist missionary printer, George Hough (1788–1859), and the subsequent setup of the American Baptist Missionary Press at Rangoon, for many years the premier Christian publisher of non-English-language materials in South Asia.

Judson's role model as a missionary dedicated to large linguistic projects had a great impact upon several generations of American Baptist missionaries in Burma and elsewhere. In his image were George Dana Boardman (1801–31), Eugenio Kincaid (1797–1883), Jonathan Wade (1798–1872), William Dean (1807–95), J. Lewis Shuck (1814–63), Josiah Goddard (1813–54), and Josiah Nelson Cushing (1840–1905). Aware of his influence and mindful of the great opportunities, Judson advised visiting board member Howard Malcolm (1799–1879) in 1836 that candidates for missionary service should first learn the language of their proposed field before setting upon the work. The faculty at Hamilton Literary and Theological Institution (later Madison, then Colgate University) in upstate New York took Judson's advice seriously and developed an entire curriculum for missionary candidates, including tutorial instruction in Burmese.

Judson's work, advice, and continual prodding caused the Baptist board to develop strict criteria for missionary training. American Baptists were among the first sending agencies to develop policies for language training and education of their missionary personnel. The fruits of their labors were seen in the unusually high number of published dictionaries, language study aids, and Scripture portions from their presses in the nineteenth century.

The Hagiographic Judson

During his own lifetime, Adoniram Judson became a mythic figure, but even more so in his death. Tall and handsome, he had the profile of an American frontiersman. His struggles with Burmese officials and exploits during the Anglo-Burmese War marked him as a rugged religious individualist in the mold of Davy Crockett (1786–1836) or Andrew Jackson (1767–1845), his contemporaries back home in the United States. Woodcuts prepared for the religious press depicted him as a survivor against impossible odds of political treachery and religious infidelism. Accounts of his trial and imprisonment generated pride in American piety and indignation at the denial of his civil and human rights.

During his lifetime, Judson was recognized as a heroic figure. He first appeared in the public consciousness of New England at the celebrated commissioning service at Salem, Massachusetts, on February 6, 1812. Throngs of people attended the service and noted the leadership of the young Mr. Judson. A few days later on February 18, as he and his colleagues embarked for India, a great crowd attended the departure of his ship, as though they thought this was the beginning to a great American evangelical foreign mission. Even Judson's early colleagues—Gordon Hall, Luther Rice, Samuel Nott, Jr., and Samuel Newell—deferred to his judgment: he was chosen to represent their interests both in Massachusetts and before the English Christian community.

The American Baptist press made the most of Judson's missionary exploits. In May 1817 the Massachusetts Baptist Missionary Magazine became the American Baptist Magazine, the official organ of the General Missionary Convention. Not an issue passed without notice of the Judsons; excerpts from Adoniram's or Ann's journals, edited letters to the board, and general articles about the geography and politics of the Far East filled the issues. These accounts were quickly picked up by other denominational periodicals in the United States and abroad. Most riveting were the accounts of Judson's torture and imprisonment in 1824–25 and Ann's devoted attempts to secure his release.

When Judson returned to the United States on his first furlough in 1845, he was hailed as a national hero. After almost thirty-four uninterrupted years on the field, he returned to a public hungry for news. His tour took him through most of the eastern U.S. urban centers: Boston, Providence, New York, Albany, Utica, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. He met with churches, associations, schools, colleges, ministerial gatherings, and the rich and famous. At a convocation at his alma mater, Brown University, students gazed upon him, "the story of whose labors and sorrow and sufferings had been familiar to them from childhood, and whose name they uttered with reverence and affection as that of the pioneer and father of American missions to the heathen." Everywhere people literally reached out to touch him. The mystique about his appearances was further enhanced by his inability to speak at most events, owing to his chronic throat condition. He usually just stood mute and offered friendly gestures.

During his national tour, he was accorded the privileges of a visiting statesman. Leading capitalists like soap manufacturer William Colgate received him and offered to help finance his work. Secretary of War William Marcy introduced him to President James K. Polk. He narrowly missed being presented to the United States Senate by luminary Daniel Webster of New Hampshire. Ever the statesman, Judson did venture south of the Mason-Dixon Line to visit some of the older southern friends of the Burman Mission, notably in Baltimore and Richmond, where he was honored by speeches of the new Southern Baptist leaders.

Significant in the making of a mythic image was Judson's reputation beyond his own denomination. People generally interested in missions, members and clergy of various denominations, and many others acclaimed Judson as "a good man," according to Robert Middleditch, a contemporary biographer. Perhaps the greatest evidence of his overall "living impact" came

Under Judson's influence, American Baptists were among the first to require language training and education of missionaries.
among his former brethren in the Congregationalist fold. He was officially received at a meeting of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and described as a "brother beloved." In an emotional 1845 moment at a public gathering at Bowdoinham Square Baptist Church in Boston, he reunited with his former colleague Samuel Nott, Jr., who rejoiced at the sight of his early missionary companion. Nott and Judson were the only surviving members of the original first five American foreign missionaries.

Judson's name became a useful fund-raiser and consciousness-raiser among American evangelicals in the late nineteenth century. His 1846 visit to Philadelphia raised over $14,000, while other visits led to the formation of numerous new missionary societies in the Baptist family. Still another means of recognizing the accomplishments of America's great missionary was to name a child after him: this was seen in the case of Adoniram Judson Gordon (1836-95) and Adoniram Judson Joslin (1819-68), to name just two prominent examples. Judson's name was displayed nationally on the centenary of his birth in Malden, Massachusetts, in 1888, and significantly on the anniversary of the establishment of the Baptist mission in Burma. In 1913 his son Edward (1844-1913) made much of this event along with other Northern Baptists in the United States and Burma. Edward launched a financial campaign to underwrite the construction of a church edifice in New York City to which John D. Rockefeller contributed, known as the Judson Memorial Church.

Even the accounts of Judson's final hours and death were cause for veneration. Exhausted as his work on the Burmese dictionary project drew to a close, he continued his vast correspondence to the end. Isolated from his wife and children, he died in the company of a fellow missionary and was buried at sea, as he had wished, without a service of committal. The picture painted by his biographers, beginning with his wife, Emily, was one of lifelong and final devotion to his work and its reception into God's hands.

The creation of Judson's literary image began during his 1846 furlough. John Dowling, a well-known religious writer, published in that year The Judson Offering, which included not only details of the mission and the sacrifices but also numerous poems created for the theme. Adoniram, recognizing the notoriety that attended his first wife, Ann Hasseltine, worked diligently on his furlough to secure the services of an adequate biographer for his second wife, Sarah Hall Boardman. Following his death in 1850, Judson biographies proliferated on an official basis and in the general evangelical press as well. The authoritative work, edited by the eminent Francis Wayland, president of Brown University, included well-selected letters and papers relating to the late missionary's career. That, plus Robert Middleditch's biography, sold tens of thousands of copies through the next three decades. The American Baptist Mission Press, named the Judson Press in 1913, retained an ample supply of the literature.

The hagiographic image of Adoniram Judson is best illustrated in assessments like those of mission historian George Smith, who said, "Adoniram Judson is surpassed by no missionary since the Apostle Paul in self-devotion and scholarship, in labors and perils, in saintliness and humility, in the result of his toils on the future of an empire and its multitudinous people."

An Afterword

American Baptist mission historian Robert G. Torbet commented that Adoniram Judson provided a constant source of inspiration for the denominational family of American Baptists, and Yale University Sterling Professor of History Kenneth Scott Latourette concurred that Judson caused the Baptists of the United States to unite in owning Burma as their first mission field. Colleges and seminaries, as well as distinguished chairs in theological schools, were named for him. He is recalled on the campuses of Brown University and in Malden, Massachusetts, the place of his birth. Judson himself avoided recognition of his accomplishments, declining, for example, the conferral of a doctor of divinity degree at Brown in 1823. He wanted to be remembered for his observation, "The future is as bright as the promises of God."

Notes

3. Adoniram Judson to the Foreign Missionary Association of Hamilton Literary and Theological Institution, June 25, 1832.
7. Modern writers think that part of Adoniram’s image as a folk hero was earned by and through his wives, Ann, Sarah, and Emily. For this perspective, see Joan J. Brumberg, Mission for Life: The Story of the Family of Adoniram Judson (New York: Free Press, 1980), pp. 79ff.
8. Adoniram Judson to Reverend Emerson, January 7, 1814.
13. For instance, Judson College in Alabama, Judson College in Illinois, and the Judson Chair in World Missions at Andover Newton Theological School in Massachusetts.

Bibliography

Works by Adoniram Judson

Adoniram Judson was the author of a series of tracts in Burmese (1816-34), catechetical works (1817-27), and published letters (1816-32). Several other major works are listed below.


The Legacy of Harry and Susan Strachan

W. Dayton Roberts

Harry Strachan and Susan Beamish Strachan, his wife, were the innovative missionary couple who founded the Latin America Mission (LAM) on July 24, 1921.

Harry (1872–1945) was born of Scottish parents and raised in Aberdeen, though he was born in Canada while they were temporarily resident there. His father, Joseph Strachan, was a stern and God-fearing stonemason, and his mother, Mary Murray, was a pious Presbyterian. Harry dated his conversion from experience in Sunderland, England, where he had secured work after running away from home sometime in his late teens. After his conversion, he joined the YMCA and the Bethesda Free Church of Sunderland, which helped to support him throughout his subsequent missionary career and where he was ordained to the Christian ministry.1

Susan (1874–1950) came from Cork, Ireland, where her family was part of a nominally Protestant enclave in a Roman Catholic community. The Beamishes had been given a land grant in Cork by Sir Oliver Cromwell, over two hundred years before. Susan and her siblings were baptized as infants and raised in the Church of Ireland (Episcopal). Converted as a teenager in a small Methodist chapel in Cork, early in her Christian experience she felt called to be a foreign missionary. Later, as an adult in Argentina, she was baptized by immersion, just before she married Harry Strachan.

At about the turn of the century, Harry and Susan met at Harley College in London, where they were both preparing for missionary service in the African Congo under the Regions Beyond Missionary Union (RBMU). Independently, by God’s providence, they were rejected as missionary candidates for the Congo because of what turned out to be nonexistent or minor health reasons, and ultimately they found each other again in the more salubrious climate of Argentina. Susan had been sent there in 1901 after completing her college and midwifery studies. Harry followed a year later, in the spring of 1902.

Joined in Marriage and in Mission

In Argentina they were married in June 1903 and, after further orientation and probation in Buenos Aires, were assigned to Tandil, where they served together for another fifteen years. Following the 1910 Edinburgh missionary conference, the RBMU was merged with other small agencies to form the Evangelical Union of South America (EUSA), of which the Strachans automatically became charter members. In Tandil the Strachans’ three children were born: Robert Kenneth (1910), who eventually succeeded his parents as general director of the LAM, Harry Wallace (1912), who died from complications following an attack of malaria while a student at the University of Florida in Gainesville, and Grace Eileen (1913), who herself became a missionary under the LAM and married W. Dayton Roberts, another LAM missionary.

Tandil for the Strachans was not only a valuable experience in missionary pastoring but also served as a laboratory of evangelistic method and a place where Harry, especially, became burdened for evangelistic outreach on a continental scale.

While in the United States on a belated health furlough (their current term of service having been extended to ten years because of World War I travel restrictions) Harry and Susan de-

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decided they could wait no longer for their mission in Great Britain to back them up in carrying out what they believed was God’s plan for them in continent-wide evangelism. Consequently, they resigned from EUSA in 1919 to launch their own missionary project, which eventually became the Latin America Mission.

Missiologist Samuel Escobar ranks Harry Strachan, along with Bible colporteur James (“Diego”) Thomson and educator John A. Mackay, as one of three great Scottish missionaries who crossed the ocean to preach the Gospel in Latin America with a vision not for a particular country or region but for the whole continent. “Of the three,” adds Escobar, “Strachan is perhaps least known by missiological scholars, but his story is equally significant because of the continental reach and enduring impact of the evangelical movements that he started.” Wheaton College, Wheaton Illinois, in early recognition of Strachan’s unique and extensive ministry, conferred on him the degree of doctor of divinity in June 1937.

Fuller Seminary missiologist Paul Pierson, writing about the gifts of women in the modern missionary movement, has stated, “As they sought to be obedient to their Lord, women in mission have pushed out the boundaries of what was considered appropriate for them and blazed new trails in ministry. Susan Beamish Strachan was one of these. Few if any women—or men, for that matter—have exemplified this spirit of obedience more than Doña Susana.”

The truth is that Harry and Susan Strachan made a remarkable and innovative team, and the impact of their legacy goes far beyond the mission and the many institutions and movements that followed in their train. They labored together in Argentina from their marriage in 1903 until 1918, and then in Costa Rica, where from 1921 until their deaths they directed the mission they had founded. Harry died on March 28, 1945, and Susan on December 6, 1950. They were buried in the General Cemetery of San José, where their son Harry Wallace had been laid to rest in 1933, and where later they were joined by Kenneth (1965) and Grace (1987).

July 24, 1996, marked the seventy-fifth birthday of the Strachans’ mission. Called originally the Latin America Evangelization Campaign and launched as an agency to conduct cooperative evangelistic efforts throughout the continent, the LAM today maintains evangelistic outreach as its priority objective while engaging also in other important ministries of support and enhancement. It may best be described as an international fellowship of committed Christian men and women who, by aligning their individual and collective vocations and ministries, seek to encourage, assist, and participate with the Christian church of Latin America in its efforts to evangelize the world.

The LAM counts about 200 missionaries in its ranks, many of them on loan to some thirty agencies and programs, most of which were founded by the mission itself and subsequently given their independence. They include two major church denominations (Colombia, 526 congregations; and Costa Rica, 115), seminaries, a hospital, child welfare programs, camps, schools, radio stations, a publishing house, and Christian bookstores, to mention a few.

**Latin America Mission, 1921–**

In their work, which sometimes involved the most difficult of circumstances, including frequent separation and long periods of contact only through correspondence, Harry and Susan were essentially one in all they undertook. They shared, as best they could, in all major decisions. Once they had established the LAM and settled in Costa Rica (October 1921), the pattern of their lives was fairly consistent. Harry was away in evangelistic campaigns up and down Latin America for many months each year. The rest of his time he divided between periods of rest, recuperation, and study in Costa Rica, their headquarters, and the deputation trips and personnel recruitment he felt obliged to undertake in the United States and Canada to raise support for the work in Latin America. Whenever Harry got back to Costa Rica from his seemingly perpetual evangelistic and deputation trips, he and Susan spent as much time as possible together, sometimes walking the streets, much as they had learned to do before their marriage in Coronel Juárez, Argentina. Harry would report his evangelistic experiences and Susan would broach her ideas for development of the headquarters base.

The initiative of development at the Costa Rican base became, inevitably, mostly Susan’s. Almost immediately after settling in, she established a Bible institute for girls in her home, enrolling at first three—then eight—faithful students. A few months later Harry sent her ten young men from Nicaragua, and a coeducational institute was underway. Later it became the Latin American Biblical Seminary, with truly continental impact.

Susan’s other major responsibilities during the early years in Costa Rica included the publication of a missionary news bulletin called*El Evangelista* and later an evangelistic paper in Spanish called*El Mensajero bíblico* (The Biblical Messenger). In subsequent years she also founded—always with the full backing of her husband and while continuing at the same time to manage the mission and the Bible institute—a hospital and a home for children and orphans. Susan usually superintended the construction of buildings related to these institutions.

While often the first dream and initial steps in these enterprises were Susan’s, it would be inaccurate to say that they competed in any way with Harry’s evangelistic ministry. Their mission priorities were shaped by a holistic vision and were shared wholly by both. At the same time, while this relationship evidenced no basic dichotomy in their understanding of mission, it is also true that Harry and Susan each brought distinct perspectives to bear on their work. This complementarity greatly enriched the movement and inevitably resulted in broader vision and a stronger organization.

**The Strachan Legacy**

Their many accomplishments, properly speaking, do not constitute the legacy of Harry and Susan Strachan—rather, they are the fruit of that legacy, which can better be measured in the less tangible terms of spirit, culture, and missiological orientation.

By God’s grace, I was privileged to work in the LAM for almost a decade under the direction of Harry and Susan, as well as thereafter under their son Kenneth and two of his successors. And since my retirement from the LAM, I have continued to serve on its board of trustees. This, plus the fact that by marrying their daughter, Grace, I became a son-in-law of the senior

**With Harry away much of the time, development of the Costa Rican base fell mostly to his wife, Susan.**
Strachans, has allowed me a unique opportunity to try to understand and communicate the true dimensions of their ministry.

I believe that the legacy the Strachans left to me, to the other LAM missionaries, and to the rest of the evangelical mission community can be summarized in five major points. They do not exhaust the wealth of our inheritance, but they highlight the factors that have had the most impact.

1. Identification with the culture and the people. Harry and Susan showed a deep sense of identification with the Latin American people and culture. The local newspaper was as important to them as their morning coffee, and they followed local politics avidly. They embraced local customs and concerns with genuine involvement and appreciation.

At one point, early in his career, Harry came under the conviction that as a highland Scot, he was perceived by the Argentines to be aloof and disinterested in them. He made it a matter of earnest prayer, and the Lord gave him a warmth and empathy that changed the quality of his relationships.

More important, this sense of Latin American identity required them to know and understand thoroughly the local situation before embarking on any project—even an evangelistic campaign. Harry and Susan spent twelve full months, from January 1920 to January 1921 (leaving their children with Christian friends in Kansas City), and traveled by ship, train, riverboat, bus, and frequently on horseback, getting to know intimately most of the countries of the continent before they felt free to establish their new mission.

This same characteristic caused them to place the headquarters in San José, Costa Rica, rather than in some city like Philadelphia or New York (both major areas of their economic support).

In the campaigns he planned and conducted, Harry always insisted on securing an outstanding Latin American orator to be the crusade preacher and evangelist. His own role, he felt, should be backstage. In the next generation it was Kenneth Strachan who carried this principle to its fullest development in LAM, but it was the incarnational identification of his parents with the Latin American people and their culture that inspired him.

2. The priority of evangelization. The mission was born in the heyday of Protestant liberalism in America. The mainline thrust of evangelistic mission had peaked at about the turn of the century, and the early decades of the 1900s were characterized by events such as the 1910 conference in Edinburgh, which described Latin America as already Christianized, a 1914 consultation in Cincinnati that gave rise to a comity agreement that restricted evangelistic outreach in Latin America, and another conference in Panama in 1916 that gave birth to the liberal Committee on Cooperation in Latin America. The climax of this wave of Protestant liberalism came with the publication in 1932 of Re-thinking Missions: A Laymen’s Inquiry, edited by W. E. Hocking, criticizing evangelistic mission and seeking a more tolerant, nonproselytizing objective for the Christian church overseas.

These factors undoubtedly sharpened the Strachans’ sense of the priority of evangelization, but it was something they were already committed to, and it brooked no discussion. Kenneth emphasized the evangelistic campaign ministry after his father’s death by initiating the Evangelism-in-Depth movement, thereby giving maximum expression to his parents’ priorities.

It always surprised me a bit that Kenneth, who resembled his mother in so many ways, was the one who propounded and communicated so successfully his father’s priority passion for evangelism. And it was Grace, in whom so many of her father’s genes were evident, who became the visionary of human development, emulating her mother, working among marginalized women but discovering that true and complete development must seek first of all to bring those in need to the feet of the Savior.

3. Compassionate response to human need. Nothing illustrates this quality better than the reaction of the Strachans to the miserable street urchins they encountered in San José. Ragged, dirty, and sickly, the street children begged, occasionally worked at selling newspapers or shining shoes, and more frequently resorted to theft and violence to secure a living.

Susan wanted to do something about it immediately. Harry reminded her—and she agreed with him—that God had led them to Costa Rica to start a ministry of campaign evangelism, and until the Lord should lead them explicitly in other directions, they must not allow themselves to get diverted from this purpose. So they carried the burden in their hearts and frequently made it a matter of prayer until finally, after leading them through the experience of starting a hospital and understanding better the needs of the Costa Rican waifs, God opened the way to establish a Bible home for children. This led to the present-day Roblealto Program of Child Welfare, which has become a model ministry of wide and varied outreach and an important part of Costa Rica’s social structure.

It is not hard to find other illustrations of this readiness to respond to obvious needs. The bold inauguration of an urban hospital when there were yet no evangelical doctors available and the beginning of medical and evangelistic work in the unwholesome Department of Bolivar in Colombia, with an innovative use of river launches and other means, are two other such examples. The next generation initiated similar ventures: rural “caravans” to minister in neglected areas of Costa Rica and the “Family Welfare” outreach to marginalized women in the ghetto areas of San José. Both derived their inspiration from Harry and Susan Strachan.

4. Willingness to break new ground. “Is there a better way of doing it?” This is a question Harry must have asked himself frequently. He was certainly quick to experiment with different methods and venues, traveling local trains back and forth to give out tracts and a word of witness, converting a horse-drawn coach into a bookmobile, using tents and theaters instead of church auditoriums for campaigns, promoting them with marimba concerts and musical bands.

Susan’s concern for street children led to the Roblealto Program of Child Welfare, today an important part of Costa Rica’s social structure.
Before the Bible institute that Harry dreamed about could get started, Susan was already asking herself, "Where are the young men who come as students going to find missionary-minded wives to share their ministry?" And so she began a simple training school for Christian girls that eventually became the Bible institute of evangelists and pastors Harry had envisioned. Their Christian peers credited them with being "one step ahead," and this is indeed apt for these missionary innovators.

5. Personal passion for Christ. The ultimate goal in life for Harry and Susan was to love, obey, and exhibit the person and gospel message of their Lord. In the long run, nothing else mattered.

Harry’s early participation in and identification with the American Keswick movement demonstrated this focus. The Keswick movement was a summer-conference outgrowth in Great Britain of the Moody-Sankey campaigns of 1875. It appealed especially to evangelicals of Reformed theological persuasion and had come to be characterized by disciplined piety and missionary zeal. It quickly spread to America and other parts of the world.

Harry wholeheartedly expounded the Keswick conviction that a Christian believer can enjoy victory over sin through the power of the indwelling Christ. "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world" was axiomatic among those of Keswick orientation, like his close colleague Robert McQuilkin of the Sunday School Times. Harry made it his own watchword.

It was Susan, however, who gave the most lucid expression to this priority. Early in the San José years she wrote a tract entitled A Personal Passion for Christ, which has been reprinted many times and incorporated into other publications. Her thesis was that in the Bible and in common Christian experience there are countless numbers of those who belong to Christ, but only a relatively few ever learn to exhibit a personal passion for him that sets them apart in the category of a Moses, a David, a Paul, or a John Bunyan. This became Susan’s goal—to live out a personal passion for Christ.

"In our zeal for the better, are we missing the best?" she wrote. "There is a reward for the obedient disciple, there is power and authority for the faithful disciple, there is the glory of achievement for the zealous disciple, but there is the whisper of His love, there is the joy of His presence, and the shining of His face for those who love Him for himself alone. And to what profit is it that we dwell in Jerusalem, if we do not see the face of the King?"

Harry was also moved by this passion. I once saw a list of some of his sermons. There were literally dozens of them based on the text following the withdrawal of Moses and Elijah from the Mount of Transfiguration. "And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only" (Matt. 17:8). Those final two words became for him an inexhaustible fountain of homiletical inspiration. Clearly, the fundamental motivation in ministry of both Harry and Susan was a personal passion for Christ.

The Strachans today could be proud of their twelve adult grandchildren—achievers, servers, significant world citizens. I recently asked them what they considered to be Harry and Susan’s legacy to them. Although most were too young when their grandparents died to recall them in such concrete terms, nevertheless I garnered some significant responses. One of the grandchildren recalls a four-year-old’s sense of the warmth of Doña Susana’s presence, communicated in the comfortable feel of the silk-covered buttons of her dress. Three claim their grandmother as their model of womanhood, exemplifying a liberty to aspire and to achieve, grasping opportunities and making things happen. Two of them refer to Susan’s writings as being a treasured inheritance. “When I first read her ‘Personal Passion for Christ,’ said one, I recognized in myself the same longing that so dominated her life. I don’t know if these things are inherited, as such, but if so, I think this would be the legacy that I most treasure and am grateful for.”

I can think of no better way to summarize and close this account of the Strachan legacy than with a paragraph from granddaughter Clare Strachan Frist:

Most important, and the basis for the fruitfulness and enduring quality of the work they did, was the nature of their commitment to God. When a person gives his love and his life so totally to God, there is a touching of things eternal that transcends any other achievement. Those who have the privilege of seeing or hearing about such a person are blessed and stirred to make the same sort of commitment. A life so lived is the greatest gift a person can give someone else, above and beyond any practical results that might come from such a life.

Notes
1. There is no biographical information in print about the childhood and premissionary lives of Harry and Susan Beamish Strachan. Most of the data in this essay was taken from conversations and correspondence with them and with their children.
3. Information related to the Latin America Mission, as well as to the Strachans themselves, of which I made extensive use, is found today in three places: (1) bound copies of The Evangelist, volumes covering 1921 to the present (available in LAM’s Miami and San José, Costa Rica, offices); (2) Billy Graham Center, Wheaton, Illinois, holding correspondence and other documents from the LAM archives; and (3) personal letters and documents in the custody of Mrs. Clare Strachan Frist, of Greenville, S.C. Mrs. Frist is a granddaughter of Harry and Susan Strachan.
4. A Personal Passion for Christ was written by Susan Strachan in the early days of her Costa Rican ministry (no. 11 in a series of leaflets published by the Latin America Evangelization Campaign, before it became the Latin America Mission). It was later published as a chapter in a devotional book issued by InterVarsity Press. The full text can be found in chapter 11, “Centerpiece,” of Roberts, One Step Ahead.

Bibliography
The Evangelist is the regular publication of the Latin America Mission, P.O. Box 52-7900, Miami, FL 33152-7900. During her time of service in Costa Rica, from 1921 until her death in 1950, Susan Strachan edited the magazine, and large parts of it were either written by her or quoted from Harry Strachan’s letters and reports. These portions constitute virtually the only published writings of the senior Strachans.

Cabezas Badilla, Franklin. Nuestra clinica: Sanidad y santidad al estilo del...
**Book Reviews**

**Count It All Joy: Testimonies from a Persecuted Church.**


**By Their Blood: Christian Martyrs of the Twentieth Century.**


**Their Blood Cries Out: The Untold Story of Persecution Against Christians in the Modern World.**


**In the Lion’s Den: A Shocking Account of Persecution and Martyrdom of Christians Today and How We Should Respond.**


Having lived in Ethiopia through the worst years (1977–84) of the Cultural Revolution, I have been personally involved with the persecuted church. What praying! What singing! What enthusiasm! What courage! I enjoyed reading these four books. Cumbers covers Eritrea and eleven areas of Ethiopia between 1974 and 1991 (pp. 38–246). In chapters 1–6 he gives a thumbnail sketch of Christianity in Ethiopia and mission-church relationships. The body of the book (chaps. 7–18) comes from recordings of interviews with believers who suffered at the hands of those who hated them. Enough historical material is added to stitch the interviews into an attractive patchwork quilt. It has the ring of truth about it that all first-person reporting carries.

The Hefleys claim hagiology status for their book. Their story begins in China, flows through Asia to the Pacific and then to Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, and ends in the Caribbean and Latin America. It is a collection of moving stories that deserve to be remembered. A comprehensive bibliography and index add to the book.

Marshall’s book seeks to understand the source of the persecution (Islam, pp. 15–70; Communism, pp. 71–96; Hinduism and Buddhism, pp. 97–118; and then Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, pp. 118–48) and asks why there has been a Western conspiracy of silence (pp. 149–210). The final chapter (pp. 211–34) makes suggestions for creating a win-win environment with the persecutors. Seven appendixes follow (pp. 235–66). In an age of cultural relativism the anti-Christian nature of many religions and philosophies needs to be understood. History shows that with all the political power of the West we can’t prevent religious persecution is unacceptable to us.

Hagiography is a venerable but grossly overlooked element of modern church history. The church universal needs the inspiration of martyrs. The stories of those who could have avoided death but accepted it rather than freedom because they viewed it as a compromise belong in a distinct category. This is the group of people who choose to die; they did not want to be rescued!

We need more of the Cumbers-type case studies presenting the viewpoint of the persecuted church. The voice of the persecuted church, and the martyrs within it, is the only voice worth considering. In most cases these stories must be written by outsiders. It has been my experience that the ones who suffer the most, glory in it the least. The church of which these witnesses are members need the stories. But who has the greatest spiritual needs? Which church needs help the most? The Christian faith the most vibrant? Who has lost the vision? Where is the Christian faith the most vibrant? Who has the silver and gold, but does it have the power to mock the opposition?

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be answered: Where does God's sovereignty fit in? What is faith in Christ costing me? Nothing? Why? Has the opposition been too successful? Do we have the shoe on the wrong foot? Should we perhaps be sending videocassettes to the persecuted churches and asking them to pray for us?

So hagiographers, read these four books carefully and start applying for research grants. Many countries have stories that need to be written up accurately.

—Brian L. Fargher

Brian L. Fargher is Executive Director of the Leadership Training Centre (Campus Crusade for Christ), Edmonton, Alberta. He spent twenty-nine years with SIM in Ethiopia.

American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice.


Women have played central roles in the American foreign mission movement from its inception, yet scholars have paid little attention to the principles and strategies that guided women's mission work at home and abroad. Dana Robert offers a first attempt to examine women's part in the creation of American mission theories. Drawing on a wide variety of published and unpublished sources, Robert offers a richly suggestive study of women's contributions to the missionary movement. Her book is part of a series appraising modern missions edited by Wilbert Shenk.

Robert chose to organize her work around case studies detailing the approach of groups of women in a particular time period. She focuses on groups that seemed in their day to be on the cutting edge of mission theory—the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Baptists, Methodists, faith missions, the Maryknoll Sisters. The book is full of stories drawn from journals, diaries, letters, and mission publications that offer insights into women's feelings, motives, and relationships with institutional structures. These sources are widely scattered and often rare, and one of the book's major contributions is in demonstrating their richness. The footnotes and bibliography offer an invaluable introduction to the literature of American women in mission. (In the first printing, the book's usefulness was unfortunately hampered by the lack of an index; the publisher has subsequently added an index.)

The vast array of sources and the lack of institutional and local studies account for Robert's decision not to attempt a general narrative of women and the missionary movement. Her choices about organization give the narrative a decidedly northern flavor, and one wonders about the nuances that attention to Southern Baptists, Southern Methodists, and Southern Presbyterians or, for that matter, to missions-minded Pietist groups like Moravians and others might introduce. The decision to use the lens of mission theory also limits the story. American scholars have not generally shown much interest in mission theory; the handful of recent studies of women in mission tend rather to explore cultural and social issues. While Robert's primary interest is in women's gender-based contributions to mission theory, the sources she uses offer much more. They are richly suggestive about women's experiences and American Christianity more generally.

This is a groundbreaking study, and Robert's capable use of neglected primary sources both offers new insights and opens new areas for examination.

—Edith L. Blumhofer

Edith L. Blumhofer is Associate Director of the Public Religion Project, University of Chicago Divinity School.


This is the second volume of the author's massive Missiological Encyclopedia, first published in Dutch in 1991. It is not a general encyclopedia of missions but rather a handbook of missiology, or the study of mission(s). Volume 1 (reviewed here in October 1995, pp. 182-83), dealt with the philosophy of mission and the science of mission. Volume 2 deals with the theology of mission, which, the author maintains, "in recent decades, has been transformed into missionary theology" (p. 1). He defines "missionary theology" as "that form or type of Christian theology which... reflects upon the relations of Christians and churches with... adherents and communities of other religions, world-views, and ideologies in all spheres of private and public life" (p. 10).

After an introductory chapter that
deals with the definitions, history, context, and structure of missionary theology, the bulk of the book is devoted to discussion of what the author describes as “the ten branches of missionary theology,” which include missionary ascetics, missionary dogmatics, missionary ethics, missionary catechetics, missionary liturgics, and missionary homiletics. His concluding chapter offers a retrospective summary view of missiology as a discipline, and a look ahead at the main tasks for mission studies in the twenty-first century.

The author, who is professor of missiology at the University of Utrecht, has provided an exhaustive resource about the study of mission throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Its bibliographies in many languages are invaluable, and the indexes of names and subjects facilitate its usefulness. It should be on the shelf of every mission scholar, right next to Myklebust’s two-volume work The Study of Missions in Theological Education.

---Gerald H. Anderson

Gerald H. Anderson is Editor of this journal and Director of the Overseas Ministries Study Center, New Haven, Connecticut.


The largest amount of missionary work in the Pacific Islands has been done by Islanders rather than by Europeans. Yet nearly all of the writing about the missions has been by and about the Europeans. It is hard to learn about the Islanders because they provided little of the written record. Only here and there can written traces of their activity be discovered. One such discovery is the basis for this book.

New Zealander Allan Davidson, when teaching in a seminary near Rabaul in Papua New Guinea, found an old notebook in the seminary library that proved to be the handwritten autobiography of an important Islander missionary, Semisi Nau. This discovery led to years of painstaking research as Davidson tracked down every possible source of further information on Nau and checked the accuracy, where possible, of what Nau had written. The writing proved generally accurate (whereas a report by the Australian missionary superintendent was found to contain some pure fabrication), and the further information added much to the picture. The introduction that Davidson has provided runs to twice the length of the autobiography.

Nau lived from about 1866 to 1927 and worked as a missionary in the Solomon Islands from 1905 to 1919. His great achievement was his opening, with the help of a Samoan colleague, of the great atoll of Ontong Java to Christian work. This was accomplished through much suffering, including sitting patiently in an open boat for three months, the final week without any water, waiting for the people to let him come ashore. It is clear that he loved the people and did not try to dominate them as did some Islander missionaries and the Australian who followed him at Ontong Java.

An important value of Nau’s writing is that it enables us to see into his inner religious life, something that is not found in the usual writings about Islander missionaries, which deal only with their activities. The autobiography is filled with expressions of deep faith and joy in God,
no matter what the circumstances, and it continually speaks of the reception of God's strength and comfort. These inner springs of missions are the core that Western scholars need to be sensitive to if they are to understand Christian missions, at least as carried on by non-Westerners.

—Charles W. Forman

Charles W. Forman is Emeritus Professor of Missions, Yale University Divinity School. He has worked as a missionary in India, Fiji, and Samoa.

The Kingdom of God in Africa: A Short History of African Christianity.


There was a lull in the effort to produce a comprehensive history of Christianity in Africa after Peter Falk's work in 1979. Suddenly a surge of books appeared in the 1990s: in 1994 by John Baur and by Adrian Hastings, in 1995 by Elizabeth Isichei, and now by Mark Shaw. Baur and Isichei provided survey guides, while Hastings used a shorter time frame to focus on a mission-to-culture interpretation. His Africanized periodization and fulsome treatment of the Ethiopian church were significant. Shaw's work is notable for its theological conceptual scheme, using the understanding of the meaning of the kingdom of God in each phase of African church history as a means of interpretation. His concern is about the "African Church's long struggle to be an effective witness to the One they worship as risen from the dead" (p. 11). The struggle to establish the kingdom has three facets: one is an emphasis on the providential and theocratic rule of God among the Berbers, Egyptian Copts, and Ethiopians, whose monarchs were resourceful patrons. A second is the nineteenth-century missionary movement, which focused on the redemptive rule of Christ—the preaching of God's gracious remission of guilt—as the basis of the Gospel of the kingdom. One consequence was the East African Revival and the contemporary charismatic movement. At other points in time, the emphasis shifted to a third facet, namely, the eschatological mandate to promote justice and transform all things through the power of the Holy Spirit. The careers of Tertullian, Augustine, and Desmond Tutu are examples. This scheme, informed by Shaw's evangelical background and experience from teaching in Africa, is applied consistently within a pleasant narrative.

The book is designed as a text for theological schools and is well illustrated with maps and bibliography. Those with sociological interests, however, may look elsewhere. There is so much unsaid or said so cryptically that the depth of the memory of the people of God and their encounter with Christ have not been fully plumbed. There is still a need for a comprehensive history, written by a number of scholars, each covering an area of expertise.

—Ogbu U. Kalu

Ogbu U. Kalu teaches history at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
Mangoes or Bananas? The Quest for an Authentic Asian Christian Theology.


In eight chapters the author, who is currently principal of the Seminari Theologi Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, thoughtfully searches for the form and contents of an authentic Asian Christian theology.

The book seeks "to assess Asian theological writings on the basis of their adequacy as theologies of mission" (p. 26). Writings of Asian theologians examined include those of D. T. Niles, M. M. Thomas, Kosuke Koyama, C. S. Song, Vinay Samuel, Cho Yong-gi, and Minjung theologians. The author maintains that "ATA [Asia Theological Association] theology is strong on evangelism and pastoral concern. Theologically, it is basically orthodox" (p. 195). He draws a sharp contrast between the ecumenical Christian Conference of Asia and the evangelical ATA. The passion that guides this book is to make conservative orthodoxy stand out in contradistinction to ecumenical liberal theologies, which in his view are "domesticated by the Enlightenment and dualistic categories" (p. 216).

The author's image of mangoes signifies "golden yellow on both the outside and the inside" (authentically Asian), while "bananas" are a deception, since the outside is yellow but the inside is white (p. 240). "What we need," he says, "are more theological 'mangoes' and not 'bananas'" (p. 241).

There are problems here. First, in this book the people of Malaysia, their life and stories, are strangely absent. Second, there is depth and variety within "Western theology" that does not appear here. Do Western biblical studies such as the New Jerome Biblical Commentary and the Anchor Bible Commentary find no place in the discourse? Third, the Enlightenment is evaluated here mainly in Western terms, not in 1998 Kuala Lumpur terms. Finally, "liberal theology" receives a fossilized characterization that betrays a Western origin (p. 15). In general, the book gives a negative impression because it is a contra book.

-Kosuke Koyama

Kosuke Koyama is Professor Emeritus, Union Theological Seminary, New York.

Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition.


This helpful volume does far more than report information gathered from the comprehensive ReMAP (Reducing Missionary Attrition Project), a fourteen-nation study launched by the World Evangelical Fellowship Missions Commission. Too Valuable to Lose provides helpful articles from over twenty authors to help analyze missionary attrition and suggest workable solutions to prevent avoidable loss of valuable missionary personnel.

While missionary attrition is a problem, with the ReMAP study indicating that 29 percent of all missionaries sent out returned early (p. 86), this rate is strikingly close to the 30 percent attrition rate reported in a 1995 secular study of military, diplomatic, and business endeavors (p. 6).

ReMAP reveals twenty-six specific reasons for which missionaries leave active service (p. 92). Some, like "medical complications or a legitimate call to another ministry," are considered unpreventable. Others are deemed preventable, such as "marriage/family conflict or problems with peers."

Primary causes for attrition in old sending countries were reported to be "normal retirement, needs of children, change of job, and health problems" (p. 98). Top causes listed by new sending countries were "lack of home support, lack of call, inadequate commitment, and disagreement with the sending agency" (p. 94).

This comprehensive volume includes six sections: Foundational Papers, Research Analysis, National Case Studies, Thematic Chapters, Final Observations and Outcomes, and Additional Resources. Among the foundational papers is an intriguing article on generational factors.
ongoing concerns of discipleship as related to mission. Immersion experiences at multiple sites in El Paso, TX and Juarez, Mexico will bring participants in direct contact with critical border issues. Identify the borders in your mission and ministry. The parish community of St. Pius X along with theologian and pastor Msgr. Arturo Baruelas will host part of the conference.

The Annual Conference of the Africa Faith and Justice Network will be held in conjunction with the USCMA Conference. AFJN will begin Thursday at 7:00 PM. For AFJN information, contact 202-832-3412.

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outlining divergent interests and influences of boosters (over age 50), boomers (30-50), and busters (under 30). Every person interested in the future of missions should read this chapter.

The chapter with "final observations" might be helpful to read first. Taylor gives practical advice for each stakeholder in the missions enterprise. Born in Costa Rica of missionary parents, Taylor lived in Latin America thirty years and served for seventeen years as a career missionary with CAM International. He speaks from experience.

This volume presents papers from Christianity in East Asia, a project with meetings in 1991 and 1993 sponsored by Meiji University in Japan and the Presbyterian Church (USA). The authors include Japanese, Korean, and Western scholars, mostly Presbyterian, all of whom share an ecumenical Protestant perspective.

Missiologists often cite the contrasts between South Korea’s large, rapidly growing Christian population and Japan’s tiny Christian minority, but this study attempts the more difficult analysis of the complex tapestry of differences within a shared cultural context. Its three sections address the development of Christianity, its encounters with local religions and societies, and reflections on the future of mission. While each chapter focuses on a particular issue, together they cohere in covering a wide spectrum. Despite the Presbyterian orientation of the writers, they refer to other Christian groups and wider issues, avoiding the parochialism of many denominational studies. Of special interest are the analysis of Christianity and nationalism, the comments on the variety of factors in church growth, the exploration of ancestor veneration, and the references to self-critical developments in Korean Minjung theology.

There is a healthy balance here between nationalistic, revisionist criticism of missionaries and an appreciation of the historic missionary contributions. Some record of the encounter of the varied perspectives at the two conferences would have been enlightening. A few egregious typographical errors and inconsistent romanization of names mar the volume, and its expensive imprint will force most readers to consult library copies. Although the book exhibits the unevenness of conference reports, the essays are challenging, and this book merits the attention of its intended audience of scholars, teachers, and mission administrators.

—Edward W. Poitras

**Perspectives on Christianity in Korea and Japan: The Gospel and Culture in East Asia.**


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**African Proverbs CD: Collections, Studies, Bibliographies.**


The African Proverbs Project (APP), an impressive effort to map the proverbs of the whole continent of Africa, produced a CD-ROM. This compact disk is a multifaceted electronic research tool that contains the equivalent of 140 floppy disks. It cites over 28,000 proverbs in dozens of African languages. The three "electronic volumes" include Studies, Reference Books, and Maps; Proverb Collections (African Proverbs Series and Proverbs for Preaching and Teaching Series); and three bibliographies.

It contains a gold mine of useful...
information. By checking the Ethnologue, I found there are 213,000 Kuria language speakers in northwestern Tanzania. By using the “Template 1” button, I found ten African proverbs on the theme of violence, with their sources. What collection has the largest number of African proverbs? First is 6,813 Malagache proverbs from Madagascar, and second is Hausa in Nigeria with 6,407 proverbs. Any part of this CD can be cut and pasted into a document or sent instantly to the printer.

Such an ambitious project is bound to have some gaps or weaknesses. Many of the proverbs use a sexist translation or "exclusive language" in English. The proverbs of English-speaking Africa are more thoroughly researched than those of French-speaking Africa.

Overall, this CD-ROM is a very important contribution to African proverb scholarship and Christian mission and pastoral ministry today. The format is especially valuable for libraries and cultural research centers. It is an extremely helpful research tool for scholars and writers worldwide. In-the-field practitioners (preachers, teachers, catechists) can get specific material for homilies, sermons, lessons, and talks (applied inculturation and practical evangelization). It is extraordinary that for the traveling missionary this one compact disk takes the place of carrying around over seventy-five books.

—Joseph G. Healey, M.M.


Employing methodology in part based on Antonio Gramsci’s “cultural hegemony” theory, Xing reviews the background of the social gospel and the YMCA in America, as well as the successful efforts of the Y to establish an indigenous association movement in China in the early twentieth century. There the YMCA-sponsored programs such as literacy campaigns, health education, and citizenship training classes made it popular with young urban Chinese who supported social reforms. Yet, “after an initial period of wholehearted acceptance, the social gospel lost ground to its secular alternative communism,” and the Y lost its mandate in the ongoing Chinese social reconstruction” of the 1930s (pp. 172, 168). Although Xing gives several reasons for this reversal, the most consistently identified failure was that “the liberal Christian social gospel the Y subscribed to was not a revolutionary ideology” (p. 173).

This work provides an interesting

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This thin volume presents a cross-cultural study of how the social gospel, through the American YMCA, was first accepted in China, only to be rejected for a Communist revolution. Xing, a native of China and assistant professor of history at Colorado State University, has revised here his doctoral dissertation, completed at the University of Minnesota in American studies. Utilizing a wealth of archival sources, this book is a laudable first attempt by the author to explore the issue of cultural relations between Americans and Chinese.

1998–1999 Senior Mission Scholars

OMSC welcomes into residence for the fall 1998 semester Senior Mission Scholars Dean S. Gilliland and Paul E. Pierson. Dr. Gilliland is Director of Cross-Cultural Studies and Professor of Contextualized Theology and African Studies, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California. Before joining the Fuller faculty in 1977, he served as a Methodist missionary in Nigeria for more than twenty years. Dr. Pierson is Dean Emeritus and Professor Emeritus of History of Missions and Latin American Studies, Fuller Theological Seminary, School of World Mission. His mission experience was with the Presbyterian church in Brazil, 1956–1970, and in Portugal, 1971–1973.

In the spring semester of 1999, OMSC's Senior Mission Scholars will be Kenneth B. Mulholland and Charles C. West. Dr. Mulholland is Dean and Professor of Missions and Ministry Studies, Columbia Biblical Seminary and Graduate School of Missions, Columbia, South Carolina. He served nearly fifteen years as a missionary with the United Church Board for World Ministries in Central America, followed by service in theological education in Honduras and Costa Rica. Dr. West is Professor Emeritus of Christian Ethics, Princeton Theological Seminary. He served as a Presbyterian missionary in China, 1947–1950, and then worked for several years with the Evangelical Church in Germany. His service in Europe concluded with five years on the staff of the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, Switzerland. From 1971 to 1991 he was professor of Christian Ethics at Princeton Theological Seminary, New Jersey.

In addition to providing leadership in OMSC's Study Program, the Senior Mission Scholars are available to OMSC residents for counsel regarding their own mission research interests.
introduction to Sino-American intercultural relations and is worth reading for this purpose. In several passages, however, there is a distracting lack of clarity, and the important differences between the American YMCA, the Chinese YMCA, and social gospel ideology are sometimes lost. Also, the preponderance of English-language citations undermines the allegedly cross-cultural approach of the study. This is highlighted by the omission of available Chinese periodicals like Xiaoxi (News) and Weiyin (Whisper), which are essential sources for the Chinese YMCA Student Division and the Chinese Christian Student Movement.

—Charles A. Keller

Charles A. Keller is Assistant Professor of History at Marietta College, Marietta, Ohio.

**Presbyterian Reformers in Central Africa: A Documentary Account of the American Presbyterian Congo Mission and the Human Rights Struggle in the Congo, 1890–1918.**


The Congo reform movement at the turn of this century was an international campaign, bringing together missionaries, merchants, and abolitionists from Great Britain, the United States, Germany, Belgium, France, Switzerland, and British West Africa. Over the past forty years, however, historians have given this campaign a distinct, national character, focusing upon British Protestant missions and the Congo Reform Association, established in Liverpool in 1904, as the primary critics of the Congo Free State and its founding sovereign, King Leopold II of Belgium. This documentary account, *Presbyterian Reformers in Central Africa,* is an important addition to the historiography of the Congo reform campaign, illuminating the complex role of the American Presbyterian Congo Mission and providing insight into the broader issues of Anglo-American, humanitarian cooperation.

Robert Benedetto presents 123 documents from ten archives in the United States, Great Britain, and Belgium. These documents range from personal correspondence to missionary committee reports, addressing daily life in the Congo, encounters with brutal exploitation and atrocities, and the strategies of humanitarian protest against the imperialist regime. The collection is organized around the activities of the missionary William Morrison, a critic of the Congo State, who proves to be an articulate and engaging protagonist in Benedetto’s account. It is especially noteworthy that the documents in this volume are accompanied by extensive annotations, which will be of great interest to specialists.

The introduction to this book raises important issues, such as profiteering and relations between the sexes, which expose tensions between missionary principles and practices. In other respects, however, the introduction does not provide an adequate context for the documents which follow. Benedetto’s discussions of the Berlin conference and the Congo Free State are superficial and occasionally flawed. On a conceptual level, Benedetto does not demonstrate that the Presbyterian missionaries were motivated by a coherent ideology of “human rights,” as distinguished, for instance, from Christian principles of duty. Apart from these shortcomings, Benedetto’s well-chosen documents offer an intriguing account of the American Presbyterian Congo Mission and should be read by all students of the Congo reform campaign and the broader role of missions in the humanitarian politics of European imperialism.

—Kevin Grant

_Kevin Grant is a Visiting Assistant Professor in the History Department at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York._

**Enchiridion della Chiesa Missionaria.**


This two-volume multilingual “Enchiridion” (handbook) is a wonderful collection of the most significant Roman Catholic materials on mission issued from the Vatican and the Italian Bishops’ Conference from the eighteenth century up until our own day. In a very attractive format, the texts in their original language (mainly Latin and Italian, but also French, English and Spanish) are flanked by the Italian translation on the opposite page. Volume 1 contains fifty-one missionary documents (almost 1,800 pages). It begins with *Allataes sunt,* the 1755 encyclical of Pope Benedict XIV on the Oriental rites, and concludes with *Ecclesia in Africa,* the 1995 apostolic letter of Pope John Paul II issued after the Synod on Africa. The second volume draws together, first of all, almost eighty official addresses for World Mission Sunday for the period 1926–96 and, second, twenty documents over the past thirty years by the Italian Bishops’ Conference on missionary activity.

The “Denzinger” style of sequential numbering of paragraphs through the two volumes allows for easy referencing in three excellent indexes (exceeding a hundred pages), which are arranged respectively according to biblical references, source material, and themes. Following in the rich tradition of thematic enchiridia, these pages contain a precious tool for tracing, understanding, and appreciating the history and evolution of the Roman Catholic Church’s mission in the modern period and in the twentieth century.

The value of this collection is enhanced by the beautiful hard-copy binding, the excellent quality of the paper and printing format, and an attractive box that contains the compact (5” x 7”) volumes. Such a unique publication will be very useful for any scholar or student of mission studies with reading proficiency in Italian.

—Roger Schroeder, S.V.D.

Roger Schroeder, S.V.D., worked as a missionary in Papua New Guinea for six years and currently is Assistant Professor in the Cross-Cultural Ministries Department at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.


How did Protestant missionaries from Alabama impact China, and how did China impact them? This is the story told by Wayne Flynt, professor at Auburn University, and Gerald W. Berkley, director of East Asian Studies, University of Guam.

The life and work of forty-seven missionaries are examined. Of these, five are Methodists, six are Presbyterians, and a dominant thirty-six are Baptists. The account is arranged around the following subjects: preparation, travel to China, understanding Chinese culture, reporting home, missionary life, missionary work, “woman consciousness,” conflict between missionaries and with their boards, and participation in political issues. One of the book’s values is its extensive use of manuscript collections, interviews, oral histories, and letters.

The authors deal critically, but fairly, with all the faults, failures, and foibles of these Alabama natives far from home. And yet the remarkable growth of the church in China in recent years is proof of the positive legacy they left. The missionaries “planted the seed well and now it flourishes” (p. 333). The judgment of some historians that the missionary enterprise ended in failure has been “much too pessimistic” (p. 332).

Was there anything unique about the Alabama connection as distinct from other areas of the rural South? Probably not. In any case, “China changed them more than they changed China” (p. 346). For many, but not all, racial prejudices tended to weaken, the longer they stayed. And for Presbyterians, Methodists, and even some Southern Baptists, “an ecumenical vision” took the place of “Alabama sectarianism” (p. 344). Missionaries “shaped American attitudes” toward China, and because Alabama had few international contacts, the role its missionaries played was central (p. 343).

—G. Thompson Brown

G. Thompson Brown is Professor Emeritus, Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia. He formerly was director of the Division of International Mission and China Liaison for the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. and was active in theological education in Korea (1952–73).

The Japanese Emperor System: The Inescapable Missiological Issue.


Between September 1988, when the serious illness of the Japanese Showa emperor (Hirohito) was announced, through the time of his death in January 1989, and continuing through the old emperor’s funeral and the various investiture ceremonies of the new Heisei emperor (Akihito) in November 1990, there were serious debates among Japanese Christians about their country’s emperor system.

The world outside Japan has heard and understood very little about this de-
bated, and even Christians in other countries are scarcely aware that the Japanese emperor system poses severe problems. In order to increase the general awareness of some of the issues, a group of Japanese Christian scholars has written essays that examine their country’s imperial system from historical, sociological, religious, and theological perspectives. For people in the West in particular, who have been conditioned to think of the Japanese emperor system as somehow comparable to the role of the British monarchy in a democratic parliamentary system, it has been hard to understand why Japanese Christians—and other Asian peoples as well—have felt so worried about Japan’s imperial system. For such people, this book edited by Robert Lee, aennonite missionary who is the director of the Tokyo Mission Research Institute, can provide some eye-opening insights.

Furuya Yasuo gives a Japanese insider’s analysis of the events of 1989–90 that aroused the concerns of Japanese Christians, and even brought death threats to those who spoke out about problematic issues during that time. Chiyozaki Hideo examines how patterns of social control in early Japan were often related to the control of water rights. Fujimaki Mitsuru describes traditional Japanese beliefs in “functional gods,” who were valued not for their morality or their holiness but for their utilitarian value.

For those with some knowledge of Japanese history, Chiyozaki Hideo’s survey of the six historical periods of transition for the Japanese emperor system has many revealing surprises. One must remember that while neighboring China has had approximately twenty-eight dynasties throughout its history and Korea has had four dynasties, Japan has had but one dynasty from Bronze Age times to the present. What makes Japan’s emperor system “an inescapable missiological issue” is the way in which the system has been manipulated in religious ways in times past, and even today, in order to justify the policies of powers behind the throne. Hence, “for many Christians the emperor system is and has been a false religion” (p. 129).

This readable and well-edited book should be of great interest not only to those interested in the Japanese Christian community but also for Christians in many countries who are concerned with how ethnic identities, political loyalties, and Christian faith intersect amid the perplexities of the modern world.

—James M. Phillips

James M. Phillips, a contributing editor, served as a Presbyterian missionary in Korea (1949–52) and in Japan (1959–75) and as associate director of the Overseas Ministries Study Center (1983–97).

Hate the Old and Follow the New: Khoekhoe and Missionaries in Early Nineteenth-Century Namibia.


A neglected area in South African history has been the northwestern frontier of the Cape of Good Hope. This comprises the region of the Lower Orange River called Little Namaqualand and the adjacent territory of Great Namaqualand lying in present-day Namibia. The reports of early European travelers and missionaries reveal that a complex network of social relations existed among the indigenous Khoikhoi peoples—the Nama, Griqua, Oorlams (an acculturated group who had acquired guns, horses, and wagons and spoke rudimentary Dutch), and Bastards (mixed offspring of Khoikhoi and Europeans). They were primarily a pastoral folk, but many of them engaged in commerce as well when Europeans began penetrating the area. However, in comparison to the eastern frontier, the Cape regime during the decades between 1780 and 1840 saw little significance in this arid and inhospitable place.

In this thoughtful book, a revision of his University of Cape Town dissertation, Dedering seeks to close the gap in our knowledge of the area. He utilizes the letters and journals produced by missionaries (several of whom were Germans) who served there under the London Missionary Society and Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, mission materials in the National Archives of Namibia, governmental records in the Cape Archives, and other collections in South Africa. What he finds is that the missionaries and indigenous Africans in the precolonial frontier zone of Namibia were drawn into a complex web of relations, one that defies definition by the simplistic formulas used by many writers on European expansion.

The missionaries played a crucial role in creating the environment where the Khoikhoi entered new avenues of social mobility, reconstructed their worldviews, and experienced the forces that radically altered their living conditions. At the same time, relations between the two groups were riddled with the ambiguities and misunderstandings that are the hallmarks of cultural interaction. Dedering argues that the missionaries were not inspired by national chauvinism or ideas of imperialism but by the contradictory ways in which social relations developed on the periphery of colonial expansion. One cannot merely explain societal change in terms of “capitalism” or “colonialism”; the situation is much more complex. Africans reinterpreted their worldviews in conversation with Christianity, even as the missionaries were losing their hegemonic position in the Cape and Namibia.

—Richard V. Pierard

Richard V. Pierard is Professor of History at Indiana State University, Terre Haute.

A History of Japanese Theology.


Theology in Japan is taken very seriously, and for a country where less than 1 percent of the population is Christian, the number of able Japanese theologians and biblical scholars is impressive. But this is the first time a history of Christian thought in Japan by Japanese scholars is available in English.

It consists of four chapters, each written by a different author, dealing with four generations of Japanese Christian scholarship. The first generation of Protestant scholars, who began writing in the latter part of the nineteenth century, already show some independence, despite the predominantly American influence during this period.

The second generation of theologians (1907–45) was more influenced by liberal German theology. However, toward the end of this period the theology of Karl Barth increasingly dominated the theological scene.

In the last chapter, “Theology After 1970,” there are accounts of attempts by several theologians to go beyond Christian-Buddhist dialogue to an eclectic approach that seeks an integration of the two religions. Sichi Yagi, a radical New Testament scholar and the author of the third chapter, is a representative of this approach.

This volume is surprisingly flawed because of the nature of the last two chapters. Both are written by radical theologians who are fascinated by the offbeat and esoteric theologies of the
modern period. Neither pays much attention to the majority of able and productive Japanese theologians who represent mainstream Christian thought in Japan. The last chapter by M. Odagaki is an especially skewed and unreliable portrayal of theology in Japan since 1970. This is unfortunate because there is a significant portion of recent theological scholarship in Japan that remains to be described.

—J. John Hesselink

Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism.


This is a splendid account of fundamentalism from the 1930s to the 1950s. It builds on the work of George Marsden and Ernest Sandeen, who chronicled the origins of the fundamentalist movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Contrary to some interpretations that argued for the demise of fundamentalism, Joel Carpenter shows how vibrant the movement was during these decades.

Carpenter, who is provost of Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan, stages a lover’s quarrel with his subject. Raised as a fundamentalist but no longer adhering to its tenets, he documents in detail the highly contentious environment of fundamentalism and its combative leaders.

Three crucial themes stand out. First, the fundamentalists of this era were institution builders. Driven from the ranks of mainline Protestantism and even separating from each other, they created an array of institutions and organizations that now compose a vast network to nurture the fundamentalist faith. Second, during these decades they gradually became the dominant force in American missionary activity. Third, despite their overwhelmingly premillennialist perspective, they prayed and worked for the revival of American Protestantism. Carpenter concludes, “Briefly put, fundamentalism was by far the most influential evangelical movement in the United States during the second quarter of the twentieth century” (p. 237).

I have only a few quibbles with Carpenter’s analysis. I think he slights the role of the Pentecostal movement in American fundamentalism, but that involves the knotty problem of the definition of fundamentalism and Pentecostalism. A further conceptual problem is the difference between fundamentalism and evangelicalism.

But these are small complaints about a book that will reshape our understanding of Protestantism in the twentieth century and remind us of the continuing hold that fundamentalism has in modern or postmodern America.

—John M. Mulder

John M. Mulder is President and Professor of Historical Theology at Louisville Presbyterian Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky.
Dissertation Notices

Adams, William Eugene.
"Personality and Adjustment among Mormon Missionaries."

Alaichamy, Christeena.
"Communicative Translation: Theory and Principles for Application to Cross Cultural Translation in India."

Ferris, Yeoun Sook.
"An Examination of Some Themes in the Confucian Classics with Respect to Missiological Implications for the Issue of Ancestral Rites."

Hunsicker, David B.
"The Rise of the Parachurch Movement in American Protestant Christianity During the 1930s and 1940s: A Detailed Study of the Beginnings of the Navigators, Young Life, and Youth for Christ International."

Kibor, Jacob Z.
"Persistence of Female Circumcision among the Marakwet of Kenya: A Biblical Response to a Rite of Passage."

Laing, Annette Susan.
"'All things to all men': Popular Religious Culture and the Anglican Mission in Colonial America, 1701-1750."
Ph.D. Riverside, Calif.: Univ. of California, Riverside, 1995.

Scheid, Edward G.
"Scripture and Theology of the Religions: On the Theological Interpretation of Sacred Scripture in Christian Attitudes toward World Religions."

Schutt, Amy C.
"Forging Identities: Native American and Moravian Missionaries in Pennsylvania and Ohio, 1765-1782."

Strauss, Stephen J.
"Perspectives on the Nature of Christ in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church: A Case Study in Contextualized Theology."

Pederson, David John.

Shihab, Alwi.
"The Muhammediyah Movement and Its Controversy with Christian Mission in Indonesia."

T’a’ase, Elia Titiamaa.
"The Congregational Christian Church in Samoa: Origin and Development of an Indigenous Church."

Wahba, Wafik Waheeb.
"Dialectical Hermeneutic: Interpreting Christian Theology in the Contemporary Egyptian Context."
for these
1998 Fall Seminars and Workshops

Martha Lund Smalley  Sept. 14-16
How to Develop Church and Mission Archives. Yale Divinity School archivist helps missionaries and national church leaders identify, organize, and preserve essential records. Mon. 2:00 p.m. - Wed. 4:00 p.m. $75

Jean-Paul Wiest & Cathy McDonald  Sept. 17-19
Doing Oral History: Helping Christians Tell Their Own Story. Learn how to document church and mission history. Thurs. 9:30 a.m. - Sat. noon. $75

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