Mission at Daybreak, Missiology at Sunset

It has been said that theology is a task best done at sunset. The suggestion (to be taken more than half seriously) points to the reflective character of the theological task.

In the feature article of this issue, contributing editor Andrew F. Walls focuses on the challenge of mission studies/missiology, which he also sees as a "sunset" task. In the development of new Christian communities, when can we expect mission studies to get underway with full seriousness? What kind of persons are best placed and equipped to work out the contextualization of the Gospel?

Well, says Walls, it won't be the missionaries—even if they had the privilege of bringing the sunrise of the Gospel. To be sure, in the early years of the Christian era, Paul the missionary made strategic contributions, as he employed concepts from Greek culture to help make the Gospel message intelligible. Following the Apostolic period converts from paganism, such as Justin, strove to advance the project of contextualization. But, Walls observes, it would fall to second generation Christians to lay the deepest foundation and erect the most comprehensive structure. Mission studies in the fullest sense must be pursued by persons who from their youth have been fully and simultaneously immersed in both the Christian faith and the host culture. Who among the anti-Nicene Fathers played such a role in the Greco-Roman world? Who, in fact, might be regarded as the father of mission studies?

Walls nominates Origen of Alexandria. Long before Bible concordances were even anticipated, Origen could be credited with being a walking concordance of Old and New Testaments; and his non-Christian opponents were compelled to acknowledge his encyclopedic knowledge of the classical Greek poets and philosophers. Origen, says Walls, pioneered in interpreting each in light of the other.

In our day, Origen is offered as a model for second and third generation Christians in the southern continents: "The theological task has passed the stage where missionaries can be very significant; they already have contributed their part of the story. . . . The weight of responsibility lies on a new generation of Origen's people ... people who are heirs to both the Christian and the [local] tradition, who have taken in both with their mothers' milk. On such people depends, not only the future of African, Asian, and Pacific theology, but the future of Christian theology and of theological scholarship as a whole."

As for the role of Christians in the West, who can only observe the process from a distance, Walls concludes that they "can try to understand and interpret it; that too is a crucial dimension of mission studies."

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In Quest of the Father of Mission Studies

Andrew F. Walls

Theological scholarship needs a renaissance of mission studies. Christianity is now a non-Western religion. The majority of those who profess it live in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific. The significant developments that determine what its shape will be in the twenty-first and twenty-second centuries will be those that take place in the southern continents, where Christian faith is in daily interaction with their cultures and daily developing in new ways as a result. It is being objectified in the political and economic and social settings of those continents.

From the point of view of the traditional student of Christian history, it is almost like starting all over again. A Western Christian may enter into the feelings of the followers of Jesus who fled Jerusalem before the Roman War of A.D. 66-70. After the Roman victory, as the exiled Christians thought of the desolated temple that had once been their home, they could take comfort from the fact that Christ now had more servants in Antioch—and Asia and Greece and Rome—than Jerusalem had ever known. But in their hearts the survivors of the A.D. 70 holocaust must have known that the faith of Christ would now be carried on in a very different way. The new believers had no temple and, in the way a Jerusalem believer understood it, no Torah either. They would never hear the prophets read or the Psalms chanted in Hebrew, their children would be uncircumcised and would eat pork without revulsion. They would continually raise questions about belief, social life, and moral choice that were not part of the great tradition—the tradition of life in the Messiah maintained by the Torah-keeping James the Just in the days when he presided over the joyous company who held their property in common, shared their meals from house to house, and attended the temple prayers together.

And now we can expect a change of similar magnitude in the way in which the faith of Christ is carried on. For the student of the Christian faith, and for the student of the southern continents, the past century has provided materials enough to shatter the familiar frameworks of study. The pattern of assumptions behind a good deal of conventional discourse still seems to be something like this: centuries ago Christianity, the religion of the Roman Empire, became the religion of the West, helping to shape its culture. In the modern period, the Christian hold on Western culture has been loosened, to differing degrees in different areas. Insofar as the West still has a religion, it is Christianity, and Christianity remains important in its cultural development. The non-Western world, in contrast, has been shaped by Eastern religions. The colonial era, which widely established Western hegemony over the non-Western world, has come to an end, and with it the missionary movement, a largely unsuccessful attempt to replace the religions and cultures of the East with the Western cultural model. (It will be observed that this model of discourse has no effective space for Africa, nor for the primal religions that cannot be identified as Western or Eastern.) There are many variants of the model; some theological versions even stress the expansion of Christianity in the non-Western world without expecting anything much in Christian expression to change as a result—rather as if the Jerusalem church in A.D. 70 assumed it could go on sending inspectors to approve new developments, as it had done in Samaria and Antioch.

New Understanding, Old Story

Such models of discourse simply cannot be sustained. The emergence of Christianity as a non-Western religion provides both a new story and new means of understanding the old story. The story of non-Western Christianity, with all its new elements, is continuous with earlier Christian history. It is also evident that Christian developments in different parts of the non-Western world have a certain coherence together. In other words, the materials of mission studies, if we may use this term as a shorthand to cover all the studies arising from this new phase of Christian history, not only are relevant for the specific segments of social reality that they illuminate; they may also shed light on earlier Christian history, including specifically Western church history and the history of Western society. Even more, they may help to illuminate and explicate the Christian faith itself.

For a variety of reasons academic theology has often been rather slower to profit from the materials that have emerged from non-Western Christianity than have the historical and social and linguistic sciences; only now are the theological issues posed by the missionary movement beginning to make an impact on the academic theology of the West. It seems justifiable, therefore, to reflect further on the nature of mission studies; to seek analogies in earlier Christian history to the academic processes involved; to determine, in fact, when and where mission studies began. Is there any single figure who can be reasonably identified—not, indeed, as the founder or inventor of mission studies, for such titles are always invidious—but as a defining ancestor? Someone who embodies the nature of the task and points the way for successors? Who could be designated the father of mission studies in the way Eusebius is the father of church history?

I recognize that many candidates may be set forth as the defining ancestor of mission studies. The nominee that follows is offered because he illustrates so vividly the continued interaction of faith and culture that forms the raw material of mission studies and the dedicated and devout intellectual application to those issues that provides its processes. He was born in Alexandria in or about the year 185 of the Christian era. His name, Origen, is a compound of the name of the Egyptian god Horus, which suggests that his family may have had its roots in the Egyptian countryside.

The outline of Origen's life is well known and needs no detailed treatment here. The main sources for it, outside slight references in his own writings, are three in number. The most considerable is the account by Eusebius in his Ecclesiastical History. Eusebius never knew Origen but reveres him because his own revered teacher, Panphilus, who was Origen's student, did so. It is usual to allow a discount for the enthusiasms of Eusebius, but it is never wise to underrate him. His sources for the life of Origen were substantial, ranging from primary sources now lost (including an archive of more than a hundred letters) to gossip. In employing this material, he usually tells us which is which, and even if we ignore the gossip, there is plenty left. We know more with reasonable certainty about the life and worth of

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Thoroughly Greek, Thoroughly Christian

A further subject is more problematic but, as far as it goes, fascinating. It comes from the decidedly anti-Christian philosopher Porphyry, who, in a work known to Eusebius, claims to have known Origen.4 Porphyry notes that Origen, like Porphyry’s great hero Plotinus, was a pupil of Ammonius Saccas, the most influential Alexandrian scholar of his time. But while acknowledging that Origen left a great reputation behind him, Porphyry complains that, as far as rational conduct is concerned, he went in a totally different direction from his master.

Origen, a Greek educated in Greek learning, drove straight toward barbarian recklessness. . . . He hawked himself and his literary skill about; and while his manner of life was Christian and contrary to the law, in his opinions about material things and the Deity he played the Greek, and introduced Greek ideas into foreign fables. For he was always consortling with Plato, and was conversant with the writings of Numenius, and Cronius, Appollonius, Longinus, and Moderatus, Nicosocrates and the distinguished men among the Pythagoreans; and he used the books of Chairemon the Stoic and Cornutus, from whom he learned the figurative interpretation, as employed in the Greek mysteries, and applied it to the Jewish writings.5

Porphyry, that is, recognizes the considerable extent of Origen’s learning and acknowledges that that learning is not superficial. Origen was, in fact, always consortling with Plato as well as regularly using the commentaries that, he tells us elsewhere, Plotinus himself used (no doubt from the method of their common teacher Ammonius Saccas). Porphyry, however, clearly believes that such activity is incongruous in a Christian because, by (his) definition, Christians are shut up to “barbarian Recklessness,” with which such studies are incompatible. In other words, Christians have turned their backs on the Greek intellectual heritage. By giving authority to Jewish writings, they have identified with the barbarian world; Greekness and Christianity do not belong together.

It will be noted that Porphyry says that Origen was brought up as a Greek (that is, as a pagan) and converted. This cannot be the case; Eusebius’s account of Origen’s Christian home and upbringing is too circumstantial to be set aside. But Porphyry’s mistake is a revealing one; he could not bring himself to believe that someone who had actually been brought up as a Christian

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could have the degree of Greek literary equipment that Origen obviously had. He knows that Origen lived as a Christian (and therefore in an illegal and antiscandalous guise), and also that intellectually he "played the Greek," even when talking of the Deity, and applied Greek ideas to the Jewish writings and foreign fables that Christians in general cultivated. Porphyry cannot divest himself of the idea that Greekness must involve some sort of affirmation of the heritage of polytheism. It is precisely in this endeavor to be both thoroughly Greek and thoroughly Christian, and in the conviction that this joint enterprise is possible, and in the massive scale of his attempt to implement it, that the enduring fascination of Origen lies. His is the most systematic attempt of early Christianity to employ the whole encyclopedia of Greek learning as well as the categories of Greek intellectual discourse, to the exploration and elucidation of the Christian faith. Conversely, his is the most remarkable systematic attempt to think the principle of Christ into the whole intellectual configuration of his time, to plot its significance on the intellectual map of his day. In the different areas of intellectual discourse, he raises the implications of the statement that the one whom we meet in the Gospels as Jesus the Christ is the Logos of God, the divine Reason at the heart of the universe. The great themes of intellectual and scientific discussion—time, space, matter, the soul, the stars, the animal world, history, destiny—must surely be illuminated by that conviction. Origen ranges along all the major highways and over many of the subsidiary tracks of contemporary philosophy, ethics, physics, and linguistics, his guiding light the conviction of the ultimate significance of the Logos who is also Christ Jesus. He wades through waving cornfields of Greek learning and literature (he rarely quotes authorities and never shows off, but he nevertheless handles the whole canon of Greek authors more effectively than even such a substantial representative of the Hellenic tradition as Celsus). And into that body of traditional material he introduces the new literary source that Christianity brought to bear on the accepted corpus of writing, the prophetic and apostolic writings that Christians read in their worship, which Origen sets in the center of intellectual discourse.

**In a most remarkable way Origen plotted the significance of Christ on the intellectual map of his day.**

**Neither Missionary nor Pagan Convert**

Origen's parents were Christians; we do not know whether they were converts. Leonides, his father, gave him both a solid secular education and a thorough grounding in the Scriptures. This fact is worth a moment's reflection. The first major explorer of the significance of Christianity in the Hellenistic world is the apostle Paul. But Paul is a foreign missionary, and he thinks and writes as one. Deeply as he immersed himself in Greek thought, comfortable as he made himself in Greek culture (much too comfortable for some of his colleagues, who would have liked him to take a stronger stand against syncretism, to identify more strongly with old and safe ways), he remained at heart a Jew. He knew where his background and identity lay. He never forgot that he was circumcised the eighth day, of the tribe of Benjamin, even if he could place those facts in proportion; and he knew exactly the difference between the cultivated olive tree, which was his homeland, and the uncultivated graft that Gentile Christianity represented. Though he enters Gentile culture, he does so as an outsider whose natural home is elsewhere, making the adventure for Christ's sake.

The earliest Christian philosophers we know of—Justin, Athenagoras, Clement of Alexandria—are converts. They know they now belong to Israel (and Justin can do battle with Trypho the Jew over who owns the Scriptures), but they know they were not born there. They have been grafted in, grafts of the wild olive tree. The business of their life (and, since it is the question that their friends and neighbors raise, the center of their mission) is to establish the relationship of the Christ, who now claims their allegiance, to the Greek past. What was God doing in the Greek world over all those centuries when he was preparing Israel for the coming of the Christ?

This is not Paul's question; for Paul, the Jewish missionary, the astonishing revelation was that the Gentiles were to have such a significant place in God's salvation; it was the present and future, rather than the past, that gripped him. But Justin and his contemporaries have to deal with the past. The Greek worldview and its intellectual foundations were too comprehensive to be ignored; they had to be converted. And so the second-century generation of convert apologists develop principles for the critique of this Hellenic inheritance. Justin, still wearing the philosopher's short cloak that was the contemporary equivalent of the academic gown, introduced the Christian—and especially the prophetic—Scriptures into Greek intellectual discourse as a sourcebook of comparable, even superior, antiquity to that of the Greek literary tradition. All the time he is wrestling with the convert's question—how to turn an existing way of thought and life toward Christ, how to critique the heritage, affirming, denying, discriminating.

Origen, with his dual education, Greek and Christian, takes the process a stage further—beyond critique to reconception, refiguring. He is not a convert; he has been born into a Christian tradition. In his day, Christianity was still a minority movement, even if a growing one, and could still attract hostility, both from official activity and from popular sentiment, but it was no longer foreign or alien. It was native. Origen does not sort out the Greek from the Christian elements in his upbringing; he has received both with his mother's milk. A careful Christian father—one who was ready to give his life for his faith—provided his children with a good Greek education without worrying too much whether all those authors were suitable for Christian reading, or pausing to cleanse Homer's mythology. Justin, the convert, is always afraid of the demons, always conscious of their presence in the Greek world. Origen, brought up as a Christian, is much more relaxed about such matters; in his consciousness, Christ has taken care of the demons.

Before he was seventeen, his father, Leonides, was imprisoned and then executed in an anti-Christian outburst in Alexandria. The youth tried to share his father's witness unto blood; his mother frustrated him, it is said, by hiding his clothes. The experience left a permanent mark; Origen always associated Christian faith with the danger or expectation of suffering. The intellectual project that occupied his whole life was not maintained in unruffled academic calm but in an environment where visible Christianity was always insecure and often physically dangerous. The purpose of his teaching was to lead people to the point of potential martyrdom and to prepare them for the impli-
cations when they reached that point. It is common to stress the "realized" nature of Origen's eschatology; it should also be remembered that he and his pupils lived on the edge of time, in eschatological preparedness for death.

He was the eldest of seven children. The family property had been confiscated as part of his father's punishment, so Origen must now support his mother and the family. He turned to teaching, qualified as he was to instruct in the standard Greek curriculum. This teaching was soon diversified in an unexpected way.

The outburst against the church that had claimed his father's life had disrupted the arrangements for meeting those who were inquiring about Christianity and for teaching those who had made this commitment and were preparing for baptism. Clement, the cultivated literary intelligence who had been in charge of both, had left Alexandria. Almost by default, Origen found himself in charge of the catechetical school, and eventually the bishop, making a virtue of necessity, formally appointed him to this task.

**Origen as Christian Educator**

We should not think of the catechetical school of Alexandria in terms of ideas about church membership classes. In some parts of the early church—Rome for instance—there would be parallels, though a three-year period of instruction might seem long by modern standards. But Alexandria's school for Christian inquirers had taken account of modes of life in Alexandria. The city was a major intellectual center. It was home to the Museon, with its lecture halls and ambulatories (it was believed that philosophy was best done while walking), its great dining hall (intellectual conversation is stimulated by eating together), its magnificent library, restored by Claudius after earlier military damage, and its many professional chairs of philosophy, grammar, and literary criticism endowed by successive emperors. Alexandria's huge Jewish community had already developed its own tradition of learning, which fused the Greek and Jewish traditions; the work of the greatest of the Jewish scholars of Alexandria, Philo, was to inspire and inform much of Origen's own work. The Christians of Alexandria had to work with people who had been influenced, at first or second hand, by the intellectual currents represented, on the one hand, by the Museon and, on the other, by the learned synagogue of Philo. Those who approached Christianity as inquirers, whether sympathetic or critical, raised questions that came from the discourses of those institutions and had to be met in those terms. Nor was the choice before them simply between becoming Christians or remaining in a static inherited religious tradition. Christianity stood in a spectrum of religious options; those who were interested or concerned enough to investigate it might also be inquiring elsewhere. Nor was there any guarantee that if sufficiently attracted they would come into the church; Christianity itself was the handmaid of philosophy. Let us say that philosophy was the handmaid of Christianity.

Origen acquired a reputation for staying with them to encourage and support them and several times was himself in danger of death. He is often called a speculative thinker, but his intellectual activity had severely practical implications, and his students' grasp of their subject might at any time be placed under empirical test.

This point leads us to a significant aspect of the process by which Origen implanted Christian thinking in Greek intellectual soil. Ideally, philosophy was not merely an academic discipline; it was a way of life. Plato taught that the end of philosophy was the vision of God. To turn to the philosophic life was in fact a form of conversion, a deliberate choice not to live in the way that most people do. The philosophic life required mental discipline, produced by the study of grammar, physics, and mathematics to prepare the mind for higher reaches of attainment; it also required moral discipline, the pursuit of virtue, the abandonment of vice.

By early Christian times, this ancient ideal had gone sour. Philosophy had become secularized, professionalized, trivialized; it had become a professional job, a career. The second-century Christian apologist Justin, who spent some time among the philosophers looking for the life-changing vision of which Plato spoke, rejected several as unworthy guides—one because he required too many propaedutic subjects, and one because he wanted to settle the fee in advance (such a consideration indicated that the teacher was no true philosopher). The reaction on the part of the young inquirer Justin shows that the ideal of the philosophic life still had followers in the second century, even if the reality was often more sordid. There were still people looking for the vision of God in the philosophic life, expecting conversion thereby, and recognizing that this would imply a new lifestyle.

Origen's work starts at the point that Justin reached some time after his Christian conversion. Christianity is true philosophy, leading humans not to the Platonic vision of God but to something even richer. They may become partakers of the divine nature through the Word. The Christian discipline embraces the whole universe of knowledge, for Christ is the Logos, the divine reason through whom all creation came into being. All that is in accordance with Reason is his, and all sources of knowledge may be confidently explored by his light. It is the Christian confidence of Origen that impresses today; the convert's fear of the demons, so evident in Justin, has given way to assurance in the endlessly penetrative power of the Word who is Christ Jesus. His pupil Gregory reports that Origen excluded only the Epicureans from his philosophical curriculum; the practical atheism and the hedonism built into their system rendered them valueless in the search for truth. But all the other schools and all the academic disciplines could properly be laid under tribute by Christians.

The old groundwork disciplines such as grammar and mathematics were still good for the mental discipline necessary for the study of philosophy, and helpful for the study of the Scriptures, which were the sourcebook of true philosophy. In a letter he tells Gregory: "I beg you to draw from the Greek philosophers such things as can be made curricular or preparatory studies to Christianity, for geometry and astronomy, such things as may be useful for expounding Holy Scripture. The philosophers say that geometry and music and grammar and rhetoric and astronomy are the handmaidens of philosophy. Let us say that philosophy itself is the handmaid of Christian..."
prolegomena to be put to use in opening up the understanding of life in Christ through the Scriptures. For Origen, the Greek inheritance is a means of appropriating the Christian one.

**Christianity Annotated by Pre-Christian Learning**

Gregory tells us that Origen engaged his students in dialectics to develop the faculty of discrimination, to avoid sloppiness and self-delusion. He adds that Origen did not think rhetoric particularly important, since it contributed to expression, rather than to substance; on the sciences, however, he discoursed until his students were amazed at the all-wise workmanship displayed in the created universe. From thence to philosophy, Origen was the first, says Gregory, to incline him to philosophize—by his words certainly, but also by his actions. Christian theology was annotated, as it were, by Greek writers—“So that we were taught to collate with all our powers all the writings of the ancients, whether philosophers or poets, rejecting nothing because we had not the necessary discrimination.” They should not, in fact, reject out of hand any school of philosophy or any body of learning, Greek or barbarian, but bring them into critical relationship with the body of Christian theology until they form a commentary on it, not a substitute for it.

Moreover, in Christian studies, the moral disciplines are still vital, as they were in the Greek tradition. In their Christian form they were the disciplines of a godly life and the discipline of prayer. At the heart of Christian studies, the key to the vast encyclopedia of learning, are the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments. It is necessary to stress the two testaments, for there was a strong movement among Greek Christians to divorce the Old Testament from the New, to make Christianity more Greek by cutting its Jewish roots. Origen refuses to go this way; he insists that the two testaments belong together, with a unity found in Christ. The system of allegorical exegesis that he did so much to develop is entirely comprehensible in terms of contemporary Greek literary method. But the conviction underlying Origen’s approach is that Christian philosophy cannot abandon the Old Testament or the rootedness of the Gospel in Israel’s history.

Origen, then, represents a Christian version of the Greek intellectual tradition in its goals, activities, and methods. In fact, the operation that he began rescued that tradition, gave it new meaning, depth, and energy when it had become stale and barren and professionalized. The Neoplatonist revival associated with Plotinus and Porphyry is another stream of reformation flowing at the same time and one that rejected the Christian version as “barbarian recklessness”; in the end, however, it was the application to Christian themes, the development of Christian theology, that restored vigor and purpose to the Greek intellectual tradition. With Christian theology, philosophy returned to big subjects and vital themes; once more it was a quest for truth, with an urgency in the quest. Christianity gave it a new sourcebook, new themes, and a new energy. Yet in some respects the Christian appropriation of the Greek heritage was very traditional. It kept traditional methods, retained the old sources, gave them a new role, and restored something of the old motive and object. For Plato, as for the young Justin, the end of the philosophic quest was the vision of God. For Origen, the philosophic quest is the preparation for the Christian life. In this and many other respects he is most Greek when he is most Christian, and most Christian when he is most Greek. When Christianity came to the Greek world, it appeared at first to be incompatible with that world’s essential Greekness. But it turned out to be a source of cultural preservation and renewal. It was not to be the last time in Christian history that this paradox occurred.

Origen’s catechetical school developed. He divided it, passing the elementary studies to Heraklas, the future bishop, and taking the more advanced students himself. He lived very simply—no wine, a minimum of food and sleep. He slept on the floor of his lecture room. It was the old ideal of the philosophic life actualized in Alexandria.

It seems to have been many years before the busy teacher wrote anything. The person who spurred him to write was a certain Ambrose. This man had come to commitment through Origen, having previously been a Valentinian Gnostic (another reminder that Origen worked among people open to a whole spectrum of new religious movements). Posteriority’s debt to Ambrose is considerable; he provides the first known example of a creative initiative by a publisher. He provided Origen with a staff of seven shorthand writers who, because of Origen’s crowded day of labor, worked shifts. In addition, Ambrose provided a staff of female copyists who transcribed what Origen dictated to the stenographers. From this initiative Origen’s vast literary output emerged and began to be circulated. No one knows how much he wrote. Epiphanius, who thought him a bad influence, said Origen was responsible for 6,000 rolls. “Who of us can read all he wrote?” asks a despairing Jerome. The *Commentary on John* alone had 64 rolls, and we have only 9 of them.11

A discerning publisher, Ambrose also commissioned works, some on matters that troubled him (the treatise *On Prayer* arose in this way), some on matters that he knew troubled other people. If Origen is the father of mission studies, Ambrose is the first mission studies publisher.

Throughout his service in Alexandria, Origen was a layman. Nor, despite his reputation as a teacher, was he ever invited to preach. It was on a trip abroad that this opportunity was offered, which did not please his bishop, who was still less delighted when the church of Caesarea ordained Origen. The result was that Origen was dismissed from his post in the catechetical school, and he had to leave the city where he had done such significant work. Caesarea readily offered him a home; as we have already seen, he settled into teaching there. His preaching developed, and when he was about sixty, he began to allow his sermons to be taken down in shorthand. We have some of them. He died soon afterward, no doubt partly as a result of his ordeal.12

**Building for God with Gold from Egypt**

This account omits much that is relevant to Origen’s mission studies career. One such aspect is his ecumenical vision. Few early Christian writers traveled so far; we find him not only on the beaten tracks but in Arabia and northern Anatolia. Another is his readiness to deal with religious ecclectics, such as Julia Mammaea, the emperor’s mother, and to put the Christian case to them.

But above all, he is a seminal figure in the story of Christian critical interaction with culture. Some of his profoundest insights in this area are to be found in his commentaries, or in those exegetical tropes that seem so foreign to the modern style of biblical interpretation based on the literary-historical method. He argues, for instance, that Heshbon, a Canaanite city destroyed by the Israelites, could be translated “the city of thoughts.” He then points out that when the Israelites destroyed it, they did not leave it in ruins but rebuilt it on the same site. It is a telling comment on the Christian cultural project as reflected in Origen’s
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Russell P. Spittler, Provost and Professor of New Testament, Fuller Theological Seminary

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own work: the city of thoughts cannot be allowed to stand as it is, but equally it cannot be allowed to remain in ruins. It has to be rebuilt, but with the same materials. There is nothing wrong, nothing to be feared, in the materials from which Greek thought is constructed; they can be used in the Christian task of intellectual reconstruction.

Still more striking is a passage in his letter to Gregory Thaumaturgus, where he connects the construction of the tabernacle in the wilderness with the spoiling of the Egyptians. The gold cherubim that indicated the holy presence were made from Egyptian gold as were the pot that held the manna and the other vessels used in worship; and the curtains of the tabernacle were made from Egyptian cloth. Materials that were being misused in the heathen world were thus used, thanks to the wisdom of God, for the worship and glorification of God. The work to which he urges Gregory is to put Greek learning to the same sacred use.

Origen does not pretend that this is an easy matter; indeed he emphasizes the risks involved with another Old Testament allusion. Hadad the Edomite made no idols until he went to Egypt. But when he went there and married into the Egyptian aristocracy, he brought back the idea of setting up the golden heifer at Bethel and Dan. Origen tells Gregory: “I assure you, nothing to be feared, in the materials from which Greek thought is constructed; they can be used in the Christian task of intellectual reconstruction.

The Greek intellectual inheritance, seized by Origen for the intellectual adornment of the Christian tabernacle, has shaped the whole theological tradition of the Western and Eastern churches. Other aspects of his legacy may yet remain to be exploited. One wonders whether his remarkable exploration of the meaning of time is among these. His view that time is a dimension of the world (it is not time that moves, but the world moves along time as a continuum) may one day attract Indian theologians, whose theology has to relate Christian expression to a metaphysic of time totally different from that with which the mainstreams of Christian theology have hitherto engaged.

Which brings us to the point at which we began. The task that absorbed Origen’s whole life is precisely the exercise before those who are now engaged in thinking the Christian faith into the fabric of thought of Africa and Asia and Pacific societies. These societies are as complex as the Hellenistic, and like that civilization they have inherited bodies of literature, wisdom, and tradition, written and oral—frames of thinking that are as axiomatic for their peoples as the Hellenistic frame was for the likes of Celsus. The theological task has passed the stage where missionaries can be very significant; they already have contributed their part in the story; Paul has done his work. In many areas, perhaps most, it is not the task of the convert generation, relentlessly turning their ways of thinking toward Christ. They too have made their stand, and their contribution, like Justin’s, has been vital. The weight of responsibility lies on a new generation of Origen’s people brought up in the Christian faith, confident in the Scriptures, and yet at home in the old cultural tradition—people who are heirs to both the Christian and that other tradition, who have taken in both with their mothers’ milk. On such people depends, not only the future of African, Asian, and Pacific theology, but the future of Christian theology and of theological scholarship as a whole.

Those of us who cannot be part of that process can try to understand and interpret it; that too is a crucial dimension of mission studies. And for all of us, Origen may be an exemplar of the Christian scholar and of the role of mission studies. He does not provide a comfortable view of the scholarly vocation. He lived in utter simplicity, comparative poverty, and unremitting toil. His early years were full of danger, with narrow escapes from death; in his sixties he met imprisonment and torture. His church authorities restricted his scope and dismissed him from a teaching post. After his death he was often denounced without comprehension, pilloried as an arch-heretic by people who knew nothing of the setting in which his work was done and could only parrot in safety the established orthodoxies of a different time. He has never reached the calendar of saints.

His only earthly rewards seem to have been the love and eager loyalty of his students, the welcome and openheartedness offered by churches other than his own—and perhaps the unfailing confidence and resourcefulness of his publisher. But he saw the need for Egyptian gold and Egyptian cloth to furnish the tabernacle in the wilderness, and he turned the learning of the Greek world to the worship and glorification of God. Let us salute Origen of Alexandria, the father of mission studies.

In using Egyptian gold for the glorification of God, it is necessary to watch out lest idols be manufactured in the process.

those who have taken what is useful in Egypt, left that country and made objects for divine worship, are rare. But many were the brothers of Hadad the Edomite.”13 Egyptian gold and Greek materials are to be used for the glorification of God, but it is necessary to watch out lest idols be manufactured in the process. For this reason Origen urged on Christians, learned and unlearned, the duty of discrimination and sought to provide them with tools for the purpose.

It has been a special feature of studies that arise from the exercise of Christian mission that they open up new fields of learning, establish new forms of inquiry, and gather new bodies of material. We cannot pause to consider Origen’s astonishing achievement in the Hexapla, which, had he done nothing else, would have established him as a major pioneer scholar. In an age when few Greek Christians studied Hebrew and when tensions between church and synagogue were high, he collated the entire Hebrew text of the Old Testament with the texts of all four translations then known. For the Psalms, he collated two more texts, one of which he himself had discovered in Palestine. Nor can we pause to consider how he developed the Bible commentary, taking the form over from the Gnostics who invented it and making it an instrument of reflection on Scripture. We cannot even pause for Concerning First Principles, the first work of systematic theology written for its own sake, rather than as an apology or a defense. Henri Gonzel designates Origen’s work a “research theology.” It is a happy phrase. Origen’s theology is exploratory but open minded, reverent but not fearful. There is no merit in unreflective attachment to opinions. For Origen, only the Word, the Logos, deserved unconditional attachment.

Notes
2. The main account is in Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, book 6, between sections 16 and 39.
3. The two texts, with a French translation, are conveniently put...
The Future of Christianity in Latin America: Missiological Perspectives and Challenges

C. René Padilla

The so-called acceleration of history places us in a precarious position when we attempt to discern the future of Christianity in Latin America. The rapid changes taking place in the world, many of them global, make it extremely risky to venture any forecast for the future. Nevertheless, we cannot—and we may not—evade our responsibility to reflect on the path we must take in order to attain the goals inherent in our commitment to the kingdom of God, and this duty necessarily implies making the effort to discern the future. We must undertake the task with appropriate humility, being very careful as we seek to interpret the “signs of the times.”

In this article I ask two key questions: What vision should determine the mission of the church of Jesus Christ in the midst of the dramatic socioeconomic, political, cultural, and religious changes taking place in Latin America? What should be the role of the church as it looks toward the future of a world in profound transition, under the spell of the empire of the mass media?

Religion in the Postmodern World

It is evident that in Latin America predictions that scientific and technological progress would render religion obsolete have simply not been fulfilled. Latin Americans in general consider themselves believers, and many are faithful adherents of one form or another of religion or cult, organized or not. What does this situation imply for the church’s mission at present and as it looks to the future?

A thoughtful reading of the current religious situation in Latin America demands an understanding of the changes that have taken place throughout this century in the perceived place of religion in personal and social life, partially as a result of modern scientific and technological development, with special emphasis on the mass media. This perspective leads us to the thesis proposed by Arend T. van Leeuwen, in the 1960s, on the impact of Western technology on the modern world. This Dutch theologian held that the technological revolution was achieving that which Christian missions were unable to achieve—the unification of the world. This development began in the West but in modern times expanded to “all nations” and became one of the factors opening up centuries-old, traditional societies to modern influences, with the resulting integration of these societies into “a planetary world.” For the first time in human history, van Leeuwen declared, ontocratic societies—“religious, closed, and traditional,” in which it was very difficult for the values of other cultures and even the Gospel itself to enter—were being replaced by technocratic societies, characterized by openness to change.

Although van Leeuwen referred to Asian societies, not directly to Latin America, there can be no doubt that his analysis fits the ontocratic societies of Latin America, “religious, closed, and traditional,” including the Roman Catholic society developed since colonial times. Today, even more than when these words were written, it is evident that we are entering a period of history dominated by technocracy, especially by the mass media, and open to change in every dimension of life.

It is not surprising that the transition to the technocratic period should have profound religious repercussions. In the past, in the rich countries of the West, the industrial revolution slowly displaced Christianity from its position of social dominance, putting science and technology in its place. This same process of secularization is now taking place in Latin America, but with one great difference: secularization here generally does not lead to atheism but to a noticeable withdrawal of the faithful from the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), which is identified with

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1. On the publication of Origen’s works and his prolific output, see E. J. Goodspeed, Christianity Goes to Press (New York: Macmillan, 1940), pp. 87ff.
3. Philologia 13. Hadad must have been confused with Jeroboam (cf. 1 Kings 11:14–25 with verse 25 and 1 Kings 12:25–33); the point being made, however, is not affected.
the authoritarian, traditional society of the past. Thus the way is cleared for a search for religious alternatives, other “gospels” that will better respond to felt needs and that are more consonant with the spirit of the day. This provides fertile soil for all kinds of new religious movements, and fewer and fewer Latin Americans think that the religion inherited from their ancestors has the title deed to their conscience. Latin America has become a shopping mall of religious options. As Peter Berger has pointed out, “secularization brings about a demonopolization of religious traditions and thus, ipso facto, leads to a pluralistic situation.” And religious pluralism creates a “market situation” in which “the religious tradition, which previously could be authoritatively imposed, now has to be marketed.” Christianity has no future in Latin America if it does not take seriously this aspect of the world today. The end of the Constantinian era, marked by the “death of Christendoms,” is the essential starting point for understanding the role of the churches at the outset of the third millennium.

**Pentecostal and Neo-Charismatic Growth**

Much of the religious fervor that characterizes Latin Americans today shows itself in the unusual growth of evangelical churches, especially Pentecostal and neocharismatic churches. Indeed, the growth of these churches in the last three decades has attracted the attention of many throughout the continent. It may be an exaggeration to predict that in the foreseeable future the majority of Latin Americans will be evangelical. There seems to be, however, good reason to affirm that “if the growth of the last few decades continues, Latin Americans claiming to be evangélicos could still become a quarter to a third of the population early in the twenty-first century.” For traditional Roman Catholic leaders, including Pope John Paul II, we are in the presence of a real avalanche or invasion of “sects” that threatens the “religious unity” of Latin America. For a growing number of social scientists we are witnessing an unprecedented phenomenon deserving careful analysis because of its social consequences. Astute politicians recognize a new popular force that can be used to serve their respective ideologies.

This is not the place to discuss the manifold, and sometimes contradictory, attempts that have been made to explain the growth of these churches. Whatever the explanation, the fact remains that Latin American Protestantism is a growing force and is changing not only the religious but also the social and political landscape of the continent. Undoubtedly, one especially important element that, in the last few years, has contributed to the growth of megachurches, many of them neocharismatic, is their adoption of the culture of mass empire. In fact, the use of the mass media in charismatic churches, which are generally the fastest growing, is part of a whole constellation of elements reflecting the spirit of the times: the business approach, the use of marketing techniques to achieve numerical goals, the offer of material prosperity, help so that people will “feel good,” and the emphasis on entertainment. These factors are accompanied by a reduction of the content of the message to its minimum expression and an apathetic attitude toward the formation of disciples prepared to live out their faith in every dimension of life.

We clearly are facing a phenomenon that we might call evangelical popular religiosity, unprecedented in these countries. In the Catholic camp, an extensive bibliography covers the topic of popular religiosity. In contrast, this socioreligious category is not even part of the Protestant vocabulary, probably because it is considered an exclusively Roman Catholic phenomenon. We need field studies to detect similarities as well as differences in manifestations of popular religiosity in both evangelical and Catholic contexts. The inevitable conclusion seems to be, however, that the extension of this type of Protestantism is intimately related to the light culture of postmodern times. It probably will continue for some time yet, in spite of various attempts by the Catholic hierarchy to contain its advance. But it does not fulfill the necessary conditions to sustain the hopes of those who wish to see in Latin America a continent deeply affected by the message of the kingdom of God and his justice.

**Catholic Christendom and New Evangelization**

Pablo Richard has defined Christendom as “a particular class of relationship between the church and civil society, a relationship in which the state is the primary mediation.” This relationship, which has characterized Latin America “since 1492 until our days,” has been definitively broken. Today, on the threshold of the third millennium, it is no longer possible to ignore this rupture, which has progressively deepened during the twentieth century. There seems to be enough evidence to suggest that the project of “the new evangelization” now sponsored by the Vatican basically represents an effort to recuperate lost ground and to reaffirm “the medieval synthesis of the two swords”—one belonging to the emperor and the other to the pope—which is “the essence of Christendom.”

It may be difficult for the Roman Catholic hierarchy to accept the idea that the unity of colonial Christendom, imposed in Latin America by the force of arms, is past history and that this continent is no longer, if it ever was, a Roman Catholic continent. But there are many reasons to believe that the majority of Latin American bishops and archbishops would agree that “Catholicism in Latin America is not insured against the risk of being reduced to becoming just one among many religious options and having no other recourse to be taken into account than its own power of conviction.” The problem is that for several centuries, in order to be taken into account in Latin America, Roman Catholicism relied on resources that had little or nothing to do with its “power of conviction.” It is not necessary to demonstrate that the Spanish conquest, since the end of the fifteenth century, was a political-religious project inspired by the ideal of establishing in the New World a Christian kingdom under the power of the Catholic sovereigns and the power of the pope. In his classic work *The Other Spanish Christ*, originally published in English in 1932, John A. Mackay carefully demonstrates the decisive importance of this fact for understanding “the spiritual history of Spain and Hispanic America.” For Mackay, the Roman Catholic Church that accompanied the Spanish conquerors in the sixteenth century was the church of the Crusades, with a mission intimately related to military conquest and coherent with the “Islamic soul” of these conquerors, forged during the eight centuries of defen-
sive fighting that followed the Moorish invasion of Spain. The conquest was “the last of the Crusades,” in which “the sword and the cross formed an offensive alliance in order to take Christianity, or what was considered Christianity, to foreign lands.” Thus evangelization was carried forward at an incalculable ethical cost, and the corpus christianum, the colonial Christendom, was established by means of “the tremendous power of the Crusades.”

In his study of the history of Christendoms and of the RCC in Latin America, Pablo Richard has proposed that in 1808 colonial Christendom entered a period of crisis as the result of the revolutions that culminated in the independence of Latin American countries from the Spanish crown. It was not easy for the RCC to accept that the republican state should replace the monarchical order that had served as its royal protector for three centuries. The crisis was not resolved, and with time, following 1930, the RCC was forced to find a way to redefine its relationship to the state, with the purpose of restructuring a “new Christendom” that could be called “populist, nationalist, Latin American, culturalist, and developmentalist.” This attempt, Richard states, resulted in the strengthening of the presence and the power of the church in civil society, but it caused a new crisis: the clash between two models of Christendom, the colonial and the new, during the period from 1930 to 1960. The cycle that begins in 1960, according to our author, confronts the RCC with two alternatives: a revised model of the new Christendom, at the service of the capitalist economic model, or a process of dissolution of this new Christendom in order to make way for “a church that is either beyond the New Christendom model or has already broken away from it.” For the first time in the history of the church in Latin America, “there is a direct contradiction between Christendom and church: one will be able to survive only if the other disappears.”

The future of Christianity in this continent depends to a large extent on the resolution of this crisis, comparable to that of colonial Christendom at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Richard wrote his analysis of the Christendoms—the colonial and the new—before the destruction of the Berlin Wall. On the horizon there still was no indication of the dissolution of the Soviet Empire or of Fukuyama’s “end of history.” In these circumstances, Richard predicted that the crisis of Christendom would lead “irreversibly to its complete breakdown,” although he admitted the possibility that Christendom could be “radically and totally” restructured. Everything seems to indicate, however, that the ecclesiastical institution with its headquarters in Rome has not rejected the historical legacy of medieval Catholicism. On the contrary, the RCC in general continues to conceive of itself as the agent of a new civilization in which, in order to relate to civil society, it will continue to rely on political power and the institutions of the established order.

The second General Assembly of the Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano (CELAM II), held in Medellin in 1968, was a promising watershed for the RCC. The purpose of this conference was to consider the practical significance of Vatican II for Latin America. Medellin ’68 turned out to be, we could say, the official inauguration of the most significant aggiornamento of the RCC in Latin America since its initiation in the fifteenth century, for it introduced a change of direction that affected every aspect of the life and mission of the RCC. In a way, it was a legitimation of the progressive sector of the church in terms of the adoption of the “preferential option for the poor” and the support to the comunidades eclesiales de base (grassroots ecclesial communities; CEB).

However, it must be observed that the three decades that followed Medellin ’68 have proved beyond doubt that, with some outstanding exceptions, the hierarchy of the RCC has not abandoned its dream of a Roman Catholic Latin America and that the traditional integralist position has the ardent support of the Vatican. In fact, it is quite evident that since CELAM III (held in Puebla in 1979), little by little this sector of the church, backed up by the Vatican, has significantly gained ground. The hierarchy in general has continued to be closely associated with conservative political forces. Although the Latin American RCC includes competing ideological positions that are as diverse as that of the military national security regime and that of liberation theology, time and again Pope John Paul II has shown his preference for the bishops committed to the status quo. Other measures leave no doubt about the ideological position of the RCC: the official support of orders or movements such as Opus Dei, established by the pope in 1982 as a “personal prelature” for urgent missions; the inclination to demand special privileges from the states in exchange for ecclesiastical political support; the undisguised effort to control government welfare programs and the system of public education, to the extent of attaining the reinstitution of religious teaching; the struggle to obtain the approval of laws defining which religious activities are officially allowed; the relentless publicity campaign against the “fundamentalist sects”; and the acceptance of the so-called neoliberal economic program (subject to the “social teaching” of the church to minimize its damaging impact on the poor). One can only conclude that, in contrast to what Richard could foresee in the 1980s, the RCC has chosen to resolve the crisis of the new Christendom in Latin America by making an effort to ensure the preservation of its political power. Evidently, many of the bishops believe that, now that “Christianity is no longer being transmitted from one generation to the next by any closed milieus,” political power is still useful as a way “to create or simply maintain consumer majorities who are artificially bound to Christianity.”

The notable desertion of members, which so deeply concerns the Roman Catholic hierarchy, clearly coincides with the breakup of the centralism and authoritarianism that have marked the RCC for centuries. As Bastian has pointed out, during the colonial period the Roman Catholic religion was “the means to legitimize unequal and pyramidal social relations,” which were represented in certain works of art of the eighteenth century. It is obvious that in today’s religious market, where one can find food for every palate, the role of a hegemonic power has become obsolete; contra those who wish to believe otherwise, Roman Catholicism is just one among many religious options, and whether it will be taken into account or not will depend on its power of conviction. Not an anti-Catholic prejudice but an analysis of the facts and certain premises derived from the Gospel move us to affirm with José Míguez Bonino that “what we Protestants reject is not that there has been established, or may be reestablished, a ‘Roman Catholic Christendom,’ but that a ‘Christendom’ be established at all.”

In today’s religious market, where one can find food for every palate, the role of a hegemonic power is obsolete.
A Protestant Christendom?

As Peter Berger has argued, “Religion has been the historically most widespread and effective instrumentality of legitimation . . . because it relates the precarious reality constructions of empirical societies with ultimate reality.”21 In Latin America Roman Catholicism served in the past, and sometimes continues to serve in the present, to legitimize the established socioeconomic and political order. Now that Protestantism is gaining weight not only in the religious camp but also in the political field, the question is whether there is a basis to think that a sort of Protestant Christendom will replace the Roman Catholic one. Mounting evidence indicates that not all Protestants reject the Christendom project!

A favorite weapon of the Roman Catholic hierarchy against the inroads of Protestantism in Latin America has been the argument that Latin America Protestantism is a “foreign religion,” that it came “from outside.” One could well argue that no church in this continent lacks a foreign origin. The accusation, however, gains strength when it is combined with a conspiracy theory, according to which Protestantism is viewed as the “spearhead of American imperialism.” A contemporary version of this theory links Protestant growth to “the apogee of militant fundamentalism starting from the United States” and a supposed “global plan, with well defined priorities and tactics,” for a “religious as well as political conquest of Latin American countries.”

For anyone to think that Protestantism, “divisible, divided and fissiparous” as it is,25 could be aligned with a global plan of such magnitude requires a high dose of credulity. This idea gained some credibility, however, when it was developed in a doctoral thesis that was accepted by the Faculty of Theology of the Jesuit Fathers in Frankfurt, Germany. The author, Florencio Galindo, builds his whole case on one single document produced by a little-known group, “Amanecer,” one of many charismatic groups to be found in Latin America. The fact that such a document has been reprinted by CELAM “for information” shows the extent to which this topic is a matter of deep concern to the Roman Catholic hierarchy.24

It cannot be proved that there is a religious-political global plan to which a significant number of Latin American Protestants would adscribe. It is not difficult, however, to show that the Constantinianism that for centuries has characterized the Roman Catholic Church has made amazing progress among evangelicals in Latin America in the last few years. Traditionally, evangelicals in Latin America have abstained from politics. In the last twenty years or so, however, they have experienced a political awakening to such extent that today participation in political parties, either secular or Christian, plays an important role in the lives of many pastors and churches in practically every country of the region. This is not the place to describe in detail this phenomenon or to attempt to evaluate its possibilities and limitations.26 Suffice it to say that the surprising numerical growth of evangelicals, their social ascension, their rising educational level and professional improvement, and their greater importance in society have made their participation in party politics, especially in some countries, an inevitable question. While they were an insignificant minority, they could remain unnoticed; under the present circumstances they not only are noticed but are compelled to define themselves politically.

With a few exceptions evangelicals are simply unprepared to face, on the basis of their faith, the challenges that the new situation poses to them. Their inheritance of the Anglo-American “awakenings,” with a “double reduction, Christological and soteriological,”26 places them in a position of disadvantage in relation to the task of providing a solid theological and ethical basis for political action that is faithful to the Gospel and relevant to society. The problem is now compounded by the fact that, supposedly in order to articulate a political program and practice in line with Christian ideals, evangelical political parties have been formed in several countries. In the last analysis, the creation of these confessional political parties is an expression of the Constantinian mentality, namely, that “the church should seek the mediation of political society in order to ensure its ecclesial and pastoral presence in civil society,” which is “the quintessence of the Christendom model.”25 A minor but influential sector of Latin American Protestantism has apparently adopted this model in an effort to replace the RCC in its traditional role of defining ethics and regulating moral conduct for the whole of society.

David Stoll focuses on this topic and warns evangelicals, at this moment of their great numerical expansion, about “the danger of allowing their missions to be harnessed to U.S. militarism by the religious right.” If that happens, says Stoll, it will frustrate a religious transformation from which “a social vision with the potential to alter Latin America’s cultural, moral, and political landscape” could emerge.

In light of the foregoing discussion, one of the worst possible scenarios for the future in Latin America would be an open confrontation between two types of Christendom—one Roman Catholic and the other evangelical-Protestant—fighting to gain adherents not only in order to maintain hegemony in the religious field but also to control the political and economic power. The “confessionalization” of politics resulting from the “catholicizing” of evangelical (especially charismatic) churches would be as damaging to the cause of the Gospel as the politicization of faith in the past.

An Ecclesiology for the Third Millennium

All that has been said so far makes evident the urgent need for an ecclesiology rooted in the Gospel—an ecclesiology that will totally disavow the premises of Christendom. Among both Roman Catholics and Protestants the alternative is still the one clearly described by Richard in the 1980s: either Christendom or the church. Despite the theological and other differences that exist between the RCC and evangelical churches, on the threshold of the third millennium history places before them the very same alternative: either define their identity (1) on the basis of the powers of this world and the love of power, or (2) on the basis of the kingdom of God and the love of love.

The two options may also be expressed, following Juan Luis Segundo, in terms of masses and minorities. For him, at the root of the corpus christianum is the premise that “society is coextensive with the community of adherents,” and this premise leads the clergy to use any means to attain “a numerical universality of adherents to the doctrine of Christ.”28 The determining factor is thus the law of least effort, even at the cost of denying the essence of the Gospel.

The reference to the essence of the Gospel leads us to consider the basis of ecclesiology, which is Christology. In Roman Catholicism, the desire to include the large majority of people in the church opened the door to popular religiosity, in which “ethics is absent and ritualistic magic takes its place.” Christ “has lost prestige as someone who is able to help with regard to daily affairs” because he has lost his humanity, and “in relation to his earthly life he appears almost exclusively in two dramatic roles—that of a child in his mother’s arms and that of a suffering and...
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bleeding victim." In evangelical Protestantism, in contrast, the obsession with numerical growth is leading many leaders to assimilate elements of the light culture that dominates society, to emphasize the individualism and subjectivism that mark the Christological and soteriological reductionism inherited from the past, and to minimize the ethical demands of the Gospel.

Placed at the service of Christendom, both Roman Catholicism and evangelical Protestantism take the shape of popular religiosity. In this way they turn Christianity into a popular religion that appeals to the masses, but they fail with regard to the purpose of the church derived from the Gospel—that of contributing from below toward the formation of a community of disciples of Christ who are "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world." Richard is right in saying that "evangelization is inerently incompatible with a Christendom model. [Roman Catholic] Christendom 'produces' unevangelized Catholics." Protestant Christendom, I would add, produces unevangelized evangelicals.

The alternative is not an elitist Christianity designed for a thinking minority but a Christianity that seeks to be faithful to Jesus Christ and to the Gospel as "Good News to the poor," at whatever cost. Such faithfulness is possible only if there is a Christology that looks at Jesus Christ from a Trinitarian perspective, recovers all events of redemption in him, including his life, death, resurrection, and ascension, and places him at the very center of the life and mission of the church as the Lord of the totality of human life and history.

Grassroots Ecclesial Communities

It is not an exaggeration to say that in the whole history of the RCC in Latin America, there never was another moment as full of promise for the life and mission of the church as the decades of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, when the famous CEBs flourished in several Latin American countries. There was good reason for many theologians to see in these comunidades a real "ecclesigenesis"—"the emergence of a different way of being the church, based on the axis of the Word and the laypeople," "one of the most significant ecclesial movements and social forces in the twentieth century." As a matter of fact, the CEBs meant a return to an ecclesiology that conceived of the church as a faith community built "from below"; a community with the poor and from the poor, where people reflect on the faith and celebrate it, but also where "human situations are judged from an ethical perspective in God's light." In the CEBs all the members are carriers of charisms through which the Spirit of God acts for the common good, to such an extent that these charisms become the "organizational principle," "the structure of the community." To be sure, bishops, archbishops, cardinals, and popes play an important role as those who have the "gift of help, direction, and government" and the "charism of unity." But "their speciality does not consist in accumulating or absorbing, but in integrating and coordinating. It is a gift located not outside but inside the community, not above the community but for the good of the community." This ecclesiology thus overcomes not only the Constantinian model, which unites ecclesiastical and political power, but also the clerical model of the church, which reduces it to a "hierarchiology," to use Boff's term. The people of God are viewed as "a vast network of communities that include Christians, religious, priests, and bishops, without class distinction."

From the perspective of an evangelical theologian, it is quite impossible to go beyond this vision of the church in its internal relations and its relationship to the world. The ecclesiology of the CEBs has its roots in the New Testament and projects a model that is quite coherent with its teaching regarding what God wants of the church as the firstfruits of the new humanity, the sign and agent of the kingdom, the community in which God's purpose to unite all things under the lordship of Jesus Christ is made visible.

The future of Roman Catholic Christianity in Latin America depends to a large extent on the historical realization of this vision of the church. Already in the sixteenth century the RCC opted for a hierarchical model of the church, thus blocking the possibility of radical renewal through an ecclesiology based on the universal priesthood of believers. According to Leonardo Boff, "the exclusion of Protestantism was a great error because it excluded not only Luther but also the possibility of true criticism and a controversial attitude with regard to the system, in the name of the Gospel." The greatest crisis of Catholicism in our continent today is the crisis posed by the alternative between accepting the CEBs as the means through which God wants to renew the church or expelling them as counterproductive to its ecclesiastical project.

The Protestant Principle

The dilemma is no less radical for evangelical churches. They are the direct or indirect descendants of the sixteenth-century Reformation, and as Samuel Escobar argues, in the Latin American context they have retained an "Anabaptist character." Nevertheless, they are changing in the direction of "massification," allowing numerical success to make them victims of political power plays. As a result, they are losing what Tillich has called the Protestant principle, that is, "the divine and human protest against every historical absolutization," which Segundo considers "an essential dimension of Christianity, ... [although] totally opposed to the pastoral endeavor to make the task of gaining converts universal."

The theological agenda in general, and the ecclesiastical agenda in particular, of these churches has been clearly defined by José Miguez Bonino in his Faces of Latin American Protestantism. Basically, it concerns making mission the "material principle" of theology, that is "a theological orientation which, as the best expression of the life and dynamic of the religious community, will give coherence and consistency to the understanding of the gospel and become a point of reference for the theological building of the community."

Space does not allow us to summarize all the significance that such an approach has for Miguez, but it is quite clear that for him mission must not be conceived of as conquest (the "I conquer" as the "nucleus of the missionary consciousness") but rather in terms of a sending that "is not an accidental or limited act in a given moment" but rather an act that finds its source in
an eternal ‘mission’ that corresponds to the very trinitarian reality” and that is “the invitation to participate in faith in the very life of the triune God and hence in the totality of what God has done, is doing, and will do to fulfill God’s purpose of being ‘all in all.’”

When the validity of this view expounded by Miguez—a view in which mission is inseparable from the work of the triune God—is not acknowledged, the totality of mission is reduced to evangelism “narrowly conceived as announcing the so-called plan of salvation and inviting people to conversion” and we fail to participate in “the fullness of the work of the triune God.”

The result of this type of evangelism, which has been common practice in Latin American Protestantism, is churches for which the key question is how to win more converts; often sadly lacking is concern for people in their concrete human needs. Evangelism becomes a question of marketing and falls into the absolutization of the means provided by the consumer society. With this point, we return to the topic of the church’s adaptation to Constantinianism, which for several centuries has characterized the Roman Catholic model, and which today seems to be powerfully penetrating Protestant churches. In this situation the recovery of the Protestant principle is urgent, in order that these churches recognize their role in society, to which Miguez refers in the following terms:

Our conception of the church based on the community of faith, empowered by a personal vital commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, our understanding of Christian freedom and of the priesthood of all believers, the rejection of a nonreformable doctrinal and ethical magisterium definitively close the way for us to attempt to become the religious actor of an old or a new Christendom. Socially and theologically, our missionary, social, and ecumenical commitment must begin “from below,” from the sectors of society with the least power, from the believing community, from the life of the believers, from open and equal social dialogue.

These words synthesize the vision of the church that the Gospel calls on us to build, by the power of the Spirit, in faithfulness to the Son of Man, who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. The future of Christianity in Latin America depends on the fulfillment of this vision modeled on the politics of the crucified Messiah.

Notes


5. It would probably be quite correct to say that the greatest concern on the part of the Roman Catholic hierarchy with regard to Protestant growth is closely related to political interests. On the growing social and political significance of evangelical Christians in Latin America, see my chapter in Guillermo Cook, ed., New Face of the Church in Latin America: Between Tradition and Change (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1994).

6. For a summary of some of these conflicting attempts, see Samuel Escobar, “La presencia protestante en América Latina: Conflicto de interpretaciones,” in Historia y misión: Revisión y perspectivas (Lima: Ediciones Presencia, 1994), pp. 112–34. Sadly, there is a real danger that “the Protestant upsurge and the Catholic reaction could be sparks that ignite a religious war of catastrophic proportions” (p. 112; here and throughout, translations from Spanish are my own).

7. The RCC also has entered the world of the mass media, with the consequent “risk of transforming religious rites into senseless shows, and of rupturing the communities of the faithful” (Giancarlo Zizola, “From the New On-Line Pulpits, Electronic Christianity Preaches to the Whole World,” Idec internationale, July-September 1997, pp. 11–18).


11. Juan A. Mackay, El otro Cristo español: Un estudio de la historia espiritual de España e Hispanoamérica (Lima: Colegio San Andrés, 1992), pp. 63, 85 (only the Spanish edition was available to the author).

12. Richard, Death of Christendoms, pp. 77, 79.

13. Ibid., p. 160.

14. One paradigmatic case is that of Argentina, where the bishops who opposed the military dictatorship of 1976 to 1983 could be counted on the fingers of one hand (e.g., Angelelli, Hesagne, De Nevarres, and Novak). For a detailed analysis of the “new right” social and political project of the Roman Catholic hierarchy for the Latin American countries (with emphasis on Argentina), based on the social teaching of the church, see Ana María Ezcurra, Iglesia y transición democrática: Ofensiva del neoconservadurismo católico en América Latina (Buenos Aires and Montevideo: Puntosur, 1988).

15. Hanson, The Catholic Church in World Politics, p. 87.

16. Samuel Escobar has documented this campaign and, on the basis of documents issued by the Roman Catholic hierarchy, has shown the progressive hardening of the official attitude toward the Protestant “sects” from the first General Assembly of CELAM (1955) to the fourth (1992). At this last gathering the pope, in his opening speech, described them as “rapacious wolves.” According to Escobar, it is not surprising that “some North American Catholic commentators have publicly expressed their disappointment at the insistent posture of certain sectors of the hierarchy at Santo Domingo and at the return to attitudes that seemed to have been overcome” (Escobar, “La presencia protestante en América Latina,” pp. 20, 21).


18. Stoll agrees with this conclusion, saying, “What has flung open Latin America to evangelical Protestantism . . . is the Catholic Church’s inability to decentralize its system of authority” (Is Latin America Turning Protestant? p. xvii). In the second chapter, Stoll shows how counterproductive it is for the RCC to affirm its centralism precisely at this time of “disintegration of Latin America’s paternalistic social order, a society of mutual obligations between upper and lower classes in which the church served as spiritual guarantor” (p. 25). In the same vein Bastian relates the Protestant expansion to the effort on the part of the RCC to safeguard its hegemony “by instrumentalizing the religious demands of the masses through a corporate model of religious management” (Jean-Pierre Bastian, La mutación religiosa en América Latina (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Economica, 1997), p. 95).


The Northern Outreach Program of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana

Elom Dovlo and Solomon S. Sule-Saa

Ghana in West Africa is generally divided into two sectors along geographic and cultural lines. Northern Ghana consists of three of the ten political regions of the modern state. Southern Ghana makes up the remaining seven regions. Harsh climatic and economic conditions in the North have led to the influx of northerners into southern Ghana in search of job opportunities. The Islam Committee of the Christian Council of Ghana drew attention to this development in 1975. According to James Anquandah, “In 1975, the Committee issued a call alerting urban congregations about the mass movement of Northerners into Southern Ghanaian cities and towns and urging them to broaden their ministries as imaginatively and boldly as possible in order to accommodate Northern Christians and non-Christians in their areas of concern so as not to lose them to Islam.”

More than 2.5 million northerners reside in the seven southern regions of Ghana, where they form about 18 percent of the population. Northerners come south primarily to seek employment, to escape persecution, to visit relatives, to learn a trade, to seek good education, or simply out of curiosity. Improvement in transportation and communication have made migration easier, increasing the flow southward. In the South, many northerners trade in meat and operate butcher shops. Others work as laborers, watchmen, cleaners, cooks, gardeners, and potters. The women normally engage in petty trading. A great number are also unemployed.

Northern migrants normally establish settlement patterns in the South along ethnic lines. They tend to form islands or pockets of distinct ethnic communities separated from the rest of the peoples of southern Ghana. These settlements are normally wards of suburbs popularly known as Zongo, a Hausa word meaning “strangers’ quarters.” As Deborah Fallow points out, in the Zongo “the salience of ethnicity is insubstantial, having been superseded by an Islamic-based sense of community and social order.” Northern migrants are often subsumed under this Islamic identity.

A Neglected Mission Field

In its National Church Survey of 1989, the Ghana Evangelism Committee (GEC) highlighted this presence of northerners in the South. The survey revealed that less than 1 percent of northerners in southern Ghana attend church. The GEC referred to northerners in the South as a hidden mission field because of the apparent negligence of southern congregations in noticing them and in adopting suitable ways to evangelize them. The GEC distributed and widely publicized this survey report. It also organized seminars to sensitize the churches in southern Ghana to the challenge of the mission field on their doorstep.

This article examines the response of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) to this challenge. The PCG, the oldest Protestant church in Ghana, traces its roots to the Basel Mission, which arrived in the country in 1828. Though the church started work among northerners as far back as 1878 in the then Northern
because Islam initially spread in the northern sector of the Territories, it made few serious efforts to convert northerners in the South until 1989, when it established the Northern Outreach Program (NOP).

Southern congregations have generally neglected to evangelize northerners in the South because of (1) the assumption that all northerners are Muslims, (2) prejudices between southerners and northerners, and (3) linguistic and cultural barriers between the two peoples.

Most southerners assume that northerners are Muslims because Islam initially spread in the northern sector of the country. Moreover, since most northerners in the South live in the Zongo, it is simply assumed that they are Muslims. However, a large number of northerners who settle in the Zongo are not Muslims. Over time, however, many do convert to Islam through social conformance.

Since the major Protestant churches have mission fields in the northern sector of Ghana, they must be aware that all northerners are not Muslims. The neglect of northerners in southern Ghana may therefore be due to the church finding their dwelling place in the Zongo forbidding. Some fear that attempts to evangelize in the Zongo may cause violent reprisals. Moreover, in Ghana Christians and Muslims seem content with converting adherents of the traditional religions. Even in northern Ghana, Christian missions are primarily directed at un-Islamized groups rather than Islamized groups.

The second major obstacle to effective mission among northerners is the prejudices between northerners and southerners. Generally, southerners feel superior to northerners and give them derogatory names, which produces resentment and avoidance. A survey by the authors on how northerners and southerners perceive each other yielded mostly negative perceptions. Most southerners, if they do not make the mistake of thinking that all northerners are Muslims, regard them as pagans who must be avoided because they dabble in juj, drink too much, and fight. In addition, they think northerners are illiterate and unsophisticated.

Northerners, for their part, see southerners as arrogant because they are better educated and wealthier. Northerners believe that because they do menial jobs in the South, southerners think they are their slaves. Northerners say that southerners treat them with disrespect, are harsh to them, and despise them. Some feel that when southerners are benign, they tend to be patronizing. All these prejudices are unfortunately carried into the church, which makes northerners unresponsive to the Gospel from southerners.

Linguistic and cultural barriers are also seen as obstacles to evangelizing northerners in the South. Northern Christians in the South are normally expected to join southern congregations. No provision is made, however, for them to worship in their own language in these congregations. As a result, unless a northerner can speak English or the two major southern languages, Twi or Ga, he or she cannot fully participate in church services. Northerners who go to church in the South, therefore, often do not feel at home. As a consequence, church attendance among northerners is insignificant. The 1989 survey reported that “the total number of adult Northern and alien people attending Church in Accra at the time of the Survey was 1,402, or less than one percent of total Church attendance.” Of those attending church, the majority attended the Roman Catholic Church.

Unlike the Protestant churches, the Roman Catholic Church has tried to be sensitive to the needs of northern Catholics in the South and innovative in caring for them. The Catholic Church was established in the North in 1906, and northerners are included in the church hierarchy. In their congregations in the urban South, the identity of northern people is acknowledged. There are church-related social associations for northern people. In some congregations, such as the Nima St. Kizito Catholic Church, Mass is celebrated in northern languages such as Dagare, Buli, Kasem, and Frafra.

This is not the case with the Protestant churches. Northerners therefore see Protestant churches in the South as only for southerners and consequently stay away. At times converts from the northern mission fields of the Protestant churches become “unchurched” when they come south because of the prejudices encountered in southern congregations. The NOP was formed by the PCG to break these barriers so as to reach out to northerners in the South with the Gospel.

**The Northern Outreach Program**

The NOP is not the first attempt within the PCG to reach out to northerners in southern Ghana. The earliest attempt, in the 1970s, was initiated by expatriate lecturers at Trinity College, Legon, who had northern cooks. They encouraged these cooks to evangelize their fellow northerners in Accra. Dr. Kemler, in particular, encouraged his cook, Isaac Apaabe, to go for training at the Christian Service College at Kumasi to equip himself for the task. After completing the training, Apaabe was posted to Nima Presbyterian Church of Hope in 1980 as an evangelist to the northern community. In 1987, when the coauthor of this article, Solomon S. Sule-Saa, was on temporary assignment to the church, no northern group existed in the congregation. However, not long thereafter, Sule-Saa started a Bible study and prayer group with seven northerners. This initiative led to the formation of the Nima 441 Northern Community Church.

At the First National Church Survey Consultation, organized by the GEC in June 1989 at Accra, GEC leaders argued that the failure of the church to evangelize northerners in the South was due mainly to “the great imbalance in distribution of spiritual, manpower, and material resources .... Although Northerners and aliens represent 18% of the population, they are served by only 0.3% of the Churches.”

It was in response to this thought-provoking consultation that the Presbyterian Church of Ghana set up the NOP. The Synod Committee of the PCG decided to start the project in Accra, the capital city. It appointed Sule-Saa to implement the program. Success in Accra led to the opening of a second work, in Kumasi, under John Azumah the following year. From these two cities the program spread to other southern regions.

The NOP’s strategy is to identify with the northerners and to embark upon a ministry that “scratches where they itch most.” The aims and objectives of the project are:

1. To carry out evangelism among the Northern Communities

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within the Ga Presbytery and other Presbyteries as requested.

2. To establish congregations on a linguistic basis so as to foster and develop a sense of belonging and unity among members and with the whole body of believers.

3. To organize classes for these communities with the view to help them become functionally literate.

4. To offer vocational training for these communities in order to equip them with the knowledge and skills that will make them employable.

5. To assist those thus trained as well as any others who may be in such need to obtain jobs, thus making them self-supporting.

6. To cooperate with all organizations and individuals engaged in similar programs and with all the pastors and leaders of the church at all levels in the work.

The provision of literacy classes (objective number 3) provides a context in which the first two goals of the NOP can be promoted. According to the Ghana Institute of Linguistics Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT), only 2-5 percent of northerners are literate. The need for literacy for the northern communities in the more literate South is therefore acute. The NOP runs mother-tongue literacy programs geared toward functional literacy. Church services and other gatherings provide occasion for those who have completed the literacy course to read the Scriptures in their mother tongue. Some young men even join regular schools after attending NOP literacy classes.

About 80 percent of the northern community churches established in the last decade were planted through literacy classes. The teachers of literacy classes normally share the Gospel with the people. Literacy has an added advantage of enabling the NOP to train men and women to manage new churches being planted.

Literacy is also a key to development, hence its prominent place in NOP ministry. By development, we mean empowering or enabling the people to support themselves economically. These are the fourth and fifth objectives of the NOP. To achieve these objectives, the NOP has established two vocational workshops at Nima and Madina, two major Zongo suburbs of Accra. So far, fifty young women have passed through these workshops, with twenty successfully completing the training. Students are trained in vocational skills such as making batik, tie and dye, soap making, and carpentry. The aim is to enable them to set up cottage industries and earn their own income. The NOP also helps to find jobs for unemployed church youth.

The above activities go hand in hand with the principal objective of the NOP, which is forming northern community churches. To avoid the cultural and linguistic factors that make the northerners perceive the church as a southern affair, the NOP plants churches in which northerners use their own languages and cultural expressions in worship.

The NOP churches are community based. The dominant ethnic group in a settlement is often the target for church planting. This is done with the view that they will in turn reach out to other northern ethnic groups that are in the minority. The churches are also located in the heart of the northern communities, within walking distance, thereby eliminating transportation costs.

The NOP also encourages the northern community churches to evangelize other northerners in the South. This is seen as preparatory to a further goal of reaching out to their own people back in their homelands in northern Ghana. Thus the NOP is playing a catalytic role in evangelism in northern Ghana. In 1991, for instance, a young man in the Nima 441 Northern Community Church went home and drew his family of ten to the Presbyterian Church in his hometown. In November 1996 the NOP carried out a planned evangelistic tour of northern Ghana. Dubbed Operation Go Back Home and Tell, seventy-nine members of the Accra and Kumasi NOP worked in five districts of the PCG's northern mission field for two weeks. They succeeded in planting four churches, saw about five hundred people converted, and brought renewal to several Christians who had backslid.

From the above, it can be seen that the NOP has been able to penetrate northern communities with the Gospel. Over thirty northern community churches have been planted between 1989 and 1995, with a total membership of over two thousand people serving eight major northern ethnic groups. The NOP has therefore become a source of joy and pride for the PCG. Dedicating the NOP House in Accra in 1994, Rev. E. S. Mate-Kodjo (the synod clerk) remarked: "Why did the devil close our eyes all these years? The NOP's success is beyond our expectations. I am happy with the achievements. The whole church has a lot to learn from the holistic ministry of the NOP."

The NOP has also attracted praise for positively transforming the lives of northerners in the South. Baba Musa, the Bulsa chief in Madina, a suburb of Accra, remarked at one of their gatherings, "Now there is peace in my community here. Prior to your coming here, this community did not know peace. I had to frequent the police station to bail my people who were always drinking and fighting each other. Thank God, now all these have ceased. The men give 'chop-money' [for food] to their wives. There is now love here." There are also individual testimonies from the youth about how their lives have been transformed. Many recount giving up bad habits such as drug abuse and immorality in responding to the Gospel.

The NOP has also enabled northerners and southerners to work together in mutual trust and with affection. Prejudices are therefore being gradually minimized and eliminated. Often they confess their past prejudices toward each other. This in itself is of great therapeutic value to the church.

Challenges

Though so much has been achieved within the brief period since the NOP's inception, the program faces many challenges. The holistic nature of NOP ministry requires human, financial, and material resources. For example, the newly established NOP congregations need trained personnel to lead them. There is, however, difficulty in getting potential northern leaders to train at PCG's theological institutions. This is because of their low educational background. An effective training system must therefore be put in place for the northern leadership.

Second, because of the low income of members of the northern community churches, they cannot secure their own places of worship. Furthermore, there is a recognized need for a comprehensive welfare system to cater to members, especially the unemployed. Without adequate financial support there can be stagnation in the NOP's work.

Another challenge the NOP faces is ethnicity. The NOP's strategy establishes single-ethnic congregations, which is likely to entrench ethnic division in the church. The NOP is aware of this danger. It tries to avert it by integrating its congregations into the mainstream of the church without loss of their cultural identity. This is done in three main ways.

First, the NOP organizes joint leadership with southerners in its community churches. The southerners, drawn mostly from the Bible Study and Prayer Group of the PCG, are active in establishing NOP churches. Second, the NOP organizes joint
The next issue of the *Journal of Psychology and Theology* is our fourth special issue featuring psychology and missions. This special issue features guest editors Dr. Elizabeth Hall of the Rosemead School of Psychology of Biola University and Judith Schram, M.A. of Wycliffe Bible Translators. Elizabeth Hall, PhD, is Assistant Professor of Psychology at Biola University and is from a fourth-generation missionary family. Her research interests are in applying psychology to the field of world missions, and she is involved in providing psychotherapy to missionaries and their families. Judith Schram, M.A., is Chair of the Board of Directors of Wycliffe Bible Translators USA. She is a counselor and intercultural trainer working with Wycliffe personnel, and has worked on a translation team as a field linguist since 1976.

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services with southern congregations on special occasions like the NOP Day, Christmas, Easter, and the PCG's Missionary Week.18 During joint services, northerners worship together with southern congregations. They are acknowledged and given the opportunity to sing and to hear the Word of God in their mother tongue. Third, the NOP teaches about the dangers of ethnicity. It appeals to biblical passages such as Ephesians 2:13–14 to emphasize the unity required in Christ.

The northern community churches are also struggling with various cultural norms that conflict with Christian teaching. An example is culturally accepted elopement practices. In this traditional way of marriage, the young women are captured and made to stay with men before marriage rites are performed. This practice can lead to several years of cohabitation. The NOP is often faced with the need to devise ways of handling such cultural practices.

Toward a More Fulfilling Ministry

When the NOP began, its leaders had not been trained specifically for the job. Much has been learned by trial and error. Though it has been successful, to have a more fulfilling ministry, the PCG needs to plan effectively to enhance its work in the future. As a holistic ministry, the program requires a lot of human and financial resources. As the headquarters of the church cannot bear the full burden, the entire membership of the PCG must be sensitized to the work of the NOP, and a fund must be established to care for mission among northerners in both southern and northern Ghana. It specifically reaches out to northerners in southern Ghana, but it also has exhibited its potential as a catalyst for mission in the three northern regions of Ghana. Its potential is therefore greater than anticipated at its inception. There is the need for proper planning to enable the attainment of this greater vision.

The achievements of the NOP also enhance the multiethnic nature of the PCG. Thus Isaac Fukuo admonishes the PCG that “the Presbyterian Church of Ghana is no longer a monopoly of the Twis and the Gas.”19 This perspective calls for new reflections on administrative, liturgical, and financial structures of the church. As a missionary venture, the NOP congregations do not follow the patterns established by southern congregations. There may be the temptation to hope that they would conform with time. Or they may be simply added as an addendum to old structures. However, a greater challenge will be to see them as an opportunity to revisit these old structures and to reform them.

One of the aspects of past Protestant missionary endeavor in Ghana was that various mission bodies carried out their activities in specific areas of the country. Some of these areas are coterminous with specific ethnic groups. This fact led to the establishment of ethnic-based denominations that do not evangelize beyond their dominant ethnic group. Where some people are evangelized beyond the main ethnic group, they form a minority and are often left out of the leadership structures of the church.

The paradox of the NOP’s work is that it must operate along ethnic lines to enable conversion. The challenge that will face the PCG will be how to integrate its members so that they can truly experience oneness in Christ. The NOP presents the opportunity for creating a model of a church that is one in Christ and that also is rich in the diversity of its organization, culture, and liturgy. To succeed, it must also be a model for missionary enterprise that engages in a mission of ethnic reconciliation. Ethnicity is one of the burdens of Africa. Breaking down its negative features must be a special mission of the church in Africa during the twenty-first century, a mission that makes the redemptive blood of Christ thicker than the blood of ethnicity.

Notes

1. Regions in southern Ghana are Greater Accra, Eastern, Volta, Western, Ashanti, Central, and Brong-Ahafo. Regions of northern Ghana are Northern, Upper East, and Upper West.


7. Detailed data on prejudices is offered by S. Sule-Saa in his B.A. long essay entitled “The Emergence of the Northern Outreach Programme and Its Impact Within the Presbyterian Church of Ghana” (1996), pp. 20ff.

8. This problem has been noted by Anquandah, Together We Sow and Reap, pp. 81ff, and by E. Dovlo in “Religious Pluralism and Christian Attitudes,” Trinity Journal of Church and Theology 1, no. 2 (1991): 41–42.


11. The church was to serve as the springboard for the NOP when Rev. Solomon Sule-Saa was officially appointed in September 1989 to establish and oversee the work of the NOP.


13. NOP constitution, p. 2.


15. The Bible Study and Prayer Group is a renewal movement within the PCG charged specifically by the church with evangelism and church planting (see C. N. Omenyo, Charismatic Movements Within Mainline Churches: The Case of the Bible Study and Prayer Group in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana” [M.A. thesis, University of Ghana, 1994], p. 12).

16. The Ga Presbytery has set aside the first Sunday of August as NOP Day. It is a Sunday when the NOP’s work is publicized through newsletters, joint services, and other activities. It is also an occasion when the congregations in the presbytery raise support in cash and kind to enhance the work of the NOP.

My Pilgrimage in Mission

William D. Reyburn

When I reflect on it, I am surprised—even amazed—that I became involved in missions. I was born in 1922 in a small farming community in Colorado. My parents were not churchgoers, and neither of them had a college degree. The only one who may have encouraged my parents in religious matters was my maternal grandfather, a businessman and faithful Methodist Sunday school teacher, in faraway eastern Kansas. Possibly during his influence, my two older sisters and I, shortly after our births, were carted off to the local Methodist minister for baptism. With that rite of passage out of the way, the church again became redundant.

Eight months after my baptism, the same Methodist minister conducted my father’s funeral.

At about age five I was sent off each Sunday morning, weather permitting, to the Methodist church, to sit in Mr. Brown’s Sunday school class and listen Sunday after Sunday to a stream of fanciful Indian tales. But the stories of wild savages were not to last: my mother had attended a summer tent revival and was converted to the Pentecostal faith. Immediately I was withdrawn from the big brick church, where worship was like a quiet game of cards, and was plunged into the little wooden church by the railroad, where worship was more like a cheering section at a football game.

Early Hints of a Life’s Calling

From this improbable beginning I began a journey, a spiritual evolution, with tears and trials, defeats and triumphs that marked the beginning of my pilgrimage in mission. During those early days I made two discoveries that were to set the tone of my life and work for years to come. The first was that I had an innate ability to imitate sounds—sounds of birds, animals, and people—a talent that revealed itself later as a love for language. The second, which developed a bit later, was a desire to know and communicate with the Mexican-Americans in the areas of Colorado and New Mexico where I grew up. These two realities would eventually translate themselves into the study of linguistics and anthropology.

Thanks to a brother-in-law, who managed a farm in New Mexico, I was put to work in the fields alongside Spanish-speaking families, where I came to know the workers and their children as compañeros. Frequently I witnessed blatant prejudices against latinos by the anglo population, who had few if any latino friends and who spoke little or no Spanish. Store owners hiked up their prices, shortchanged their latino customers, and assumed that latinos came into their stores only to steal. All too often both latinos and anglos threw up walls that robbed them of the chance to live together with understanding, peace, and justice.

The first opportunity to expand the insights I had gained in my youth came with World War II. Having joined the Marine Corps while a college student, I was sent for officer training at a college in central Ohio. While hitchhiking to Columbus on a Saturday afternoon, I noticed a group of Mexicans working on the Pennsylvania Railroad. When I greeted them, they put down their tools and gathered around me. They had been recruited in Mexico and were housed with their wives and children in nearby Pataskala, Ohio. Their greatest concern was being far from home in a sea of English speakers and not knowing English. Would I come and teach them? As a result of this encounter, I arranged to spend each weekend for the next five months and helped them learn. Not surprisingly, the children were better learners than their parents.

A local group of Christians provided the workers with English and Spanish Scriptures. Indeed, those who were highly motivated to read the Bible made excellent progress. I came to realize through these weekends how important the stories in the Bible were for the language learner, a lesson I would be able to build on in other areas of the world in years to come.

My next opportunity to explore a language came when I was sent to the island of Guam. Although I had not yet had any training in linguistics, my interest in language and people propelled me ahead. A Roman Catholic priest helped me find a Chamorro speaker to serve as informant. Much to my surprise and delight in my first hour with this person, I began to hear Spanish words. Being ignorant of the history of the Chamorro people and Guam, I became an ardent learner. Again, I found my fellow Marines, like the anglos in New Mexico, demeaning the local people and calling them “ignorant gooks.”

I learned on Guam how greatly valued the translated Scriptures were to the Christians, although only the four gospels had been translated and not many people had copies. Hearing their stories convinced me that translating the Bible was a task that I should prepare to do. In the meantime, however, there were other formative events to occur.

From Guam I was sent to Sasebo, Japan, a seaport on the southern island of Kyushu. The atomic bombs had exploded on Hiroshima and nearby Nagasaki, and the war in the Pacific had ended. My qualifications as an infantry officer were no longer needed, and I joined a construction battalion assigned to clearing bombed-out portions of the city, opening roads, and building playing fields for Japanese youth.

A thirteen-year-old schoolboy, Toyishi Kamagawa, who was anxious to practice his English, agreed to teach me Japanese if I would help him with English. Since his English was already well advanced, he got much more practice in English than I got in Japanese. Our friendship opened several doors; for example, he found the Bible beside my cot and expressed a desire to read

I stumbled along trying to make clear in the King James Version what was unclear to me and often totally obtuse to my young Japanese friend.
In Nagasaki—in the valley of the shadow of death—I committed my life to serve the Christ of peace, whatever that might require.

Easter morning, 1946. I had decided to drive my jeep to the top of the hill overlooking the port and city. In this way I would celebrate an Easter sunrise. I selected a spot at the head of a ravine and parked my jeep facing the east. Before the sun had risen over the Sea of Japan, I heard female voices from somewhere in the ravine below singing Easter hymns.

I made my way down through the undergrowth and finally came upon a group of young women who were celebrating Easter morning singing hymns at sunrise. With some hesitation and perhaps fear they allowed me to join them in their worship of the risen Christ.

This group of girls were students of the Methodist girls' school in Nagasaki and were unable to return to their studies because of the destruction of the city. Later I was invited to some of their homes and thus was able to know several Christian families.

Commitment in the Rubble of Nagasaki

While stationed in Sasebo, I visited the remains of the devastated Nagasaki. Although the harbor section of the city had suffered little destruction, the city center of several square miles had been instantly vaporized by the plutonium bomb that struck it on August 9, 1945. One of the few buildings with standing walls was a Roman Catholic church. Its windows and roof had been blown out, and the tiles of the roof had melted in the intensive heat generated by the explosion. As I stood beside this church and gazed around me in horror, I was overcome by the crushing awareness that this could be the sign of things to come, a worldwide destruction through nuclear war. Like the Job of old, I sat in the rubble and contemplated the world becoming one vast Nagasaki. In this valley of the shadow of death, where, according to Japanese figures, seventy thousand people died and nearly as many were injured, I committed my life to serve the Christ of peace, whatever that might require.

When I returned to civilian life, I was twenty-four years old. By that time I had a good idea of my capabilities, had personally known Christians in several cultures, and knew what I needed to study to prepare for the work that I felt God was calling me to do. My marriage to Marie Fetzer, who had earned a graduate degree in anthropology at Columbia University, was a significant turning point because from that time forward it was only possible to think in terms of our pilgrimage.

Soon after completing a doctorate in linguistics at the University of Pennsylvania, I went with Marie to Ecuador, where we undertook Quechua language and cultural research in cooperation with several of the missions working in the High Andes. We were particularly concerned with the way in which missions there had met with failure in their efforts to evangelize and to introduce modern farming methods, medical clinics, and schools. The results of our investigations were shared with the missions concerned as well as with others through various publications.

While we were engaged in the Andean work, Dr. Eugene A. Nida, secretary for translations of the American Bible Society, recommended that we assist a Mennonite mission in the northern Argentine Chaco, where many of the Toba Indians had turned to a Pentecostal form of Christianity. This indigenous movement left the Mennonite missionaries feeling helpless and at a loss. As a result of our work there, the Mennonites reoriented their work, an effort that eventually resulted in the translation of the Scriptures into three Argentine languages.

Juan Litwiller and Walter Trobisch

The Mennonite missionaries, however, were not the only ones to undergo change. We were fortunate to encounter Juan Litwiller, son of Canadian Mennonites, who had grown up in Argentina. It did not take many chats around the bushfires at night for Juan to realize that my conservative religious background had left me theologically crippled. It was through Juan’s penetrating questions in regard to the relation of the Bible to culture, of anthropology to church, of language to behavior that I was challenged to reexamine many of the “Christian” assumptions I was making in my work.

Juan introduced me to the writings of Emil Brunner, Karl Barth, and others. I found Brunner’s Revelation and Reason, The Mediator, Man in Revolt, and Christianity and Civilization particularly enlightening. Two years later, I had the good fortune to visit Professor Brunner at his home in Zurich.

Juan Litwiller later became dean and then director of ISEDET, a united seminary in Buenos Aires. Juan’s untimely death in 1971 at the age of forty-three was a painful loss for Latin America and the world.

After three years in Latin America, we were asked to assist the Presbyterian Mission in Cameroon, West Africa, in language and literacy work. While lecturing at Libamba College, we met Walter Trobisch, who contributed meaningfully to our pilgrimage in mission. Walter had been an infantryman in the German army until he was wounded in Russia and sent back to Vienna. While recovering, he was able to enroll for theological studies in Vienna. He once described his studies to me as “being on the German G.I. Bill.” As a teacher at Libamba College, Walter took a great interest in the problems of his students and approached those problems with care and cultural sensitivity.

We spent many hours together, particularly in the company of some of his students, talking about and searching the significance of polygamous marriages, bride-price payments, arranged
marriages, circumcision, and many other social practices that impinged on his students’ lives. We traveled together spending days on the roads, never tiring of the topics of our conversations. Walter eventually published I Loved a Girl, Love Is a Feeling to Be Learned, and many other books that became popular at first among African youth. Walter Trobisch’s contribution to our thinking was to enable us to see the deeper aspects of African social customs and how in the transition to modern societies missions and churches had to come to grips with these problems. Walter, like Juan Litwiller, died while still in the prime of life.

After our first term of three years in Cameroon, I studied for a semester at the University of Heidelberg and then for a year at Princeton Seminary. We returned to West Africa to serve the United Bible Societies as translations consultants. My area of responsibility stretched from Zaire (Republic of Congo) to Senegal and brought me into contact with numerous missionaries, church denominations, and African churches.

My work with the United Bible Societies had to be fully ecumenical, carried on across cultural, national, and theological boundaries. Within any two weeks I might sit down and consult with Swiss, German, Dutch, French, British, Norwegian, New Zealand, Australian, and American missionaries. In addition I had to deal with West African translators, most of whom had a form of Christianity brought to them by their European or American missionaries. Seeing the competition for converts in some areas was disheartening. For example, in one nation in West Africa I came across a village of eight hundred people with six denominations at work, among which there was nearly no contact.

Most missionaries could understand that it was important for various denominations to work together to translate and produce a common Bible. However, collaborating with other denominations could result in punishments from the home office. As one missionary told me, “We can work on the translation project with the Roman Catholics and the Baptists, but if this news gets back to our home office, our funds will be cut off.”

The great advantage of working with an interconfessional group such as the United Bible Societies was our contact with the diversity of people with a common goal. Translations consultants did not normally belong to a missionary community. In fact, they were fortunate to see one or two colleagues a year, usually at training seminars for translators. Thanks to the initiative of Eugene Nida, triennial workshops became a regular pattern in which, at least in the earlier years, a great variety of personal, cultural, and theological problems were discussed and opposing viewpoints welcomed. Equally valuable have been the informal opportunities to talk with colleagues, express concerns, and obtain counsel.

Looking Back with Thanksgiving

As I look back over the forty-five years of my mission pilgrimage, I am deeply grateful that I discovered in my early youth those talents that led me into linguistics and anthropology. I am grateful that my experiences in World War II gave me insights into the significance of missions by allowing me to know Pacific and Japanese Christians. I was thus able to make up my mind based on personal experience rather than from reading about missions. I am thankful that my journey has been fully shared with my wife of forty-seven years, that along the way we have known people of many backgrounds who have challenged us to think and act as citizens of a wider world than the one we were born into. I am indebted to the United Bible Societies and my colleagues who encouraged me to study and thus to share my life and thought with others.

Finally, and by no means the least, I am thankful for our four children, who in the most trying and tragic times somehow found the grace to laugh and to love their mom and dad.
The Legacy of William Ward and Joshua and Hannah Marshman

A. Christopher Smith

Imagine an ellipse, with Calcutta and Serampore the focal points. A city and a suburban town in pre-Victorian Bengal, separated from each other by twelve miles of the River Hooghly. One British, one Danish. In those locations, a pioneer band of British Baptists worked for several decades after 1800. Between those fixed points, they sailed several times a week for various reasons—enough to make one wonder what sort of mission enterprise focused on that short axis. Thence developed a tradition that would loom large in the history of the so-called modern missionary movement.

The founding father of the Baptist mission at Serampore was William Carey. An Englishman who sailed to Bengal in 1793, Carey kept resolutely to a twelve-mile stretch of river for 35 years (after 1799) never departing from it. The major portion of his missionary service probably occurred in Calcutta, even though tradition has identified him mostly with Serampore. His urban focus was made possible by the close team of dedicated missionary colleagues who ran the mission at Serampore during and after his prolonged periods of absence. And it is on them—William Ward and Joshua and Hannah Marshman—that I focus in this essay.

The Baptists’ missional polarity between Calcutta and Serampore was born out of political and financial expediency in the early nineteenth century. Working simultaneously in those two centers was apparently crucial to the survival of the Baptist mission in British Bengal. Carey ran his professional literary business in the heart of British Calcutta, while the Marshmans and Ward ran schools and industries on their mission estate in Serampore.

In Calcutta, Carey engaged in teaching languages and translating the Bible (as well as all sorts of other books) at Fort William College, a colonial-service establishment that trained young Britishers to manage the expatriate occupation of Bengal. After fifteen years of such service there, Carey and his colleagues set about establishing a college of their own in the Danish colonial enclave of Serampore. From then on, the work of the Serampore Mission revolved around two colleges. Their bold collegial venture, however, consumed huge amounts of money, to the detriment of the Baptists’ overall mission work in Asia.

Against this operational background, we may take the measure of the character and missionary attainments of Ward and the Marshmans. William Carey was the mission’s patriarch, around whom many other Baptist missionaries found their place. However, it is equally true that without the subjects of this essay, Carey would have achieved much less than he actually did. Ward and the Marshmans freed him up in a unique way to engage in a specialized ministry that gained public acclaim.

So how did these people converge in mission? Mission tradition records that they had much in common and that the three men functioned together as a remarkable triumvirate, along with Hannah. Yet important distinctions between Carey and the slightly younger men who became his closest missionary colleagues also require notice. During the late eighteenth century Ward and the Marshmans lived in important British ports, in contrast to Carey, who never saw the sea before he sailed to India. Ward lived for several years in Hull, which was a key English port for the North Sea and thus Germanic and Nordic Europe. The Marshmans lived for decades in Bristol, which was a node of the triangular Atlantic trade in African slaves and sugar. Ward and Marshman sailed out to India together in 1799, the latter with a wife and son, the other with neither, although the one who would become his wife also traveled with them on the American, India-bound ship Criterion. By all accounts, both men had a promising missionary career ahead of them with the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS). For William Ward, that career involved twenty years in India; for Joshua Marshman, thirty-seven. But both were to be outdone by Hannah Marshman, the mission’s matriarch, who bore the heat and burden of the day for forty-seven years.

Unlike Carey, both Ward and Marshman spent a year or more in Bible college training for the ministry before they left England. Both men took furloughs in Britain in the 1820s. They spent significant time with BMS leaders in London and particularly with Christopher Anderson in Edinburgh, Scotland. Fraternal bonds with Anderson were to prove crucial to the fortunes of the Serampore Mission from the mid-1820s onward, when the BMS and the Serampore Mission parted company. Carey, in contrast, never left Bengal.

Removing the Veil

William Ward (1769–1823) was an enterprising young man with an unusual background. His ministry in Bengal was so irenic that few people have realized that his life there contrasted greatly with his experience at the grassroots of British politics. During the last 150 years, very few have been aware that he had to go through a revolution in outlook in the mid-1790s before he could commit himself to full-time Christian service.

Since I have written elsewhere on the major change that Ward passed through, the focus of the present essay must be on his mission legacy. Attention will be paid particularly to his distinguished service within the Serampore Trio as peacemaker, personnel manager, pastoral counselor, and publisher. Born in 1769, Ward was brought up in the English town of Derby. His father, John Ward, was a skilled carpenter who died before his children came of age. As for religious influence on his early life, we are told that William accompanied his devout mother to the local Wesleyan Methodist chapel. The education he received was very limited, but he developed a studious disposition and became an apprentice to a local printer who engaged in a variety of publishing and retailing activities.

The youth was promoted to regular employment to “correct the press” and eventually was entrusted with editing the weekly newspaper, the Derby Mercury. This promotion occurred at a time of unusual opportunity for liberal-minded journalists, who were concerned about political developments in Britain and across the English Channel. In Derby, Ward became involved in local social-improvement projects and began to confront some of the worldly realities of his day. A collector and disseminator of European news, still in his twenties, he functioned as a social and...
political commentator in the English Midlands during Europe's revolutionary years (1789–97).

During the first half of the 1790s, before coming to faith in Christ, Ward edited several newspapers and experienced a number of demotions along the way. An outspoken petit bourgeois reformer and "rational dissenter," he was involved in the Derby Society for Political Information and composed a number of political manifestos that led to his being prosecuted in London for "seditious libel." Perhaps that was why he sought advice from radicals in the avant-garde London Corresponding Society (LCS) around March 1793. This was also the time of a memorable conversation he had with William Carey in the great metropolis.\(^6\)

Ward perhaps took some time out in London in 1794 to study print-typography. At the end of 1795 he was appointed full-time editor of the commercial Hull Advertiser and Exchange Gazette. Hull was an interesting international port to live and work in, but, again, after being in office for only nine months, he became an editorial casualty. This happened sometime after he had received baptism in one of the local Particular Baptist churches.

In March 1797 Ward risked provoking a royalist mob in Derby because he was so concerned to do something practical to promote social reform in his part of England.\(^7\) His public collaboration then with the LCS and John Thelwall, a maligned demagogue, resulted in an ugly riot on March 12. This event brought great odium on him and his hapless Baptist brethren in Derby, and it marked the end of his attempts to effect change in British society by secular means. For many months, he lived in fear of being imprisoned for his involvement in this debacle. Mercifully, he was spared punishment. After that, the unemployed young man busied himself with Bible study and rural evangelism in and around Hull.

After these brushes with the law, Ward decided to train for full-time Christian ministry among the Particular Baptists. The denomination's leaders agreed. In 1797 local friends arranged for a prosperous Baptist industrialist in Newcastle to underwrite his theological studies in Halifax, Yorkshire, under Dr. John Fawcett. Fawcett's Ewood Hall had a reputation of being very supportive of the new Baptist mission to Bengal, and it was there that Ward declared that he was prepared to serve the Lord, not because of some new revelation, but because of the Redeemer's command in Matthew 28:18-20.

Ward was discovered by BMS leaders in the summer of 1798. Three years earlier Fawcett had written and circulated a pamphlet entitled Considerations relative to sending Missionaries among the Heathen, so encouragement was not at all lacking when Ward began to consider devoting his life to God's work overseas.

It was probably John Sutcliffe who represented the BMS in Olney, which had featured significantly in Carey's ministerial formation. At that memorable service, he declared that it was not because of some "new revelation" that he was prepared to serve the Lord overseas, nor did he need one. Rather, it was because of the Redeemer's command in Matthew 28:18-20 that he now ventured forth.

### Leaving the Loom

Most of the first generation of Baptist missionaries from England came from humble backgrounds and were enterprising by nature. In this respect, Joshua Marshman was no exception. He was born in 1768 to the family of a weaver in a Wiltshire village where no more than an elementary education was available. Unlike Carey and Ward, Marshman was brought up in a Baptist household marked by a particularly Puritan type of piety. Like his future mission colleagues, he was a keen reader. At the age of fifteen, he was happy to accept employment as a bookseller's porter in the big city of London. Opportunities to advance himself did not materialize, however, so he returned home regretfully and took up his father's trade at the loom. There he found the going hard. Nor did much encouragement come his way from the strict family church of Westbury. Its leaders refused to baptize him as a young adult because they felt he had too much "head knowledge" and insufficient "heart knowledge," as far as biblical faith was concerned.

Only in 1791 did the way begin to brighten for Marshman, when he was blessed with marriage to Hannah Shepherd. She belonged to another pious Baptist family and was to prove a true helpmeet to him, and more, in quite unexpected ways. Thus he turned out to be the only member of the future Serampore Trio who gained a capable wife, on the model of Proverbs 31, years before he became a missionary.

Spurred on by Hannah and new family responsibilities in the early 1790s, Joshua looked about for an opportunity to make better use of his talents. For years he had striven to educate and improve himself. Hope revived in the beginning of 1794, when he was invited to become the teacher and master of a school run by the Broadmead Baptist Church in Bristol, some twenty miles away from his home. This post in the city proved to be the making of him. His outlook on life broadened considerably as he met people whose interests transcended the provincial. Fellowship opened up with the creative Baptist leaders of the Bristol Education Society, and he launched out in a part-time college course of study. His minister at Broadmead was Dr. John Ryland, who had baptized William Carey and had moved from Northamptonshire to become president of the denominational academy in Bristol. Talks with him resolved many issues in the young teacher's life, and Joshua was received into the Broadmead church by baptism. The following years saw Joshua give his best to studying Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and even some Syriac and Arabic, at the Baptist Academy in preparation for future ministry.\(^9\)

During his twenties, Marshman trod a somewhat different path from Ward. His course was more circumscribed: more confined within a denomination, more focused on collegiate study of ancient languages, and much less concerned about the sociopolitical issues that troubled his nation. Along the way he witnessed and gave Latin instruction to William Grant, a thoughtful young man (b. 1774) who was strongly influenced by the philo-
sophical currents that swirled through Britain after the French Revolution. This young man tossed about between Deism, Arianism, and atheism until he at last settled for Socinianism. At that point, he met Marshman, who stoutly defended scriptural teaching on Christ’s atonement. The end result was one of the most “intellectual” conversions that an evangelical missionary volunteering for service as did Marshman and his courageous missionary movement.” Thereafter, Grant was baptized and became a member of the Broadmead church along with his newfound friend.

This relationship had an unforeseen impact on Marshman’s life. Grant became so interested in reports from Dr. Ryland and the BMS’s Periodical Accounts of Carey’s mission endeavors in faraway India that he offered his services to the society. At that time, Ryland was looking out for promising young men who could strengthen the evangelistic enterprise there; thus he and Grant played an important role in encouraging Marshman also to devote himself to the mission cause.

Launching Out

Few BMS candidates ever set sail for “the Indies” so soon after volunteering for service as did Marshman and his courageous wife. Only a few weeks after making that decision in 1799, they, the Grant family, William Ward, and several others embarked as a group for Bengal. Yet they were probably better prepared for taking such a step than was Carey’s party six years earlier. The 1799 contingent had the benefit of sound advice from Charles Grant (no relation to William Grant), an evangelical official recently returned from India who had inside knowledge of the workings of the East India Company, and more. They also sailed with the aid of counsel from Baptist mission leaders, who had learned much in recent years about supporting missionary work overseas.

In May 1799 Ward testified that he was ready to leave his homeland for India, counting his life as nothing for the sake of the Gospel (Acts 20:24). His peers were of much the same mind. During their long voyage out on the American ship, they read much. Ward wrote tellingly in his journal: “Thank you, ye Moravians: you have done me good. If I am ever a missionary worth a straw, I shall owe it to you under our Saviour.”

The mission party of thirteen included five children and took four and a half months to reach British Bengal. Little did they anticipate the shocks they would encounter soon after arrival. The first surprise was not a little due to the mission recruits’ lack of judgment. They were in high spirits when the Criterion sailed into the estuary near Calcutta early in October 1799. As Christian activists who had little sympathy for the British establishment, they dared to venture into forbidden, occupied territory, where the native populace had exceedingly few opportunities to hear the Gospel. (In this bold business, Carey had been their forerunner, but, encountering the hostility of the British East India Company officials, he had found it prudent to establish himself in rural Kidderpur, where he managed an indigo business). Alas, the new arrivals, instead of presenting themselves as assistants for Carey’s indigo business, as advised, openly declared their missionary purpose. A storm of official indignation consequently broke out against them. To escape it, they fled for refuge upriver, to a Danish “trading factory” that was notorious as a haven for Europeans anxious to evade British law—Serampore! This was the tiny Danish enclave of Fredericksnagore, known by Hindus as Srirampur or Shreeramupoor, located about twelve miles up the Hooghly River from Calcutta.

After running headlong into trouble, the young Christian firebrands began to wonder whether they had compromised all that Carey had striven so hard to achieve in Bengal. Great was the sense of anticlimax, therefore, when Ward, as the group’s spokesman, traveled to Kidderpur to report what had happened. (Did it revive memories of the way he had made life difficult for Baptists in Derby a couple of years earlier?) How unpleasant to bear bad tidings to Carey, when all Ward had ever wanted to do was encourage his esteemed senior in his great work! He must have found it difficult to urge the pioneer to join them in Serampore, when that meant abandoning the new mission base in Kidderpur, in which so much had been invested. Carey agonized over giving up his means of self-support (via the indigo business), which could be exploited without incurring expatriate fury. He eventually relinquished his indigo site, although he had no idea how he and the large new missionary group could ever survive financially in Serampore.

Another shock to the enterprise was the death of Grant from fever, only two weeks after the party set foot in Serampore. Marshman was stunned. He was acutely aware that he himself might never have left England in Christ’s service, but for his young friend’s lead. Yet that was how Providence worked to bring the key members of the future Serampore Mission together.

Marriage in the Mission

Two years after arriving in the “city of refuge” (Serampore), Ward married Mary Tidd Fountain, the young widow of missionary John Fountain. She had sailed out with the 1799 party to marry Fountain, William Carey’s erratic assistant, but John had died before their first anniversary and the birth of their only son. At this point Mary receives rare mention in some of the biographies or histories of the Serampore Mission. She set a precedent whereby widows of deceased BMS personnel voluntarily remarried within the Baptist mission community, instead of returning to Britain. That was one of the ways in which they sought to give their best to support the advance of missionary work overseas.

William and Mary never had a son of their own, but they did have several daughters. Ward subsequently acted in loco parentis as a much-appreciated “uncle” to younger members of the so-called Serampore missionary family. During his early years as a missionary, he exercised a special ministry in mentoring and befriending Felix Carey, William Carey’s most wayward son, and John Marshman, his other colleague’s only son. Both of these youths took many years to decide to follow in the footsteps of their missionary parents.

In contrast with Ward’s experience, Marshman’s life was altogether turned around by his wife before he left his homeland. Born in Bristol, England, in 1767, Hannah Shepherd became a Baptist long before she met Joshua Marshman. After their marriage, Hannah took him in hand. She urged him to develop proficiency as a schoolteacher and preacher and objected strongly to Joshua’s toying with the idea of their emigrating to North America. Neither was missionary service overseas a calling to which she aspired, but divine providence overruled, and under the auspices of the BMS, they arrived in Bengal in 1799 with their young son, John.

Ever resourceful, Hannah promptly set up a fee-paying boarding school in Serampore for Anglo-Indians. This would provide vital funds for the welfare of the Baptist missionary community by the Hooghly. With her strong character and indefatigable commitment to Christian service, she soon shoul-
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dered extensive responsibilities there. She became a sturdy pillar of support to her own family of six, to William Carey’s turbulent family, to a series of missionary widows, and to many orphans (both native and missionary) over dozens of years. She managed scores of domestic servants from many castes, controlled community expenses, organized and directed elementary schools for native girls, and served as counselor to Bengali and British women. She served industriously for forty-seven years in Bengal and outlasted the first generation of Baptist missionaries, dying at the age of eighty. She was the one who had to pick up the slack in Carey’s domestic affairs. She was the rock that supported missionary widows who felt particularly vulnerable, not least in the face of BMS policy, which disallowed the appointment of women as missionaries. An unsung heroine, she never was appointed or formally recognized by the BMS as one of its missionaries, though she was held in high esteem by all at Serampore and was granted a personal allowance by them. In truth, the Serampore mission hardly could have survived without her ministry and herculean contributions. That is why she came to be known by Baptists in Bengal as the mother of the Serampore Mission.

Hannah was very influential in spurring her menfolk on to be achievers. Her husband’s bosom friend, William Ward, was of the opinion that “in most family things [Joshua was] . . . ruled by his wife.” The redoubtable lady managed to restrain her husband somewhat from his tendency to go to extremes. And their able son John owed his scholarly formation to her—a debt he was to repay to Serampore in ample measure after the 1820s. Unfortunately, however, little was ever recorded of Hannah’s life, since the focus in Christian circles two hundred years ago was predominantly on what male leaders achieved.

**Service at Serampore**

Ward and Marshman proved to be the sort of yokefellows that the forty-year-old Carey (1761–1834) had longed for since he arrived in Bengal. Marshman became a close, lifelong colleague who saw him through to his dying day. About him, Carey wrote in 1800, several weeks after their first meeting: “Bro. Marshman is a man from whom I have great expectations.” He is “a prodigy of diligence and prudence . . .; learning the language is mere play to him; he has already acquired as much as I did in double the time.”

Ward, for his part, was the most accomplished printer-journalist that the BMS accepted for missionary service anywhere during Carey’s lifetime. He became indispensable to the Serampore Mission between 1800 and 1823 as a practical administrator, printing press manager, a cross-cultural trainer, and pastoral counselor. One of William Carey’s closest companions, he produced Serampore’s strategic _Form of Agreement_ in 1805, various missiological documents, and a classic text on Hindu mythology.

Ward’s life was influenced greatly by the decisions that William Carey made for himself. The fact that “the father of the mission” spent so much time away from Serampore every year over three decades is particularly noteworthy in this regard. Carey’s demanding professional duties at the East India Company’s Fort William College, in Calcutta, meant that the burden of mentoring native evangelists plus managing personnel and all sorts of troubleshooting fell largely on others’ shoulders. Ward reflected this arrangement when he wrote in 1805:

> Brother Carey is half his time at Calcutta, and his soul is in translation. He is cut out exactly for sitting doggedly to such an immense work. But he is not cut out for an itinerant, for talking to enquirers, for watching over and regulating 100 little things belonging to a Mission Settlement where there are 20 or 30 native brethren, who must be advised with, admonished, watched tenderly and encouraged in a holy walk. Brother Carey can pursue one thing with the greatest steadiness, industry and patience . . . But he is not cut out for embracing a multiplicity of objects, and regulating a machine which has many important parts and combinations. In many important instances his advice has done much for the Mission, for he is possessed of great prudence. But he is not cut out for seizing on opportunities, pursuing advantages, and pushing on a work with zeal.

Thus a substantial amount of the daily operation and management of the Serampore Mission became Ward’s responsibility.

In the Danish entrepôt, Joshua Marshman developed and administered various educational projects to render the new Baptist mission self-supporting. He managed various sectors of the Serampore mission estate during Carey’s prolonged spells of duty in Calcutta. With an iron constitution and formidable drive, he outlived his comrades and vigorously challenged young missionary recruits to exert themselves in evangelizing India. He became a good friend of Henry Martyn and Christopher Anderson and ended up as a strong defender of British government in India.

A formula struck by Carey sheds important light on Marshman’s personality, as well as on the characters of the other members of the Serampore Trio. In May 1810 Carey wrote to John Ryland:

> Marshman . . . is all eagerness for the work [of making Christ known]. Often I have seen him when we have been walking together, eye a group of persons, exactly as a hawk looks on its prey, and go up to them with a resolution to try the utmost strength of gospel reasons upon them. Often have I known him engage with such ardour in a dispute with men of lax conduct or deistical sentiments, and labour the point with them for hours together without fatigue, nay more eager for the contest when he left off than when he begun [sic], as has filled me with shame. In point of zeal he is a Luther and I am Erasmus.

Such comments suggest that Carey was the “dove” and Joshua Marshman the “hawk” of the Serampore band. Clearly, effusive apologetics was not something that a quiet plodder like Carey was cut out for. Only a rugged individual—a Luther—with an iron constitution could be so insistent, “instant in season and out of season.”

I have explored Carey’s estimation of Marshman’s personality at length elsewhere. Marshman’s tendency to act in ways like Martin Luther became particularly evident whenever the Serampore Mission was challenged to “contend earnestly for the faith.” Marshman came over as a fiery theological debater. Never was that clearer than when the Serampore Baptists felt threatened by Raja Ram Mohun Roy and Abbé J. A. Dubois in India. Again, it was Marshman who became the lightning rod for clashes between the senior and junior Baptist missionaries in the 1810s, and between the BMS and the Serampore Mission in the 1820s. Ward dared to observe as early as 1805: “Bro. Marshman is a most important acquisition and a good help to the Mission . . . in his ardent zeal. But he is too volatile, and has too much quicksilver in him.”

Joshua’s theology and working style had a particularly Puritan slant. Unlike Carey and Ward, he was ever ready to contend in theological, institutional, and political defense of
Baptist mission work in Bengal. Quite possibly, he took to heavy-duty literary skirmishing by default, out of fear that Carey could not be counted on to take a lead in that area—and perhaps could not afford to do so. At times, it seemed to Marshman as if the very future of God’s work at Serampore depended on himself acting as its champion. But the effectiveness of his righteous contention was often questioned by others, including his peers.

In the ways of Providence, defenders of Christian faith are obliged at times to retreat from the public fray for extended periods. Thus both Marshman and Luther spent a significant portion of their lives in seclusion, translating the Word of God into a major contemporary language. Luther produced his German Bible while secluded in the Wartburg (1521–22), while Marshman undertook his cherished project—the translation of the Scriptures into Chinese—in the sanctuary of Serampore, even though it was thousands of miles away from his intended readers! Ever eager to “take all Asia for Christ,” Marshman engaged in the daunting task of translating the Bible into the complex tongue of a country that he never visited, a tongue he himself never spoke well. Fourteen years he devoted to translating The Works of Confinus (1809), producing a dissertation on Chinese phonology (1809) and a Chinese grammar (Clavis Sinica, 1814), and translating the Bible into Chinese. The last-named turned out to be a “white elephant” for a number of reasons that were never spoken. Fourteen years he devoted to translating The Works of Confinus (1809), producing a dissertation on Chinese phonology (1809) and a Chinese grammar (Clavis Sinica, 1814), and translating the Bible into Chinese. The last-named turned out to be a “white elephant” for a number of reasons that were stated quite candidly by his devoted son, John, and by Andrew Fuller and William Ward. In Marshman’s case, enthusiasm, dogged determination, and hard work very much needed to be tempered by judicious, collective decision-making. Perhaps he expected to achieve too much from translating the Bible into a language in which he had never been immersed—in contrast to the experience of his counterpart, Robert Morrison. It was left to William Carey to do for an Asian language something similar to what Luther achieved for German.

But Marshman was valuable, beyond question. The Serampore veterans had much in common in terms of their convictions and mission goals. Needing each other so much in the face of mountains of work and severe opposition, they remained true to each other, regardless of personal differences.
would be avoided as the work passed into the hands of younger men. Whether their manifesto actually achieved this result is open to debate. It was superseded quietly several times between 1807 and 1820. In fact, it never received much publicity in Britain and proved to be much more of a statement of intent than a reflection of actual achievements. With the benefit of hindsight, it might be judged to have been a modest working paper that systematized mission principles for those who would follow in the pioneers’ steps.

Ward is better known for his voluminous A View of the History, Literature, and Mythology of the Hindoos: including a minute description of their manners and customs, and translations from their principal works, which passed through five editions and a number of reprints, under various titles, between 1806 and 1863, in both India and Britain. The immense time and energy he invested in producing and revising this magnum opus reflected the high priority that the Serampore Trio placed on missionaries coming to terms with Indian culture.17

But what did Ward achieve by his Orientalist studies? What did his phenomenal descriptive tomes do to encourage Western emissaries to get under Indian skins and into their confidence? And to what extent was the thinking of new recruits influenced by them as they decided how to approach India’s peoples? These are questions that remain to be explored carefully elsewhere.18

In 1820 Ward and his partners noted that “the Hindoos themselves, amidst very much which is positively evil, have precepts in their books which a Christian would not be dishonoured by observing”; yet they were rather pessimistic about the possibility of making much use of such potential points of contact.19 This tone is apparent in their dispatches back to Britain, in which confrontation in a crusading mode continued to dominate the missionary agenda, in spite of vows to avoid controversial language when preaching the Gospel. This combative nature appears in Ward’s forthright Account of the Writings, Religion, and Manners of the Hindoos (1811), which was “approved by his two elder colleagues” and by some outspoken evangelical Dissenters. But Ward was by no means an undiscriminating iconoclast. Witness the public recommendation he made in 1818 for setting up a museum-like pantheon of Hindu images and sculptured monuments in London, England!20

But 1823 signified the end for Ward. He had just begun forwarding their newly crystallized convictions for the future run­ning of the Serampore Mission. Thus the booklet quickly slipped into oblivion. Nevertheless, similar proposals emphasizing the work of the Holy Spirit and faith in missionary work were brought forward again in Britain decades later, triggering a new era of independent “faith missions.”

Marshman was slower to go to print than was his deceased colleague. Between 1822 and 1825, he wrote some “occasional pieces.” Well known in his day was his missionary riposte, A Defence of the Deity and Atonement of Jesus Christ, in Reply to Ram­mohun Roy of Calcutta (1822). Raja Ram Mohun was an inquiring Hindu intellectual who had several conversations with the Baptist missionaries and then produced a pamphlet entitled The Precepts of Jesus, which Marshman feared would “completely mislead some Indians as to the essence of Christianity.” A heated literary exchange followed. Marshman used the language of conventional Calvinistic theology, stating his case in a fairly systematic, Western manner. Opposing him, Ram Mohun championed “natural theology” and, as if he were a demythologizer, bluntly discarded parts of the New Testament that testified to Christ’s supernatural nature. But the debate went nowhere.

Other works that shed light on Marshman’s theological/mission perspective include his 1822 Reply to “Missionary Incite­ment, and Hindoo Demoralization; including some observations on the political tendency of the means taken to evangelize Hindoosthan” and his 1824 Reply to Abbé J. A. Dubois’s gloomy Letters on the State of Christianity in India. The first “Reply” was to a pamphlet by John Bowen, a former civil servant in India who held that mission promoters had given distorted accounts of the country, its people, and their religions in order to increase support for their mission­ary enterprise. Marshman rebutted Bowen’s accusations force­fully and produced a biblical critique of Hindu idolatry en route. No doubt he was concerned to protect Serampore’s image back in Britain, but again, overanxiety to set the record straight prevented the author from making a constructive contribution to the ad hoc debate. His second “Reply” was to a one-time Catholic missionary, a copy of whose Letters had been sent to Serampore by the distinguished evangelical Anglican Charles Grant, who requested an answer in 1825 “without delay.” Marshman treated this as an urgent matter because Ram Mohun had appealed to the skeptical Letters as incontrovertible evidence against Serampore. Dubois contended that it was worse than futile to try to convert Indians by broadcasting the Holy Scriptures. What stung the Baptists to the quick was the way in which the quality of their translations was ridiculed. This attack seems to have unnerved Marshman, for he ended up producing a vehement broadside that did the Christian cause no credit.

Crisis in the early 1820s triggered off another publication from the private Baptist press at Serampore. Its initial title, Thoughts on Missions to India (1825), was unpretentious; its second edition, though, was more to the point, entitled Thoughts on Propagating Christianity More Effectually Among the Heathen (1827). The booklet is a striking example of pre-Victorian missiological theorizing. First and foremost, it appealed for comprehensive spiritual renewal and organizational restructuring within the BMS. The Thoughts called rather idealistically for the recovery of the disinterested, voluntarist, apostolic, and personalist style of operations that the Trio had enjoyed in part before 1815. In its second edition, it was published along with a sermon cut from the same cloth, entitled “The Christian Spirit which is essential to the triumph of the Kingdom of God.” Its author was the Trio’s bosom friend, Christopher Anderson of Edinburgh, whose theological convictions were very much in line with Ward’s.21 Since Ward had died, Anderson had acted as Serampore’s vital “third man,” even though he never left the British Isles. During 1826 and 1827 he had spent much time in heart-to-heart conversation with Marshman who was then on extended furlough in Scotland. This association led to their joint publication, in which they put forward their newly crystallized convictions for the future running of the Serampore Mission. Thus the Thoughts functioned as a statement of intent and proved to be Serampore’s “swan song.” The booklet quickly slipped into oblivion. Nevertheless, similar proposals emphasizing the work of the Holy Spirit and faith in missionary work were brought forward again in Britain decades later, triggering a new era of independent “faith missions.”

Little else from Joshua Marshman’s pen needs consideration here. Nor is there anything on the literary side to record from Hannah. She was far too busy in her vital support role at Serampore to have time to put pen to paper. For everyone in her hard­pressed mission, writing for publication was a luxury for which it was very difficult to make time.

Mission Legacies

Unlike Carey, Ward was privileged to pay an extended visit to Britain, the continent of Europe, and the United States before death terminated his term of service in India. The purpose of his visit between spring 1819 and May 1821 was twofold: to help him recuperate physically, and to raise funds for the extremely costly
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college that he and his partners had founded recently in Serampore. In both of these objectives, he was successful.

After that two-year furlough in Britain and the United States, Carey and Marshman eagerly welcomed Ward back to Bengal late in 1821. But their relief was tragically short lived. Scarcely a year and a half after his return, and in the prime of life, Ward succumbed abruptly to a virulent form of cholera.23

During the funeral service in Serampore, Marshman lauded his highly esteemed brother for his trusted role as pastor to “the pastors of the infant [Baptist] churches raised up in India.”24 This role, no other at Serampore could ever fulfill. But Ward’s extended furlough in Britain had borne some unexpected fruit for his bereft colleagues. In Edinburgh he had bonded with Christopher Anderson, a Baptist pastor with a warm evangelical-Calvinist heart who was an active promoter of missions far and wide. With theological convictions very much in line with Ward’s, he became the Serampore Trio’s partner, notwithstanding the oceans that separated them from one another. Without his judicious counsel, in the gracious spirit of William Ward, Marshman would have fared far worse in his controversies with the London-based leaders of the BMS. Not for nothing did this loyal Scot call his newborn son William Ward Anderson, on learning of the premature death of his beloved friend.

The weight of responsibilities that had rested on Ward’s shoulders at Serampore were such that, when he passed away,

**After Ward’s untimely death, Carey and Marshman wondered how their enterprise could continue much longer.**

Carey and Marshman wondered how their enterprise could continue much longer. Serampore’s stalwart operations-manager and chief pastoral mentor, and the head of their college’s theology department, was no more.25 He had been the one who had taken the lead in their practical, pioneering reflection on mission in southern Asia, ever since he had started producing annual reports on the state of their mission in 1809.26

So Ward was laid to rest, only to slip from the memory of the Serampore community. 

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**Notes**

2. From the turn of the century, this project was clear to Carey and leaders of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS). In the 1790s the BMS was known as the Particular Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel Amongst the Heathen. The simpler designation, Baptist Missionary Society, was adopted and used from 1800 onward.
5. “Serampore Trio” is the popular, shorthand term used by mission promoters and historians to refer to the close partnership of William Carey, William Ward, and Joshua Marshman, who codirected the Serampore Mission in Bengal between 1800 and 1823.
6. John C. Marshman provided a thought-provoking account of Ward’s early career between 1789 and 1797 in his Life and Times of Carey, Marshman, and Ward, Embracing the History of the Serampore Mission
11. Sunil Kumar Chatterjee, Technically, the term "Serampore Mission" (capital
10. Stuart Piggin, See the selected bibliography on her at the end of this essay.
13. A. Christopher Smith, "British Recruits for Serampore, 1800-1825,
16. The five editions and a number of reprints, under various titles, between 1806
Bibliography--------------------------------­
15. A. Christopher Smith, "Echoes of the Protestant Reformation in
India and America on Returning to Bengal in
19. Thus Joshua Marshman wrote five years later: "The destruction of
Hindooism [and "Boudhism"] . . . is perhaps the greatest work of
mercy which remains for God to accomplish for man” (Joshua
Marshman, Reply to Abbé J. A. Dubois’s Letters . . . [Serampore, 1824],
p. 205-06); Marshman, Thoughts on Missions to India (Serampore,
1825), p. 2.
20. For Ward’s recommendation, see his View of the History, Literature, and
Mythology of the Hindoos (1818), 1:lxii–lxxvii; also the 4th edition
(1822), 1:xxxiii–clxxiv), which suggests that the project idea endured
for several years. See A. Christopher Smith, "Mythology and
Missiology: A Methodological Approach to the Pre-Victorian Mission
75.
21. A. Christopher Smith, “The Edinburgh Connection: Between the
Serampore Mission and Western Missiology,” Missiology: An
Letters (1821), nos. 2, 10, 17–18, 26.
23. Toward the end of his furlough, Ward wrote Farewell Letters to a Few
Friends in Britain and America on Returning to Bengal in 1821. This
small book reflected on the decadence of Hinduism, summoned
Christians to give themselves to world evangelization, focused on a
spirituality of utter commitment, and identified encouraging
missionary successes that had occurred in Bengal. He also wrote
Reflections for Every Day in the Year (1822) while returning to Britain
from America.
24. Joshua Marshman, “Divine Grace the Source of All Human Excellence:
A Sermon Occasioned by the Death of the Late Rev. William Ward,”
Serampore, March 1823, p. 51 (in BMS microfilm reel no. 53).
25. Serampore College included a divinity department but was not
constituted as a divinity college or seminary “for Asiatic Christians.”
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26. As can be seen in the BMS’s Periodical Accounts 4, no. 21 (1810): 97–
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Ward’s History, Literature, and Mythology of the Hindoos went through
five editions and a number of reprints, under various titles, between 1806
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Missionary in India (Hooghly, West Bengal: Sunil Kumar Chatterjee,
1887), and Rachel Voigt’s “Memoir of Mrs. Hannah Marshman’s Earlier
Years” (unpublished manuscript, n.d.) (Voigt was Hannah’s daughter).
The latter manuscript is held in the BMS Archives, Regent’s Park
College, Oxford. Another popular account of her life appears in W. H.

July 1999
The Legacy of Christian Friedrich Schwartz

Robert Eric Frykenberg

Christian Friedrich Schwartz (1726–98) was perhaps the most remarkable missionary of eighteenth-century India. For forty-eight years the influence of this gentle and unassuming forerunner of Anglo-Saxon missionaries reached farther and farther across South India, from Tranquebar (Tharangambadi) southward to Tiruchirapalli (Trichinopoly), to Thanjavur (Tanjore), and to Tirunelveli (Tinnevelly), if not even to Kanyakumari (Cape Comorin) and Travancore. Eloquent in many tongues, he won respect and renown as a preacher, schoolmaster, educational innovator, diplomat, envoy, and statesman, and, finally, as protector-regent and raja-guru to Serfoji, Maharaja of Thanjavur (Tanjore). He, more than any other, together with disciples whom he called “helpers,” strengthened the foundations of Tamil Evangelical Protestant Christianity. That this was done in a time of war, when armed conflicts and conspiracies were rife, when the Raj of the East India Company was spreading its imperial (British) sway over much of the subcontinent, and when opposition to missionary work was implacable makes what he achieved all the more remarkable and deserving of more serious attention from analytic historians than has so far been received.

Son of “Hannah’s” Prayer

Christian Friedrich was born on October 22, 1726, at Sonnenburg, in Neumark, Prussia (now known as Stonsk, near Gorzow, Poland). His father, George Schwartz, was a baker and brewer. His mother, Maria Crunerin, had already lost her first husband (HansSchönemann) and three children, all of whom died young. A daughter, Maria Sophia, had been born three years earlier. Having earnestly prayed for a son, like Hannah of ancient Israel, Maria dedicated her infant boy to Christ and, on her deathbed (sometime before 1731) made her husband and her pastor solemn vows, before the Lord, that the lad would be nurtured and trained for service to God. At the age of eight, on entering grammar school, Christian came under the devout influence and teaching of the local pastor and was confirmed in a pietistic form. At the age of fourteen, he made a profoundly inspired prayer to God that he might be equipped with the tools with which to serve the Lord. At the age of twenty-one, he was invited to preach and did so several times, including Christmas Day in the Chapel Royal of St. James Palace. During his stay in England, he became acquainted with George Whitefield, the spell-binding evangelical preacher of the day. Abroad the East Indiaman, Lynne, in which he left Deal on January 29, 1750, he endured a stormy voyage. He landed in Cuddalore on June 17 and arrived in Tranquebar a few days later.

The Danish trading settlement of Tranquebar was the earliest home of evangelical Christianity in India. Frederick IV of Denmark, inspired by the Enlightenment and by the Pietism of Philipp Jacob Spener (1635–1705), and Heinrich Plütschau (1677–1752). These missionaries, upon their arrival in 1706, had immediately encountered strong opposition. Danish merchants, secretly forewarned and fearing anything that might threaten profits, induced the governor to throw Ziegenbalg into prison (where he languished for four months, from November 19, 1708, to March 26, 1709). Despite such ordeals, the missionaries had proven themselves to be resourceful. After mastering local languages, they had translated Scripture and scientific texts, set up printing presses, established schools, gathered congregations of believing or “confessing” converts, and trained local disciples as pastor-teachers. These Tamil Christian pastor-teachers (catechists), drilled in the latest, most advanced ideas and methods of modern education developed at Halle, had then become harbingers of radical cultural and social change. Francke’s dictum, that every human being in the world—every adult and child, regardless of age or gender—should be equipped with basic literacy and with a grasp of modern science, had revolutionary implications. In 1731 these new-model schools had caught the attention of a captain in the royal guard at the Thanjavur Court. He in turn had been instrumental in bringing one of these schools into that kingdom and in obtaining a royal land-grant for its support. Three Tamil preachers, Aaron, Diago, and Rajanayagam, fully ordained, had also begun to serve local congregations within villages of the kingdom. In Tranquebar, meanwhile, six to eight European (mainly German) missionaries, dozens of local Tamil pastor-teachers, and nearly seventeen hundred believers (exact figures not now confirmable) had formed an institutional base for further expansions of “confessional faith” into the continent. Thus, even before Schwartz’s arrival in India, an evangelical form of Tamil Christianity had already gained a firm foothold in South India.

Plunged into a Land at War

The South India into which Schwartz entered in 1750—indeed, the entire Coromandel Coast as well as the Carnatic interior—

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was embroiled in war. Sepoy forces of the English East India Company under Clive were engaged in campaigns against those of the French Company under Dupleix; the very survival of either or both powers in India was at stake. Devastation suffered by village peoples during such troubles would be a continuing concern to Schwartz throughout his entire career. His reports conveyed heart-rending accounts, horrific details, and insightful social analysis. From his grass-roots vantage, he witnessed the rise of the English Company, from its coastal enclaves and city-states to paramount overlordship in the subcontinent and the Indian Ocean. Danish territories, such as Serampore (Srirampur) and Tranquebar, carefully remained on the sidelines, seeking to stay untouched by such dangerous developments. But Schwartz himself, despite his strong aversion to political affairs, could never fully escape being sucked into this larger tide of events. What eventually prompted involvement was the fact that, before long, most of his own work would lie among peoples in principalities far beyond borders of the Danish settlement at Tranquebar.

At the beginning, however, this was not so. The young Schwartz worked among Tranquebar congregations and schools. Already proficient in European languages (modern, classical, and biblical: German, English, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, etc.), he became fluent in local Indian languages (modern and classical): Tamil, Telugu, Sanskrit, Marathi, Dakhni-Urdu (Southern Hindustani), Persian, and Portuguese (the coastal lingua franca).

With his linguistic skills and engaging manner, Schwartz won the hearts of many nationalities in India: British, German, Portuguese, Maratha, Mughal, Telugu, and Tamil.

His reputation as a gifted schoolmaster grew. He established a school in every local congregation, faithfully following the philosophy and formula developed by Francke in Halle. He and his "helpers" then became responsible for all new mission work south of the Kaveri River. This task involved caring for congregations in Thanjavur, Tiruchirapalli, and Tirunelveli. In 1760 he crossed the Palk Strait and traveled among Tamil villages of Jaffna (Dutch Ceylon, now Sri Lanka).

Two years later, while visiting Tiruchirapalli, Schwartz was implored by Major A. Preston, the local commander, to render assistance. A powder magazine had blown up, killing many soldiers and sepoys. With no military chaplain to bury the dead or comfort the wounded, Preston promised to build a "prayer-school" hall for Tamil Christians if Schwartz would only stay. Two years later, in 1764, when troops were ordered to march and to besiege Madurai, Preston again begged the missionary to act as his military chaplain. What Schwartz did in ministering to sick, wounded, and dying sepoys and soldiers was so appreciated that he was given an award of nine hundred pagedas (gold currency, equivalent to about £360) from the nabob of the Carnatic (the Arcot prince whose palace in Tiruchirapalli was then under company "protection"). These funds were useful for building new schools, including a special "orphan school" for the neglected offspring of the soldiers. After Preston died during a Madurai campaign, his successor, Colonel Wood, also turned to Schwartz for help, offering to construct a larger, proper place of worship. A stone structure, seating fifteen hundred persons, was completed and dedicated on May 18, 1766. Within its large enclosed compound, "Christ Church" schools, both English and Tamil, and a commodious mission house were eventually added.

Thus, as a consequence of extraordinary and unforeseen events, a major shift in Schwartz's career occurred. Much correspondence between authorities in London, Madras, Halle, and Copenhagen passed to and fro before his position could be clarified. The old transnational triangle of collaboration between Halle, London, and Tranquebar would continue, with communication networks, support, and cordiality unchanged, and henceforth Schwartz was to be more formally designated and supported as a special missionary of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK). A year later, in 1768, he also received a formal appointment from the East India Company, gazetting him chaplain for Tiruchirapalli, on a salary of £100 (most of which was plowed into local missionary outreach projects). Schwartz's regular working station, both as a missionary and a chaplain, was to be in Tiruchirapalli.

Missionary, Chaplain, Emissary

In his new assignment, the German missionary from Halle and Tranquebar proved to be singularly effective and successful. His knowledge of languages, with his engaging, caring, and gentle manner, enabled him to relate to many kinds of mercenary soldiers and sepoys: British, German, Portuguese, Maratha, Mughal, Telugu, and Tamil. Consistently cheerful, kind, and self-giving, he won the hearts of officers and troopers alike. At the same time, his missionary activity continued to expand. The "helpers" he had trained went out into towns and villages, two by two, returning to meet with him for self-analysis and prayer. As pastor-teachers, they sought to provide basic literacy for believers in each congregation. Besides meeting these "helpers" each morning and evening, Schwartz also accompanied them on missionary forays to more distant places.

In 1773 war again ravaged the land. The storming of Thanjavur by the nabob's forces brought suffering to many people in that city. Schwartz came to them and began to organize relief efforts. His efforts to help the poor and suffering, Christian and non-Christian alike, brought him recognition, and his fame spread. On more than one occasion, when no grain could be obtained and people were starving, his simple word was sufficient to underwrite loans and stabilize prices. Without such surety, grain would not come onto the market, and food purchases for masses who were dying from famine would not have occurred. When Tulaui, the rajah of Thanjavur, was restored to his throne in 1776, he begged Schwartz to remain permanently. Two years later, Schwartz left his junior colleague, Christian Joseph Pohle, to carry on as missionary and chaplain in Tiruchirapalli and moved to Thanjavur. Among various concerns, the humble prayer-school halls of growing local Tamil Christian congregations, damaged during the wars, needed to be rebuilt. The Rajah, in token of his appreciation, made an endowment for the building of a new and larger stone place of worship. Thereafter, despite travels, Schwartz was to make Thanjavur his permanent abode for the remaining twenty years of his life.

Shortly after this move, Schwartz was summoned by the British authorities to Madras. There he was asked to undertake a secret peace mission. Hyder Ali, ruler of Mysore, had specifically requested that Schwartz be sent. No other emissary was deemed...
more trustworthy. No one could command such trust; and no one could command such fluency of the relevant languages (Urdz, Persian, Marathi, Tamil, and others). No translator or interpreter would be required. Reluctantly, “to prevent a further effusion of blood,” Schwartz agreed to go, but only as long as it was clearly understood that he went only as a missionary and only as an emissary of peace. His journey took eight weeks. Along the way, he and his unarmed entourage took advantage of every opportunity to preach or teach at every place where his palanquin halted. When he finally arrived at Srirangapatnam (Seringapatam), the capital of Mysore, he was ceremoniously received. At meetings, both in public durbar and in private audience, he was accorded courtesy and respect. He then wended his way back to Madras and personally reported his conversations to the governor of Madras, at Fort St. George. He handed over the prize purse of three hundred rupees that Hyder Ali had given him, and when this was then handed back to him, he made it the initial base of an endowment for the establishment of an orphan school in Thanjavur. From neither government, Madras or Mysore, would he allow any personal payment beyond expenses for his travel. He did, however, succeed in securing for Pohle, his successor in Tiruchirapalli, the chaplain’s salary of one hundred pounds per year that he himself had previously received from the company. The words that Schwartz conveyed from Mysore to Madras in his report were never made public, but his personal impressions of Hyder and of this whole episode are to be found in his letters to Europe. He was never convinced that his efforts had done much to avert the war that he saw coming.

Back in Thanjavur, construction of the Gothic stone place of worship was completed on April 16, 1780. This structure, capable of holding five hundred, was named St. Peter’s Church. In the suburb of Vallam, a house and compound were converted into a prayer-school hall and other pukka buildings also began to rise. But again, war interrupted activities. Hyder’s armies broke upon the Carnatic “one-hundred-thousand strong,” destroying Baillie’s brigade near Kanchipuram and sweeping to the gates of Madras itself. Once more Schwartz found his hands full, tending the hungry, sick, wounded, and dying. Hyder Ali commanded that the missionary be allowed to pass among his own troops without molestation. “He is a good man,” he is reported to have remarked, “and means no harm to my government.” When peace negotiations resumed, Schwartz was again called upon to act as a go-between (dubash). Twice more he acted in this capacity, but his efforts were abortive: on the first occasion Tipu Sultan’s pickets stopped him at the border (Hyder Ali having died in 1782); on the second, his legs became so afflicted with boils (“eruptions”) that he could not travel. Colonel William Fullarton, commander of the Madras field force, later wrote: “The integrity of this irreproachable missionary has retrieved the character of Europeans from imputations of general depravity.”

Introducing Modern Education

Schwartz’s most notable achievements, in modern education and in government, still lay before him. His scheme for a modern, state-subsidized “public” system of schools in India began with the rajahs of Thanjavur, Shivaganga, and Ramnad. High schools that he established so impressed the East India Company’s resident at Thanjavur that the company’s directors in London and its government at Fort St. George, in Madras, were persuaded to subsidize them, even though none of these schools lay within company territory. Maratha Brahman youths who would eventually fill uppermost rungs of civil service positions within the entire Madras presidency flocked to these schools. The curriculum, combining biblical and Christian texts with principles and sciences of the Enlightenment, included English literature and European philosophy.

At the same time, Schwartz laid the foundations for what was to become the largest and strongest evangelical Christian community in India. As early as 1769 and 1771, word had come to him that Tamil Christians had settled in Tirunelveli. An affluent Brahmin widow, residing with an English officer at the company’s fort at Palayamkottai (Palamcottah), had appealed to Schwartz for help. In 1778, having come to Tirunelveli to see for himself, he baptized her, christening her “Clarinda.” When Clarinda later made a personal endowment to pay for construction of a proper prayer-school building for the new congregation, Schwartz sent Satyanathan Pillai, one of his most gifted “helpers,” to serve as a permanent resident pastor-teacher. Satyanathan was formally ordained in 1790, after undergoing a rigorous examination in Thanjavur. He was then also formally commissioned as a missionary, the first Tamil evangelical to be so designated. In 1799 Satyanathan joined David Sundaranandam, a local convert and disciple who had come from the lowly Shanar (now Nadar) community, in organizing one of India’s earliest modern “mass movements” of conversion to Christianity. Thou­ sands turned to the new faith and suffered severe persecution for so doing.

Meanwhile, north of Tirunelveli, war continued, bringing further devastation to Thanjavur. This time also, local distresses were aggravated by the rapacious avarice and oppression of the rajah’s servants. The country was left waste, and thousands fled their villages. The company’s resident at the Thanjavur Durbar recommended that Schwartz be put in charge of a special committee of investigation. At Schwartz’s insistence, the rajah dismissed his corrupt officials, and without coercion, a modicum of justice was restored. Once again placing faith in Schwartz’s word, seven thousand people returned and took up the cultivating of their fields. Upon the recommendation of the British resident, Schwartz was appointed royal interpreter (on a salary of £100 a year). When the rapacity of the rajah’s servants again became intolerable, Schwartz drew up a state paper, suggesting how the administration of justice should be thoroughly reformed. As a consequence, he and his “helpers” were asked to assist those in charge of the Courts of Justice.

In 1787, as he lay dying, Tulaji Rajah adopted ten-year-old Serfoji, a cousin, as his heir. At the same time, he turned to Schwartz and begged him to serve as the boy’s guardian. Schwartz hesitated and then declined. But when the company set the boy aside and made Amir Singh rajah in his place, and when Amir Singh’s servants threatened the boy’s life, keeping him in a dark room and refusing to allow for the boy’s care and education, Schwartz made a special appeal to the Madras government. The Madras authorities formally recognized him as the boy’s guardian, but in 1793, when Amir Singh’s servants again made attempts against Serfoji’s life, placing him in a dark room and refusing to allow for the boy’s care and education, Schwartz made a special appeal to the Madras government. The Madras authorities formally recognized him as the boy’s guardian, but in 1793, when Amir Singh’s servants again made attempts against Serfoji’s life, placing him in a special house and surrounding him with armed guards so that the missionary had much difficulty in gaining access to the boy, Schwartz decided to journey to Madras and to make a personal appeal. Such was his concern for the prince’s life that he brought Serfoji with him, along with the three widows of the late rajah. The governor-in-council heeded Schwartz’s appeal. Serfoji’s claim was recognized, and restoration of Serfoji to the throne of Thanjavur was ordered. Thus the succession of the prince whom the deceased rajah had begged Schwartz to protect was finally confirmed.
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**Raju-guru to the New Maharaj**

The new rajah became an enlightened and highly educated young man ruling in his own right, having imbibed much learning from Schwartz, his raju-guru. Indeed, the new and modern palace that he was to construct and dub Saraswati Mahal would contain a Room of Wonders (Wunder Kammer) that, replete with modern library, laboratory, microscopes, and telescopes, boasted the latest in scientific apparatus and instruments. Inspired by the Enlightenment, he became a founding member of the Royal Geographic Society in Britain. By then, the young prince had come to think of the old missionary not only as the protector and regent of his realm but as his personal father and friend. When Schwartz suffered his final illness, he called Serfoji to his side and bestowed a special blessing upon him. He exhorted the prince to rule all his subjects with even-handed justice, to protect his Tamil Christian subjects from persecution, and to submit himself to the grace and mercy of the One and true God, who alone could give him eternal peace.

Schwartz died on February 13, 1798. For the memorial service, Serfoji Maharaj read some deeply heartfelt English verses that he had composed for the occasion. He sent to England for a special monument. This monument, a marble sculpture by Flaxman, rests in Christ Church, in the Small Fort of Thanjavur. It depicts the old man on his deathbed, surrounded by his beloved Tamil “helpers” and holding the maharaja’s hand. In Madras (now known as Chennai), on a huge brass memorial placed in St. Mary’s at Fort St. George by the East India Company, a long and detailed eulogy of tribute (by Bacon) is inscribed. Except for something to his sister’s family, Schwartz left all possessions, with nearly a thousand pounds, for the work to which he had given so many years.

In a world awash in corruption and injustice, both European and Indian, the personal integrity of Schwartz was never questioned. To the very last, he showed indifference to personal power or wealth. “He was,” Heber later wrote, “one of the most active and fearless, as he was one of the most successful, missionaries since the Apostles.” Heber estimated the number of Tamils who came to faith directly because of Schwartz at six thousand. In Tirunelveli many thousands more came to faith in the years just after he died. Young missionaries were told to emulate “that worthy man and labourer in Jesus Christ who established such a reputation of candour, integrity, and disinterestedness among both natives and Europeans, as cannot fail to recommend the cause of Christianity to men of every description who have ever heard his name.” Such words could echo Joseph Jaenicke’s confession: “My connexion with Mr. Schwartz is another proof of [God’s] good providence over me”; or Paezold’s anecdote about overhearing Brahmans at Tiruvallur solemnly declare to Schwartz, “You are a holy man: if all your Christians thought, spoke, and lived as you do, we would, without delay undergo the change and become Christians.” Simple folk ever thronged around their beloved teacher, everyone trying to get nearest to him and be the first to greet him with “O Sir! God be Praised!” Amazingly, few would know about Schwartz two hundred years later.

**Notes**


2. Copies of lecture notes he took while listening to Baumgarten, Michaelis, and Freylinghausen were long preserved by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge in London.

3. Circumstances of collaboration between Copenhagen, London, and Halle are not entirely clear. The king of Denmark and Queen Anne of England were (Hanoverian) cousins. Francke’s former student Anton Wilhelm Boehme served as a link between them and between Francke and the newly formed SPCK.

4. These are found mostly in his letters to authorities of the Waisenhaus (orphanage) in Halle and of the SPCK in London, later printed in the famous “Halle Reports.”


**Sources for Study of Christian Friedrich Schwartz**

**Printed Sources and Secondary Works**


Fullarton, [Col.] William. A View of the English Interest in India; and an Account of the Military Operations in the Southern Part of the Peninsular During the Campaigns of 1782, 1783, & 1784: In Two Letters. London, 1787. [SOAS Library: EB.78.60.]


Book Reviews

In Our Own Languages: The Story of Bible Translation in Sudan.

Land of Promise: Church Growth in a Sudan at War.

Seeking an Open Society: Interfaith Relations and Dialogue in Sudan Today.


Gateway to the Heart of Africa: Mission Pioneers in Sudan.

Announcing the Light: Sudanese Witnesses to the Gospel.

Sudan, the largest country in Africa, has been involved in civil strife for over forty years. This conflict is sometimes referred to as the silent crisis because so little is known of the conflict and the suffering of the people. This series of six booklets begins to break the silence of the very dynamic church in Sudan and the conditions that shape and form its existence. Andrew Wheeler and William Anderson, editors of the series, have more than sixty years of mission work experience in Sudan and East Africa with the Church Missionary Society and the Presbyterian Church (USA), respectively.

The editors have chosen to call upon a series of writers to share their viewpoints as a method to approach church growth, the struggle with diversity, Bible translation, church history, and personal witness in Sudan. This approach does not lead to a tight, definitive thesis for each subject but does call upon the reader to recognize the dynamic and fluid context within Sudan, where the church is experiencing phenomenal growth and a strong sense of unity. "Whilst we are aware that there is rapid growth, the scale and the reasons for this growth are little understood, and neither has much consideration been given to the significance of this for the future of Sudan, and for the future of the African Church as a whole. These papers do not pretend to answer these important questions, but each opens a special and vivid window on the experience of the Sudanese Church at the present time. Each gives us a particular insight into how contemporary Sudanese are hearing the Gospel, within their own languages and cultures, and responding within the harrowing personal and social conditions of a nation that has been at war with itself for 40 years" (Land of Promise, p. 7).

Janet Persson, in In Our Own Languages, provides an excellent historical survey of Sudanese Bible translation in both Catholic and Protestant traditions. In Land of Promise the differing realities of several ethnic groups point to the variety of experiences in the people becoming Christian in Sudan. This methodology gives an overview but does not provide the reader with a comprehensive survey of the growth of the church. Wide-ranging topics like pluralism in Africa, a Sudanese family’s unique pilgrimage of faith, and Muslim-Christian women’s dialogue in Seeking an Open Society invite the reader to savor the diversity of Sudan. As a follow-up to Seeking an Open Society, the next booklet—Struggling to Be Heard—shows the role of Christians in the Sudanese independence movement and their evolving conflict with Sudanese politicians. Gateway to the Heart of Africa is the story of the contributions by Western missionary leaders, which provided a foundation for today’s Sudanese church.

"These booklets challenge the reader to think about the rich and dynamic experience of the different faith communities in Sudan and how the rapidly growing church fits into Sudanese society. The ideas presented not only tell a story that needs to be told but also invite critical thinking by all who live in today’s increasingly diverse global village."

J. Roger Schrock


In this collection of essays, Charles Van Engen ably demonstrates what a “professor of the biblical theology of mission” (his Fuller Seminary School of World Mission chair) does. He surveys, in seven sections of two chapters each, the interactions between missiology and major controversial theological issues: biblical interpretation, contextualization, ecclesiology, pluralism, modernity/postmodernity, ministerial formation, and the “evangelical/conciliar” debate. With impressive bibliographic resources, balanced conversation with diverse voices, and articulate evangelical conviction, he moves out of the trenches that characterize much of the discussion to date into constructive proposals that merit attention and development. His skill as a teacher is always evident in his useful overviews and his lucid explanation of complex contents. At key points, he expounds important biblical passages, unfolding stimulating aspects of a “missional hermeneutic.”

Eleven of the chapters have appeared elsewhere, including one chapter from the author’s very useful teaching volume God’s Missionary People (1991). He defines the trajectories of a theology of mission...
that is rooted in the tension of the “already/not yet” character of the inbreaking reign of God. There is remarkable coherence in this collected-essay format, given Van Engen’s clear commitments to Christocentric faith, the vocation of the church to demonstrate God’s love in Christ, and the essential focus upon hope in God’s fulfillment of the begun work of salvation. The new materials, especially his survey of the importance of narrative theology for mission interpretation of the Bible, are provocative introductions to complex contemporary discussions. His inadequate treatment of the history of Western university education (pp. 423ff.) is the only problem of any importance.

Both the bibliography and the index enhance the scholarly and the classroom usefulness of the book. It will work well both as a textbook and as a discussion-starter with colleagues who are not used to engaging their disciplines from missional perspectives.

—Darrell L. Guder

Darrell L. Guder is the Peachtree Professor of Evangelism and Church Growth at Columbia Theological Seminary (Decatur, Georgia) and serves as the Secretary-Treasurer of the American Society of Missiology.


This is a short book of five chapters, pared down from a longer doctoral dissertation of several years ago at the University of Michigan. It is an improvement over the dissertation but is still of only marginal utility in its analysis of missionary educational institutions in China. The author has done a respectable amount of work in U.S. archives, notably the Yale Divinity School, the Presbyterian and Methodist archives, Lutheran materials in St. Paul, Minnesota, and some rich collections of papers at the University of Oregon. These are for the most part known to other scholars. Her writing style is quite good, and the book has a smooth flow to it. Citations are competently and clearly executed. Nevertheless, her inability to use Chinese sources is a handicap, and her overall hypothesis is so spottily developed that it is not very convincing.

Graham’s claim is that the goal of American missionaries in China from the mid-nineteenth century onward was twofold: to convert the Chinese to Christianity, and to alter their gender roles in society. The latter was just as important as the former, and schools were to be its primary means of achievement. I remain unconvinced that altering gender patterns was quite as high on missionaries’ priority list as Graham claims, though it can certainly be seen in some of the materials she cites. Moreover, her focus on gender roles in the schools is swamped by her general narrative and analysis of developments in education in the period 1900–1930. This was a lively period, and students and schools, including mission schools, played an important role in Chinese history at this time. But we have several good works by China scholars on various aspects of this period, and this slim volume, although it has a few insights, adds too little to what we already know to have justified publishing it as a book.

—Daniel H. Bays

Daniel H. Bays is Professor of Modern Chinese History and Chairman of the History Department at the University of Kansas, Lawrence. He is editor of Christianity in China, from the Eighteenth Century to the Present (Stanford Univ. Press, 1996).

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The literature on African Christianity has grown significantly in recent years. This while others suffer from relative neglect. The literature tends to be abundant for some aspects of Christian realities in Africa, while others suffer from relative neglect. Evangelicalism in Africa has not enjoyed the kind of focused scholarly and missiological attention devoted to Christian groups like the African Instituted Churches (AICs). Christina Maria Breman’s sustained analysis of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA) is a significant contribution toward filling that gap.

Breman is a Dutch missiologist. She served with the Africa Inland Mission in Tanzania at Nasa Theological College from 1987 to 1989, when she had to return to the Netherlands for health reasons. This forced return home eventually launched her into doctoral studies. She chose to do her research on the Association of Evangelicals in Africa out of interest and because it gave her “the opportunity to keep in touch with Africa” (p. xix). The present book, a dissertation written for Utrecht University, is a sympathetic but not uncritical study of the continent-wide organization uniting evangelicals in Africa. The author has attempted a comprehensive overview of the organization. In so doing, she has chosen breadth over depth. That may be the reason why, in the foreword, Tokunbo Adeyemo, AEA general secretary, observes the lack of attention to “AEA’s holistic ministry” in Breman’s book (p. xviii).

Adeyemo nevertheless commends Breman for writing the “best single library on the AEA” (p. xviii). The reader of this library will discover many surprises, including a range of opinions on the definition of “evangelical” (pp. 21–33); a cautious change of attitude in the AEA toward the All Africa Conference of Churches (pp. 343–67); and a decreased American influence on this evangelical organization in Africa (p. 436).

Breman’s book is an important and timely corrective to the many erroneous ideas about the Association of Evangelicals in Africa. It is not the definitive work on any of the topics treated. One hopes, though, that she has paved the way for African scholars to take up the challenge and produce monographs on the various aspects of evangelicalism in Africa.

—Tite Tiéno

1999–2000 Senior Mission Scholars

OMSC welcomes into residence for the fall 1999 semester Senior Mission Scholars David A. Kerr and J. Dudley Woodberry. Beginning his career in the Middle East, Dr. Kerr is known for his expertise in the area of Christian-Muslim relations. He has taught at Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham, the Duncan Black Macdonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations at Hartford Seminary, Connecticut, and now at Edinburgh University, where he directs the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World. Dr. Woodberry is the retiring Dean and Professor of Islamic Studies, School of World Mission, Fuller Seminary, Pasadena, California. Ordained in the Presbyterian Church (USA), for several years he pastored churches in Kabul, Afghanistan, and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. He is editor of Muslims and Christians on the Emmaus Road (1989).

In the spring semester of 2000 OMSC’s Senior Mission Scholars will be Samuel Wilson and T. Jack Thompson. Dr. Wilson is Professor of Missions and Evangelism, Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry, Ambridge, Pennsylvania. He served for a number of years as a missionary with the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Peru, and then directed the MARC division of World Vision International, where he worked alongside Dr. Raymond Bakke in organizing evangelism and church planting workshops around the world in major urban settings. Dr. Thompson is seconded by the Presbyterian Church of Ireland to the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World, Edinburgh, where he is Lecturer in Mission Studies. A former missionary in Malawi, he is the author of Christianity in Northern Malawi: Donald Fraser’s Missionary Methods and Ngoni Culture (1995).

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.

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Tite Tiéno is Professor of Theology of Mission at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. A citizen of Burkina Faso, he has had extensive experience in theological education in Africa and the United States.
Mission Today: Challenges and Concerns.


Abraham Athyal, in his introduction, emphasizes that in the contemporary Indian context "mission has emerged as a top priority for the Indian Church" with "a genuine enthusiasm and a sense of urgency" (p. 1), but such "enthusiasm for mission without proper theological orientation can be self-defeating" (p. 2).

Some of the essays, such as those by K. C. Abraham, Bishop Victor Premasagar, and Jesudas Athyal, are provocative and provide a comprehensive summary and synthesis of their topics. Others, however, are not of such a high standard. It would be helpful if the contributors writing, for instance, the chapter "The Multi-Faith Context" were sufficiently involved with adherents of other faiths, which is not the case here.

Again, nowhere has the book attempted to clarify the very concept of mission, in view of the fundamental paradigm shift that has taken place in mission after 1910 and the contemporary search for a new paradigm. The book is also lacking in its emphasis on the mission of the "laity," as well as in its perspective of the Dalits and the kingdom of God. Despite its subtitle, "Challenges and Concerns," the book does not seem to have taken any cognizance of certain foreseeable challenges, like those of the poor, culture, Islam, the ecological crisis, and youth.

When everything is said and done, I would still maintain that the book has gone a long way in explaining "the basic challenges and concerns relating to mission in the changing context of India" (p. 1). This is the first publication of the new department of Mission, Ecumenism, and Dialogue of the Gurukul Lutheran Theological College, and it has made a notable contribution.

—Regunta Yesurathnam

Regunta Yesurathnam, an ordained minister of the Church of South India, is Professor of Theology and Ethics at the Andhra Christian Theological College, Hyderabad, India.

The Agitated Mind of God: The Theology of Kosuke Koyama.


Dale Irvin, professor at New York Theological Seminary, and Akintunde Akinade, a Nigerian now teaching at High Point University in North Carolina, have brought together a fitting tribute to the remarkable Japanese theologian Kosuke Koyama. Koyama might take issue with some of the ideas his theology has spawned, but his influence is evident in every essay.

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The Diffusion of Religions: A Sociological Perspective.


Robert Montgomery is both minister and sociologist. It was the latter occupation that shaped this book, motivating Montgomery to look for historical patterns that reveal how religious beliefs and practices move through space and time. His thesis: Whether a new religion is opposed, adopted but altered, or absorbed more or less intact is determined by historical context and intergroup relations as much by the intentions of the senders as the culture of the receivers. The "intergroup relations" rubric subsumes such diversity as the method of religious transmission (by force or not); the degree of hostility between senders and receivers; the threat of other outside forces; the stability of the indigenous moral order; social divisions among various targeted groups, the ability of those groups to resist new beliefs, and their efforts to sustain their ethnic identity; and the role of the state in its quest for power and legitimacy.

Armed with these concepts, Montgomery scoured the histories of Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam, looking for events that tested his theory, a prodigious undertaking that arrived at a parsimonious central conclusion (p. 152), namely, that "the spread of religion is not well served by force, domination, or threat and . . . domination in religion produces overt or covert resistance." Montgomery calls his analysis "comprehensive, not necessarily thorough" (p. 149). "Selective" also describes it because the undertaking is simply too broad for one slim volume to contain.

As introduction to the topic and as argument for a social science point of view, the book rewards a careful perusal, but the reader is warned that the analysis resembles a microfilm spooling at high speed. Narrowing the scope and historical sweep would have diminished the project, but it would have given the reader more opportunity to evaluate the evidence and engage the explanations in a more satisfying way.

—Jon Miller

Jon Miller is Professor of Sociology at the University of Southern California. He has written a sociological case history of the Basel Mission and is presently involved in comparative historical research on the religious, political, and economic context of the nineteenth-century evangelical missionary movement.


This is one book that I found difficult to put down! In seventeen chapters, Nathan Hege, who spent twenty-four years as a missionary in Ethiopia, relates the extraordinary account of the Meserete Kristos Church (MKC, literally, Christ the Foundation). Sensitively setting the MKC story within the immediate context of the Marxist revolution as well as within the larger framework of Ethiopia’s long association with Orthodox Christianity, Hege writes with simplicity, clarity, and candor.

This is the story of a small church, a fledging in the larger scheme of ecclesiastical histories, begotten of the imperfect efforts of another, somewhat comically culture-bound small church—the Lancaster Mennonite Conference, whose conspicuously ordinary missionaries entered Ethiopia in 1948. Slow was their progress, and meager their results. Nevertheless, by 1982, the year in which it was declared illegal by the government, the MKC numbered approximately 5,000 members in fourteen congregations.

In 1977 all churches were subject to monitoring by the three-year-old Marxist government. Forced to go underground in 1982, the MKC reorganized, with women often playing the key role in establishing, sustaining, and overseeing the network of house churches. By the time its official legal status had been reinstated in 1992, MKC membership had increased tenfold, and today exceeds 114,000 members organized into 175 “charismatic” congregations. While many MKC congregations cannot afford the luxury of a paid pastor, together they have commissioned some 140 indigenous missionaries (evangelists) to proclaim the Gospel in other parts of Ethiopia.

The book’s value is enhanced by the inclusion of a map “Regions of the Meserete Kristos Church,” a chronological table of historical highlights, a chronological list of Meserete Kristos executive members (1962–97) and executive secretaries (1965–98), an alphabetical register of all Mennonite Relief Commission, Mennonite Central Committee, and Eastern Mennonite Mission workers who have served in Ethiopia, a glossary and abbreviations table, and an index.

—Jonathan Bonk

A Broader Vision: Perspectives on the Buddha and the Christ.


This is a carefully written attempt to juxtapose Buddhism and Christianity with regard to a number of shared features. The author is outstandingly well versed in the originals of the languages involved. He highly praises the work and thinking of Edgar Cayce as well as praising Rudolph Steiner in some respects. It is important for us to remember that there are a large number of people in the United States and Europe who are deeply influenced by the Western esoteric tradition. Drummond,
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with his knowledge of writings from Plato, Plotinus, and onward to the anthroposophists, will certainly appeal to them. It seems as if Drummond expects Christians to be his main audience, and his study of Buddhism has helped him to diagnose some of the darts sticking in Christianity's throat. Perhaps Christianity has interpreted its mission too narrowly. When we look at the price it paid to try to permeate the whole life of the Greco-Roman empires, the United States, Britain, and other places, one sometimes feels the cost to Christianity may have been too great. Drummond calls us to think more deeply, more broadly, lest we find the new Israel becoming like the old Israel in its exclusiveness and its preliminary demands.

—Noel Q. King

Noel Q. King is professor emeritus of History and Comparative Religion, University of California at Santa Cruz. An Anglo-Indian, he was born and raised in Pakistan. He served for twelve years in universities in Ghana and Uganda.


This small book presents an "intercultural history" of the American YMCA's first attempts to establish associations in Asia as part of its mission to the world's youth at the end of the nineteenth century. In Japan, the author argues, the Y failed to overcome the barrier of nationalism, and "Japanese YMCA Christians—fiercely demonstrating their independence from American YMCA missionaries—eventually pushed the American YMCA missionary movement into a tailspin from which it never recovered" (p. 11). Davidann, who teaches history at Hawaii Pacific University, revised his University of Minnesota doctoral dissertation to produce this interesting study, which incorporates both Japanese and American archival materials.

Beginning with the domestic background to the American Y's expansion, the narrative covers the origins of the Japanese YMCA and the important developments to 1930. The author views the American Y "missionaries" as an integral part of Protestantism's reaction to liberal theology in the late nineteenth century. He maintains that young men joined the Y and went overseas to save fundamentalism at home as well as abroad. Because this enterprise of American nationalism was a form of cultural imperialism, it was doomed to fail in Japan, where nationalism was also on the rise. Although Japanese from the former samurai class first believed that Christianity and the YMCA could provide a path for their country's modernization, the American Y missionaries' refusal to abandon fundamentalism resulted in the "crisis" of American withdrawal from Japan in the 1930s.

Davidann's account provides stimulating reading but ultimately raises many unanswered questions. The insistent use of the term "YMCA missionary" instead of "secretary" needs clarification, as the YMCA was neither a church nor a denominational organization to which unbelievers could convert. The portrayal of the Y as evangelical and fundamentalist also seems inconsistent with the association's social-service emphasis after the turn of the century. Like other authors in this field, the concept of cultural imperialism is an important part of the thesis, but no attempt is made to define or explain what this means. In the end, the reader is left wondering why the American YMCA was such a failure if so many Japanese joined the Y and made it an indigenous social institution capable of expansion onto the Asian continent in Korea and Manchuria.

—Charles A. Keller

Charles A. Keller is assistant professor of History and coordinator for Asian Studies at Marietta College, Marietta, Ohio.

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<td>How to Develop Church and Mission Archives.</td>
<td>Yale Divinity School archivist helps missionaries and church leaders identify and preserve essential records. Mon. 2:00 p.m.– Wed. 4:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Sept. 16–18</td>
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