Book Reviews

Good Citizens: British Missionaries and Imperial States, 1870 to 1918.


Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth-Century England.


These two books address important and clearly distinctive aspects of British missions in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. James Greenlee and Charles Johnston seek to explain how policy makers in British missionary societies responded to the European power politics that limited or forestalled evangelical expansion overseas after 1870. Susan Thorne attempts to demonstrate that missions produced and mediated a new dichotomy between race and class in late Victorian Britain.

While the discussions of these two books are sometimes complementary, the authors generally work at cross-purposes, exposing the roots of contentious debates that have spread in recent years from the interdisciplinary field of imperial studies into the field of missionology. These debates focus upon methods of textual analysis and the definition of “politics” as a historical category. Greenlee and Johnston choose to ask traditional political questions about institutional policies and then draw upon archival sources to reveal the objectives of policy makers and the circumstances that ultimately determined policy options, (pp. xi–xii). Significantly, this traditional political perspective excludes women, who rarely occupied positions as policy makers in missionary societies. Moreover, the authors assert that gender “had little impact on whatever passed for the official missionary mind as it confronted expansive imperial states around the globe” (p. xiii), a claim that is arguably difficult to reconcile with their acknowledgment that women composed about half of the field force of most missionary organizations at the turn of the century (p. 263). By contrast, Thorne undertakes a discursive interpretation of archival sources, arguing that missionary propaganda and organizations reflect Britain’s own social tensions based upon class and gender oppression (p. 98). In examining these issues, Thorne illuminates the grassroots organizations that supported British missions, as well as the seldom-studied relations between British missions overseas and at home.

There is common ground to be found in these books. Each focuses primarily upon England, and there is a shared emphasis upon Congregationalists. Thorne dwells exclusively upon the London Missionary Society (LMS), which was an eminently Congregational mission, even though it was officially nondenominational. Greenlee and Johnston survey the policies of several missions, but they highlight the LMS and particularly the Reverend Ralph Thompson. Both books successfully represent the factional nature of British imperialism and, more specifically, the British missionary movement.

Unfortunately, the disjointed structures of imperial regimes and missions are replicated in the weak organization of both of these studies. They do not, furthermore, address theology in any depth, overlooking the specific religious principles that prompted thousands of British men and women to undertake or support missionary work. While the authors have chosen to distance themselves from theological discussions in order to augment and, in the case of Thorne, critique the main body of missionary scholarship, these books would have been enhanced by the integration of theology into their analyses of politics and economics. For relevant examples of such integrative approaches to theology, see David Bebbington’s Nonconformist Conscience (London, 1982) or G. R. Searle’s Morality and the Market in Victorian Britain (Oxford, 1998).

Kevin Grant is an Assistant Professor in the History Department, Hamilton College, Clinton, New York.


Not to be pigeonholed as an institutional history, this volume is a multi-layered essay on the relationships of mission, Western empires, and American, African, and Asian Christianity. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts was established by royal charter in 1699 to maintain and extend the Anglican Church in the English colonies. American independence and the development of the British Empire in the nineteenth century transformed it into a missionary society in the modern sense, but always with a particular consciousness of the church’s established and official character. Its charter status underlined this. The
society's ethos was usually that of High Church Anglicanism, and Anglican evangelicals tended to support the more voluntarist Church Missionary Society, often with different missiological and ecclesiological emphases. Further, the Anglican Church was the established church only of England, not of Great Britain, the imperial power. After World War II came decolonization and other revolutionary changes, and new eccumenical developments. A worldwide Anglican communion emerged in which the Church of England was dwarfed by churches arising from its mission work.

While C. F. Pascoe's century-old history of the SPG was almost unreadable, no one will say that of this volume. Almost half of Daniel O'Connor's masterly account is a thought-provoking study of the vital period since 1947. The forty pages on the eighteenth century establish that the society's work with Native Americans and African slaves was more significant than some of us thought. Throughout the cultural, political, and theological context is considered. We see, for instance, how a society historically aligned with imperial thinking could produce the most vocally anti-imperial missionaries—Roland Allen, C. F. Andrews, A. S. Cripps.

After O'Connor's outline come fourteen detailed essays by coauthors who examine critical issues from each of the three centuries, and developments in North America, Barbados, East, West and South Africa, India, Melanesia, and Australia. This is not a book to be left to Anglicans. Anyone seriously interested in the missionary movement from the West should explore it.

—Andrew F. Walls

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This book is the doctoral thesis of a South Indian historian on the faculty of the Tamilnadu Theological Seminary. It appears to have been published unedited, which would explain its repetitiveness and heavy academic style. This is a pity, because the results of the author's research are both original and fascinating in their conclusions, and the notes and bibliography reveal the enormous range of material consulted.

Jeyakumar shows how the British cunningly developed the use of memoranda aimed at restricting the activities of foreign nationals employed by mission agencies, whom they feared might work for Germany. These same memoranda became the instrument used to regulate the activities of missionaries who were involving themselves in the national struggle associated with the Congress Party and Gandhi in the 1920s and 1930s. Missionaries were required to show active support of the British government if they were to be allowed to remain in India. Jeyakumar also shows how the British attempted at times to hold missionaries and mission agencies responsible for the political attitudes and actions of those Indians employed by them.

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**Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions**

Edited by Gerald H. Anderson

The worldwide impact of Christianity is a direct result of people who have played key roles in the missionary enterprise. This unique reference work documents the global history of Christian missions with biographical articles on the most outstanding missionaries from the past 2,000 years.

Written by 350 experts from 45 countries, the Biographical Dictionary contains more than 2,400 original, signed biographies that portray leading missionary figures from Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Protestant, Pentecostal, independent, and indigenous churches. Arranged in a convenient A–Z format, the articles provide biographical information for each missionary covered as well as discussion of their writings, public achievements, and contributions to contemporary mission issues.

"An outstanding reference work... Broadly conceived and well executed, it makes a significant contribution to the study of Christian mission and the history of religions."

— Religious Studies Review

"Here is a veritable treasure trove of missions history... Every library in the English-speaking world with a credible claim to offering general facilities for historical research ought to have this volume... It has set a new standard."

— Evangelical Missions Quarterly

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Jeyakumar recounts the stories of a small but significant number of missionaries who took courageous positions and stood beside Tamil Christians who were prepared to speak up on national questions. He identifies 103 such Tamils in the *Who Is Who of Freedom Fighters* of Tamilnadu. In his conclusion the author also shows how regulations similar to these memoranda have been used by the government of independent India to restrict the activities of missionaries wishing to enter India. The difference is that these regulations now apply to the British, who were exempt from the earlier memoranda. He ends by challenging others to a further study of how Indian Christians have behaved toward the state since 1947, particularly in the period of the Indira Gandhi emergency. Such a study would add further evidence to what is found in this book, namely, that not all Indian Christians have been apolitical as has often been thought.

—Andrew Wingate

Andrew Wingate is Principal, United College of the Ascension, Birmingham, England.

### Relevant Patterns of Christian Witness in India: People as Agents of Mission.


This book is the product of a nationwide study on the crucial issue of Christian witness in a pluralistic context. The material comes out of twenty consultations and workshops, for which Athyal was the coordinator. *Relevant Patterns* is a peculiar volume in that Athyal is named as editor, but none of the contributors are named. The project was initiated by the Thiruvalla Ecumenical Charitable Trust, founded by M. M. Thomas; it was jointly sponsored by the National Christian Council of India, the Christian Conference of Asia, and others. The workshops produced sixty-six papers and five consolidated reports, now reflected in this volume.

*Relevant Patterns* provides social analysis of the national and regional contexts, offers a rereading of history from a liberation perspective, and weaves ecological responsibility into missionization. In the introduction a claim is made that the study has evolved “from the crucial mission issue of Christian witness in the pluralistic context of India.” But nowhere in the course of the study is the nature of the “pluralistic context” explained. More work needs to be done here with special reference to cultural pluralism, religious pluralism, and ideological pluralism.

The material focuses primarily on mission to the Dalits rather than mission to high-caste Hindus and the Muslims. There seems also to be an implicit assumption that the church is in mission because of the Great Commission, when in fact the Great Commission and the Great Command-ment only serve as constant reminders of the missionary nature and calling of the church. The contributions fail to adequately reflect the paradigm shift in mission from kingdom to koinonia. This is unfortunate, since with its emphasis on “identity in community,” koinonia is a much-needed paradigm in today’s context of oppression and fragmentation. Finally, the book suffers from both an overly severe criticism of church traditionalism and institutionalism and an insufficiently qualified eulogizing of missionaries and their work in the colonial era.

—Regunta Yesurathnam

Regunta Yesurathnam is an ordained minister of the Church of South India and Professor of Theology and Dean for External Studies at the Andhra Christian Theological College, Hyderabad, India.
The Lutherans in Mission: Essays in Honor of Won Yong Ji.


This second volume in the Lutheran Society for Missiology Book Series is a tribute to Won Yong Ji, since 1979 professor of systematic theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and founding editor of the society’s journal, Missio Apostolica. While the editor calls the volume a Festschrift, it actually is a collection of previously published essays that, a note on the back cover informs us, Professor Ji “has found most helpful in teaching and promoting discussion of the mission of the church.” As such, one could imagine the volume serving as the reading list for one of Ji’s courses. The three papers in part 1, “Martin Luther and Mission,” argue that there is a theology of mission implicit in Luther’s writings. Part 2, “The Lutherans and Mission,” provides a historical context for understanding missions from the perspective of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod. Part 3, “Theology and Mission,” presents the biblical and theological basis for missions, with particular emphasis on identifying a uniquely Lutheran missiology. Finally, part 4, “Mission and Ministry in Action,” includes papers that present a broad, ecumenical perspective for understanding contemporary missiological thought and practice.

As a Festschrift, the volume would have benefited from more information about the honoree, such as a vita and bibliography of his work, as well as more information about the various authors. As an anthology of previously published works, the volume will have limited appeal beyond the audience for which it was compiled—the schools and congregations of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod.

Paul F. Stuehrenberg is Librarian, Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Connecticut.

Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity, and Belief


This book has won awards from the American Comparative Literature Association, the Modern Languages Association, and the Association for Asian Studies. It is thus an important book, but it is not easy reading.

Gauri Vishwanathan, professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia University, brings to the study of conversion a perspective very different from those one normally encounters. Viewing conversion as one of the most “destabilizing activities” and “unsettling political events in the life of a society” (pp. xi, xvi), she sets her case studies within national, colonial, and even global contexts rather than the merely local. In doing so, Vishwanathan challenges what she calls a missionary-oriented focus that “prevails overwhelmingly in the existing anthropological and historical literature on conversions which is primarily concerned with how conversion takes place, whether or not they are successful, and what further kinds of changes were triggered in the culture by ways of a chain reaction from the original ‘transformation.’” (p. 42) Instead, she looks at the ways in which conversion exposes contradictions in prevailing national and cultural ideologies, civil law, official schema, systems of religious belief, and...

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comes across. Conversion of individuals and of groups is an act of cultural criticism. Whether her approach can be applied to less famous and well-documented cases or not, she offers an important supplement to the missionary-oriented focus.

—John C. B. Webster

John C. B. Webster is a historian and diaconal worker of the Worldwide Ministries Division of the Presbyterian Church (USA). He has spent many years studying and living in India.


Religion is a significant factor in violent conflicts, but the religious situation in many countries is increasingly complex. These books face the questions raised by such developments.

Copeland is a Southern Baptist professor of Christian mission who served as a missionary in Japan. He intends "to demonstrate that one can affirm the Christian mission internationally and interculturally without diminishing either the importance of good interreligious relationships or the recognition of the worth of the major religions" (p. vii). Copeland addresses the subject of interreligious relations in broad strokes, but he provides a good survey of the issues and an introduction to the key theologians who have addressed them.

He helpfully identifies fourteen questions and offers a brief statement of his own response to each one, but readers seeking a persuasive case for a perspective on the issues will need to read further in the bibliography that is provided.

Copeland suggests the following categories for the various perspectives on the religions, but he does not consider them mutually exclusive: negativism, dialecticism, confessionalism, Christocentric pluralism, theocentric pluralism, soteriocentric pluralism, paradoxical pluralism, nonrelativistic pluralism, and preeschatological agnosticism. Copeland himself is sympathetic to the nonrelativistic pluralism of Jacques Dupuis but is most positive to proposals in the dialectical, confessional, and preeschatological categories. His critique primarily indicates the inadequacy of negativism at one pole and relativistic forms of pluralism at the other.

Copeland helpfully offers a rationale for Christian mission and describes the spirit in which it should be conducted. His proposal regarding the manner in which Christians should relate to other religions through dialogue and cooperation is particularly worthwhile.

Ramachandra’s focus is more narrow and his proposal more groundbreaking, even iconoclastic, in his analysis of common assumptions regarding the conflict between faiths. He is regional secretary for the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students and lives in Sri Lanka.
Lanka, site of serious conflict. He critiques both the West's perception of Islam and the rhetoric of Islamic movements and offers a way forward for peaceful relationships between Christians and Muslims.

Whereas Islam is frequently viewed by the West as involving unavoidable conflict, Hinduism is assumed to be tolerant and pluralistic, but Ramachandra presents a quite different picture, arguing that fruitful dialogue requires a more accurate understanding of the situation. Given that both Muslims and Hindus have had a significant interest in Jesus, Ramachandra offers a portrait of this enigmatic figure in his Jewish context with a clear testimony to his uniqueness as divine. But this story does not cancel all other stories of the divine-human encounter. Rather, it "enables us to discern signs of God's new order, inaugurated in Jesus, in all human struggles against fear, greed, violence, sickness, oppression and injustice" (p. 117).

Ramachandra's general proposal for a way forward in the quest for interreligious harmony is what he calls "constitutional secularism," as distinguished from social or cultural secularism (p. 147). It is a strictly political use of the term to describe the efforts of the state to deal impartially with all the religious communities within it, while not assuming either official atheism or relativism in regard to the truth claims of religions. Here, as elsewhere in the book, Ramachandra's analysis is provocative but generally persuasive.

Taken together, these two books offer hope that religion need not be an inevitable source of conflict. They present a call to Christians to live graciously among adherents of the various religions of the world with an openness to what God is doing even in the midst of the religions.

—Terrance Tiessen

**What Is Mission? Theological Explorations.**


Author of numerous books on mission, Andrew Kirk is dean and head of the School of Mission and World Christianity at Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham, England. Kirk explains his purpose as "an attempt to present the crucial material on theology of mission in a convenient form ... intended to guide the student through some of the relevant discussion on a fairly wide range of issues" (p. 1). In conversation with David Bosch's *Transforming Mission,* Kirk nevertheless interacts primarily with missiological reflection within the ecumenical movement.

The book is divided in three unequal parts. In part 1, "Laying Foundations," Kirk draws heavily from his earlier work, *The Mission of Theology,* and from* other stories of the divine-human encounter.* Rather, it "enables us to discern signs of God's new order, inaugurated in Jesus, in all human struggles against fear, greed, violence, sickness, oppression and injustice" (p. 117).

Kirk defines mission perhaps too broadly as "what the Christian community is sent to do" (p. 24). He defines theology of mission as "a means of validating, correcting and establishing on better foundations the motives and actions of those wanting to be part of the answer to the prayer, 'Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven'" (p. 21).

Readers will be encouraged by Kirk's emphasis on the mission of the triune God, understood from a kingdom of God perspective. He is correct in his strong emphasis throughout the work that the church is missionary by definition (p. 30) and thus that "there can be no theology without mission ... no theology which is not missionary" (p. 11). Evangelicals may be dissatisfied with Kirk's somewhat apologetic approach to evangelism (pp. 57–74). Readers in church growth circles may be disheartened to see that Kirk ignores the movement's theoretical developments after the early 1980s, erroneously reducing church growth theory to issues of the homogeneous unit principle and people groups (p. 221).

This book will make a helpful text for students who wish to think deeply and creatively about the mission of the church. We are all in Andrew Kirk's debt for this clear, concise, broad, challenging, and stimulating work.

—Charles Van Engen

**Transfigured Night: Mission and Culture in Zimbabwe's Vigil Movement.**


*Transfigured Night* is a rainbowlike case study of vitality and diversity in African Christianity. After seven years as an Anglican priest and missioner, Presler engaged in field research (1991–95) at the Eastern Highlands Tea Estates in the Hondo Valley of eastern Zimbabwe near the Mozambique border. He observed numerous all-night vigils, conducted sixty-five individual and group interviews, solicited essay responses on "Christianity and tradition," and drew from archival...
sources. Presler focuses on the *pungwe*, an all-night vigil by which the Shona people "synthesize traditional religion and Christian gospel to meet Shona longings for spiritual encounters, communal solidarity, and liberative empowerment" (p. 14). With insight he analyzes the place of the vigils in Shona spirit religion and their adaptation by guerrillas for mass mobilization during Zimbabwe's war of liberation in the 1970s. Since independence in 1980 the vigils proliferated. The study details their continuing functions in traditional religion and their flowering in the renewal of both mission-founded and African-initiated churches. Letting participants speak for themselves, the text contains rich details that engage the reader.

Presler argues convincingly that the *pungwe* is an authentic Shona ritual. Guerrilla fighters did not introduce it from China or Tanzania or Mozambique; rather, they adapted it from traditional religious and church practices. Similarly, leaders of mission-founded churches found a catalyst in revivalist American Methodism, but in the vigils they discovered an indigenous means of revival. Each of the three African-initiated churches studied gave to the *pungwe* a distinctive expression.

In concluding chapters Presler relates his findings to missiological theory, including that of Robin Horton on African conversion and of Robert Hefner on the interactive function of ritual. Interpretation of the dynamics of contextualization would have been strengthened by use of Charles Kraft's concept of dynamic equivalence and of Paul Hiebert's "fourth self" interpretation of indigenous theologizing.

*Transfigured Night* puts flesh on the bare bones of David Barrett's statistics on the explosive growth of African churches.

—Norman E. Thomas

Norman E. Thomas is the recently retired Heisal Professor of Evangelization and Church Renewal at United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio. He served for fifteen years as a United Methodist missionary in Zimbabwe and Zambia; his dissertation was entitled "Christianity, Politics and the Manyika" (the Manyika are the Shona group in Presler's study).

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**Faith in the City: Fifty Years of the World Council of Churches in a Secularized Western Context:**


One of several volumes published as preparatory study material for the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, held in Harare, Zimbabwe, in December 1998, this volume contains papers presented at the First Harare Preparation Conference held at the Free University in Amsterdam, Netherlands, on September 19, 1998, gathered under the theme "Faith in the City." Chapters are by Martien Brinkman (of the Interuniversity Institute for Missiology and Ecumenics [IIMO]), Ineke Bakker (Council of Churches in the Netherlands), Konrad Raiser (general secretary, WCC), Anton Houtepen (director of the IIMO and professor of ecumenics at Utrecht University), Anton Wessels (professor of musicology at the Vrije Universiteit), Margot Kässmann (general secretary of the German Evangelical Kirchentag), and Nico Gille (Amsterdam Council of Churches).

Both the title of the book and the presentations reflect a double meaning: Is there hope for the inner cities of secularized Western Europe? and, Is there still a faithful community remaining in those cities? Woven in all the presentations one finds the question, "What could be the contribution of the ecumenical movement to the credibility of the Christian faith in the secularized cities of Western Europe?" (Brinkman, p. 9). The chapters contain excellent overviews of the relationship of the older ecumenical churches to the cities of western Europe.

The book left this reviewer with four impressions. First, the presenters voice a deep and appropriate concern over the decline of the older churches in western Europe and their impact in the cities—a matter with immense implications for the future of the World Council of Churches and older forms of ecumenism. The shrinking impact of the "missionary structures of the congregation" (J. C. Hoekendijk's program of the 1960s that affirmed the radical secularization of the church in the city) parallels the decline of the older Christian faith communities and a reduction of the church's presence even in crucial social services.

Second, there is hope for the inner cities and there is a vibrant Christian faith community there—only it is predominately found among the strong churches made up of recent non-European...
Finally, the state of the older churches in Amsterdam and western Europe should spark a reexamination of the initial charter of the World Council of Churches, founded in Amsterdam, fifty years before this consultation. It was affirmed then that the church’s primary calling to mission and unity is so that the world may believe that Jesus is the Christ (John 17:21).

—Charles Van Engen

Charles Van Engen is the Arthur F. Glasser Professor of the Biblical Theology of Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary’s School of World Mission, Pasadena, California.

Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus: General and Historical Objections.


The history of disputation literature between Judaism and Christianity is a checkered and sordid one. Christian polemics have added much heat and little light to the disagreements that stand between these two great faiths.

Into this sensitive territory comes this breakthrough book from Michael L. Brown, the first of three volumes planned on the subject. Unlike much of the literature of the past, this book is both irenic and persuasive. Brown, a Jewish believer in Jesus, is able to address controversial issues as one who is an insider, a member of the Jewish community, yet as one who is thoroughly conversant with Christian theology. His scholarship is well documented and his style is personable and conversational, which makes the book accessible to a wide audience.

In the first section Brown handles objections like “A person is either Jewish or Christian . . . belief in Jesus and Jewishness in any form are incompatible.” The historical section deals with more thorny issues such as the problem of Christian anti-semitism. The most helpful issues surrounding the Holocaust. The

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author provides an excellent summary of various Jewish views on the Holocaust and then provides a sensitive and balanced consideration from a Christian perspective; this is some of the best writing I have seen on this topic.

What the book lacks is a cogent effort to address issues from a post-modern outlook, with its pervasive relativism. Nevertheless, this first volume is a valuable tool for Jewish people seeking answers as well as for Christians seeking to be better prepared to give reasoned answers to their Jewish friends.

—David Brickner

David Brickner is Executive Director of Jews for Jesus, San Francisco, California. He has served on the staff of Jews for Jesus for twenty-three years, as the leader of the Liberated Wailing Wall, Chief of Station in the Chicago and New York branches, and Director of Recruitment.