Christian understanding of humankind’s place in the universe is rooted in the Hebrew Genesis story. Created “in the image of God,” the mother and father of the human race are instructed to “fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over . . . every living thing that moves upon the earth” (Gen. 1:27–28). Two chapters later, their ill-used curiosity leads to judgment and a world filled with imperfection and death. Their progeny’s assiduous obedience to the first injunction may be judged by the nearly seven billion humans who now inhabit the planet. As to the exercise of “dominion,” never has the earth been more subdued than in the twenty-first century. Human domination has traumatized the fragile ecosystem, extinguishing species on a scale and at a rate unprecedented.

When Paul observed that “the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now” (Rom. 8:22), he was not forecasting destruction of the planet by smugly hegemonic “Christian” civilizations that would emerge centuries later, in part because of his success as a missionary. It was the physics and chemistry of post-Enlightenment science that enabled Western societies to exponentially amplify both their domination and its effects.
with disastrously irreversible consequences. The science and technology that gave us bright lights, high-speed travel, creature comforts, and an ever-increasing array and volume of possessions turn out to have unwittingly locked us into a Faustian bargain. The gospel of plenty, carried obediently to the uttermost parts of the earth by its emissaries, is at last being appropriated by the vast populations of the non-Western world. Too late, those of us who have been its chief beneficiaries and advocates now realize that this “good news” could doom the planet.

Westerners, including missionaries, have been self-consciously certain of the superiority of their way of life, evident in their material accoutrements and in the powerful armies and economies of their nations. Missionaries—replete with incontrovertible material evidence—innocently thought that adoption of Christianity would have a “civilizing” effect on converted peoples, transforming the inner elan of societies and launching them on a developmental trajectory that would one day enable them to consume like us. Alas, so it has proved to be! And now, caught up in a way of life from which there seems to be no voluntary escape, we find ourselves complicit in human-induced climate change, with its concomitant degradation of habitat and destruction of species. According to current estimates by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, of the 40,177 species assessed, 784 are extinct, while another 16,119 are threatened with extinction (see www.iucnredlist.org/info/categories_criteria). The greatest number of extinctions—256—has occurred on the continent of North America. But species have disappeared in other parts of the world as well—185 in Oceania, 50 in Sub-Saharan Africa, 36 in South and Southeast Asia, 29 in South America, 16 in Europe, 11 in West-Central Asia, and 1 in Antarctica. The scale of our scorched-earth destruction makes Cambyses II or Genghis Khan look like mild-mannered organic gardeners.

Only now are Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox missiologists starting to realize that strategies for saving the world have been framed within a theological cocoon that prevented them from adequately understanding the end result of their civilization’s notions of progress, development, and the social-material destiny of humankind. The planet is simply too small to accommodate large numbers of human beings who think and live as we do.

We are therefore pleased in this issue of the IBMR to lead with two outstanding essays, written by younger thinkers, that reflect on the missiological implications of creation stewardship. In his lead article, Allan Effa provides a helpful survey of evolving Roman Catholic, conciliar, and evangelical thinking and action on environmental concerns. Willis Jenkins follows by providing readers with a much-needed theological and ethical framework for addressing what is perhaps the most pressing missiological agenda of the twenty-first century. And as Christoffer Grundmann’s article reminds us, for two millennia Christians have understood healing of the whole person to be integral to mission. On this point they have consciously reflected the mind of Christ, whose attention to the blind, the crippled, the deaf, and the leprous dominates the Gospel accounts of his short life and ministry in Palestine. His first disciples were explicitly commissioned to heal the sick (Luke 9:1–2; 10:9), and following his ascension, his disciples continued to pay special attention to those incapacitated by illness and injury.

As we grow into our understanding of the missiological implications of a stricken planet and move beyond mere concern with our own small bodies to concern for the larger living planet on which we sojourn and for which we are uniquely responsible, we join Paul “in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Rom. 8:20–21).

—Jonathan J. Bonk
The Greening of Mission

Allan Effa

Our understanding of Christian mission develops in response to issues and questions that arise in living out our faith. Theology is not formed in a vacuum but emerges in response to concrete situations or crises that stimulate study and reflection. The issues shaping our approach to mission today are different from those our ancestors struggled with and, in all likelihood, will not be cutting-edge concerns sixty years from now. As each new crisis is addressed, however, our perspective on the nature of the Christian mission is enriched and enlarged.

One of the great contemporary matters requiring an informed missional response is the environmental crisis. Because of a growing consensus that the planet may be moving toward an unprecedented ecological disaster, the Christian community is re-examining some of its theological assumptions and filling in some gaping blind spots in its understanding of the missio Dei. The church, in every camp and tradition, is grappling with its responsibility toward creation and seeking to integrate this in its missionary praxis. This article explores the “greening” of mission by looking at major statements from the Roman Catholic, conciliar, and evangelical traditions concerning the Christian mission in light of the environmental crisis. A brief survey of recent publications and research initiatives follows, as well as a summary of the shared theological assumptions that are unifying the Christian voice and providing a framework for advocacy and action.

The Greening of Roman Catholics

One of the most influential Roman Catholic theologians in the twentieth century was Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. This French Jesuit, paleontologist, biologist, and philosopher dedicated his life to the integration of religious experience with natural science. Although considered controversial, primarily because he accepted the theory of evolution, he articulated a strong sense of the sacredness of the world. Teilhard’s vision of the future lowers should not await this restoration passively; rather, “The church’s mission and ecological concerns.

Karl Rahner shaped the theology of Vatican II and beyond. He argued that the resurrection of Jesus not only guaranteed the promise of eternal life for human creatures but also opened the door for the final transformation of all of creation. The resurrection of Jesus should be seen as the beginning of the redemption of creation, as “pledge and beginning of the perfect fulfillment of the world.”

Although Vatican II did not directly address the relationship between care for creation and mission, Pope Paul VI found in the doctrine of creation a mandate to seek justice and a fair sharing of the earth’s resources. For his part, Pope John Paul II offered significant leadership in formulating a Roman Catholic response to the environmental crisis. In 1979 he proclaimed St. Francis of Assisi the patron saint of those who promote ecology, acknowledging the genuine respect St Francis held for the integrity of creation. Creation deserves respect because God pronounced it good, and nature itself is a “Gospel that speaks to us of God,” bearing witness to all the earth. The pope called for an “ecological conversion” and coupled the mandate of caring for nature with the development of a peaceful society. He understood the destruction of creation as the fruit of human sinfulness and the alienation that resulted from the fall. Yet at the same time, creation’s plights fall within the ambit of God’s salvation: “All of creation became subject to futility, waiting in a mysterious way to be set free and to obtain a glorious liberty together with all the children of God.” Drawing from a number of Pauline texts, John Paul II expressed confidence in the restoration of creation because of the reconciling death and resurrection of Christ. Christ’s followers should not await this restoration passively; rather, “The lay faithful are called to restore to creation all its original value. In ordering creation to the authentic well-being of humanity in an activity governed by the life of grace, the lay faithful share in the exercise of the power with which the risen Christ draws all things to himself and subjects them along with himself to the Father, so that God might be everything to everyone (cf. 1 Cor. 15:28; Jn. 12:32).” In other words, when Christians engage in earth keeping, they draw from Christ’s resurrection power and participate in the working out of God’s cosmic purposes. One can clearly discern echoes of Teilhard and Rahner in this pronouncement.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) used similar language in its statement Renewing the Earth, casting

Allan Effa is the Ray and Edith DeNeui Professor of Intercultural Studies at Taylor Seminary in Edmonton, Alberta. He served as a missionary in Nigeria from 1982 to 1990.

—anall.effa@taylor.edu.ca
the environmental crisis as a moral challenge and calling for a conversion and a change of heart “as individuals, as institutions, as a people.” Furthermore, it also linked care for creation with the pursuit of justice and the protection of the poor and powerless. Ten years later the USCCB tackled the issue of global climate change. Stewardship of God’s creation and care for future generations, as well as for the needs of the poor, the weak, and the vulnerable, were affirmed as common moral ground in addressing this problem. Besides calling on the United States to set an example by implementing policies and initiatives toward the reduction of air pollution, the bishops also called for increased sharing of green technologies and resources with developing countries.

Roman Catholics in Canada have also addressed environmental concerns, especially those affecting the quality of life for Canadians. The bishops of Alberta issued a letter expressing concern about climate change, ozone depletion, the loss of fish stocks, and a number of local environmental issues. They referred to creation’s sacramental nature as a revelation of the “generosity of the Creator” and of the dynamic presence of God, speaking in the “life forces of our universe and planet as well as in our own lives.” The Social Affairs Commission of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops described the ecological crisis as a profoundly religious crisis, declaring that since “God’s glory is revealed in the natural world,” the destruction of creation limits “our ability to know God.” The commission reflected on the theological link between creation and the incarnation, suggesting that when Jesus took on flesh, he embraced not only our humanity but also all of creation: “Thus all creatures, great and small, are consecrated in the life, death and resurrection of Christ.” Additionally, the commission explored the connection between advocacy for the poor and care for the environment, suggesting that “the preferential option for the poor can be extended to include a preferential option for the earth, made poorer by human abuse.” They concluded with a call to embrace eco-justice calling for a threefold response: the Contemplative Response calls for a deeper sense of awe for the beauty of creation as a means of knowing the Creator; the Ascetic Response calls for a restrained consumerism and fasting from actions that pollute; and the Prophetic Response calls for preaching and community action that address the ecological crisis as a social justice issue.

The destruction of creation limits “our ability to know God.”

The Greening of Conciliar Churches

The World Council of Churches (WCC), or ecumenical movement, seeks to offer a united voice for mainline Protestant and Eastern Orthodox churches as well as a number of independent churches through regular assemblies and study commissions. Their most comprehensive statement on mission is Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation (1982). Surprisingly, there is no specific reference to care for creation as a participation in God’s mission. The opening sentence does affirm that “the biblical promise of a new earth and a new heaven where love, peace and justice will prevail (Ps. 85:7–13; Isa. 32:17–18, 65:17–25 and Rev. 21:1–2) invites our actions as Christians in history,” but it makes only a brief reference to stewardship and restoration of creation as one of those actions. The Affirmation shows how the Gospel addresses the totality of life, including all of creation, “which groans and travails in search of adoption and redemption.” The Christian witness must “show the glory and the humility of human stewardship on this earth.”

The WCC convenes a conference on world mission and evangelism between each world assembly. The 1989 conference in San Antonio, Texas, was the first to address ecological concern and action as an integral part of the church’s mission. Delegates reflected on “God’s call to exercise our stewardship with justice, to maintain the integrity of creation, to use and share the earth’s limited resources and to sustain and fulfill the lives of all.” Much of the discussion revolved around God’s ownership of the earth and human activities that destroy the land, often resulting in the unjust distribution of land. Since the earth is the Lord’s, “the responsibility of the church toward the earth is a crucial part of the church’s mission.” This mission brings the gospel of hope to all creation—a hope rooted in the resurrection of Christ.” Specifically, the conference urged churches to engage in efforts that “reverse the ‘greenhouse effect,’ to remedy the destruction of strip-mining, to halt the production and dumping of toxic wastes, to ban the hunting of endangered species, and to combat the pollution of the seas.”

Justice, peace, and the integrity of creation should be addressed not as separate problems but as an intricately interwoven complexity requiring common action on the part of the church. The World Convocation on Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation (1990) established its theological foundation on the belief in God as giver of life and repenting of the misuse of biblical statements such as “to have dominion” and “subdue the earth.” Delegates committed themselves to “conserve and work for the integrity of creation both for its inherent value to God and in order that justice may be achieved and sustained.”

Subsequently, the council established a working group to forge partnerships and create a common base for action on climate change. The WCC actively participated in global conferences on climate change in Montreal (November–December 2005) and Nairobi (November 2006). The Porto Alegre Assembly of the WCC (2006) gave its support to the Ecumenical Water Network and provided a policy framework through the statement Water for Life.

The National Council of Churches (NCC), which represents the U.S. member churches of the WCC, established its Eco-Justice Program to provide a network for American churches to work together to protect and restore God’s creation. Their Web site defines the program’s scope: “Eco-justice includes all ministries designed to heal and defend creation, working to assure justice for all of creation and the human beings who live in it. A major task . . . is to provide program ideas and resources to help congregations as they engage in eco-justice.” The site offers links to environmental policy statements by fourteen denominational affiliates of the NCC.

The Canadian Council of Churches has also taken initiatives, focusing on domestic policy and the environment. At a consultation with leaders of aboriginal communities, environmental organizations, and international development agencies, a joint statement emerged: Climate Justice: A Call for Canadian Leadership (2001). Concern was expressed over Canadian energy consumption patterns as well as government support for exploration and expansion of fossil fuel production and nuclear power. The statement called for Canada to take a leading role in implementing
the Kyoto Protocol and to give priority to the “quality of life we bequeath our children and grandchildren, and the long-term economic, social and ecological security of our planet.” The Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, also known as Kairos, functions as a resource for Canadian churches and an advocate for environmental concerns.

The Greening of Evangelicals

Evangelicals are independent churches without a global communion to address concerns such as environmental justice. Nevertheless, common understandings have emerged from consultations and congresses in the past thirty-five years. The Chicago Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern (1973), for instance, is seen as a breakthrough document that spans the divide between evangelism and social action. For the first time, American evangelicals united to tackle issues like racism, militarism, the imbalance of wealth distribution, and the oppression of women. The Declaration called on “fellow evangelical Christians to demonstrate repentance in a Christian discipleship that confronts the social and political injustice of our nation.”

The following year, the International Congress on World Evangelization was convened, resulting in the Lausanne Covenant—a defining step toward affirming a broader understanding of the church’s mission. Its section on Christian social responsibility highlighted justice, liberation from oppression, and sociopolitical involvement as part of Christian duty. Although no mention was made specifically of the responsibility to the environment, it nonetheless opened a door to subsequent reflection on issues of social justice. Of particular importance was the International Consultation on Simple Lifestyle (1980). The participants sought to address the statement in the Lausanne Covenant that called upon affluent Christians to “accept our duty to develop a simple life-style in order to contribute more generously to both relief and evangelism.” While much of the focus was on the imbalance of wealth, development needs, and the pursuit of justice and peace, the sections on creation and stewardship included a denunciation of “environmental destruction, wastefulness and hoarding” and an acknowledgment that “Creation Ethics” are an “important part . . . of mankind’s responsibility to the world we live in.”

The World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) is the largest nonbinding global organization of evangelicals, with a constituency of some 160 million. The WEA Missions Commission (now Mission Commission) convened a missiological think tank to reflect on the challenges facing the church at the end of the twentieth century and to identify the major themes of special importance for the development of a biblical missiology. The resulting Igauasu Affirmation (1999) identified fourteen commitments and challenges, one being the ecological crisis. Without offering theological elaboration, it called “all Christians to commit themselves to ecological integrity in practicing responsible stewardship of creation” and to become involved in “environmental care and protection initiatives.” Several of the papers presented at the gathering offered some preliminary theological outlines for an evangelist approach that includes earth keeping.

The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization subsequently convened a forum on holistic mission (2004). René Padilla offered a ground-breaking paper exploring the biblical basis for holistic mission, with theological constructs remarkably similar to those found in conciliar and Roman Catholic pronouncements: “The biblical message of salvation points towards ‘new heavens and a new earth’ and that means that we cannot view salvation as separated from creation. The purpose of salvation is not merely endless life of individual souls in heaven but the transformation of the totality of creation, including humankind, to the glory of God. A person’s conversion to Christ is the eruption of the new creation into this world: it transforms the person, in anticipation of the end time, in a wonderful display of God’s eschatological purpose to make all things new.” Padilla further argued that the church’s mission must be multifaceted, since it is driven by the missio Dei, which includes “the whole of creation and the totality of human life.” Finally, he drew implications from the resurrection of Jesus, as a power making the kingdom manifest in the “here and now and in every sphere of human life, and in the whole of creation.”

A presentation by Ronald Vos deplored an “anthropocentric view of the natural world” and those views of the “end of the world that emphasize earth’s destruction rather than its regeneration.” Instead, he called for a covenantal approach to creation that acknowledges God’s delight and concern for his handiwork, and his promise to redeem it along with humanity.

In 2004 U.S. evangelical leaders gathered at the Sandy Cove Conference to address environmental concerns and to hear John Houghton, cochair of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, speak on climate change and Christian faith. The resulting Sandy Cove Covenant resolved to “make creation care a permanent dimension of our Christian discipleship” and to “motivate the evangelical community to fully engage environmental issues in a biblically faithful and humble manner . . . that we might take our appropriate place in the healing of God’s creation, and thus the advance of God’s reign.”

Sandy Cove gave birth to the Evangelical Climate Initiative, signed by eighty-five prominent American evangelical leaders as a biblical and Christ-centered evangelical approach to climate change. The Initiative includes a statement entitled “Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action.” Its Web site offers a wealth of biblical resources on the topic, including the “Prayer Guide for Global Warming.” Not all U.S. evangelicals are on board when it comes to the matter of climate change, however, with well-known leaders James Dobson, Charles Colson, and others disagreeing about the “cause, severity and solutions to the global warming issue.” Despite these dissenting voices, when the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) surveyed evangelical leaders in September 2007 about the prominent issues of concern to American evangelicals today, “creation care” was listed among the top five. The NAE has continued to move forward, issuing the Energy Star Challenge (2007), with its goal to “reduce energy use in churches and buildings” and, in so doing, to protect the environment and save millions of dollars.

Richard Cizik, vice president for governmental affairs of the NAE, has called upon evangelicals to invest less passion defending a particular theory of how the universe was created and to focus more on responsibility toward creation: “I don’t think God is going to ask us how he created the earth [evolution or creationism], but he will ask us what we did with what he created.”
Publications and Research

Theologies of creation and ecology, as well as considerations from ethical perspectives, are all part of a growing body of literature on this subject. Two missiologists who have led the way in the integration of creation care and mission are J. Andrew Kirk and Christopher J. H. Wright. Kirk’s book *What Is Mission? Theological Explorations* discusses six contemporary issues, including care of the environment. He argues that this should be seen as a part of the Christian mission because of its integral link with “matters of economic and political justice.” He proposes a specifically Christian approach that is focused on the Creator, the human mandate to care for God’s creation, and the divine intention to heal the brokenness of creation.

Christopher J. H. Wright’s massive biblical theology of mission likewise devotes a chapter to mission and “God’s earth.” Beginning with the foundational affirmation that the earth is the Lord’s, Wright explores the sanctity of creation, the whole earth as the field of mission, God’s glory as the goal of creation, and God’s redemptive plan for the whole of creation. Even though this redemption is something only God can fully accomplish, our hope in God’s future must shape the way we “live now and what our own objectives should be.” He describes creation care as one of our priestly and kingly duties toward the earth, as well as an opportunity for the church to exercise a prophetic role, tackling the forces of greed and economic power, underpinned by a biblical commitment to compassion and justice.

A master’s degree in “Global Issues in Contemporary Mission” is offered by Redcliffe College, in Gloucester, England. The elective modules include “The Greening of Mission,” which offers students the opportunity to “examine the interface between environmental concerns and contemporary Christian mission.” The module studies the growing awareness of environmental issues in the Christian community “in terms of academic theology and in mission praxis.”

Conclusions

This survey identifies the pulse of a growing conviction that incorporates environmental concerns into the church’s missional agenda. Roman Catholics, conciliars, and evangelicals speak in remarkable unison of the theological basis for the greening of mission. They agree that the ecological crisis and our corporate and individual complicity require repentance and an embrace of God’s agenda. In the words of Canadian novelist Rudy Wiebe, “You repent, not by feeling bad but by thinking different.” The consensus, from what we have surveyed, points to at least three areas of faulty theological thinking that require reformation.

Creation. All Christian traditions call for a shift from an anthropocentric to a theocentric understanding of creation. A Copernican revolution must take place in our theology of creation; instead of existing primarily for human benefit, creation is to be understood as God’s creative masterpiece, an object of his pleasure and a witness to his presence and power. Humans are God’s image bearers, but they are only part of the divine expression. Other elements of the creation declare the glory of God in ways that humans cannot duplicate. Although we rightfully use and enjoy the resources of our planet, we acknowledge the intrinsic value of creation and our role of stewardship and caretaking.

Salvation. The three traditions also call for a shift from a personal to a cosmic view of salvation. This shift happens as we grapple with the dynamics of the kingdom of God and the comprehensive nature of God’s redemptive plan. History is not just about human destiny but also about God’s plan for the cosmos. Jesus’ death and resurrection bring humans into a state of reconciliation with God but also somehow open the way for the reconciliation of all things to God. Jesus’ ascension serves as evidence not only that he is the exalted Lord over an individual’s life but also that all things are being brought under his lordship. Salvation, or healing, is something that the animal kingdom and all of creation awaits.

Eschatology. A third shift necessary to correct faulty thinking is from “an eschatology of abandonment” to one of restoration. A strain peculiar to some expressions of Christian thinking believes that creation is destined for destruction and that all that really matters is how people settle the issue of their eternal destiny. In this line of thought, people get saved, wait until Jesus raptures them away, and then get to watch the planet burn. This defective eschatology must be corrected by the consistent biblical witness that creation is part of God’s redemptive plan. It is a destiny of restoration that will ultimately be accomplished by God’s sovereign power and intervention. The church has the amazing privilege of partnering in God’s mission when it aligns itself with God’s plan, loves the things God loves, and works toward the goals God has for our world.

Notes


8. Ibid.


12. Alberta Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Celebrate Life: Care for
New from J. Dudley Woodberry

What practices is God blessing in raising up groups of Jesus followers among Muslims? And how shall we understand Muslim peoples and their access to biblical witness? In recent years, workers from a growing number of organizations have begun to discuss such questions. Their initial insights were refined by a broad group of workers in a consultation in the spring of 2007, further analyzed in subsequent months, and compiled in this volume. From Seed to Fruit presents the most recent worldwide research on witness to Christ among Muslim peoples, using biblical images from nature to show the interaction between God’s activity and human responsibility in blessing these peoples.

Order online: www.missionbooks.org/fromseedtofruit

J. Dudley Woodberry is Dean Emeritus and Senior professor of Islamic Studies at the School Intercultural Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. He has served with his wife and three sons at the Christian Study Centre in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, and as a pastor in Kabul, Afghanistan and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
18. The statement by WCC officials to the conference is found at www.kairos.canada.org/e/ ecology/climateChange/copmop/WCC_COP11-Statement.asp.
19. The WCC statement to this conference is found at www.kairos.canada.org/e/ ecology/climateChange/climateJusticeAll.asp.
26. Ibid., sec. 9.
29. Christopher Wright called attention to the need for ecology to be given a distinctly Christian and biblically grounded voice (ibid., p. 97). Stuart McAlister related the importance of teaching a “good creation theology” to the next generation (ibid., p. 371). Rose Dowsett called for repentance on the part of Christians who have colluded with the greedy exploitation of the environment and failed to raise voices in warning and protest (ibid., p. 460).
32. Creation Care Conference, Sandy Cove Covenant. See www.creationcare.org/conference/.
33. For the Evangelical Climate Initiative, see www.christiansandclimate.org/faq#eci.
35. The press release was entitled “The Vast Majority of Evangelicals Not Represented by the ‘Evangelical Climate Initiative’.” See www.prnewswire.com/cgi-bin/stories.pl?ACCT=104&STORY=/www/story/02-08-2006/0004277632&EDATE.
39. No fewer than fifteen recent publications from a variety of publishing houses are listed in “God’s Green Earth: Creation, Faith, Crisis,” Reflections: Yale Divinity School 94, no. 1 (2007): 24. Listed in the same issue are eleven Web sites dedicated to initiatives pertaining to environmental stewardship; see p. 41.
42. For a fuller description of the module’s content and learning outcomes, see www.redlife.org/uploads/downloads/ma_modules1_jun07.pdf.

**Missiology in Environmental Context:**

Tasks for an Ecology of Mission

**Willis Jenkins**

For a field focused on the most geographic practice of Christian faith—crossing from one terrain to another for the sake of Christ—missiology seems to manifest a strange absence of the terrestrial.¹ Missiology rarely discusses the significance of earthly context or ecological dynamics for mission theology. For all its attention to culture, missiology seems to have little to say about the landscapes formed by ecology and culture in reciprocal relation. Insofar as missiology remains extraterrestrial, abstracted from geographic context, it struggles to make missional sense of environmental problems or to interpret emerging Christian responses to the challenges of sustainability.

In recent years, as churches have begun responding to environmental problems, missiologists have entertained occasional calls to link ecology and mission.² These proposals, issued from across a theological spectrum, encourage missiology to make environmental issues significant for the church’s theology and practice. Meanwhile, without much notice from missiology, grass-

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Willis Jenkins is the Margaret Farley Assistant Professor of Social Ethics at Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Connecticut. He was a missionary in Uganda (1997–98), cofounded the Episcopal Church’s Young Adult Service Corps, and was a member of the Episcopal Standing Commission on World Mission (2000–2006). —willis.jenkins@yale.edu

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¹ Willis Jenkins is the Margaret Farley Assistant Professor of Social Ethics at Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Connecticut. He was a missionary in Uganda (1997–98), cofounded the Episcopal Church’s Young Adult Service Corps, and was a member of the Episcopal Standing Commission on World Mission (2000–2006). —willis.jenkins@yale.edu

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roots Christian initiatives in sustainable community have been emerging around the world. What we need now is an ecology of mission that can show how environmental issues matter within the practices of following God’s love across terrains. In this article I consider initial proposals to link missiology and environmental issues, as well as contextual examples of environmental mission practice, in order to identify some specific tasks for contemporary mission theology.3

Recover the Geographic Context of Mission

Discussions of environment and mission often refer to Marthinus Daneel’s African Earthkeepers: Wholistic Interfaith Mission (2001).4 Sections of this work have appeared in the few journal volumes devoted to the topic, and excerpts often constitute the only missional perspective in anthologies of Christian or religious environmental thought.5 Daneel’s account of interfaith reforestation as an extension of the “war of liberation” to reclaim native lands presents a rich case for missiological evaluation. His portrayal of connections between social liberation and ecological restoration vividly demonstrates the missional significance of connections between social and ecological relations. It would be impossible to make sense of mission in Zimbabwe apart from the country’s political history and the religious significance of its lands for its peoples.

Ecosystems, species, skies, and wetlands make up the context of mission, just as do cultures, languages, markets, and health clinics.9 Consider the example offered by the director of a community development organization sponsored by the Church of Uganda, responsible for dealing with poverty and proposing public health initiatives. Missiological indifference to ecological issues, he explained to me, exacerbated the very problems he was assigned to address. He spoke of the importance protecting wetlands has for protecting public health. Thick wetlands filter rainwater from the cultivated hills above. When too many reeds are cut, opening channels for livestock and people to enter the water, communities require more resources for constructing concrete-protected springs and for antibiotics. Communities that carefully regulate wetland use have better access to cleaner water and fewer health problems. Moreover, communities where wetlands have been entirely drained face water shortages, and in some places the local climate has warmed enough for malarial mosquitoes to come. Both the diocesan office and international mission agencies, however, understand land management and social outreach as separate mandates, and only the latter as a legitimate concern of church mission—even when the church owns the land!

Sometimes stark social problems have the power to elicit new levels of missiological recognition and interpretation. Responsible contextual mission practices depend on a theological interpretation of social ecology—whether as simple as the relation of wetland biology to human epidemiology or as complex, as Daneel has shown, as the relation of land policies to colonial oppression and the experience of God’s liberation. Furthermore, as J. J. Kritzinger points out, whatever else it may mean, good development must include recognition of the ecological context and impact of development. This axiom leads Kritzinger to propose a twofold agenda for missiology: “We need both an ecologically sensitive theory and practice of development, and a humane and holistic involvement with the environment.” Missiology must find ways to show how it matters for mission that the practice of following God’s love across significant human boundaries happens on earth, across particular terrains, within a community of life and a set of ecological relations that bind us to one another.

Connect Human Dignity and Environmental Quality

Because it reflects on movement across social boundaries and geographic terrains, missiology is exceptionally well placed to address the distributional character of environmental problems.5 Environmental risks and resources distribute asymmetrically across social space; said differently, the effects of environmental problems fall disproportionately on the poor and powerless. Missiology can help the church resist the reductionist notion that a common humanity faces a common ecological predicament. There are, rather, multiple environmental problems, suffered unequally by diverse human communities.

In the United States, two United Church of Christ reports have documented a serial relation between hazardous waste locations and African-American populations. The reports depict a geography of American racism, showing how a pattern of human-caused environmental toxicity maps structural injustice. In the American context, missiology must ask what church mission means within landscapes of environmental racism.9

Once missiology begins to make visible the connections between environmental quality and human dignity, a number of new mission-related issues come into view, such as:

Public health risks. Regional and sometimes global spread of pollutants imposes public health risks. Those persons already at the margins of society are exposed to the greatest risks and bear in their bodies a larger burden of disease. Not infrequently, resources of poor lands are controlled by those in wealthy lands, while the pollution and waste from the powerful minority end up back among the poor.10
The adverse effects of climate challenges and renews theological anthropology. It shows, as Ross human dignity in ecological context, environmental justice chal-
practice, structural sin, and holistic reconciliation. By placing In this way environmental justice recontextualizes some basic restoration, and to invite the world into a geography of grace.

miscellaneous, to promise environmental health, to offer ecological siology must find ways to name and condemn environmental way confront and respond to environmental problems. Mis-

who’s trees we depend upon, neighbors whose fisheries and fields we eat from, neighbors whose emissions the wind blows our way. Environmental justice both interprets an important aspect of mission context and names a significant objective for mission practice. If communities experience the reality of sin though impoverished soils, dangerous chemicals, disappearing waters, and polluted air, then mission practices must in some way confront and respond to environmental problems. Mis-

ling and human dignity in ecological context, environmental justice challenges and renews theological anthropology. It shows, as Ross Langmead’s incarnational missiology emphasizes, that “there is an intrinsic interconnectedness in the whole of creation which binds humanity to its environment.”

Respond to Environmental Oppression

Anthropological interconnectedness calls for missiology to offer a critique of the way environmental degradation systemically deforms personhood. Some theologians have critiqued capital-

In the Philippines, for example, environmental degradation is the most important thing happening in some communities. In places the landscape has been so devastated by commercial logging and mining that entire mountains are burnt bare to the ground, their slopes cut by constant landslides. Church organizations in the Philippines have responded with outspoken criticism of governmental land policies and denunciation of corporate corruption. Meanwhile, local church members often try to resist the pillaging, sometimes to the point of martyrdom.

Mission partnership with these churches is unimaginable apart from a thoroughgoing response to a social ecology of injustice. Loss of ecological integrity has led to an ecology of human suffering, where the hills fall down upon the poor, and to an economy of invisible exploitation, where one community’s use of resources strips bare the place and provisions of another community. Such conditions call not just for adapted responses of relief and development but for reimagining theologies of reconciliation, justice, and forgiveness.

A mission partnership, for example, that the Episcopal Diocese of the Northern Philippines shares with the Anglican Church of Japan (Nippon Sei Ko Kai) centers on sustainable forestry and renewable energy initiatives. In this case the sustain-

ity initiative contributes to a wider practice of reconcili-

ation: because Japanese consumers have been buying Filipino timber, the Church of Japan’s partnership takes representative responsibility and seeks solidarity with suffering, in the causing of which they participate. Responding to the ecological context, this mission relationship finds and gives new meaning to the theology of reconciliation.

Critique Inhumane Environmentalisms

Since environmentalists work against multiple threats to the integrity of creation and to human communities, Pieter Miering suggests that perhaps the church should affirm environmental activists as “avant garde missionaries.” Just as many churches perceive civil rights workers who put their lives on the line for justice as doing the work of God, environmental workers who risk themselves for the sake of preserving species or in resisting exploitative operations can be seen as carrying forward God’s purposes.

But environmentalism may not always straightforwardly conduct the work of God. Consider the plight of the Batwa people in Uganda. Removed from their forest home in the 1990s to make an uninhabited reserve for mountain gorillas, the Batwa were forcibly resettled on agricultural land. An ancient forest-

Diseaseminded and displaced populations often live on marginal lands that are most at risk of natural disasters. They may live in a shantytown built in a river’s flood-
plain, or beneath a deforested mountainside, or, as in the United States, alongside weak levees. They may live at the edges of arable land and on poor or exhausted soils as large plantations take a massive share of good land.

Restricted access to natural resources. Access to important resources such as water and wood becomes increasingly difficult when these resources are privatized and commercialized. The 2006 WCC Assembly devoted special focus to the importance of fair access to and protection of water sources.

Reduced biodiversity. Where communities rely on native species for food and as sources of medicine, biodiversity may in itself be an important resource. In addition to being the communities’

perhaps the church should affirm environmental activists as “avant garde missionaries.”
adrift at sea, so far were these people from a place that made sense to them. Their culture and language, their foods and medicines, their identity and their prayers were intimately tied to their way of life in an ancient forest.20

An American missionary couple who had gone to work as medical caregivers for this outcast people, intending to enact God’s enduring love for them, found that displacement from the forest touched everything important to the Batwa. The missionaries were asked what God’s love could mean in this exile from their home, where the Batwa felt unable to find life’s sustenance, where their children would grow up without knowing the sylvan sense of their language, songs, and prayers. The missionaries began to realize that restoring the experience of God’s love for the Batwa must include restoring them to the forest. So they began working with government officials and international agencies to protect or restore forest ecosystems that the Batwa could access and manage through a community-based conservation program. The missionaries became innovative environmentalists, working out new schemes of forest protection in order to protect the special value it held for the Batwa way of life with God.21

The Batwa case shows the importance of missiological critique of some forms of environmentalism. Many in the global South have criticized wilderness-driven forms of environmental preservation that reserve park access for a global elite while displacing local, less powerful populations. Some see in large-scale wilderness reserves a new kind of green colonialism. Ramachandra Guha has pejoratively called such environmentalists the new missionaries, imperial evangelists of the worst sort, ignoring what local communities already know, despising indigenous culture, and finding ways to grab land.22

An authentic missiology must resist both sorts of perverted mission. In this case, both evangelical and environmental missions require finding a way to imagine humanity and nature living sustainably together. Missiology can help resist the “unnecessary polarity between humanity and nature with its tragic results,” says Kritzinger, by insisting on the human dimensions of environmentalism and sustaining constant concern for the marginalized.23 Solidarity with marginalized peoples often serves as a tonic, arousing resistance to ill-conceived development programs of all sorts. Missiology has special theological commitments to maintaining that tonic. In this case, more effective solidarity to begin with might have resisted the unnecessary polarity by walking with the Batwa, who had lived sustainably in the forest for centuries and who knew exactly how the trees sing the praises of God and how the rivers clap their hands.

**Restore the Significance of “Place”**

The case of the Batwa dramatizes how for many indigenous peoples environmental justice has less to do with generic environmental quality and more to do with threats to particular places. For peoples whose culture, language, and identity have developed over time through intimate relation with a particular terrain, environmental degradation poses a comprehensive threat to a living cosmology.24 It threatens not only the embodiment of individual persons but also the worlds that sustain them. This includes carefully developed patterns of land management and long-standing forms of participation in a bioregion, as well as the moral conventions that sustain these patterns and forms. For indigenous people especially, threats to place often threaten a whole world, a lived cosmology.

Part of the environmental task for missiology therefore lies in developing the theological significance of place. As a geographic location at once ecological and cultural, place names not just a spatial locale but a local way of understanding the world.25 Place is therefore vulnerable not only to forces directly destroying natural environments (degrading spaces) but also to social forces that weaken place attachments or dissolve land management schemes (degrading ways of understanding a world). Exile from the land for indigenous peoples may occur not only through physical displacement but also through displacement of social systems, perhaps by the imposition of private property or commodity agriculture systems. For some indigenous peoples, then, the theological crisis presented by environmental problems is a local crisis, requiring not just local theologies but a theology of locality.26

Missiology faces special demands, however, in meeting the theological challenge of place, for it often works from biblical tropes of itinerancy, homelessness, exile, and global commission. In other words, missiological theodemics tends to detract from place attachments. Sometimes this orientation has led to missionary destruction of place and advocacy for the displacement of indigenous peoples.27 But at its best it animates a missional restlessness that reflects God’s restless, universal love for the whole world. Indeed, missiology often works to keep the church’s theology from settling into rigidity by maintaining a stream of global engagement with difference. In an age of neocolonial mobility, however, the missional themes of sojourning run greater risks of complicity with globalizing patterns of restless capital, displacement of peoples, and creation of homeless citizens. So where can missiology look for resources to attend to the significance of land and place?

Daneel’s account of Zimbabwean nationalist land reclamation offers some potent suggestions for connecting liberation and homeland within a quite particular relation of grace and creation. But that connection also raises the most haunting fear for any theology of place: the specter of a religiously sanctioned “eco-fascism.”28 Daneel describes how religious support for the Zimbabwean liberation movement (chimurenga) developed from “a religiously inspired sense of place,” which, together with a notion of God as the just warrior, animated participation in political recapture of the land. “Drawing on the religious

**To protect the special value the forest held for the Batwa way of life with God, the missionaries became innovative environmentalists.**
to a particular territory and funds the practices, insurrectionary or ecological, that reclaim territory from alien oppressors. A local way of understanding creation, all the way down to the species of vegetation it ought to sustain, derives from a conception of grace tied to the land identity of native peoples. When all this happens in contemporary Zimbabwe, where the rhetoric of native liberation has been distorted into fascist support for inept tyranny, the missiological questions press urgently. How can missiology tell a good theology of place from a bad one, a sustaining one from a fascist one?

Here, one might respond, the exilic and sojourning metaphors of Christianity, typified in mission practice, work benignly against the politics of absolute locality. The question, then, is how missiology can discover the grace of place within the grace of mobility. How can we describe the theological significance of Bwindi Forest to the Batwa while surely staving off the horrors of an Aryan Lebensraum (habitat) or a nationalist “homeland”? We need “bio-regional missiology,” some way of describing the place claims for sojourning Christian missions. There are precedents: Oliver Davies points out that Celtic Christianity bears legacies of both an intensively place-shaped theology and remarkable missional dynamism.

Integrate Nature and Grace

In 1961 theologian Joseph Sittler warned an assembly of the World Council of Churches that the church would lose its witness if it did not recover the intimacy of nature and grace. Each one of the tasks named in this article depends in some way on that recovery. Here lies the key theological challenge for missiology: developing or rediscovering the relationship of creation and salvation, and describing its significance for mission practice.

As Ross Langmead puts it, environmental issues force a new kind of contextual return to the Gospel: “An ecological perspective in mission asks the question of how the gospel takes a different shape not only in different cultures but also in different ecosystems. . . . If we are to situate our mission more deeply in creation in all of its regional variety, we may have to learn to take into account other factors such as the land, flora, fauna, climate, geography, and physical history.” That contextual turn may take a variety of theological forms.

A few years ago Roman Catholic missionary Dorothy Stang was martyred in Brazil for helping communities organize against the commercial exploitation of their forests. Stang was assassinated because she helped poor villagers find in the Gospel the power to resist the systems of sin working to deprive them of their place on a healthy earth. Her witness directs missiology to articulate the mission of God for those living within degradations of creation, to concretely and contextually proclaim the good news of a new creation for God’s people.

At least two World Vision missiologists agree with the trajectory of Stang’s witness to a holistic missiology. Bryant Myers argues that the transformation effected by the Gospel includes restoration of healthy environmental relationships, while Dayton Roberts asserts that such restoration requires renewed biblical attention to the texts of cosmic salvation. Mission requires not just the stewardship of Genesis, the prophets’ land of covenant, or the creation hymnody of the Psalms, but the groaning creation of Romans 8 and the cosmic sweep of Paul’s prologues, where all creation comes into the saving mission of God.

Many missiologists agree with that tack toward cosmic soteriology, but differ with more or less eccentric interpretations. For D. F. Olivier, a missiological focus on human “discipling” nonetheless serves God’s mission “to bring about the new creation.” Mission begins with humanity but finally results in the renewal of all creation. P. J. Robinson further develops the salvific reach of the missiological community toward all the earth. “Through this discipling community God’s peace and loving-care is to be communicated to the whole earth because God’s salvation in Christ includes both heaven and earth.” In this perspective, creation waits for “the restoration of all humankind’s relations, including its relationship to nature.”

Christina Manohar moves the salvific focus still further towards creation itself by situating the missionary community within God’s wider community-building mission, identifying the new creation vision of Isaiah 11 as the goal of the cosmic scope of Christ’s reconciliation. Donald Messer draws on the vision of Isaiah to reconcile missionaries as “global gardeners,” stewarding creation by bringing forth the new earth. Newton Thurer similarly argues from a creation-focused soteriology to recast the missio Dei: “the purpose of God is to fulfill the unity of the creation through Jesus Christ,” so the “church’s missionary calling is to cooperate with God’s action and intention for all the creation.”

When soteriology puts creation at the center of God’s mission, then mission practice can make the well-being of all creation a specific goal of mission. For example, when J. A. Loader argues that the biblical narrative depicts God’s active love for all life, then the missionary proclamation of the Good News cannot stand apart from wonder at the natural world and responsibility for all life. Following the logic of the Pauline ta panta (all things), mission practice may be shaped to service even beyond all life to all of creation. For creation-centered soteriologies, observes Sebastian Kim, mission practice will mean “living with the earth to restore the interconnectedness of the whole creation. Creation is both the motive and the goal of mission.” Or, as L. Stanislaus puts it, “When we understand the fulfillment of the Kingdom towards a new heaven and a new earth, and our mission is in realizing this new heaven and new earth, then our commitment is to the whole of creation.” Thomas Malipuruthu goes so far as to suggest that for a dialogic missiology this missional commitment means that “the whole of Creation, considered as a corporate personality, emerges as a dialogue partner.”

For others, however, the cosmic and human dimensions of soteriology operate simultaneously, making for practices that reside nearer to the holistically human mission work called for by Stang and Myers. When Cal Dewitt and Ghillean Prance appeal to the New Testament’s reconciling embrace of “all things,” they do so not so much to make ecology the mission but to define mission in ecological context: “It is enterprise whose goal is the wholeness, integrity, and renewal of people and creation and their relationships with each other and the Creator; it is reconciliation of all things.” They want to see the fullness of mission realized practically in multiple personal, social, and ecological dimensions. While drawing from different theological wells, Langmead’s definition of ecomissiology similarly “sees the mission of God in
terms of reconciliation at all levels,” corresponding to a theological insistence “that salvation is multidimensional.”

The range of ways for making environments matter for the salvific significance of mission turns on how missiology integrates creation and salvation. Those integrations must escape from a limitation to being merely thematic proposals in ecomissiology, however, if they would shape the wider mission theologies of the church. Sometimes they do, as seen in a pattern visible in recent Anglican thinking on mission. Titus Presler’s articulation of Anglican missiology glosses the Book of Common Prayer’s definition of mission (“to restore all people to unity with God and each other”) as restoring “the vital and creative community with God and one another for which we were made and which we see in the Garden of Eden . . . realized through harmonious relationships among many kinds of living beings and individuals.”

The Episcopal Church’s guiding mission vision document Companions in Transformation (2003) includes a significant section on environmental justice and care for creation, while the Anglican Consultative Council adopted concern for the integrity of creation as one of its “Five Marks of Mission.”

Not incidentally, the Episcopal Church has had several ecomissionaries on its roster.

**Reestablish Missiological Sustainability**

Brief mention of two final tasks names two arenas for the future of missiological thinking. The first arena is the current international contest over “sustainable development,” the emerging moral discourse for balancing commitments to promote human dignity, economic opportunity, and environmental protection. A full theological ecology of mission should offer resources for developing a practical theology of sustainability and thus at least contribute, if not witness, to the debates of the international community. What sustains us? What should be sustained?

Missiology has talked about sustainability before, when discussing the cultural, financial, and institutional sustainability of church communities. Only recently, however, has it begun to consider the ecological dimensions of a holistically sustainable church community. This may, however, emerge as one of the most significant arenas of Christian witness in the twenty-first century, making it missiologically imperative to imagine the church’s word and practice as a sustaining membership. Can missiology show how the whole world participates in God’s sustaining mission?

At the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, Christian representatives made their voices heard that sustainable development must be oriented toward “a real commitment to care for the poor, the marginalized and the voiceless” (as the Anglican delegation put it). “Therefore,” the statement went on, “it is sustainable community that we seek.” By replacing “development” with “community,” the Anglicans gave notice that their theological commitments integrate sustainability not by reference to principles of economic growth but within the shape of authentic community. Doing so, they implicitly refer the ethics of sustainability to the practices of reconciliation, and thus to the mission of God to restore unity to creation.

In their witness lies the start of a theology of sustainability rooted in the missio Dei and manifest in practices of empowerment, justice, restoration, and protection. When mission practices can imagine and enact the way that experience of God’s sustaining grace integrates those issues, so that it is at once good news for the poor and for the land, then they prepare the grounds of a sustainable missiology.

The task of sustainability is thus at once theological and practical. On the one hand, missiology needs to engage with the global ethics of a sustaining common good. On the other, it needs to guide adequate environmental and economic training for missionaries, include sustainability in long-term mission strategy, and consider the material form of its mission practices (e.g., carbon costs, food procurement, waste). What do sustainable missions look like?

**Interpret Emerging Mission Initiatives**

Grassroots mission practices already responding to environmental problems and developing sustaining communities form the second arena which should shape further development of missiology. Consider, for example, a tree-planting initiative found among some small groups of East African revivalism. A network often formed around core prayer groups in churches has begun replanting trees over deforested lands owned by the community or the church. Their experience of the redeeming God led them to start planting trees as a witness to the new life in the community. And with their grassroots land management and community-based organization of church practice, there is indeed a new form of life to which the reforested hills give witness. Meanwhile, an international Christian NGO has partnered with these groups to measure the amount of carbon they are sequestering, network them with other small groups around the region, and then sell the cumulative carbon credits to companies wanting to offset their greenhouse gas emissions. The NGO collects the payments and distributes small payments to each local group every three months, based on the proof of digital pictures they take of their living trees.

Here is an innovative set of mission practices: Christian engagement with climate change that starts from individual encounters with the redeeming Christ and leads to community-based resource management and a global network of carbon sequestration. The linkage of these practices calls out for missiological interpretation.

Or consider the Asian Rural Institute (ARI) in Nasushiobara, Japan. Begun by United Church of Christ missionaries in the early twentieth century and still “rooted in the love of Jesus Christ,” ARI is at once an experimental farm for sustainable agriculture, a training institute for NGO leaders from the Two-Thirds World, and a remarkable interfaith community. Working among its organic chickens, high-yield rice paddies, bio-gas generators, and onsite cannery, college volunteers, staff leaders, and NGO participants from around the world form a life together. The community requirements: everyone works, and everyone attends chapel. They decide together how to run the farm and why, and they take turns holding chapel, each in the tradition of his or her own faith.

The membership and practices of ARI present missiology with an integrative witness: religious, economic, and ecological alienations must be healed together, and the path to restored unity with each other and with God comes through learning the earth’s lessons. Missiology might consider interreligious understanding

For missiology the task of sustainability is at once theological and practical.
through ARI’s perspective that collaborative work to restore human communities to sustainability involves the earthly work of tending fields and the theological work of understanding one another’s relationship with God.

There are many more such initiatives, some explicitly environmental in focus, others accidentally so by reason of their contextual challenges, from all around the world and from all forms of faith. The task for the field of missiology is to help make them visible, facilitate their theological exchanges, and follow their challenge and promise for missiology itself.

**Conclusion**

This article has described a series of tasks for making environmental issues more visible, intelligible, and significant for missiology. As should be clear from the initial proposals and the practices that they imply, each of the tasks may be approached from a range of theological commitments and registers. Missiological engagement with environmental issues is an ecumenical task, requiring all Christians to show how the gifts of living with God make sense of the gifts of living on earth.

Missiology must ask questions such as: How does mission fit into ecological context? How, and how well, are Christian mission practices responding to environmental threats to community life? How does place matter for spiritual experience and geography for interreligious engagement? How might environmental mission practices help reimagine or reshape theologies of salvation, the patterns of Christian friendship, or the character of Christian witness? How do mission practices reframe questions about locality and sustainability, place and global community? How do they contribute to a practical theology of sustainable community? The answers will move toward theological description of the ecology of mission—the way mission makes creation matter for the experience of God.

**Notes**

1. This article reflects material from talks given at the 2003 Costas Consultation on Mission of the Boston Theological Institute, to training sessions for Episcopal Church missionaries from 2002 to 2005, and at the Overseas Ministries Study Center in 2007. Thanks to many participants for feedback. Some of the practical cases I mention are condensed from descriptions in Willis Jenkins, Ecologies of Grace: Environmental Ethics and Christian Theology (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008).

2. “Link” is David Bosch’s circumspect word, from his editorial introduction to the 1991 volume of Missionalalia 19, pp. 1–3. Although Bosch there affirms the case for a link, his own Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991) has almost nothing on environmental issues and little to say about missiological dimensions of creation.

3. My approach differs from Ross Langmead’s “Ecomissiology” in that these tasks do not correspond to any particular interpretation of ecotheology but are gathered broadly from the missiological literature and from representative examples of environmental issues in mission practice. See Langmead, “Ecomissiology,” Missionalalia 30, no. 4 (2002): 505–18. Most of my examples are from Anglican communities, by accident of my own experience, but they represent, I think, a wider movement.


6. Noting that the biblical narrative of God’s mission begins with creation, William Dyrness affirms that “this multifaceted work of God will always be the basic setting for our mission. . . . It is hard to see how any conception of mission that underestimates this context can be fully biblical” (Let the Earth Rejoice: A Biblical Theology of Holistic Mission [Westchester, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1983], p. 27).


15. Anticipating a subsequent task, Langmead shows how the trajectory of an ecological anthropology pushes toward reconsidered soteriology by going on to say that “incarnational missiology can be the platform for the inclusion of environmental concern in the scope of Christian mission, as the cosmic dimensions of God’s self-expression in the material universe are explored” (The Word Made Flesh: Towards an Incarnational Missiology [New York: Univ. Press of America, 2004], p. 225).


17. Consider the environmental dimensions to realizing or frustrating human capacities; see Martha Nussbaum, Women and Human Development (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000), especially pp. 94, 157–58.


24. For the phrase “living cosmology,” see John Grim and Mary Evelyn
“I love the PhD program in Intercultural Studies. It combines global breadth, intellectual depth, and a passion for effective missional thinking and practice. I have gained exposure and mentoring from outstanding professors, and I have learned intellectual and research skills that I needed to take the next step of leadership in my field.”

— Doctoral student Rick Richardson is an associate professor and director of the MA in evangelism program at Wheaton College.
31. On how Karl Barth’s theology worked to stave off Nazi theologies of place, see Jenkins, Ecologies of Grace, chaps. 8 and 9.
52. See Pobee, “Lord, Creator-Spirit,” p. 158: “Christian mission then should denounce the sins that deny, in not so many words, that God is Creator and sustains. . . . [Christian mission should] also set before and nurture people in a vision of what it is on the ground to acknowledge and confess the Triune God, as Creator and sustainer of the universe.”
53. The most noted example from this literature is John Cobb and Herman Daly, For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy Toward Community, the Environment, and a Sustainable Future (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994).
54. See www.tist.org.
Healing has been an important element in the proclamation of the Gospel from the very beginnings of Christianity. Jesus healed and ordered his disciples to do likewise in order to make the presence of the kingdom of God known, seen, and experienced (Matt. 10:8; Luke 9:2; 10:9). Healing was also one of the dominant features of spreading the Good News during the first centuries of the church’s existence. Summing up his findings on medical matters in the early church, Adolf von Harnack remarked: “Christian religion and the care of the sick have traveled a long way together in the course of history; as a result, they now are inseparable. . . . The influence and future of the church depend on her caring for those who suffer spiritually and physically. . . . This is definitely the meaning of the Gospel of the Savior and of salvation. The Early Church understood it this comprehensively. . . . And the only way that the Old Church remains young and the Young Church remains the old is that it keeps and preserves this understanding of the Gospel in its fullness.”

Despite the biblical mandate regarding healing and its early importance in spreading the good news of salvation for all (Mark 16:20), healing did not generally become a topic of concern for Christian missions until the advent of medical missions in the nineteenth century. There are two reasons for this delay: the disciples were explicitly charged not to make their living by healing (Matt. 10:8), and it took long centuries for medicine to become scientific. Early medicine, suffused with religion, was virtually indistinguishable from the cults of Asclepios and the Greco-Egyptian Serapis, which were extremely popular in Hellenistic times (approximately 300 B.C.E.–300 C.E.). Noted for their greediness and (not unlike today’s health-care system!) their constant demands for more and more donations, early medical practitioners made healing very expensive and thus unaffordable for desperate commoners. To become actively engaged in healing in this context would have compromised in no small degree the proclamation of salvation for all, which includes the command to provide healing dōrean (Matt. 10:8), that is, free of charge. The brother physician-saints Cosmas and Damien, who suffered martyrdom during the Diocletian pogrom about 303 C.E. and whose popular cult emerged in the fourth century, were commonly referred to as “the moneyless” because of their practice of not receiving payment from their patients.

When by order of the Roman emperors Gratian (375–83) and Theodosius (379–95) Christianity was made the official religion in the empire, and when in 391/92 all heathen temples in the empire were closed and their possessions confiscated and handed over to the church, shrines once dedicated to Asclepios oftentimes got “baptized” by simply turning them into a church or erecting a basilica on their site, which first had to be cleared of any idols worshiped there previously. Recent archaeological digs in Cyprus (Amathous, St. Tychon), at the foot of the Athens Acropolis, and especially at the St. Felix shrine at Cimitile-Nola, near Naples, allow us today to understand the transformations taking place. We have ample proof through texts, artifacts, and remains of buildings that the incubation so typical of the Asclepios cult was also practiced in Christian churches, when desperate people were allowed to sleep in church buildings in close proximity to the tomb of the local saint. Original sources indicate that such a practice continued until at least the tenth century, not only in Gaul or Italy but also, and even more intensely, in the eastern parts of the former Roman Empire, notably in Constantinople and in Syria and Egypt. Much more is to be expected from further digs. The many votive offerings already found and the size of the estates suggest that at certain sites Christ’s charge not to take payment in money or in kind for health blessings received might have been disregarded.

In any case, what could be done without compromising the faith was to care for the sick, including those beyond one’s own kin, thereby witnessing to God’s unconditional love for all humankind, something impressively epitomized in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–34), which many non-Christian religions view as the essence of Christianity. Caring for the sick—not healing per se, except for occasional testimonies to miracles—eventually became the hallmark of Christianity, fundamentally changing the overall societal attitude toward the sick, while active involvement in the healing arts was not on the agenda, at least not until the nineteenth century.

In fact, the official church developed an increasing dislike for the practice of medicine, especially surgery, during the course of the following centuries. This attitude became clear in 1215 at the Fourth Lateran Council, which ruled that no cleric should practice surgery, for fear of committing unintentional homicide. A priest should never shed blood. Later, even the study of medicine was prohibited for any religious. Yet in cases of necessity and in the absence of other medical help, clergy and religious, moved by pity and charity, did whatever they could under the constraints of the limited means and skills at their disposal, offering their services especially in the monasteries. Benedict of Nursia (480–550) had ordered his monks at Monte Cassino to serve the sick as if they were Christ himself (see Matt. 25:31–46) and to do whatever was needed to restore their health and well-being (Rule of Benedict.
36). Several centuries later, during the Crusades, the orders founded to care for the injured and their convalescence brought care of the sick and healing to the forefront. Prominent in this work were the Order of St. John of Jerusalem (or Hospitallers, 1099), the Knights Templar (ca. 1119), and the Antonines (1095). Later, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and despite the official prohibition of the church, healing ministries played a major role in the work of Franciscan and Jesuit missionaries. Care for the sick became a recognized duty for missions and missionaries once the New World was discovered, heralding the age of patronage missions (1492–1622). Thus the Spanish Consejo de las Indias (Council for the Indies) ruled that “hospitals”—that is, modest facilities for care of the deserving of every kind, such as lepers, widows, the poor, destitutes, orphans, and sick people for whom nobody cared—were to be built in every area under Spanish rule, notably in Mexico, Uruguay, and the Philippines, or where Spanish priests were active in ministry as in Japan, while in the territories under Portuguese patronage, charitable organizations called Misericórdia societies were established, whose members vowed to care for the needy, as had become a pious practice back home at Lisbon from 1498. In the eighteenth century the early Protestant mission societies such as the Danish-Halle Mission and the Herrnhut Brethren sent out professionally trained physicians to attend to the health-care needs of their missionaries suffering from tropical diseases, especially malaria, and also to treat indigenous people in case of illness. Nevertheless, the impact of such initiatives, which remained only marginal in this period, was severely hampered by the limitations on the kind of medical help that could actually be rendered. Such help was often not much better than the healing practices already in place in the local cultures. 

Medical missions became a means to various ends and highly suspicious for those interested only in straightforwardly religious goals.

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Mission and Healing in the Nineteenth Century

The situation changed dramatically during the nineteenth century, when medicine turned decisively away from its focus on the teachings of classical medical authorities like Hippocrates, Galen, and Avicenna and began directly to study the nature of the human body and its physiology. Such an approach had begun long before, as is indicated by the anatomical drawings of Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), by the seven-volume De humani corporis fabrica (On the Structure of the Human Body) of Vesalius (1514–64), and by the discovery of the circulation of the blood in 1628 by William Harvey (1578–1657). But this approach gained significant momentum only in the nineteenth century through three developments: first, the discovery of anesthesia (1846) and antisepsis (1847–1867), leading to the previously unimaginable rise of surgery; second, awareness of the importance of public hygiene and sanitation—providing safe drinking water and proper disposal of sewage—for the prevention of epidemics (1854–1859); and third, laboratory-based cellular pathology. This third development led to the age of bacteriology (Rudolf Virchow, 1821–1902; Robert Koch, 1843–1910; Ronald Ross, 1857–1932) and with it the discovery of the disease-causing pathogens of known epidemics, including those common in tropical countries, which led in due course to effective treatment and the development of appropriate measures of prevention. Physicians now could heal diseases previously considered fatal, thereby allowing Christian physicians once again to reconsider the scriptural charge of being sent by their Lord and Master to heal.

As much as medical missions is thus “an epiphenomenon of the development of medicine,” with medicine being transformed from an old-fashioned, authority-bound scientia into a modern science, it is also a consequence of the great missionary movement of the nineteenth century ignited by the Second Great Awakening. It first took definitive shape in the Medical Missionary Society in China, founded on February 21, 1838, at Canton (Guangzhou), with Rev. Peter Parker, M.D. (1804–88), its most renowned representative. This society was a joint philanthropic venture by missionaries, professional medics, and businessmen from different countries, different denominations, and even different religions (Parse, Chinese). They joined in this venture to guarantee institutional backing of hospital-based medical services provided by missionary physicians who were trained in rational-scientific medicine. They also wanted to provide free treatment of the kinds of diseases that traditional Chinese medicine could not handle, hoping thereby to befriend a xenophobic people. The enterprise thus became a means to various ends, the proclamation of the Gospel being just one among others, rendering it highly suspicious in the eyes of those who were interested only in the pursuit of straightforwardly religious goals.

As medicine was becoming more and more powerful and as an ever-increasing number of pious physicians determined to serve as missionaries yearning for “the evangelization of the world in this generation,” medical missions became “the heavy artillery of the missionary army,” as Herbert Lankester, then secretary of the Medical Committee of the Church Mission Society, London, characterized it in 1900. By the turn of the century, medical missions was deemed so essential that the Ecumenical Missionary Conference, held in New York in 1900, could declare that no mission could “be considered fully equipped that has not its medical branch.”

While these statements suggest that medical missions was being universally recognized, the reality was different. Only about one-fourth of all Protestant missionary societies were engaged in medical missions. The percentage of Protestant medical missionaries and their staff, both male and female, foreign and indigenous, reached its high point in 1923, when 5.6 percent (1,157 out of 20,569 total missionaries) were practicing medicine. Figures for later years dwindled. Despite these relatively modest figures, we can say that, by the turn of the twentieth century, medicine had become a topic of genuine concern for Protestant missions, albeit a controversial one.

With the exception of a remarkable initiative on the island of Malta during 1881–96 by the visionary Cardinal Lavigerie, a Frenchman and founder of the missionary order of the White Fathers, dedicated to missions in Africa, Roman Catholicism, bound by the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council, was remarkably hesitant to embrace medical missions. This situation changed dramatically in 1925, however, with the founding in Washington, D.C., of the Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries (Medical Mission Sisters) by the Austrian Anna Dengel, M.D., and with changes the Vatican announced in 1936 in its approach to the
study and practice of medicine by religious. Soon thereafter medical missions underwent a process of radical transformation, bringing about basic changes in former attitudes toward medicine by medical missionaries, nurses, and home boards.

Health Care as Focus of Medical Missions Today

The transformation of medical missions was mainly caused by the rapid advances in medical science, which demanded not only expensive high-tech equipment but also intensive medical care. These advances constantly required more adequate facilities and thus a corresponding financial and action-driven medical model. This trend provoked critical questioning of the goal of medicine. But the shift in emphasis of medical missions also reflected developments in health-care politics on national and international levels (especially the formation of the World Health Organization [WHO] in 1948, along with national departments/ministries of health), as well as the emergence of indigenous “young churches,” with their very limited financial resources. These developments prompted a reevaluation of medical missions across denominational lines and led to the creation in 1968 of the Christian Medical Commission (CMC) by the World Council of Churches (WCC), an ecumenical venture having Roman Catholic representation on its staff from its very beginning. This commission was charged with “responsibility to promote the national co-ordination of church-related medical programmes and to engage in study and research into the most appropriate ways by which the churches might express their concern for . . . health care.” In 1992 the CMC was renamed Churches’ Action for Health. Currently, the WCC’s program “Justice, Diakonia, and Responsibility for Creation” includes the project “Health and Healing,” which focuses on HIV/AIDS and mental health.

Today the healing arts and the task of medical missionaries are seen in a much broader context than before, clearly reflecting the postcolonial situation of a globalized Christianity. Christian medical work could no longer remain content with simply benefiting suffering individuals and running costly hospitals; rather, it needed to address the need for proper nourishment and hygienic living conditions, without which people would continue to become sick. Furthermore, it needed to recognize the rise of private and government health-care enterprises. Priorities had to be set for how best to invest the scarce resources at hand, priorities that of course were to be critically informed by the Gospel. These priorities were identified as promoting life in abundance and preventing untimely death, including about life in abundance and preventing untimely death, thereby profoundly critiquing other ways of doing medicine. This included the practical steps of providing adequate sanitation systems and safe drinking water, giving special attention to pregnant women and to training traditional midwives in

Notes

1. Adolf von Harnack, “Medizinisches aus der ältesten Kirchengeschichte” (Medical topics from the most ancient church history), Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur 8, no. 4 (1892): 147; emphasis in original.
Manasseh Kwame Dakwa Bediako, late rector of the Akrofi-Christaller Institute for Theology, Mission, and Culture, in Akropong, Ghana, was born on July 7, 1945. He died, following a serious illness, on June 10, 2008. Over many years he pointed others to Africa’s proper place in contemporary worldwide Christian discourse. He charted new directions for African Christian theology. He labored so that generations of scholars, confident equally of their Christian and their African identity, might be formed in Africa, and to that end he created a new type of institution where devotion to scholarship and understanding of the cultures of Africa would be pursued in a setting of Christian worship, discipleship, and mission.

These were huge undertakings, and he was called from them at the height of his powers, when still full of visions and plans for their implementation, the institution that was meant to model and facilitate all those visions still in its youth. It would be premature, therefore, to pronounce upon his legacy intended fruit. His achievements, great as they are, point to a will; decades must pass before it will be manifest how others, holding out a vision for the whole church in Africa and beyond, sending out a call to those who would heed it to dedicate themselves to scholarship as a costly form of Christian service. His life, his vision, and his objectives can be set out, but we do not yet know how far others will take up what he has laid down. It is as though we are present at the reading of a will; decades must pass before it will be manifest how others, in Africa and elsewhere, made use of what Kwame Bediako bequeathed to them.

Early Life

Kwame—he always used his traditional Akan “birth-day” name, indicating his birth on a Saturday—was the son of a police inspector and the grandson of a Presbyterian catechist and evangelist. Though his parents came from the central region of what was then the British colony of the Gold Coast, he grew up in the capital, Accra, at the Police Training Depot. His first schooling was thus not in his beloved mother tongue, Twi, but in the...
Accra language, Ga, in which he was also fluent. An outstanding pupil, he was able to gain secondary education at Mfantsipim School, Cape Coast, founded in the nineteenth century by the British Methodist mission. Missionary emphasis on education and an exceptionally enlightened period of educational policy under an exceptionally enlightened governor had given the Gold Coast some of the best schools in colonial Africa, and Mfantsipim was one of the best of these. Kwame received an excellent education of the English type. The period of his secondary education coincided with the transformation of the Gold Coast into Ghana, the first of the new African nations, led by Kwame Nkrumah, with his emphatic rejection of Western rule in Africa and high sense of Africa’s past glories and future destiny. Kwame Bediako left Mfantsipim as its head prefect and in 1965 entered the University of Ghana, set up after World War II with the aim of being an Oxbridge in Africa. There he developed as an eloquent orator and debater, a person who could make a mark in politics; he also attained the academic excellence in French that won him a scholarship for graduate studies in France and the promise of an academic career. By this time he was a confirmed atheist under French existentialist influence, apparently deaf to the pleas of Christian classmates.

In France he gained master’s and doctoral degrees at the University of Bordeaux, not surprisingly choosing African francophone literature as his area of research. During his time in France he underwent a radical Christian conversion—so radical that at one stage he thought of abandoning his studies in favor of active evangelism. Happily, he was persuaded otherwise; the time was coming when he would recognize scholarship as itself a missionary vocation.

His new life brought him new associates—above all, a fellow student of French, from England, who joined him in a mission to migrant Arab children. In 1973 Kwame and Gillian Mary were married, forming a wonderfully happy partnership that was rich both intellectually and spiritually. The following year came the Lausanne Conference on World Evangelization, enlarging Kwame’s world vision and deepening his acquaintance with other Christians from the non-Western world—or as he liked to call it, the Two-Thirds World. His studies now moved from literature to theology, and their base from France to London, where he took first-class honors in his theological degree. Then it was back to Ghana, to teach for two years at the Christian Service College (the name of the institution precisely describing its purpose) in Kumasi. Here the family links were rebuilt with the Presbyterian Church, where his grandfather had given signal service, and he was accepted for ordination in that church.

**Vocation to Theology**

Kwame’s evangelical convictions and credentials were manifest, but he was wrestling with issues that were not at the front of most evangelical minds, or on the agenda of most evangelical institutions at that time. Could Africans become fully Christian only by embracing the mind-set of Western Christians and rejecting all the things that made them distinctively African? Ordinary African Christians daily faced acute theological issues that were never addressed in the sort of theology that apparently served Western Christians well enough. It was not that the theology was necessarily wrong; it simply could not deal with issues that went to the heart of relationships with family, kin, or society, nor deal with some of the most troubling anxieties of those who saw the world in terms different from those of the Western world. Africans were responding to the Gospel, and in unprecedented numbers, but the received theology did not fit the world as they saw the world. Great areas of life were thus often left untouched by Christ, often leaving sincere Christians with deep uncertainties. Much evangelical thinking was not engaging with the issues of culture, or was doing so simplistically or superficially.

It was such concerns that brought the Bediakos back to academic study, and Kwame to a second doctorate in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland. At the same time Gillian took first-class honors in the master of arts in religious studies; she later went on to complete an Aberdeen Ph.D. in the area of primal religions.

Kwame’s studies pursued two lines of investigation. One lay among the then quite small body of African academic theologians. Why did the starting point of their thinking so often lie in the pre-Christian religion of their peoples, so rarely in the sort of topic thought interesting or important by Western theologians? Why did the efforts of pioneers such as Bolaji Idowu and John Mbiti cause equal disturbance in the evangelical stables in which they were nourished and among African intellectuals such as Okot p’Bitek, who had rejected Christianity?

Kwame pursued such questions in parallel with another question: how had the early church faced such issues? How had theologians in the Greco-Roman world dealt with questions that arose from Hellenistic culture, how viewed their pre-Christian intellectual, literary, and religious heritage, and their cultural ancestors? How far was it possible to be both Greek and Christian? His doctoral thesis, approved in 1983 and described by the external examiner as the best thesis he had ever read,1 explored how second-century theologians faced the issues posed for Christians by the Greco-Roman past, and how twentieth-century African theologians dealt with the African past. The similarity of the issues was striking; consciousness of identity was at the heart of both processes. The second-century question was the possibility of being both Christian and Greek; the twentieth-century question was the possibility of being both Christian and African. We are made by our past; it is our past that creates our identity and shows us who we are. We cannot abandon or suppress our past or substitute something else instead, nor can our past be left as it is, untouched by Christ. Our past, like our present, has to be converted, turned toward Christ. The second-century quest was the conversion, not the suppression or replacement, of Hellenistic culture, and in that case conversion had led to cultural renewal. Today’s quest is the conversion of African culture, and perhaps thereby its renewal. And second-century theologians discovered that God had been active in that past; with the same conviction African Christians could recognize that God always goes before his missionaries. Over the years that followed,
Bediako was to develop these ideas in his teaching and writing. The activity of the Divine Word, the signs that God had not left himself without witness in the African past, the multitudes of Africans coming to Christ in the here and now, all pointed to a special place for Africa in Christian history; but this special place lay within, and not separate from, the history of the church as a whole. All Christians share the same ancestors, and those ancestors belong to every tribe, kindred, and nation.

The Department of Religious Studies at Aberdeen at that time contained the embryo of the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World, better known in its later manifestation at the University of Edinburgh. In a lively mix of graduate students from many parts of the world, Africa was particularly well represented. For the most part their research topics fell into two categories that in many cases overlapped. Many were working in the area of the primal religions of traditional, usually preliterate, societies; others were engaged with the history, life, and thought of Christians in some part of Africa, Asia, or the Pacific. Increasingly, Kwame Bediako was drawn to the study of the primal religions and their relation to Christianity. These religions were primal in the sense of bring anterior to the so-called world religions. Throughout Christian history they have proved the most fertile soil for the Christian message, so that they form the background, the substructure as one might say, of the faith of a high percentage of the world’s Christians and influence their worldview. And the Bible, the Old Testament in particular, shows us a good deal about primal worldviews in action, instantly recognizable in Africa and many other parts of the world. Thus they are primal in a second sense, of being basic, elemental, reflecting fundamental elements of human response to the divine. Studies of writers of the conversion period in Europe,

**Kwame had a clear vision of what his ongoing work was to be, and pastoral concerns were at its heart.**

Bediako discovered—Gregory of Tours, for instance, or Bede, or Boniface—reveal how Western Christianity emerged in the interaction between the biblical tradition and the primal worldviews of the peoples of northern and western Europe. Western Christian history was also a story about the conversion of the past.

**Networking and Pastorate**

Kwame was meanwhile engaging in an activity that marked much of his life: building networks sustained by caring friendship. He established a link for mutual support and stimulus between African Christian researchers in Britain. It was the germ of the Africa Theological Fellowship, now linking scholars across the African continent. Contact continued with like-minded people in the Lausanne movement, such as Vinay Samuel from India and Tito Paredes from Peru, embodied eventually in the International Fellowship of Evangelical Mission Theologians (INFE-MIT), an international body in which leadership came from the Two-Thirds World and which gave rise to the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies.

Following the completion of his second doctorate, Kwame taught for a year as a temporary lecturer during a vacancy in the Aberdeen department. It was the first of a series of engagements that made him for some time part of the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World. That center moved from Aberdeen soon after Kwame finished his temporary lectureship, finding a new home in the Faculty of Divinity of the University of Edinburgh, and for many years Kwame was a visiting lecturer there. But his immediate call was to Ghana and to the pastorate of the Ridge Church in Accra. In colonial times Ridge Church had been the church of the expatriate officials; by this time it had a burgeoning and very diverse congregation, where Anglicans, Methodists, and Presbyterians in rotation provided the resident pastor. The three years (1984–87) that Kwame spent there were formative for him in what they revealed of the concerns, aspirations, and anxieties of African Christians, and in later years he was never less of a pastor for being a scholar and academic. Indeed, even before he left Aberdeen he had a clear vision of what his ongoing work was to be, and pastoral concerns were at its heart.

**The Akrofi-Christaller Centre**

With such formidable academic credentials as Bediako now had, a teaching post in the West could well have beckoned; in later years there were many such invitations, all firmly declined. In Ghana he could readily have returned to the university world; equally, he could have become a key figure in training for the ministry. But he had heard a call to theological scholarship of a sort that neither universities nor seminaries were yet able to mount. The assumptions underlying their programs frequently depended on Western intellectual models. But vast numbers of African Christians were continually facing situations that demanded theological decisions for which Western intellectual models provided no help. Fresh informed biblical and theological thinking, along with sensitive understanding of society, was needed to help in situations where the identity and obligations of Christians intersected with their identity and obligations as members of a family or a community or a state. In such cases textbook theology rarely provided answers.

Church tradition where Christianity had been received from Western sources in a period of Western dominance too often led either to blanket rejection of all things evidently African or to a division of life into parallel streams of “Christian” and “African” activities that never met. The end product could be a sort of religious schizophrenia, a fractured identity. The key theological issues of the day, as in the early Christian centuries, demanded integral identity, being simultaneously thoroughly African and thoroughly Christian, confidently Christian, assured that the Divine Word was taking African flesh and pitching his tent there. Theological reflection of this sort would require a new type of institution. Bediako had begun to visualize such an institution before he left Aberdeen. When he left Ridge Church in 1987, he found, with the full approval of his church and the support of friends in and beyond Ghana, an opportunity to put the vision into practice. The outcome was the Akrofi-Christaller Centre for Mission Research and Applied Theology, later called the Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission, and Culture. Its establishment and development lay at the heart of Bediako’s work for the rest of his life.

Any consideration of the life of Kwame Bediako must take account of the institute and the principles on which it was based. Crucial to its purpose was the commitment to Christian scholarship in Africa. Bediako believed that Africa was now, as a result of its experience as a major theater of Christian mission, a major theological laboratory, with theological work to do that would
Dr. Lalsangkima Pachuau
Associate Professor of History and Theology of Mission, Asbury Theological Seminary

C O M E . Not long after I began teaching in Bangalore (South India), someone asked, “Which institution do you recommend for a Ph.D. in Mission Studies?” My answer was “Asbury Theological Seminary.” A decade later, as a faculty member at Asbury, I realize how right I was! What an experience it has been to join the team I so admired where a well-balanced emphasis on both spiritual life and high academic standards distinguishes the quality of this scholarly community.

L E A R N . Even in the midst of school activities, I am learning to see that the love of God is the reason faculty members are here. At Asbury there is a spiritual life experience and an atmosphere which brings the best out of me in my work. It is simply a joy to work here! My wife and I are growing spiritually here and we are so impressed with the openness of the doctoral students.

S E R V E . I certainly believe I am called to a position that expects me to be an academician at the doctoral studies level. I find I serve best when I challenge students to dig deeper, to develop a level of analytical and reflective thinking, I serve at a seminary committed to academic excellence and to missions and evangelism.

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not and could not be done elsewhere. Furthermore, the shift in the center of gravity of Christianity from the global West to the global South that was such a feature of the twentieth century made the quality of African theological activity a matter of universal, not just continental, Christian concern. Africa needed scholars, and needed them not only for its own sake but also for the sake of the world church.

The Centre (as it was first named) came into being as a research institution. It was not long before it became a center of postgraduate study. Initially this was by means of an arrangement with the University of Natal (now the University of KwaZulu Natal) in South Africa. Under this arrangement students for the master of theology in African Christianity degree spent their first semester in South Africa and the second in Ghana, with Kwame and Gillian Bediako teaching in both places. Later, on the initiative of the Ghana government, the Akrofi-Christaller Institute became an independent postgraduate institution within the Ghana university system. It has seen a steady stream of success at the master’s level, but the master of theology program was from the first designed to prepare those with conventional theological training for specialist study and research in the fields of theology, mission, and culture in Africa, and the institute now has a small but significant group of doctorates to its credit. The aim of the center, however, was never merely to produce Ph.D.s (there are many recipients of such who do nothing for scholarship) but to produce mature, disciplined, dedicated scholars who recognize the pursuit of learning as a calling from God and follow it sacrificially. The institute set itself against shortcuts and soft options. Courses of study were often longer and more demanding than those at other institutions.

The institute also recognized that the duties of scholarship go beyond the boundaries of the academic world and certainly extend to informing the life and work of the whole church. The program for the institute in any year has typically included activities for ministers, catechists, Bible translators, and Scripture-use specialists. There have been workshops on Gospel and culture for Christian workers from all over the country, consultations on the local history of such major issues as slavery, and regular meetings of those engaged in writing Bible commentaries in the languages of Ghana.

The institute’s aim was to promote scholarship rooted in Christian mission. The word “mission” occurs in both the old and the new forms of its title. It marks the deliberate rejection of Western attempts at detached or uncommitted scholarship; Bediako saw the Christian scholar as holding responsibility in the church, and the church as needing the measured scholarly quest for truth, the scholarly activities of investigation and testing. At the same time, Bediako advocated—and practiced—public engagement of theology with other disciplines. He was elected a fellow of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences and was active in its affairs; he lectured for the academy on the religious significance of one of the pioneers of Ghana’s independence, J. B. Danquah.

The institute was intended to function as a Christian community; not only teachers and students but also office and domestics and catering and garden staff attended, participated in, and led daily worship. In many institutions scholarship had become an individual, even a competitive, activity, with career enhancement the driving motive. Tapping into an earlier tradition of Western learning, Bediako looked to the worshiping community, living in a situation of mission, as the proper matrix of scholarship.

The focus of the scholarship of the institute was on Africa—its religious, cultural, social, and linguistic realities, and the history, life, and thought of its Christians. The preparatory courses in the master’s degree program explored the principles underlying the interaction of Gospel and culture, the worldviews of primal societies, theology in Africa, the Bible in Africa, and Christian history in Africa from the early centuries and in different parts of the continent. The institute’s students have come from all over Africa, with a sprinkling from Western countries. The small resident faculty is supported by scholars from other parts of Africa. But the focus on Africa was always against a wider background. A course on World Christian history took account of two millennia and six continents, and that on primal worldviews considered the primal worldviews of the peoples of Europe and their early interaction with the Gospel. Bediako was essentially a world Christian. In particular, he was an advocate of what he called South-South dialogue. Bilateral arrangements between Africa and a Western partner were relatively easy to arrange, but potentially mutually beneficial links between Africa and Asian or Latin American partners were much harder to sustain. One of his last major undertakings, still in progress, was a collaborative study of primal religions as the substructure of Christianity, involving scholars from different parts of Africa, Asia, the Americas, and the Pacific.

The location chosen for the institute was itself significant. Akropong is a relatively small town, but it is the capital of the Akan state of Akuapem, where traditional patterns of rulership and the attendant rituals remain intact and there is great pride in a long and colorful history. The building that is the institute’s nucleus retains many features of its nineteenth-century Basel Mission origin and of its long association with the training of teachers and ministers of an earlier time. Within a short walk are the palace, scene of traditional activities such as the great Odwira festival of national purification, the vast old church, and the place of assembly, where the first missionary was received by the king of that day. The church, compounds in the town, and the institute’s own building carry names well known in the records of Akan church history. The whole town bears the marks of continuous interaction between the Christian Gospel and Akan society from the 1830s to the Internet age. It is a reminder of how richly stored Africa is with the materials for religious research. The linking of the names of Johann Gottlieb Christaller and Clement Anderson Akrofi in the institute’s title is also significant—the one a German missionary translator who devoted himself to the Akan language and traditional lore, the other a Ghanaian reviser of the Twi Bible and author of a grammar of that language. The vernacular principle in Christianity, the significance of theological expression in the mother tongue, and the capacity of African languages to illuminate biblical concepts were themes that Bediako regularly visited.

The Legacy

Kwame Bediako was the outstanding African theologian of his generation. A distinguished academic himself, he knew that academics were not the only theologians, and he drew attention to the informal or, as he would say, implicit theology to be found...
among people of little formal education. He delighted in the vernacular songs of Madam Afua Kuma, a traditional midwife and Pentecostal poet, who sang the praises of Christ in the exalted language of praise songs to traditional rulers. He called them “a liberating force for African academic theology and for the academic theologian.” He did perhaps more than anyone else to persuade mainstream Western theologians and mainstream Western theological institutions that African theology was not an exotic minority specialization but an essential component in a developing global Christian discourse.

Notes

World Christianity and Christian Mission: Are They Compatible? Insights from the Asian Churches

Peter C. Phan

Two terms in the title of this essay seem to cancel each other out and therefore prompt questions about their theological and pastoral compatibility. If Christianity is already a world religion, is there still a need for mission and evangelism? If there is, how should Christian mission be carried out in the context of world Christianity? These two questions are made all the more complex by the fact that both “world Christianity” and “Christian mission” are today highly contested concepts. To shed some light on these issues I begin with a discussion of what is meant by “world Christianity” and “Christian mission.” Next, I highlight some of the ways in which they seem to be mutually conflicting and then attempt to answer, on the basis of the experiences and teachings of the Asian Catholic churches, the questions of whether Christian mission is still mandatory today and, if so, how it should be done.

“World Christianity”: What’s So New About It?

In a sense, from its very birth Christianity has always been portrayed as a world movement with a divine commission to bring the Good News to all peoples, at all times, and in all places. This globality of Christianity is rooted in the universal mission of the Trinitarian God. The Christian God is professed to be the creator of the whole universe, and God’s providence and rule are said to extend beyond Israel to the entire human race and across the whole of human history. The risen Christ, despite his embeddedness in a particular moment of Jewish history and in a specific geography, is confessed to be the universal Lord, at whose name “every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (Phil. 2:10), and is proclaimed the savior of all, Jews and Gentiles alike. The Holy Spirit, who is the gift of the risen Christ, is poured out “upon all flesh” (Acts 2:17) so that “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21). While Jesus’ mission itself was limited to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 15:24) and while, during Jesus’ lifetime, the apostles were told not to visit pagan territory or to enter a Samaritan town but to go instead to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 10:5–6), after Jesus’ resurrection, when full authority had been given to him “in heaven and on earth,” the apostles were commissioned to “make disciples of all nations” and were assured of Jesus’ presence “always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:18–20). As a result of the universal destination and dynamism of God’s action in Christ and the Spirit, Jesus’ disciples will be witnesses to him “in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Clearly, then, Christianity is by nature a universal or global religion, and in the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, catholicity is professed to be one of the four marks of the church.1 What, then, makes the notion of “world Christianity” new or even controversial today? Of the many contributing factors, I will mention three.

A different history of Christianity—the myth of Christianity as a Western religion. A new way has recently been emerging of interpreting the history of Christianity.2 In popular church historiography, partly as a result of a jaundiced reading of Acts, Christianity has been portrayed as a religious movement that, though born in (southwest) Asia or the Middle East, from its very beginnings moved to the eastern part of the Roman Empire through Asia Minor and ended in Rome as its final destination, where Paul and Peter completed their apostolic...
It has become clear that Christianity is neither a Western religion nor a monolithic entity.

called mission lands, cannot be fully understood apart from their Asian-Semitic origins. Furthermore, there is a greater awareness of and appreciation for the diversity of early Christianity, so much so that it would be more accurate to speak of Christianities, in the plural, with their enormous variety of languages, cultures, theologies, liturgies, and church practices.¹

Historical studies of early Christian missions have shown the fallacy of the conventional reading of Acts, with its version of the Christian expansion toward Rome and the West. In fact, in the first four centuries the most successful fields of mission were not Europe, but (west) Asia and Africa, with Syria as the center of gravity of Christianity before 500. The most vibrant and influential Christian centers were found not in any city of the western part of the Roman Empire but in Asian and African cities such as Damascus and Antioch in Syria (where, incidentally, the followers of Jesus were first known as “Christians”), Edessa/Orhay in Osrhoene, Dura-Europos in Adiabene, Alexandria in Egypt, Axum in Abyssinia/Ethiopia; and in countries such as Armenia (which was the first Christian nation), India, and, in the seventh century, China. The non-Western character of early Christianity is shown in the fact that of the five ancient patriarchates, only Rome was located in the West, with one in the Eastern empire (Constantinople), two in Asia (Jerusalem and Antioch), and one in Africa (Alexandria).

Doctrinally, the first seven ecumenical councils, from Nicaea I in 325 to Nicaea II in 787, were held not in the West but in the East, where Trinitarian and Christological dogmas were formulated. The greatest theologians of the early church were also working in Asia, such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Athanasius, Bar-Daisan, Didymus the Blind, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Cyril of Alexandria, Aphrahat, Ephraem the Syrian, John of Damascus—and the list goes on and on. Even those who became influential in the West originally came from Asia, such as Justin and Irenaeus, and Latin theological luminaries such as Cyprian, Tertullian, and Augustine hailed from North Africa. As for spirituality, monasticism was an invention of the Egyptian Desert Fathers and Mothers.

Furthermore, even the so-called European or Western Christianity, whose apparent cultural unity was rooted in the Greco-Roman civilization of the Mediterranean world and was greatly facilitated by the use of Latin as a common language, was by no means unified. Rather, it was made up of various elements of Greek, Roman, Egyptian, and West Asian cultures. In addition, what was eventually referred to as European civilization was not the only one claiming to be the inheritor of the Greco-Roman civilization; besides the Holy Roman Empire, two other empires—Byzantium and Islam—were contenders for the same title. “Europa,” first used at the turn of the ninth century to refer to the geographic area controlled by Charlemagne, emerged as a unified cultural-political unity only in modernity and the age of colonialism, where it served as an identity marker separating it from the colonized continents. Within this Europe, Christianity was never monolithic, but pluralistic and multiple. Dale Irvin puts it succinctly: “Even in Europe, there has not been one church, one history, or one historical essence of Christianity.”²

If this is the reality of Christianity, then a different narrative of the Christian movement must be fashioned other than the one peddled by standard textbooks of church history, of which a version—admittedly somewhat of a caricature—is given above. Fortunately, serious attempts have been made recently in this direction. Besides the pioneering work of church historians such as Walbert Bühlmann, Andrew Walls, Kwame Bediako, and Lamin Sanneh, we should note the landmark two-volume work by Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist, in collaboration with a team of consultants, History of the World Christian Movement.³ In sum, to describe the historical developments of Christianity, the most accurate image is not that of a single, many-branched vertical tree, with the trunk representing the European Corpus Christianum of Christendom, but an image of rhizomes, that is, plants with subterranean, horizontal root systems, growing below and above ground and moving crab-like in all directions.⁴

A different history of missions—local Christianities. A similar historiographical revolution has been simmering in the field of the history of Christian missions. Again, to caricature somewhat, popular history of Christian missions has focused for the most part on what the Western churches—the “sending churches”—have done for the mission churches, the “receiving churches,” in the so-called mission lands. In commercial terms, the emphasis is laid on the “exporters” rather than on the “importers,” and on the exported merchandise rather than on how the imported merchandise is bought and put to use by the locals. In this historiography, the major bulk of the history of Christian missions is devoted to narrating the accomplishments as well as (though less often) the failures of individual missionaries, religious orders, missionary societies, and mission boards. The emphasis is on how well these agents and agencies have fulfilled the twin goal of missions, namely, saving souls and planting the church. The measure of success for the first goal is the number of conversions and baptisms, and that of the second is the establishment, or more precisely, the faithful replication, of the ecclesiastical structures of the exporting churches.

While not neglecting the narrative of the achievements and failures of foreign missionaries and mission agencies, contemporary historians of missions are less interested in the senders/exporters and the forms of the exported Christianity than in the
importers and their appropriation and transformation of the received product. Here, as in the field of the history of Christianity, the works of Stephen Neill, Kenneth Scott Latourette, Enrique Dussel, Andrew Walls, Lamin Sanneh, and many others are trailblazing. Neill argues that missions history should not be an extension of Western church history but a record of how indigenous Christianity comes into being and develops in its own context. In his monumental study of the expansion of Christianity, Latourette studies the effects of Christianity on its surroundings and of the surroundings on Christianity. Enrique Dussel’s historical project investigates indigenous forms of Christianity in Latin America. Walls has investigated at length the process of the transmission of the Christian faith through the missionary enterprise. While recognizing the colonial impulse inherent in modern missions, he has shown how the local churches, far from being passive receivers of the Christian message or victims of ecclesiastical colonialism, were self-conscious and active transformers of the Christianity exported to them from the West and have shaped it, and at times even subverted it, to meet their own cultural and spiritual needs.

By shifting attention from the exporters to the receivers, scholars in missions study have unearthed exciting new data and opened up new areas of research such as the role of women in missionary work, which had been neglected, at least in Roman Catholic circles, since the preponderant functions in the church were restricted to males. Similarly, greater attention has been given to the contributions of the laity to missions, which had also been ignored, since only the story of missions by the clergy was deemed worthy of telling. Furthermore, greater explorations have been made into the manifold contributions of Christianity to the local cultures in diverse areas such as linguistics, anthropology, history, philosophy and religious thought, literature, music and songs, dance, the plastic arts, architecture, and even economics and politics. What emerges is a more balanced and richer picture of Christian missions, not in order to refute the charges of colonialism and imperialism of which Western Christianity has at times been guilty, but to place Christian missions in the wider context of cultural preservation and transmission. Finally, and most important, in the history of Christianity as well as in the history of missions it has become clear that Christianity is neither a Western religion nor a monolithic entity. Rather, there have always been Christianities, even within Roman Catholicism, which, of all denominations, has most strongly and persistently promoted uniformity and centralization—fortunately, to no avail.

Tridentine Christendom, there is no gainsaying the fact that this demographic shift presents at least two formidable challenges. First, how should the churches of the Northern hemisphere and those of the Southern relate to each other? While the latter used to be called the younger churches or daughter churches with respect to the former, on which they depended for material support as well as personnel, this is no longer the case. The second, no less difficult challenge of the demographic shift in Christian population concerns the church’s evangelizing mission. If the membership of the church of the South will be greater than that of the church of the North, and if the faith life in the former is more vibrant than that in the latter, then who should evangelize whom? Now who should the exporters be, and who the importers? Furthermore, if the Christianity of the South is different in kind from that of the North, how should evangelism be carried out? To these questions I now turn.

What’s So Controversial About Mission?

Anyone with a passable knowledge of Christian missions needs no lengthy explanation of why missions have been in the doldrums, at least in the last fifty years, if by missions is meant the evangelizing enterprise carried out by Western expatriates in foreign lands. External reasons for this eclipse are many and varied, chief among which is the precipitous decline in the number of religious missionaries since the 1960s, a phenomenon nowhere more evident than in the Roman Catholic Church. More important than external contributing factors, however, are internal ones, which have to do with the changing theologies of mission itself. The very nature of the church’s mission was under scrutiny, and its theology was undergoing a complete overhaul.

There is no need to present here an overview of the theology of mission. David Bosch’s classic work Transforming Mission offers six paradigms of mission in the history of the church,
each inspired by a particular biblical text. A recent magnum opus on the theology of mission, Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today, by Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder, provides another overview of mission theology. After identifying six constant theological themes—Christology, ecclesiology, eschatology, salvation, anthropology, and culture, which are developed in various ways in different sociopolitical, religious, and institutional contexts—the authors outline four phases of Christian missions and theology of mission in the twentieth century: certainty, ferment, crisis, and rebirth.

In the current phase of the rebirth of mission, Bevans and Schroeder identify three contemporary models of mission that contain the various elements of David Bos’s “emergent paradigm.” The first, which is proposed by Vatican II and the Orthodox Church, regards mission as participation in the mission of the triune God. The second, which is found in Pope Paul VI’s Evangelii nuntiandi and the documents of the World Council of Churches, emphasizes mission as liberating service of the reign of God. The third, which is embodied in John Paul II’s Redemptoris missio and the documents of the evangelical and Pentecostal churches, proposes mission as the proclamation of Jesus Christ as the unique and universal Savior. Each of these three models, Bevans and Schroeder carefully note, has positive and negative features, and, according to them, “only a synthesis of all three will provide the firmest foundation for the model of mission” for the twenty-first century. This synthesis they call “prophetic dialogue.”

Toward a Synthesis

The last part of this essay explores how the experiences and teachings of the Asian Catholic churches can help develop this model of mission as “prophetic dialogue” and provide an answer to the two questions with which we started, namely, whether world Christianity has rendered Christian mission obsolete, and how mission is to be undertaken today.

A latecomer to the Asian scene in comparison with other religions, Christianity, like Asia itself, is characterized by diversity and pluralism. Practically all Christian churches and denominations are present in Asia today, with a long history of rivalry and collaboration, separation and union: Roman Catholics, Orthodox, various mainline Protestant denominations, Anglicans, Pente-

Noteworthy

Announcing

The American Society of Missiology/East and the Eastern Fellowship of Professors of Mission will hold their joint annual meeting November 7–8, 2008, at Maryknnoll Mission Institute, Maryknoll, N.Y. Borrowing William Carey’s 1792 phrase to “use means,” the gathering will examine the “present experience of mission agency in North America” from Roman Catholic, independent, conciliar, and local-church perspectives. For additional information, e-mail David Dawson, david.dawson@presbyn.org, or see www.omsc.org/asmeast.html.

The Center for North American Studies, Das Historische Seminar of the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt, and the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy, Berlin, will sponsor “Culture and International History IV,” their fourth symposium dedicated to the study of the role of culture in international relations, December 19–21, 2008, in Frankfurt, Germany. For details, e-mail Jessica Gienow-Hecht or Mark Donfried, ch@culturaldiplomacy.org.

The Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, University of Birmingham, is organizing the fourth conference of the European Research Network on Global Pentecostalism, February 6–7, 2009, at Fircroft College, Selby Oak, Birmingham, U.K. The theme is “Transnational Pentecostalism in Europe.” For information, contact Allan Anderson, University of Birmingham, a.h.anderson@bham.ac.uk, or visit www.globpent.net.

The biennial meeting of the American Society of Church History will be held April 16–20, 2009, in Montreal, Quebec, with the theme “Mission and Empire in the History of Christianity.” Presenters will explore “the ways that Christianity’s expansionist impulses have shaped the structure and exercise of political, cultural, economic, and social power by states and empires, as well as the ways that such entities have shaped the people, institutions, and cultures of Christianity.” For more information, e-mail asch2009montreal@gmail.com.

“Africa in Scotland, Scotland in Africa” will be the theme of a conference to be held April 29–May 1, 2009, at the Centre of African Studies at the University of Edinburgh (www.cas.ed.ac.uk). Brief abstracts are invited from prospective presenters, who should submit them before November 30, 2008, to the Center of African Studies, african.studies@ed.ac.uk. The conveners are Afe Adogame, lecturer in world Christianity, and Andrew Lawrence, lecturer in African studies.

An interdisciplinary symposium to honor the centenary of Bengt Sundklér (1909–95), Swedish Lutheran missionary to Africa, will be held May 17–19, 2009, in Uppsala, Sweden, with the theme “Telling Lives in Africa: African Biography, Autobiography, and Life Story.” Brief outlines of proposed papers are due by December 1, 2008. For more information, contact Kajsa Ahlstrand at kajsa.ahlstrand@telol.uu.se.

The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, Washington, D.C., and the Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianities, at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan, are sponsoring a research seminar, “Public Theology: Christian Political Thought in Global Perspective,” June 7–21, 2009, in Cape Town, South Africa. John de Gruchy, professor emeritus at the University of Cape Town and author of Reconciliation: Restoring Justice (2002), will lead the seminar. See www.calvin.edu/nagel for application information; the deadline is December 1, 2008.

Working under the aegis of Edinburgh 2010 (www.edinburgh2010.org), representatives from a number of strands of mission and church life are preparing an international conference to be held in Edinburgh, June 2–6, 2010, for the centenary of the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference. The theme will be “Witnessing to Christ Today: Edinburgh 2010.” Located at New College, University of Edinburgh, the project is led by international director Daryl Balia (daryl.balia@ed.ac.uk).

Bogotá, Colombia, was the setting March 2–7, 2008, for the Consultation on Scripture Use in the Vernacular, a gathering of 139 people from thirteen Latin American countries representing twenty-nine ethnic groups, as well as people of Hispanic origin and members of missionary organizations.
costals and evangelicals, and numerous indigenous Christian churches and groups. Of these churches, the largest is Roman Catholicism, and within the Catholic Church itself there are ancient and at times competing "rites," or, more accurately, vastly different theological, liturgical, and canonical traditions.

The teaching on and practice of mission within Asian Catholicism are inevitably shaped by the sociopolitical, economic, cultural, and religious contexts of Asia as a whole and by the demographic situation of Christianity in particular. Concerning the latter, as has often been pointed out, often with a sigh of regret, after more than five centuries of active mission, Christians make up, according to David Barrett, at best 5.3 percent of the Asian population, a not-too-encouraging figure for those interested in the numbers game and the bottom line. Despite the recent breathless reports about "how Christianity is transforming China and changing the global balance of power," to use the subtitle of David Aikman's book, and the growing rapprochement between the Vatican and Beijing, the prospect of a mass conversion of the Chinese to Christianity, if past history is any guide, is more a fantasy than realistic prognosis. The same thing must be said about India, which together with China constitutes almost one-third of the world population. Thus, in spite of Pope John Paul II's conviction that "the character, spiritual fire and zeal" of Asian Catholics "will assuredly make Asia the land of a bountiful harvest in the coming millennium," sober analysis will quell such enthusiasm. In other words, the thesis of the southward movement of world Christianity requires severe qualification, at least with regard to Asia. In answer to our first question, then, the emergence of world Christianity does not at all invalidate the necessity of Christian mission.

The issue then turns on how Christian missions should be carried out in Asia, with its three characteristics of extreme poverty, cultural diversity, and religious pluralism. To answer this question, the Asian Catholic bishops invoke two basic concepts: a new way of being church and a new mode of doing mission. In terms of ecclesiology, the church is defined primarily as a "communion of communities." Hence, this Asian way of being church places the highest priority on communion and collegiality at all the levels of church life and activities. On the vertical axis, communion is realized with the Trinitarian God, whose perichoresis (indwelling) the church is commissioned to reflect in history. On the horizontal level, communion is achieved with the indigenous community and leaders when planning any ministry.

The eScholarship Research Centre and the School of Historical Studies at the University of Melbourne launched an open-access online publication in July 2008, Evangelists of Empire? Missionaries in Colonial History. The collection of papers offers "evolving new histories" focused on Australia and other colonial sites. To read the collection, visit http://msp.esrc.unimelb.edu.au/shs/index.php/missions.

Personalia

Appointed. Daniel Jeyaraj, as professor of world Christianity and director of the Andrew Walls Centre for the Study of African and Asian Christianity at Liverpool Hope University. An IBMR contributing editor, Jeyaraj is a leading authority on the Tranquebar Mission and the emergence of eighteenth-century Protestant churches in India. For the 300th anniversary celebration in 2006 by India’s Protestant churches of the arrival there of the first Protestant missionary to India, Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg (1682–1719), Jeyaraj translated two major monographs by Ziegenbalg from German into English and wrote a definitive biography of this father of the modern missionary movement. Jeyaraj is also chief editor of Dharma Deepika: A South Asian Journal of Missiological Research. He is an ordained presbyter of the Diocese of Tirunelveli, Church of South India.

Died. Andrew C. Ross, senior lecturer in ecclesiastical history (1966–98) and dean of the Faculty of Divinity and principal (1978–84), New College, University of Edinburgh, Scotland, July 26, 2008, following diagnosis of a brain tumor. In addition to lecturing and writing, he also was associate director of the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World (1986–98). Prior to his university appointment, Ross, an ordained minister in the Church of Scotland, was a minister of the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian (1958–65), in Nyasaland/Malawi. Ross wrote four books, including David Livingstone: Mission and Empire (2006), and numerous articles, as well as contributions to books and reference works. He influenced the teaching of Christian history from a global perspective.

Died. Manasseh Kwame Dakwa Bediako, founder and director of the Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission, and Culture (www.acmghana.org), in Ghana on June 10, 2008, following a lengthy illness. Bediako started what was known until recently as the Akrofi-Christaller Memorial Center for Mission Research and Applied Theology in the former Basel Mission premises in Akropong-Akuapem. He became director part-time in 1985 and full-time in 1987. For twelve years he was visiting lecturer in African Theology at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. Author of Jesus and the Gospel in Africa: History and Experience (2004) and several other books, Bediako was former chairman of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Mission Theologians. (See “Kwame Bediako and Christian Scholarship in Africa” on page 188.)

Died. Ralph Edward Dodge, 101, United Methodist missionary and bishop, on August 8, 2008 in Inverness, Florida. A native of Terril, Iowa, Dodge was born January 25, 1907. After missionary service in Angola (1936–41 and 1945–50) with his wife, Eunice Davis, Dodge was secretary for Africa and Europe for the Methodist Church’s Board of Missions. As bishop for central and southern Africa (1956–68), he was an outspoken advocate for justice and African leadership, which led to his deportation in 1964 from white-ruled Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). He authored three books: The Unpopular Missionary (1964), The Pagan Church (1968), and his autobiography, The Revolutionary Bishop (1986).

other local churches; and within each local church, communion is realized through collegiality, by which all members, especially laywomen and laymen, are truly and effectively empowered to use their gifts to make the church an authentically local church. In particular, the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC) highlights the absolute necessity of making the laity, especially women, the principal agents of mission if the church is to become the church of, and not simply in, Asia.

As for the new mode of mission and the way to become the local church, the FABC prescribes dialogue. It is important to note that dialogue is understood here not as a separate activity (for example, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue) but as the modality in which everything is to be done by and in the church in Asia. Hence, dialogue is not a substitution for proclamation or evangelization, as Asian theologians have sometimes been accused of believing; rather, it is the way, and indeed the most effective way, in which the proclamation of the Good News is done in Asia.

It is important to note also that dialogue as a mode of being church in Asia does not refer primarily to the intellectual exchange among experts of various religions, as is often assumed in the West. Rather, it involves a fourfold presence:

- **The dialogue of life**, where people strive to live in an open and neighborly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations.
- **The dialogue of action**, in which Christians and others collaborate for the integral development and liberation of people.
- **The dialogue of theological exchange**, where specialists seek to deepen their understanding of their respective religious heritages, and to appreciate each other’s spiritual values.
- **The dialogue of religious experience**, where persons, rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual riches, for instance with regard to prayer and contemplation, faith and ways of searching for God or the Absolute.

As for concrete forms of dialogue, the FABC suggests that this dialogue take place in three areas: with the Asian poor, their women, the principal agents of mission if the church is to become the church of, and not simply in, Asia. Hence, dialogue is not a substitution for proclamation or evangelization, as Asian theologians have sometimes been accused of believing; rather, it is the way, and indeed the most effective way, in which the proclamation of the Good News is done in Asia.

**Dialogue is the most effective way in which proclamation of the Good News is done in Asia.**

Notes

3. Perhaps the best image of this view of Christian history is the way in which airlines depict their hubs (in this case, Rome), with a thick net of lines crisscrossing the globe to the various destinations of their flights.
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4. Even so-called Western Christianity was far from being monolithic. Historian Peter Brown has shown that it contained great linguistic and cultural diversities, for example, among Noricum, Ireland, Francia, Frisia, Germany, and Rome. See his Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200–1000, 2d ed. (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2003).


7. For the notion of rhizome as the metaphor for historical developments, see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1987), pp. 3–25.


12. Kollman notes three new developments in church history or the underlying this work, see Irvin, Christian Histories, Christian Traditions. Irvin argues for histories that would take into account the multiple origins, the diverse developments, and the significant ruptures of the Christian tradition within a wider family of traditions.


18. For their elaboration of this model of mission, see ibid., pp. 348–95.


23. This lack of conversion to Christianity does not reflect negatively on the nature of the Christian message but is the result of the dynamics of religious conversion itself. See Peter C. Phan, “Conversion and Dispensations as Goals of the Church’s Mission,” in Phan, In Our Own Tongues, pp. 45–61.

24. The Catholic episcopal conferences in Asia are members, either full or associate, of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences. The FABC was founded in 1970 on the occasion of Pope Paul VI’s visit to Manila, Philippines. Its statutes, approved by the Holy See ad experimentum in 1972, were amended several times and were also approved again each time by the Holy See. For the documents of the FABC and its various institutes, see For All the Peoples of Asia: Documents from 1970 to 1991, ed. Gaudencio B. Rosales and C. G. Arévalo (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1992); For All the Peoples of Asia: Documents from 1992 to 1996, ed. Franz-Josef Eilers (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1997); and For All the Peoples of Asia: Documents from 1997 to 2002, ed. Franz-Josef Eilers (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 2002). These will be cited as For All Peoples, followed by the year of publication in parentheses.


32. Kleden, “Missio ad Gentes,” p. 188.
My Pilgrimage in Mission

John Driver

My pilgrimage in the Spanish-speaking world for more than six decades has defined my life of mission. It has shaped my vision of the world, my ideology, and my understanding of the Gospel and mission. For my intellectual and spiritual growth, I owe as much, if not more, to my brothers and sisters in Puerto Rico, Uruguay, Argentina, and Spain (and many more throughout Latin America) as I do to my own Swiss-German biological and spiritual ancestors.

I was born in 1924 and was raised in a vital Mennonite congregation in Hesston, Kansas, and in a loving biological family. Both the congregation and my family were nurturing and compassionate and implicitly as well as explicitly encouraged vocation to Christian service and mission. As a conscientious objector during World War II, I was assigned to Civilian Public Service in a relief training unit in preparation for an eventual postwar relief assignment overseas. In 1945, at the age of twenty-one, I was invited by the Mennonite Central Committee to serve in a community development project in Puerto Rico. This was my introduction to the Spanish-speaking world. Working there as a social worker in the mid-1940s, and later as a pastor and church planter in the 1950s and 1960s, I came into contact with the fruits of poverty in a way that I had never before experienced. In rural central Puerto Rico, families were attached as tenant farmers (agregados), by economic necessity, to the lands of the large landholders. Their very lives depended on the economic assets and limited largesse of these landowners. In such a context, the easiest way for a family to break the cycle of poverty seemed to be to provide healthy sons for the United States military during the years of World War II and later the Korean War. Members of the military were able to send money home to their families. Although I had friends whose lives were shattered by their war experiences (some came home as alcoholics, and others were disabled), some families benefited economically from the consequences of war. The parents of one of my acquaintances were finally able to put a very modest roof over their heads thanks to the “blood money” they had received as indemnification from the federal government for the death of their son. The challenge of helping to obtain health care for these indigent people further underscored for me the plight of those living in extreme poverty.

My work with victims who were caught in the web of extreme poverty provided me with a new perspective from which to view the world of the poor, who in the Gospels are declared to be the objects of God’s infinite love. Later, when I began to read statements by the Latin American bishops about God’s “preferential option for the poor,” the language made sense to me. In this process I had come to view the world as I believe God views it: from the bottom side of history, from the perspective of the poor, the marginalized, and those without power, rather than from the perspective of the powerful and the institutions under their control.

Following my first year in Puerto Rico, in December 1946, Bonny Landis and I were married. She was from Jackson, Minnesota, and we had met earlier in college. During the years that I was serving in Civilian Public Service assignments as a conscientious objector, Bonny had graduated from a three-year course in nursing. Together we volunteered for another term of service in Puerto Rico which, as it turned out, was life changing and led us into our long-term commitment to mission.

Montevideo Inter-Mennonite Seminary

Following nearly eighteen years of service in community development, church planting, pastoral care, and leadership formation in the church in Puerto Rico, I was invited to serve as academic dean and professor of church history and New Testament in the Inter-Mennonite Seminary in Montevideo, Uruguay. Bonny and I arrived in Uruguay with our three children in January 1967. Cynthia had been born in 1951 in Goshen, Indiana, while I was completing my studies at Goshen College and Goshen Biblical Seminary. Wilfred (1953) and Jonathan (1956) were born in Aibonito, Puerto Rico, during our first term of service under the auspices of Mennonite Board of Missions (MBM).

A time of considerable social effervescence and political turmoil was beginning. The series of national liberation movements that would eventually sweep the Latin American continent from the southern cone to Central America during the next thirty years was just beginning. Visionary reformers were proposing profound changes in the traditional social, economic, and political structures, dividing both Catholics and Protestants. When the ruling powers resisted the revolutionaries, the confrontation became violent. In this milieu all persons were expected to align themselves either with the advocates of radical social change or with the traditionalists. For us in the seminary community, it provided an occasion for rereading the Scriptures and for revisiting our Anabaptist origins, asking if there might not be another response to the current challenge, a “third way.”

In 1970 John Howard Yoder took a sabbatical assignment

John Driver, a longtime missionary, teacher, and writer in the Spanish-speaking world, is the author of numerous books in both Spanish and English on themes of church history, theology, peace, and mission. John and his wife, Bonny, currently live in retirement in Goshen, Indiana. —johnhd@goshen.edu

John and Bonny Driver
in lower South America, during which he taught in the Union Theological Faculty in Buenos Aires and in the Inter-Mennonite Seminary in Montevideo. In addition to teaching courses in ethics, history, and theology in these institutions, Yoder compiled and edited an important collection of sources from the sixteenth-century Radical Reformation, the first such anthology to appear in Spanish. He also lectured in InterVarsity student circles in Argentina and exerted a considerable influence on evangelical leaders later associated with the Latin American Theological Fellowship.

I vowed to become more intentional in making a radical vision of the Gospel, together with a reading of our context, key elements in my witness.

Joining the Radical Reformation

In 1971 Yoder taught a seminar entitled “The Radical Reformation” at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries in Elkhart, Indiana. Wilbert Shenk, then overseas secretary for MBM, challenged the participants in this seminar by posing a question relating to the “Anabaptist vision”—a statement of Anabaptist/Mennonite understanding outlined in 1943 by Harold S. Bender highlighting the essence of Christianity as discipleship, a voluntary church membership, and an ethic of love and nonresistance in all human relationships. Shenk asked, “Why hasn’t this vision made any appreciable difference in the way Mennonites carry out God’s mission in the world?” This question became a catalyst prompting my reflection, to a degree that I had not intentionally pursued before, on the meaning of a radical reading of the Scriptures and of the church’s history for understanding God’s mission in the world. I vowed to become more intentional in making a radical vision of the Gospel, together with a reading of our context, key elements in my witness. This event proved to be a crucial moment in the course of my journey for sharing an Anabaptist and liberationist perspective on the Gospel.

During the years that followed in the Inter-Mennonite Seminary in Montevideo, I had many opportunities to teach and reflect on these themes in a context of revolutionary violence. In the early 1970s, Uruguayan, Argentine, and Brazilian Protestants were among the first to articulate a theology of liberation. By this time their Catholic counterparts were doing the same throughout Latin America. Our efforts were spurred on by the plight of seminary colleagues, both faculty and students, who were being unjustly imprisoned and tortured by national security forces zealous to stamp out all vestiges of what they judged to be subversion.

During these years my ecclesiology course in the seminary contained, along with a number of more traditional units, sections entitled “The Church and Revolution: Radical Community and Social Change” and “Economic Relationships Among the People of God.” The course provided an opportunity to revisit radical renewal movements throughout Christian history and to reread the biblical texts.

I also became increasingly uneasy about the approach to the history of the Christian church commonly followed by mainline church historians, one emphasizing institutional development and the expansion of the church’s spheres of influence. At this point in my journey I attended a lecture in Buenos Aires by Enrique Dussel, a well-known Argentine church historian and Catholic exponent of liberation theology. He argued that the real history of the Christian church is the story of its participants, the common men and women who, in their faith commitment to Christ, live out their mission in their common life together as the people of God in the world. The story should therefore be told from their perspective, from the “bottom side,” rather than being the story of bishops and Christian princes and the institutions they have created in their struggles to impose their hegemony. I immediately recognized this view of history as being the most consistent with the biblical story itself, as well as with the Anabaptist vision.

Invited by the Argentine Mennonite church in January 1974 to lead a series called “Bible Studies in the Anabaptist Mode,” I prepared materials that appeared first in Spanish and then in English. René Padilla, editor and director of Certeza, InterVarsity’s publisher in Latin America, gave the book its title, Comunidad y compromiso (1974). The English version, Community and Commitment (1976), included an additional chapter that I wrote while in Spain. I soon received invitations to lead Bible studies at youth retreats in Colombia and Argentina. The materials for the study of the Sermon on the Mount that I prepared for these occasions, and later used in other settings, were eventually published in Spanish as Militantes para un mundo nuevo (1978) and in English as Kingdom Citizens (1980).

In 1975 the Mennonite Missionary Fellowship invited Samuel Escobar and me to present lectures at their annual meeting held at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries. These lectures, together with an introduction by the highly regarded missiologist R. Pierce Beaver, were later published as Christian Mission and Social Justice (1978). Beaver quite candidly recognized that churches in the Anabaptist tradition, such as Mennonites and others in the Believers’ Church family, are in a position to make a vital contribution to our common Christian search for a more full-orbed vision of God’s mission in the world. He pointed out that it is not a question of Christian mission or social justice, but rather Christian mission and social justice. Thanks to the sociopolitical context in which we lived and witnessed in the late 1960s and 1970s, to the encouragement from Mennonite mission leaders like Wilbert Shenk, and to colleagues in Latin America such as Samuel Escobar, René Padilla, and Orlando Costas, we were able to reread the Scriptures and the history of the church in ways that otherwise would surely have escaped us and to come to better understand the Gospel of peace and justice and the church as a missional community of God’s kingdom.

Radical Christian Communities in Spain

The Mennonite seminary in Montevideo was closed at the end of 1974, and Bonny and I were invited by Mennonite Board of Missions to go to Spain to accompany Spanish expatriates who had become Mennonites in Belgium and were returning to Spain to initiate a Mennonite presence and witness in their homeland. In addition to reflecting together with our Spanish Mennonite
brothers and sisters about the shape their witness might take, the MBM encouraged me to accept opportunities for teaching.

My relationship with Escobar and Padilla from InterVarsity in South America opened doors to InterVarsity in Spain. I was invited to teach in their circles in Madrid and later in Barcelona. I found a remarkable openness to a radical vision of an alternative church history, a Believers’ Church ecclesiology, an ethic of peace, and other themes that are essential parts of an Anabaptist vision. Before long the first copies of Comunidad y compromiso arrived in Spain, and I was eventually invited to share its message in congregations scattered throughout the Iberian Peninsula.

In both Madrid and Barcelona I was invited to teach in Bible institutes of churches affiliated with the Evangelical Alliance in Spain. In Madrid I taught a course on the history of the church and its ecclesiology from the perspective of the Believers’ Church. To my surprise, the unedited outlines that I had used for teaching were published in 1978 as a 126-page paperback.

By 1977, together with Spanish Mennonite leaders, we had determined that Mennonites in Spain would seek to form a community of witness and service in Barcelona. Our understanding of the church was essentially missional. By sharing our resources, we were able to free members of the community to give encouragement to the Spanish conscientious-objector movement (which no other denomination in Spain at that time had dared to do) and to serve in a sheltered workshop for mentally challenged adults. The community was eventually able to set up a home for the elderly, as well as a residence for mentally challenged adults, as expressions of its Christian mission.

In 1977, while residing in Madrid, my wife and I quite unexpectedly received a visit from a member of an emerging radical Christian community in Burgos. The community had somehow gotten hold of a copy of Comunidad y compromiso and, upon hearing that I was living in Madrid, invited me to visit and share biblical studies of the kind I had provided in the book. This invitation initiated a relationship with an entire network of radical communities that was forming across the northern half of the country. We were invited to accompany the movement with teaching, counseling, and writing projects until the end of our stay in Spain eight years later. Essays and presentations on peace that I shared in congregations and university settings throughout Spain during this period were published under the title El Evangelio: Mensaje de Paz (1984; 2nd ed. 1987).

The conservative evangelical churches of Spain generally would have nothing to do with this network of radical communities. However, operating within the framework of our charge as Mennonite missionaries to “witness in Spain with an accent which is specifically Anabaptist,” we saw in this movement the emergence of genuinely missional communities of faith. Without waiting until they were duly organized, the communities simply began to share their common life together, to meet and to worship and to offer a ministry of rehabilitation to the victims of drug addiction in the hippie culture from which many had themselves come. They soon added a prison ministry, with a halfway house for those released without any other viable way to make a new start in society, and a hospice for those with AIDS. In this emerging network of radical groups across northern Spain, worship and work were combined in a way that made them true communities in mission.

Meanwhile, opportunities to teach in traditional evangelical congregations and institutions continued, but not without controversy. The idea that peace and social reconciliation are essential components of the Gospel was new in some circles. Some community leaders were surprised to learn that there had been conscientious objectors to military service among early Plymouth Brethren in Great Britain, as well as a radical questioning of the relationship between church and state as it is set forth in Anglicanism’s Thirty-nine Articles. When, while teaching a course on ethics at a Bible institute in Madrid, I questioned whether Anselm’s satisfaction theory of the atonement, which was developed in the context of a feudal society in medieval Europe, provided the most adequate conceptual framework for understanding the saving work of Christ, denominational leaders began to lose confidence in my theology. In spite of initiatives to restore relationships, I was counseled to rethink my understanding of Christ’s saving work.

When I told Shenk, the MBM secretary for Europe, about this painful experience, he simply replied, “You should write on this theme.” I wrote a first draft, and Shenk organized a consultation that included representatives from all of the Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren seminaries in the United States. He also asked me to share the principal themes from the manuscript at the annual MBM Overseas Missionary Orientation in 1981. I received a number of valuable insights and suggestions from colleagues at both of these events, which I gladly incorporated into the text. When Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church was finally published in 1986, in many ways it represented a consensus of current Anabaptist thought. The Spanish version, La obra redentora de Cristo y la misión de la iglesia, appeared in 1994.

When we returned to Spain in late 1981, Shenk proposed another assignment for me: to work on the theme “Images of the Church in Mission.” In addition to sharing in the life and mission of the community in Barcelona, we continued to serve other radical communities with encouragement, counsel, and teaching. I was therefore able to incorporate the biblical metaphors these radical Christian communities were finding useful in their search for more truly evangelical expressions of church life and mission with themes I was finding in my own reading and reflection. Not until the mid-1990s, however, did this project finally come to fruition, when I was invited by the Seminario Anabautista Latinoamericano in Guatemala (SEMILLA) to teach a course in ecclesiology. This invitation provided the opportunity to share with brothers and sisters in Central America, where social conditions were often quite similar to those of the early church. The community’s enthusiastic responses encouraged me to see the project through to completion, resulting in Images of the Church in Mission (1997; Spanish version in 1998).

Back to Montevideo and Latin America

At the end of 1984 a call came from lower South America to help in the formation of church leadership. The radical Christian communities in Spain were blessed with able leaders and had achieved a sense of identity as missionary communities that would make them institutionally viable. Early in 1985 Bonny and I returned to Montevideo, where I taught in the Mennonite...
Study Center and wrote on the Anabaptist and biblical themes that had occupied me for the previous decades (e.g., biblical interpretation, history, ecclesiology, pneumatology, mission, peace, and justice). Conducting class sessions in the study center and producing manuscripts for student reading and reflection eventually led to the publication of a number of books in Spanish. A course titled “A Biblical Theology of the People of God” led to the production of Pueblo a imagen de Dios . . . hacia una visión bíblica (1991). The contents of a course on pneumatology, which benefited considerably from student participation, appeared as El Espíritu Santo en la comunidad mesiánica (1992).

During this period at the study center in Montevideo, I began to receive a series of invitations to teach in other parts of Latin America. Church leaders representing all the countries of Central America attended my course on Anabaptist ecclesiology, which SEMILLA published as Contra corriente: Ensayo sobre eclesiología radical (1988; rev. eds., 1994 and 1998). This time in Central America was the beginning of an extensive relationship with the Anabaptist family scattered throughout Latin America.

Anabaptism and Liberation Theology

During these years of my pilgrimage, peace proved to be one of the principal themes for discussion, outside as well as inside Mennonite circles, including with the exponents of liberation theology. Leonardo Boff, the well-known Brazilian Franciscan, for one example, in a book entitled Teología desde el lugar del pobre (1986), has a chapter with the suggestive title, “Cómo predicar la cruz hoy en una sociedad de crucificados” (How to preach the cross today in a society of crucified people). There he envisions the redeeming power of suffering love with a clarity that has become, quite literally, good news for the poor. It is a gospel of salvation with power to save even the enemy through change and reconciliation—has opened the way to restoration for the oppressor as well as healing for the sufferer. In such a context my mission in Latin America developed.

For many years Wilbert Shenk has been a stimulus to deepening my thinking on mission. In administering the MBM, Shenk was persistent in his vision of the church as missional. He urged his colleagues to see the church and mission in its first-century context and to read the writings of the New Testament as missional documents. This thrust was true as well of themes he suggested to me along the way for reflection and writing. It was especially evident in a project he organized with a number of us who had been involved in mission in Europe, Africa, Latin America, and Asia. In 1989 and 1990 he assigned us to give presentations in overseas mission seminars on an array of biblical, theological, and historical themes. The essays that resulted were eventually incorporated into a book that was edited by Shenk and published under the title The Transfiguration of Mission (1993).

In 1989 Bonny and I retired to Goshen, Indiana. Throughout my years in mission in the Spanish-speaking world, I saw the Gospel of Jesus Christ become, quite literally, good news for the poor. It is a gospel of peace and justice (righteousness) in their full-orbed biblical senses. It is a gospel of grace communicated most authentically by a reconciled and reconciling community of grace. It is a gospel of salvation with power to save even the enemy through the redeeming dynamic of vicarious, innocent suffering freely assumed with a view to redeeming the oppressor. Even though this cross of suffering is imposed, Boff writes, it will not have the last word. It is possible to accept this cross, and even death, as an expression of love and communion toward the oppressor. Forgiving and freely assuming the cross of suffering that is laid upon us is a way of redirecting the course of history toward that ultimate reconciliation that will include all, even the enemy.

In pursuit of this redemptive third way, my pilgrimage in Anabaptism and my encounter with liberation theology coincide. The radical fifteenth-century Czech reformer Peter Chelcicky, living in an era of unimaginable social injustice, oppression, and human suffering, wrote that the salvation of oppressors would come only through the suffering of the oppressed. In a context of social injustice, this statement seems to be preposterous, but it expresses an understanding that I find present in the testimony of the early church (“Christ also suffered . . . the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God,” 1 Pet. 3:18). I witnessed this dynamic being lived out in amazing ways in the suffering of brothers and sisters in Latin America during the turbulent final three decades of the past century. Unspeakable suffering—assumed in the hope of transforming relationships through change and reconciliation—has opened the way to restoration for the oppressor as well as healing for the sufferer. In such a context my mission in Latin America developed.

Throughout my years in mission in the Spanish-speaking world, I saw the Gospel of Jesus Christ become, quite literally, good news for the poor.
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The Legacy of James Dougall

Kenneth R. Ross

James W. C. Dougall was born on April 8, 1896, in the town of AUCHTERARDER in Perthshire, Scotland. He grew up in a strongly Christian home. His mother was well known locally for championing the cause of temperance, a powerful popular movement at that time. His pastor was James S. Stewart, who later became one of Scotland’s most celebrated preachers and published highly valued volumes of sermons. Growing up nearby was Nan Eadie, who became his childhood sweetheart; in 1924 they married. Theirs was a very strong marriage, based perhaps on an attraction of opposites, as Nan’s fiery, emotional, and temperamental character contrasted with the calm, dispassionate, and diplomatic personality of James. They were blessed with four children but had the sadness of losing one son at the age of fifteen.

James was educated at George Watson’s College in Edinburgh, Glasgow Academy, and Perth Academy. He served in the Observation Corps in the First World War, an experience of which he never spoke. He completed his M.A. at Glasgow University in 1919 and proceeded to Trinity College, Glasgow, to prepare for ordination to the ministry. During these years he was greatly influenced by the Student Christian Movement, and through it he became interested in missionary work. The memory of the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference was still fresh in Scotland, and it cast its spell over young Dougall, causing him to think of giving his life to “the evangelization of the world in this generation.”

The calling to missionary service found expression, following ordination in 1923, with Dougall’s acceptance of a major responsibility in Africa as secretary of the Phelps-Stokes Commission (1923–24). This commission, the initiative of New York–based philanthropists, examined the situation throughout Africa in order to determine how education might best be developed. Its reports led to the colonial governments’ taking much greater responsibility for education in the African community. For Dougall it was a unique opportunity to develop an extensive familiarity with the African situation. He therefore already had wide experience when he began his work in Kenya, where from 1925 to 1931 he served as principal of Jeanes School in Kabete, and from 1932 to 1936 as educational adviser to the non-Roman Missions in Kenya and Uganda. His eleven years there left him with a deep sense of identification with Africa and its people.

Dougall returned to the U.K. in 1936 to become a secretary of the Conference of British Missionary Societies. His position enabled him to develop a wide range of contacts and connections. Particularly influential was friendship with Joe and Mary Oldham at a time when Oldham was at the height of his influence on missionary and ecumenical thinking. In 1940 Dougall embarked on what was to be twenty years of service in the secretariat of the Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee, as associate secretary from 1940 to 1946 and general secretary from 1946 to 1960. On his retirement, the committee recognized that “with his unique knowledge and experience of the World Church, his outstanding gifts and his unusual insight into the nature of missionary trends, he has been the guide, inspirer and formulator of the policy of the Committee in recent years.” Finally, he was elected to serve as convener of the new Overseas Council, which brought together all the Church of Scotland committees concerned with overseas work, from 1964 to 1969. After the death of his wife, Nan, in 1977, it was said that “there was a darkness about him.” Three years later, on November 9, 1980, he died quite suddenly in Edinburgh.

The Primacy of Evangelism

Taking up office as Foreign Mission Committee general secretary soon after the end of the Second World War, Dougall was alert to the reality that the world was rapidly changing and that the missionary enterprise would have to change to meet the new situation. In preparing the report of the Special Committee on Policy established at that time, Dougall therefore made the point that its “enquiry starts from the assumption that the world in which the Church lives has so changed that the particular form of the mission of the Church to the world has to be re-examined and restated. . . . It is impossible to escape the conclusion that the missionary task for this generation involves new perspectives, means and methods if we are to be faithful to the Truth which marches on.” It was a time of ferment and a time of reform. Dougall sought to bring his understanding of the missionary task and apply it to the rapidly changing context.

A theme to which Dougall returned again and again is the primacy of evangelism in the mission of the church. It might seem to be stating the obvious to say that the missionary enterprise is about sharing the Christian faith with those who do not adhere to it. Yet Dougall was deeply aware of the possibility of being distracted from this primary purpose. While, as we shall see, he took a broad view of the nature of Christian mission, he cherished above all its evangelistic core. Anything that distracted from this primary purpose. While, as we shall see, he took a broad view of the nature of Christian mission, he cherished above all its evangelistic core. Anything that distracted from the essential task of sharing the good news about Jesus Christ was the object of suspicion. A primary guiding principle for Dougall was his conviction that “the traditional and central urge of missionary enthusiasm has always looked beyond the Christian community to those who were without, to the people who sat in darkness because the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ had not illumined their hearts and lives.” As he surveyed the...
situation around him in the immediate postwar period, he noted “the urgent need for a recovery of the evangelical impulse. By this I mean a concern in the Church at home to witness to what God has done for men through His mighty acts in Jesus Christ, and through that witness to bring individuals to accept Christ as Lord and Saviour. So stated, evangelism is the life-blood of the missionary movement.”

In Dougall’s mind, the missionary enterprise was exposed to the particular danger of having its energies absorbed in administration. It was a question of the good being the enemy of the best. No one would dispute that a great deal of good was done by the assiduous labors of thousands of missionaries who administered the great educational, industrial, and medical institutions that the missionary movement had created. The difficulty that registered itself with Dougall through many reports from the field was that missionaries were so exhausted by the demands of administrative work that they were scarcely able to attend at all to the primary task of evangelism. He was ever eager to break new ground and was thrilled, for example, when the Church of Scotland was able to take a lead in the development of pioneering evangelistic work in the north of Ghana in the 1950s. The eye for the frontier, for the new departure, for the opportunity to take the Gospel of Christ where it had not been heard before—this was at the heart of the strategic thinking developed by James Dougall. Even as he was about to retire, in his final circular letter to the missionaries in India and Pakistan he made the point that “the more we try to do in and through institutions and inter-church aid . . . the more necessary it is to concentrate on the unfinished evangelistic task of the Churches.”

**Education at the Heart of Mission**

By midcentury a clear division was already appearing within Protestant Christianity between those whose understanding of mission centered on evangelism and personal conversion and those who stressed the transformation of the whole community. Whereas at the start of the century many would have understood themselves as both “evangelical” and “ecumenical,” these terms steadily became the watchwords of two separate camps. In this increasingly polarized context, Dougall’s zeal for the priority of personal, one-to-one evangelism could not be questioned. Yet combined with it was a broad vision of the renewal of society under the influence of the Gospel. In one of his earliest writings he had already made this clear: “For the Christian missionary, as for his Lord, there can be no conflict between individual conversion and social regeneration, between God’s grace in the human heart and Christian discipleship, between continuous evangelism on the one hand and education with a dominating Christian motive on the other.” It was characteristic of Dougall’s perspective when the Foreign Mission Committee Report to the 1957 General Assembly stated that “mission in the Biblical sense is the task of the whole Church to the whole life of the world . . . Many have conceived it as reaching with the Christian message every human being on the surface of the globe. That is part of it. But human life has depth as well as extension.”

This perspective was one that he sustained through all his years in office. He shared with Max Warren, his counterpart at the Anglican Church Missionary Society, a suspicion of any tendency to separate sacred history—Heilsgeschichte—from the outworking of history as a whole. The conviction that the whole of history belongs to God and is the stage on which the drama of God’s purpose is unfolded united these two notable postwar British general secretaries. In his theology of mission, Dougall continuously protested against what he described, borrowing R. H. Tawney’s words, as “a dualism which has emptied religion of its social content and society of its soul.” In one of his final speeches to the General Assembly he quoted Dag Hammarskjöld’s words that, “in our era, the road to holiness necessarily passes through the world of action,” and then added, “We might well say that the road to mission passes this way also.”

This determination to avoid dualism and achieve a “bifocal” approach in the missionary enterprise found particular expression in regard to education. From its earliest years, Scottish involvement in overseas mission had been marked by an emphasis on education. Dougall is a prime exemplar. His first assignment after ordination was to serve as secretary of the Phelps-Stokes Commission, which inquired into the development of education in Africa. In the Duff Lectures given after his retirement, it was clear that his passion for education as a central plank in the missionary enterprise was as strong as ever. Arthur Wilkie, the influential Scottish educational missionary who served at Calabar, the Gold Coast, and Lovedale in South Africa, was acknowledged by Dougall as an inspiration and mentor in this area. In the Duff Lectures he recalled the strong claims that Wilkie had made for the educational dimension of Christian mission: “Education is not outside the primary plan of Christian missions, but lies at the very heart of it. It is the finest God-given instrument for the evangelisation and upbuilding of a new Africa.” While education in Scotland was to become increasingly secularized, Presbyterian churches in Africa took this vision to heart and, often against great odds, sustained and developed the educational programs begun by the missionaries.

**Indigenization and Contextualization**

Dougall’s African experience left him impressed with the need for the indigenization of the faith. Like many sensitive European missionaries, he was struck by the deep religious awareness of African communities and by the strength of African traditional religion. His early writings anticipate themes that occupied the first generation of academic African theology when it emerged in the second half of the century: sensitivity to spiritual reality, the value of African Traditional Religion as preparation for Christianity, and the potential for Christian worship to incorporate traditional customs. In expressing a longing for a truly African Christianity, and the potential for Christian worship to incorporate traditional customs. In expressing a longing for a truly African Christianity, as well as for a Christian Africa, Dougall was representative of the best of the Scottish missionary tradition. He was prepared to articulate its theological implications. Far from a tabula rasa approach to the missionary task, Dougall argued that “we will find that their worship becomes most truly spiritual and moral when we do not deny or condemn but expand the meaning of what they already accept, reveal the best which is already implied and carry them further by means of the momentum of their Native aspirations and needs. Our worship will employ elements of the traditional practice of western denominations, but its character
should be recognisably African.” In forming such an approach in the 1920s, Dougall anticipated the theological direction that African churches would take when they gained responsibility for their own affairs later in the century.

Though the term “contextualization” had not yet been introduced into theological discussion, Dougall anticipated this approach. He was constantly struggling to understand the developments unfolding around him and to discern their meaning in relation to the missionary purposes of God. His strong sense of all history being God’s history meant that the contemporary context must always be taken with the utmost seriousness: “To proclaim Christ as Lord is to say that He is Lord of the revolutions in Africa and that He is at the centre of African history now.”

Such an understanding led Dougall to the radical realization that the Christian message requires to be constantly rethought and restated as it is introduced to a new situation. As he wrote to Ronald Orchard in 1958, “Absurd as it may seem at this hour of the day, I think we need to look again at the question, What is the Gospel? . . . isn’t it true that many questions of missionary policy vex us because we are not quite clear what the Gospel is?” This is the question prompted by contextualization. When the specific challenges of a changing context are taken to heart, then the question of “what the Gospel is” becomes the burning one.

**Changed Relations of Missionary and Church**

A major development that occupied much of Dougall’s attention was the changing role of the missionary. Whereas his own missionary formation had taken place at a time when it was assumed that Western missionaries would direct the work of the missions for many years to come, from the late 1940s high on the agenda was the need to hand over authority to the indigenous church. It was time to rethink the missionary vocation. Dougall liked to quote the new definition offered by Lesslie Newbigin, who described the missionary as “the agent of the help which one part of the Church sends to another for the discharge of the common missionary task.”

While recognizing that, in the future, missionaries would go not to establish their own missions but rather to serve the indigenous church, Dougall was very anxious to sustain the traditional understanding of the missionary vocation. Against a trend suggesting that missionaries might serve for shorter periods of time, Dougall included the following protest in the report to the General Assembly of 1948: “In spite of the attraction which short service offers, it cannot be regarded as satisfactory for the Younger Churches to have people who do not stay long enough to speak the vernacular and who may not be fully committed to missionary service, though willing for a time to go abroad.”

Counseling one young missionary, he stressed the importance of learning the local language: “Inability to speak the vernacular will be a severe handicap for you in getting to real grips with the people’s most intimate needs, and now’s the time to determine that it shall be tackled.” Counseling another, Dougall emphasized the value of long experience in missionary work: “All of us make a succession of mistakes in Africa during our first years of missionary service, and no ability can take the place of the cumulative understanding of the African himself, which grows with the years.”

The relation of church and mission was a vital area of discussion in these years. The Willingen Conference of the International Missionary Council in 1952 caught the spirit of the time when it pronounced that “we should cease to speak of missions and churches and avoid this dichotomy not only in our thinking but also in our actions. We should now speak about the mission of the Church.” This answered a question that had been ripening as the twentieth century advanced: what is the relationship between the Western missions and the indigenous churches to which their witness gave rise? Dougall saw the changes of the mid-twentieth century as an opportunity to build a new kind of relationship between “older” and “younger” churches, one that would be both necessary and enriching: “We Christians of the Older Churches can no more stand alone in this post-Christian era without the fellowship of the Indian, Chinese, and African Churches than they, without us, can be perfected in their mission. We need each other as we need Him who is able to make both Home and Overseas one. . . . Is this not God’s call to His people to close their ranks and to rejoice in their conversion from individualism and isolationism into the world-wide fellowship of giving and receiving, which is both the mirror and the means of His healing, forgiving, and transforming love for all the nations?”

Already in 1947 the Foreign Mission Committee’s Report to the General Assembly was anticipating the new emphasis on partnership in mission when it spoke of the “worldwide fellowship of giving and receiving” to which we belong as “both the mirror and the means of [God’s] healing, forgiving, and transforming love.”

While Dougall played a leading role in promoting the handover of responsibility from the mission to the church, he was equally concerned that mission should be found at the heart of the church’s concerns. He was fond of quoting the Foreign Mission Committee Minute of 1947 that stated, “The Church of Scotland has from the beginning regarded its foreign missionary enterprise as an integral part of the life of the Church, springing of necessity from the nature of the Church itself. It has in the same way placed at the centre of its concern the bringing into being of living branches of the Church in other lands which should accept for themselves the same missionary obligation, the discharge of which is one of the essential marks of a living Church.”

This confidence in the church as the proper agent of mission was not naive. Dougall knew well how easily the church could become preoccupied with its internal affairs and push its missionary obligations to the margins. He struggled long and hard against apathy and indifference, sometimes casting an envious glance in the direction of the missionary societies that had a dedicated corps of enthusiastic supporters. Yet for him it was a theological imperative that missionary concern is the concern of the whole church, no less integral to its being than the maintenance of its ministers or the upkeep of its buildings. Much of his work was devoted to reminding the church of its missionary character and challenging it to give proper priority to worldwide missionary work in its planning and organizing.

James Dougall could be regarded as a conservative, even Canute-like, figure. His work could be understood as an effort to fight...
a rearguard action to maintain the foreign mission enterprise of the Church of Scotland when trends both at home and abroad demonstrated that its time had passed. However, amid this approach that greatly valued the tradition of missionary work built up over the years, strands emerged that proved to be forward looking and prophetic—the indigenization of the faith, the contextualization of the Gospel, the church as the agent of mission, the partnership of churches in mission, and new models of missionary service. Above all, at a time when the church’s foreign mission enterprise was apparently going into decline, Dougall was able to set it in a theological context that opened up new horizons: “The mission of the Church does not originate in Edinburgh or in Geneva or in Rome, but in the eternal will of God the Father and in the historic mission of the Son into the world and in the dispersion of the primitive Church in the power of the Holy Spirit. There is but one mission in all six continents, which means that all Christ’s people in every land are, or ought to be, involved in a fellowship of faith for the advancement of his kingdom at home and in all the world.”

This perspective enabled him to call the church, as one episode in mission drew towards a close, to look to “the next missionary impulse.” In this way he served as a bridging figure, connecting the church’s missionary tradition to new frontiers and new ways of working that now appeared on the horizon.

### Notes

1. I mention here my sincere thanks to James Dougall’s children—Rev. Ian Dougall, Dr. Angus Dougall, and Mrs. Lizmay Fleming—and to his daughter-in-law Rev. Elspeth Dougall for their willingness to share their memories of his life and service. I am also grateful to the Scottish Church History Society for permission to include material that was published in my article “James Dougall, 1896–1980: Architect of Post-war Scottish Foreign Mission Policy,” Scottish Church History Society Records 37 (2007): 183–206.


16. Ibid., p. 87.


24. Ibid.

25. Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee, Minute 8799, April 15, 1947, quoted, for example, in Reports to the 1957 General Assembly, p. 453.


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James Dougall’s official papers are found within the archives of the Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee at the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh. His private papers, including his diary, are in the care of his son Angus Dougall.


**Works About James W. C. Dougall**


Book Reviews

How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity.


The Blessing of Africa: The Bible and African Christianity.


By the end of the twentieth century, as all now recognize, dramatic shifts within global Christianity saw Africa emerge as a major heartland of the faith and African Christianity as a prominent representation of Christianity’s nature and prospects. Among African scholars, however, efforts to define the African Christian identity, mainly to uncouple it from the imprint of European missionary domination and defend the African pre-Christian religious tradition, long remained the dominant preoccupation. In the immediate aftermath of colonial rule this approach enjoyed considerable appeal, but widespread acknowledgment of African Christianity’s global significance has rendered such a defensive posture passé.

In recent years, more self-confident explorations of African Christianity in a global context have emerged, as prominent African scholars engage in critical exploration of its place and relevance within global Christianity. In Whose Religion Is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West (2003), for instance, Lamin Sanneh makes the case that the expansion of Christianity in the non-Western world—the indigenous discovery of Christianity—provides important lessons for the modern secular post-Christendom West. The recently published Africa Bible Commentary (2006) also reflects this growing consciousness that African Christianity has much to offer the world of Christian scholarship. Quite clearly, there is still much work to be done, which is why Thomas Oden’s How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind and Keith Burton’s The Blessing of Africa are timely and noteworthy monographs.

Commissioned by the Center for Early African Christianity (an international consortium of schools and scholars), Oden’s work is a clarion call for a robust historical and theological reassessment of early African Christianity. The book’s central argument is that intellectual developments within early African Christianity shaped world Christianity in decisive ways. Contrary to entrenched views among Western scholars, Oden argues, the flow of intellectual leadership in the first five centuries of Christian history moved largely from Africa to Europe—south to north. Basic strands of both Eastern and Western traditions of Christianity—including spiritual formation through monastic discipline, the European university, Christian dogma, and exegetical rules and methods—were therefore formed and fomented in the crucible of ancient African Christian life.

Oden attributes long-standing neglect and ignorance of this historic African heritage to deep-seated prejudice within Western scholarship. But he reserves his strongest admonitions for contemporary African scholars and church leaders. He charges that their strenuous efforts to fashion a new African Christian identity are bedeviled as much by inattentiveness to this rich African heritage as by misconceptions of the African tradition inherited from modern scholarship. This charge is not without foundation. Then again, no mention is made of major works like Ghanaian theologian Kwame Bediako’s Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Modern Africa (1999), which scrutinizes early African Christianity in a way that informs the modern African Christian experience. Still, Oden makes a compelling case that a reappropriation of Africa’s ancient apostolic tradition not only affirms the indigenous nature of African Christianity but also recovers its historic relevance within world Christianity.

Burton’s The Blessing of Africa also attempts to place African Christianity in its wider global context, but there the similarity ends. The book focuses on “biblical Africa” and the historical significance of African peoples and events as depicted throughout Scripture. Its basic premise is that biblical Africa—which the author equates with the “land of Ham”—had geographic boundaries that extended far beyond the modern African continent, encompassing “Saudi Arabia and the countries that share its peninsula, the western regions of the Middle East, including Israel, Iraq, and Lebanon, and possibly the southernmost parts of modern Turkey” (p. 19). This conception, which speculatively associates biblical Put with sub-Saharan Africa, will be strongly contested. It also renders the book’s title somewhat misleading.

Yet this comprehensive study offers some compelling arguments and useful insights that challenge conventional assumptions about geographic Africa and about African ethnicity and racial identity. As is to be expected, Eurocentric reading of the Bible, the Crusades, and colonial Christianity receive withering criticism. But readers expecting a robust or novel treatment of the Bible and modern African Christianity will be disappointed—in this regard, Philip Jenkins’s The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South (2006) has much more to offer. Perhaps because of its historical links to biblical Israel, Ethiopian Christianity is covered in interesting detail, and the interface between the Bible, the Qur’an, and Islam is thoroughly explored. The book’s revisionist approach will attract scholarly censure, but the case for a fresh look at the significance of Africans in the biblical record and the impact of the Bible on the African story is convincingly made.

In important ways these two books confirm the monumental tasks that confront a new generation of African Christian scholars.

—Jehu J. Hanciles

Jehu J. Hanciles, a Sigma Lambda, is Associate Professor of Mission History and Globalization in the School of Intercultural Studies, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California.

God’s Terrorists: The Wahhabi Cult and the Hidden Roots of Modern Jihad.


Here is a very readable account of the succession of movements that led directly from eighteenth-century Arabia to the bin Laden of today. By tracing these links, Charles Allen, a British writer who is an authority on British India and South Asian history, has provided an indispensable tool for understanding “Islamic fundamentalism” and “Islamism” today.

Wahhabism begins as a very conservative and puritanical movement under the leadership of Muhammad ibn Abd Al-Wahhab and, after entering into an
alliance with the ibn Saud family, conquers the whole of Arabia. It is then taken to the Indian subcontinent by Syed Ahmad, where it mutates into a much more hard-line and aggressive form of Islam, creating “a highly effective organisation for Islamic revival and revolution” (p. 111) with “a well-thought-out plan to overthrow the British” (p. 125).

Wahhabism also inspires the Ahl-i-Hadith and Deobandi movements, which have had a profound influence on Sunni Islam in South Asia, inspiring resistance to all forms of Western imperialism. The line then continues through the pan-Islamism of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in the 1920s and Jamaat-i-Islami in Pakistan in the 1940s, and then finally to Sheikh Abdullah Azzam, the most influential mentor of Osama bin Laden.

Allen says in his preface: “This history offers no solutions but does illustrate patterns of behaviour, successes and failures from which lessons might be drawn” (p. xi). In his very last sentence, however, he points to one highly significant lesson: “remove the grievances and mainstream, moderate Islam stands a better chance of reasserting itself” (p. 297). If this book needs to be read in mission colleges, it is even more important that it be read in the White House, the Pentagon, and other government offices around the world!

—Colin Chapman

Colin Chapman, an ordained Anglican, now retired, worked for seventeen years in the Middle East (mostly in Egypt and Lebanon) and taught at Trinity College, Bristol, and Crowther Hall, Selly Oak, Birmingham.

Catholics in Indonesia:
A Documented History.
Vol. 1: A Modest Recovery, 1808–1903;


These two volumes on the modern Catholic history of Indonesia are a stupendous achievement. Each volume comprises, first, a substantive narrative history of missionary work and church development and, second, a large number of primary documents (ninety-eight in vol. 1; forty in vol. 2). Most of the documents are in Dutch, but each is preceded by an English précis. For those not proficient in Dutch, the English précis are so rich as to make one’s intellectual tongue salivate. Finally, each volume is replete with statistics and contains lists of ecclesiastical authorities, the names and biographical details of priests, brothers, and sisters, as well as short descriptions of the major orders that provided missionaries.

Karel Steenbrink’s work is an example of the high-quality publications and research carried on by the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (part of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences), which is located in Leiden. It is also an example of the kind of church history we need to help understand in depth the factors that lead to success in nurturing self-ministering, self-supporting churches. The author’s background in the study of Islam and the social sciences makes this a deeply textured, satisfying work. It should be in every library that has a serious collection of mission history.

Chapter 12 of volume 1, “The Construction of Complex Religious Identities,” is a good example of the rich texture of

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Steenbrink’s sociohistorical analysis. Not interested simply in institutional mission history, the author relates Catholic and Protestant church growth to anthropological research into the cultural background of converts and larger dimensions of religious change underway. He identifies what Indonesians were seeking, and he is fully aware both here and in earlier chapters that Indonesians overall were moving from local religions toward Asian religions, Islam, and Christianity, which were engaged in what Steenbrink calls “asymmetric competition,” negotiating a fundamental shift from local, tribal identities to universal identities mediated by these great traditions.

Of special interest is the subtext of volume 2, as conveyed in its title, The Spectacular Growth of a Self-Confident Minority. Nineteenth-century Dutch Catholic missions represented a recovery from the collapse of Portuguese efforts begun in 1534, the success of which was stymied by the Dutch in the seventeenth century. Overall, Steenbrink shows that the missionaries succeeded in nurturing a local clergy, congregations of religious orders, and a laity that was strong in Catholic identity. The rapid growth of these orders since 1960 has astounded the Catholic world.

—William R. Burrows


The Lamb Enters the Dreaming: Nathanael Pepper and the Ruptured World.


This well-written book describes early Christian missionary activity among the Aboriginal people of Australia in a new and refreshing way. The author, not a Christian believer, nonetheless provides a sympathetic view of what transpired between missionaries and Aboriginal people 150 years ago.

The book is based on the conversion of Nathanael Pepper, a Wotjobaluk man of the Wimmera region of Northeast Victoria, and his encounter with Moravian Christian missionaries in the very early days of the Australian colony. This was a time of social Darwinism, when indigenous people were often considered to be inferior and destined for extinction. In this case, as Kenny examines in much detail, it was not science that worked to promote humane treatment of Australia’s Aboriginal people but the “faith in our commonality” (p. 341), which came from Christian missionaries.

The Wotjobaluk world the missionaries entered in 1858 had already shown signs of a deep rupturing, particularly through contact with settlers, loss of traditional lands, and newly introduced diseases. In those early years of contact, the decimation of the local population was extreme: numbers dropped from many thousands to several hundred. Pepper himself died at the age of thirty-six.

The metaphor of the lamb lies at the heart of this book. As the colonizers’ sheep represent the victims of the violence imposed upon the land and spiritual world of the Wotjobaluk people, the missionaries offered another lamb to heal that wound. “What they brought was a means to understand the suffering that this rupture had caused” (p. 334). As Pepper comes to grapple with the meaning
of Christianity for him and his people, his journey begins to imitate that of the One whose Gethsemane experience first catalyzed his conversion. Not only does Pepper suffer from chronic illness, but his conversion also impacts his arranged Christian marriage and relationship with his own family and people.

In dismantling an ideology that suggests that indigenous people cannot make informed decisions about Christian conversion, Kenny has done us—and indigenous people—a service. At the same time, he reminds us how interpretations of the past can reveal contradictions in our present. We would do well to be more attentive to the meanings and experiences that indigenous people bring to being Christian.

—Brian F. McCoy

Brian F. McCoy, S.J., a Postdoctoral Fellow in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health at La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia, has spent most of his adult life in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in northern Australia.

China’s Millions: The China Inland Mission and Late Qing Society, 1832–1905.


Alvyn Austin, born in Calcutta to China Inland Mission (CIM) missionaries, is a veteran historian and adjunct professor at Brock University (St. Catharines, Ontario). He presents a comprehensive overview of the origins and evolution of the non-denominational CIM, which by the end of the nineteenth century had become the largest Christian missionary organization in China. Although he covers the same period as Alfred (not Anthony, as the index has it) James Broomhall’s seven-volume study Hudson Taylor and China’s Open Century (London, 1981–89), Austin takes a rather different approach. He does not want to produce another hagiography of Taylor but focuses instead on the Chinese adherents, the “foot soldiers” of the CIM. Austin singles out Xi Shengmo, also known as Pastor Hsi, who had been a member of a heterodox sect. After his conversion Xi organized autonomous indigenous churches and, more controversially (given the author has indicated, it is a miracle that the CIM ranks was as widespread as the author has indicated, it is a miracle that this vast organization, with personnel from a variety of social, national, and denominational backgrounds, not only survived but prospered after the founder’s death in 1905. While the book has its fair share of inaccuracies, its fascinating subject matter and entertaining narrative make it a highly readable text and very profitable for reflection.

—R. G. Tiedemann

R. G. Tiedemann, a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Christianity in China (Oxford), is a contributor to the Ricci 21st Century Roundtable database project on the history of Christianity in China at the Ricci Institute, University of San Francisco.

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Kevin Ward, senior lecturer in African religious studies at the University of Leeds and an Anglican priest, has written a remarkably balanced history of the Anglican Church, the world’s third-largest Christian body. Unlike most studies of global Anglicanism, which stress the centrality of its English heritage, this book gives unprecedented attention to the local construction of Anglicanism in Asia, Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, as well as to the roles of minorities in Great Britain, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand.

Moving beyond colonial and postcolonial agendas, Ward brings out the complex interaction between missionary influences and the indigenous forces of local culture. Many will be surprised to learn, for example, that most Anglican missionary activity was conducted by indigenous, not colonial, missionaries. Ward adeptly shows that local expressions of Anglicanism did not politely wait to appear until the end of formal colonialism in the twentieth century (which is itself a colonist fantasy) but were present from the beginning—a fact that paradoxically demonstrates the success of the initial missions.

Ward allows the complexities of Anglican development to shed light on the crisis facing the Anglican Communion today. We should no more expect Anglican churches of the global South to possess a fabled purity of faith (in contrast to a purely secularized North) than we should expect the North to ignore the vibrancy of churches in the South—in other words, a reverse or a renewed colonialism. There is indeed a missionary task at hand, but a book such as this reminds us that the Gospel inevitably brings God’s judgment and mercy to human society in all times and places.

This book is well researched, clearly written, and full of interesting anecdotes, maps, and bibliography. It will be useful to students, members, and—it is hoped—leaders of the Anglican Communion at this crucial point in its history.

—Christopher A. Beeley

Christopher A. Beeley is the Walter H. Gray Assistant Professor of Anglican Studies and Patristics, Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Connecticut.

Evangelicalism: An Americanized Christianity.


Richard Kyle is professor of history and religion at Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kansas. He received theological training at both Baptist and Presbyterian divinity schools, and his church membership has been with the Mennonite Brethren.

Kyle writes a brief history of popular evangelicalism in the United States, giving two chapters to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century evangelicalism.
His main focus is twentieth-century evangelicalism, with two chapters on the first half of the century and three on the second half.

Kyle's evaluation of popular American evangelicalism is, with rare exception, entirely negative. "There is only a fine line between being relevant to its surrounding culture and being absorbed by that culture. American evangelicalism has stepped over this line" (p. 2). Much of Kyle's critique regards the accommodation of evangelical faith to popular culture. He laments the loss of expository sermons, four-part harmony choirs, the organ, and the pastor as shepherd. He decries the use of guitars and drums, personal stories on relevant topics, and big-screen monitors in worship. He praises high culture, with its focus on objectivity, the timeless, and the transcendent, and he decries popular culture as trivial, new, and spectacular.

Any missiologist will benefit from Kyle's close look at the relation between church and culture in America. However, Kyle sees the relation of church and culture as a zero-sum game—more of one equals less of another; that is, they are always at odds. From Andrew Walls, however, we learn that one cannot have too much of either Gospel or culture, just too little. Rather than abandon popular culture and embrace high culture, as Kyle prefers, what American evangelicalism needs, in my opinion, is more Gospel.

—Ryan K. Bolger

Ryan K. Bolger is Assistant Professor of Church in Contemporary Culture in the School of Intercultural Studies, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California.

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Sent to Heal! Emergence and Development of Medical Missions.

By Christoffer H. Grundmann. Lanham, Md.: Univ. Press of America, 2005. Pp. xvi, 375. $73.95; paperback $43.95.

This survey history of medical missions is the long-awaited English translation of Christoffer Grundmann’s dissertation from the University of Hamburg. Now professor in religion and the healing arts at Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana, Grundmann is prominent in ecumenical circles for his incisive biblical, theological, and historical studies of healing. Sent to Heal! already holds a place among standard works in the history of Christian missions, not only because of his fine scholarship, but also because of the comprehensive bibliography he provides.

Grundmann’s study makes the important distinction between missionaries who happened to be doctors and medical missions as an accepted mission strategy with a comprehensive theological rationale. Medical missions proper emerged in the nineteenth century, when Western scientific advances united with mission outreach to dramatically improve people’s physical well-being. It soon became apparent that Western medicine opened doors otherwise closed to the Gospel. Tension remained, however, between medical missions for the sake of healing the body and mission boards that saw medicine as an auxiliary subordinate to the primary evangelistic task.

Sent to Heal! contains many useful insights. First, the chronological development of theological, institutional, and social aspects of medical missions is very valuable for providing depth perspective. Second, Grundmann works across German, English, and American sources to illuminate a movement that was both international and interdenominational in scope. Third, because individuals led advances in medical missions, the book
Pilgrims of Christ on the Muslim Road: Exploring a New Path Between Two Faiths.


This book pays tribute to Mazhar Mallouhi, who describes himself as a “Muslim follower of Christ.” Born in Syria in 1935 to a Sunni Muslim family, Mallouhi became drawn to Christ as a young man after reading works by and about Gandhi. Paul-Gordon Chandler has called this volume *Pilgrims of Christ on the Muslim Road*, in an evocation of *The Christ of the Indian Road* (1925). The latter book, written by American Methodist missionary to India (and friend of Gandhi) E. Stanley Jones, maintained that “one can fully follow Christ without being a ‘Christian’” (p. 2).

This message resonates with Mallouhi, whose journey has been difficult. In the past and still today, Islamic authorities in many countries have regarded renunciation of Islam as a crime and breach of public order. Mallouhi’s embrace of Christ—and his insistence on talking about it to Muslim friends—helps explain why he has often moved to a different country, sometimes harassed, arrested, and jailed by secret police (as in Egypt and Syria).

Mallouhi’s twofold mission is to promote knowledge of Christ among Muslims and to encourage Christians to build friendships with Muslims. This has been difficult work, hampered by curtailments of religious freedom on one side and, on the other, by mistrust and Islamophobia emanating from Arab-speaking and Western Christians. Mallouhi, who reportedly told Chandler that going to church often feels to him like “going to the dentist” (p. 177) and who has described feeling excluded by Arab and Western Christians, prefers to pray or discuss the Bible with friends at home, in cafés, and sometimes even in mosques.

Chandler argues that Mallouhi “has been able to embody a new approach that encourages followers of Christ from Muslim backgrounds not to leave their families, people, or culture” (p. 108). His approach may be liberating to Muslims who have no legal means of registering Christian identities and who fear losing their places in Muslim communities. In Chandler’s presentation, Mallouhi emerges as an inspiring, open-hearted, and pragmatic figure who illustrates what it can mean to be a Muslim who follows Christ.

—Heather J. Sharkey

Heather J. Sharkey is Assistant Professor of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies in the Department of Near Eastern Studies and Civilizations at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

For a Church Beyond Its Walls.


The Armenians claim to be the first nation to embrace Christianity, and now the leader of the Armenian church describes what it means to be a church in today’s world. Aram I was moderator of the World Council of Churches from 1991 to 2006. This book contains the reports of WCC gatherings and talks given at WCC-sponsored conferences. Even so, it is only a small portion of Aram’s literary production during the period of his leadership at WCC. It does, however, provide a window into his thinking during a transitional period of the WCC. The changing geopolitical world and the resurgence not just of non-Christian religions but the close ties of these religions to the political arena...
meant that the WCC needed to refocus its programmatic emphasis. These essays document that process.

Several bold statements merit consideration. For example, in the essay on ecclesiocentric ecumenism (1999), a call to reassert the Gospel is given. “People are not interested with what the church is or says; people are concerned with what the church does” (p. 31). Very few charismatics would disagree with that statement. Or again: “Most of our ecclesiological teachings still pertain to specific periods of history and have no relevance today. The church cannot be reduced to an institution concerned with keeping its past intact” (p. 77). This statement is all the more radical when one considers that the author is head of an ancient church that guards its tradition.

All the essays in this volume are worth reading. The lecture “Genocides in the Twentieth Century” contains much of value, including recognition of the need of perpetrators to acknowledge their atrocities. Referring to the denial of the Armenian genocide, Aram points out that the danger of denying our history is greater than that of acknowledging it. This volume deserves a careful reading by a wide audience.

—James J. Stamoolis

James J. Stamoolis, an educational and missiological consultant, has written extensively on the Eastern churches.

The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam


This book tells “the story of the religious, cultural, and intellectual achievements of the Arabophone Christians, distilling forty years of scholarly labor into a graceful overview of the ancient but still-living churches of the East. The author, Sidney Griffith, admires the theological inventiveness, rationality, and linguistic skill of Arabic-speaking Christians. He invites today’s diminished Christian communities of the Middle East and also the churches planted in or by the West to hear these voices of Christians who articulated their faith in concepts and language shaped by the Qur’an.

One Arabic-speaking Christian intellectual portrayed by Griffith is Yahya ibn ‘Adi, born in 893 in the city of Tikrit (modern-day Iraq). Yahya became head of the Baghdad Aristotelians, using Greek logic in the Arabic language as an auxil-

iary discipline to defend the doctrines of the Trinity and the incarnation. “He was convinced that in the end reason could serve the interests of revelation, and devotion to philosophy could preserve the decencies of life in common.” He argued: “Men are a single tribe [qabil], related to one another; humanity unites them. The adornment of the divine power is in all of them and in each one of them, and it is the rational soul.” Yahya moved in aristocratic circles close to the caliph, but he preferred scholars, monks, and ascetics, who chose “clothing of hair and coarse material, traveling on foot, obscurity, attendance at churches and mosques and so forth, and abhorrence for luxurious living.” The task of the spiritually serious, Yahya said, is to “give people an interest in eternal life” (p. 125).

Griffith is realistic about the limited impact these five centuries of Arabophone theological effort had on Islam. One Islamic thinker who responded to what he perceived to be Christian error was Ibn Taymiyyah (1263–1328), who remains au-
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Muslims, Christians, and the Challenge of Interfaith Dialogue.


Jane Idleman Smith is codirector of the Duncan Black Macdonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations at Hartford Seminary, Hartford, Connecticut. She also serves as professor of Islamic studies.

Readers will be captivated by the opening chapter, “Encountering One Another.” Smith narrates three episodes of dialogue, two of which are hypothetical, but all provide insight into the real-life challenges and obstacles of dialogue. This book is scholarly; nevertheless its great strength is real-life practicality. Smith’s second chapter is an insightful survey of fourteen centuries of Christian-Muslim relations. Contentious issues such as the status of Jerusalem are presented, as well as the legacy of the Western colonial era. Surprisingly, the early experience of the church in dialogue with Muslims is noted, but not explored.

Chapters 3–5 are pertinent for those interested in getting started in dialogue. For example, chapter 3 helps the reader get in touch with how it feels to be a Muslim in North America. Chapter 5, “When Dialogue Goes Wrong,” is practical. Those who have been engaged in dialogue will identify with the anecdotes. “The Pluralist Imperative” occupies chapters 6–7, one on Muslim and the other on Christian commitments. These rich in describing a wide diversity of Muslim and Christian approaches to pluralist realities. Smith identifies the challenges that a commitment to Islam as the “truth” or Jesus as the “truth” presents in dialogical encounter.

This excellent book concludes with imaginative and realistic suggestions on new directions, with a wrap-up of six reasons for dialogue. In this section and in the book as a whole, I would welcome a more explicit commitment to commending Christ, as well as more reflection on the theological convergences and divergences we encounter in dialogue.

—David W. Shenk

Robert Caldwell: A Scholar-Missionary in Colonial South India.


A statue of Robert Caldwell erected by the local government adorns the marina esplanade of Chennai (Madras). It stands as a tribute to Caldwell’s contributions to the Tamil culture and peoples. Portraits of him, with flowing white beard, adorn many a book and wall.

As missionary of Idyanguadi and bishop of Tirunelveli, Caldwell became a renowned ethnographer, historian, linguist, philologist, and sociologist. Born near Belfast in 1814 and reared in Glasgow, where he also received university training, he reached Madras in 1838. In 1841 he

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“A Theological Biography of Isaiah Shembe, c. 1870–1935.”

Choi, Dongkyu.
“Toward a Basic Theory for Missional Church Planting in Postmodern Korea.”
Ph.D. Pasadena, Calif.: Fuller Theological Seminary, 2006.

Davies, Wilhelmina Wells.

Doss, Gorden R.
“A Malawan Seventh-Day Adventist Theology of Wealth and Poverty and Missiological Implications.”

Harries, James Osmar.
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Johnson, Sarah E.

Jørgensen, Jonas P.A.
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“Toward a Contextualized Church in a United Korea/Corea: Exploring Resources in Wesleyan Theology and Eastern Philosophies.”

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“Theological Field Education: Toward a Holistic and Transformative Ministerial Formation and Ministry in the Philippines.”

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Nolans, Michael Akingele.
“The Meaning of Religious Conversion in the Christ Apostolic Church of Nigeria: Towards the Incarnation of Christianity in Yorubaland.”

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Ph.D. Boston: Boston Univ. Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, 2007.

Seitz, Jonathan A.

Shaw, Martin Coyne, Jr.

Strengholt, Josef M.
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Dissertation Notices, 29:54, 110, 166, 218; 30:54, 110, 166, 219; 31:54, 110, 166; 32:54, 110, 220
Errata, 30:65; 31:133, 208
Fifteen Outstanding Books of 2004 for Mission Studies, 29:43
Fifteen Outstanding Books of 2005 for Mission Studies, 30:43
Fifteen Outstanding Books of 2006 for Mission Studies, 31:45
Fifteen Outstanding Books of 2007 for Mission Studies, 32:101
## 2009 Student Seminars on World Mission
A monthlong survey of the Christian world mission, cosponsored by 30 seminaries. For a schedule and registration form for the January seminars, visit www.OMSC.org/january.html.

**January 5–9 and 12–16, 2009**  
Held at Mercy Center, Madison, Connecticut. The sessions of weeks one and two survey the Christian world mission. Multiple presenters. Seven sessions each week. $145 per week.

**January 19–23**  
Held at OMSC  
**Culture, Values, and Worldview: Anthropology for Mission Practice.**  
Dr. Darrell L. Whiteman, The Mission Society, shows how one’s worldview and theology of culture affect cross-cultural mission. Cosponsored by Areopagos and The Mission Society. Eight sessions. $145

**January 26–30**  
Held at OMSC  
**The City in Mission.**  
Dr. Dale Irvin, New York Theological Seminary, considers the city in the mission of God. Cosponsored by United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries. Eight sessions. $145

**February 23–27**  
**Leadership, Fund-raising, and Donor Development for Missions.**  
Mr. Rob Martin, director, First Fruit, Inc., Newport Beach, California, outlines steps for building the support base, including foundation funding, for mission. Cosponsored by Evangelical Covenant Church (Lafayette, Indiana). Eight sessions. $145

**March 2–6**  
**Missiological Field Research for Ordinary Practitioners.**  
Dr. Stan Nussbaum, Global Mapping International, Colorado Springs, Colorado, guides participants in designing a small-scale field research project around a problem or opportunity that has arisen in their current ministry situation. Eight sessions. $145

**March 9–13**  
**Following Jesus in Hindu Settings.**  
Dr. Herbert Hoefer, Concordia University, Portland, Oregon, presents the history of Christianity in India, focusing on the response of the Dalits and on followers of Jesus outside the church among caste Hindus. Cosponsored by Park Street Church (Boston). Eight sessions. $145

**March 23–27**  
Dr. Kevin Ward, University of Leeds, in Leeds, England, a senior mission scholar in residence at OMSC, examines the immensely influential East African Revival, considering its historical roots, its theological accompaniments, and its fruit in a variety of contexts. Cosponsored by Episcopal Church / Africa Partnership. Eight sessions. $145

**March 30–April 3**  
**“Onward, Christian Soldiers”: Missions and Muscular Christianity, 1900–1914.**  
Dr. Edith L. Blumhofer, Wheaton College, a senior mission scholar in residence at OMSC, looks at convergences and disjunctions in the era of high Western imperialism, immensely popular missionary exhibitions, and robust missionary confidence. Eight sessions. $145

**April 20–23**  
**Models of Leadership in Mission.**  
Rev. George Kovoor, Trinity College, Bristol, United Kingdom, brings wide ecclesiastical and international experience to evaluation of differing models of leadership for mission. Cosponsored by Areopagos and InterVarsity Missions. Seven sessions in four days. $145

**April 27–30**  
**Isaiah 40–55: God’s Mission, God’s Servant.**  
Dr. Christopher J. H. Wright, Langham Partnership International, London, unfolds the relevance of Isaiah for contemporary Christian missions and ethics. Cosponsored by Bay Area Community Church (Annapolis, Maryland) and Wycliffe International. Seven sessions in four days. $145

**May 4–8**  
**Personal Renewal in the Missionary Community.**  
Rev. Stanley W. Green, Mennonite Mission Network, and Dr. Christine Sine, Mustard Seed Associates, blend classroom instruction and one-on-one sessions to offer counsel and spiritual direction for Christian workers. Cosponsored by Mennonite Mission Network. Eight sessions. $145
Book Notes

Benson, Linda K.

Bock, Darrell L., and Mitchell Glaser, eds.
To the Jew First: The Case for Jewish Evangelism in Scripture and History.

Crofts, Daniel W.
Upstream Odyssey: An American in China (1895–1944).

Cruchley-Jones, Peter, ed.
God at Ground Level: Reappraising Church Decline in the UK Through the Experience of Grass Roots Communities and Situations.

Eitel, Keith E., ed.
Missions in Contexts of Violence.

Engelsviken, Tormod, Ernst Harbakk, Rolv Olsen, and Thor Strandæs, eds.

Fargher, Brian.

Kombo, James Henry Owino.

Lounela, Jaakko.

Notehelfer, F. G.
Remarkable Journey: Rose Notehelfer and the Missionary Experience in Japan.

Ramsay, Jacob.
Mandarins and Martyrs: The Church and the Nguyen Dynasty in Early Nineteenth-Century Vietnam.

Singh, David Emmanuel, ed.
Jesus and the Cross: Reflections of Christians from Islamic Contexts.

Steffen, Tom, and Lois McKinney Douglas.
Encountering Missionary Life and Work: Preparing for Intercultural Ministry.

Sunquist, Scott W., and Caroline N. Becker, eds.

Weston, Paul, comp.
Lesslie Newbigin: Missionary Theologian; A Reader.

In Coming Issues

Ivan Illich and the American Catholic Missionary Initiative in Latin America
Todd Hartch

Mission to Nowhere: Putting Short-Term Missions into Context
Brian M. Howell

Religious Conversion in the Americas: Meanings, Measures, and Methods
Timothy J. Steigenga

Theological Education in a World Christian Context
Dale T. Irvin

U.S. Megachurches and New Patterns of Global Ministry
Robert J. Priest

Christian Mission and the Sexuality Struggle: The Case of the Episcopal Church in the Anglican Communion
Titus Presler

Lesslie Newbigin’s Missionary Encounter with the Enlightenment, 1975–98
Timothy Yates

Remembering Evangelization: The Option for the Poor and Mission History
Paul V. Kollman

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