"In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, . . . God saw that it was good" (Gen. 1:1, 10). In the ancient Hebrew story to which people of the Book trace the beginning of everything, the latter phrase recurs at the conclusion of each successive phase of creation, reaching its climax with the creation of humankind: “God saw everything that he had made, and

indeed, it was very good (v. 31). Humankind, mandated to “have dominion” (v. 26) over all of God’s good creation, is left to take care of a very good planet.

How have we done? The record is not flattering. Under our “dominion” many species have been ravaged and extinguished.

Continued next page
The planet itself is now under duress. Whether deliberately or unwittingly, we humans have ravaged God’s very good creation, using the leverage of science and technology to amplify our savagely destructive dominion over water, land, air, and life.

Two of the three lead essays in this issue are written by the coeditors of the Center for Global Christianity and Mission at Boston University. Dana Robert is one of this generation’s most capable historians and interpreters of world Christianity; her husband, “Inus” Daneel, is a leading authority on the Shona Independent Churches in Zimbabwe, where he still spends half of each year. Among his many significant publications, none is more germane to the theme of this issue than his groundbreaking two-volume *African Earthkeepers: Interfaith Mission in Earth-Care*, reissued as a single volume by Orbis Books in 2001.

The third article is written by Craig Sorley, the son of medical missionaries who served in three different East African countries. Sorley earned degrees in environmental science and in forestry and education on the way to becoming founding director of Care of Creation Kenya, an evangelical mission organization dedicated to awakening the church to faithful environmental and agricultural stewardship. He came to public consciousness in 2008 when *Time* featured him as one of the “Heroes of the Environment.”

On a more personal editorial note, Dwight Baker, my esteemed colleague and the associate editor of this journal since 2002, officially retired as associate director of the Overseas Ministries Study Center on June 30. Readers who have come to take for granted the editorial rigor that has long distinguished this journal will be relieved to know that he will not be relinquishing his role with the IBMR. With this issue, he assumes the title of Senior Associate Editor. As such, he will continue to head up our team of copyeditors, who take such pains to ensure the academic excellence of each contribution to the journal.

With this issue we also welcome Nelson Jennings as the IBMR’s newly appointed Associate Editor. With Dwight’s departure from OMSC, Nelson assumes the role of OMSC’s Director of Program and Community Life. For the last twelve years he has been a professor of world mission at Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis. Since 2007 he has served as editor of *Missiology: An International Review*, the journal of the American Society of Missiology. The appointment of Nelson, author of three books and of numerous articles and reviews in English and in Japanese, will help to ensure the ongoing editorial and scholarly integrity of the IBMR.

—Jonathan J. Bonk

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Historical Trends in Missions and Earth Care

Dana L. Robert

Over the past thirty years, all major branches of Christianity have thought about what it means to extend the saving work of Christ beyond individual human redemption. Pope John Paul II declared the great missionary St. Francis of Assisi the patron saint of ecology in 1979 and called for the laity to draw upon the power of the resurrection “to restore to creation all its original value.” In 1989 mainline Protestants and Orthodox, through the World Council of Churches, embraced the ideas of “justice, peace, and the integrity of creation” as intrinsic to the nature of Christian witness. In 2004 evangelical leaders met at Sandy Cove, in the town of North East, Maryland, and pledged to advance God’s reign by making “creation care a permanent dimension of our Christian discipleship.” Recent opinion polls of evangelical Protestants show that earth care is one of their top five priorities. Across many traditions, Christians in the twenty-first century believe that the wholeness and reconciliation desired by God include his creation. In 2010, both the Lausanne III and Edinburgh 2010 conference processes generated missiological reflection on Christian responsibility toward the earth.

But what has been the historic role of missions in earth care? The history of Christian missions provides rich data showing a diversity of missionary attitudes toward traditional nature-based practices. The recurring themes that follow, by no means exhaustive or systematic, suggest the multiplicity of ways in which individual missionaries have understood their engagement with nature and with the existing nature practices they have encountered. History reminds us that missionary relationships with the natural world have never been static, and that each generation engages nature in accordance with its own knowledge and values. The final section of the article, while holding past missionary experience in mind, considers how future mission practice might shape human relationships with God’s creation.

Competition and Suppression

Throughout the thousand-year span during which Europe was converted to Christianity, one prominent mission theme was that of competition between the “civilized” religion of the sacred book and Roman laws, and the “uncivilized” religion of orality and nature-based spirits. The sixth-century missionary Martin of Braga wrote of the challenges involved in converting the rural peasants, or “rustics,” whose pagan practices he connected with idolatry condemned in the Old Testament. He argued that demons expelled from heaven found their homes in streams and rivers and even lent their names to the days of the week, and he condemned the practices of new converts as the religion of the devil.

In the conversion of Europe, the Christian struggle against pagan nature religion was long and violent. In Trent in 397, missionaries who had tried to prevent their converts from participating in traditional agricultural and fertility festivals were murdered. Destruction of sacred groves and woodland altars was a central feature of Christian “power encounters” with indigenous religion. The Anglo-Saxon missionary bishop Boniface was said to have felled the Sacred Oak of Thor in northern Hesse in 723. Drawing an analogy to Elijah and the priests of Baal, Boniface challenged the pagan gods to strike him down as he cut down the tree. According to Boniface’s first biographer, a wind blew down the oak while he was chopping it. After Thor did not strike Boniface dead, the people began converting to Christianity. Boniface built a church with the wood of the oak—a symbolic beginning for the Christianization of the German people.

In early Christianity, Mediterranean-based theologians had considered the rich farmlands, olives, and grapes of their own region to be proof of the superiority of Christianity over the desolation of the “pagan” and “barbaric” northern wilderness. Continued efforts to eradicate paganism through control of nature—through both power encounters and expansion of agriculture—were a common feature of medieval monasticism. As monks moved into Europe, they tamed the landscape through introduction of dikes, viniculture, cheese-making, and other forms of settled farming. The settlement of nomadic peoples around monastic centers was seen by the church as a sign of the progress of Christianity over the power of pagan religion.

With the conquest of the Americas, the monastic model was extended to the reductions and missions staffed by Franciscans, Jesuits, and other religious communities from the 1500s through the 1700s. Native Americans living on the missions farmed and grew cereal grains and other products that they sold to European settlers for their self-support. In colonial Philippines, the corruption of the religious orders meant that the church controlled most of the land, forced the Filipinos to farm it, and forbade traditional practices of land use and fishing. The colonial “mission station” was a double-edged sword from an environmental perspective: it simultaneously imposed itself on the terrain and stabilized food production that made possible concentrated settlements of people. In a spiritual sense, the routinization of agriculture around the missions went hand in hand with the suppression of pagan religious practices.

Inculturation and Transformation

The inculturation and transformation of many pre-Christian nature-based practices is another important motif in the history of Christian mission. In 601 Pope Gregory the Great wrote what has become a classic missiological text on cultural accommodation:

The heathen temples of these people need not be destroyed, only the idols which are to be found in them... If the temples are well built, it is a good idea to detach them from the service of the devil, and to adapt them for the worship of the true God... And since the people are accustomed, when they assemble for sacrifice, to kill many oxen in sacrifice to the devils, it seems reasonable to prohibit a festival for the people by way of exchange. The people must learn to slay their cattle not in honour of the devil, but in honour of God and for their own food; when they have eaten and are full, then they must render thanks to the giver of all good things. If we allow them these outward joys, they are more likely to find their way to the true inner joy.

Dana L. Robert, a contributing editor, is the Truman Collins Professor of World Christianity and History of Mission at Boston University. Her most recent books are Christian Mission: How Christianity Became a World Religion (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009) and Joy to the World! Mission in the Age of Global Christianity (United Methodist Church, Women’s Division, 2010).
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The dramatic power encounter represented by Boniface and the oak of Thor was probably less common than the mundane transformations that have in retrospect been seen as either syncretism or indigenization. That the desecrated wood of European druidic sacred groves was used to construct the first churches indicates the desire of Christian missionaries both to conquer nature and to provide controlled continuity with the people’s sense of the sacred. St. Francis of Assisi himself drew upon long-standing Christian traditions of nature religion and earth care in his appreciation of God’s creation as friend rather than enemy.

Over the centuries of effort to convert Europe, many practices related to pagan nature religion were gradually transformed into Christian customs or else survived as underground popular practices disconnected from the official Christian worldview. Most Western Christians today enjoy Christmas trees covered with lights, for example, and no longer relate them to druidic sacrifices in Celtic or Germanic sacred groves. The lighting of an advent wreath and the setting of Christmas to roughly coincide with the winter solstice are examples of the transformation of pre-Christian nature religion. At the same time, traditional tribal societies depended for survival on a right relationship with cosmic forces, and the codification of traditional laws such as the Lex Salica was one of the great contributions of Christian missions to early European societies.

Preservation

Along with inculturation of indigenous nature practices, Orthodox Christian mission contains notable examples of an essentially sacramental approach to conversion from paganism that focused on the preservation of the natural world. For example, the life and work of the hermit St. Herman of Alaska (d. 1837) is known for its sympathetic engagement with Aleut religion through liturgical and sacramental practices, translations into local languages, and living in solidarity at the poverty level of the ordinary people. Herman became head of the Russian mission in 1799. Because he tried to protect the Aleuts against exploitation by Russian traders, he worked for the sustainability of wildlife. He objected to the slaughter of sea animals by Western traders. His famous power encounters were on behalf of the people, such as when he protected them from fires and tidal waves through a combination of spiritual and practical measures. The Orthodox spirituality he employed saw nature as sacramental—as pointing toward the salvific process of theos, by which humans become more God-like. This essentially positive view of the spiritual relationship of persons to nature, which springs from deep Orthodox roots, combined with the traditional Aleut sense of spiritual force and balance in nature, including respect for the spirit of the animals that sacrifice themselves for human consumption.

At the time of Alaska’s sale to the United States, the Orthodox mission had nine churches (including a cathedral), thirty-five outlying chapels, and thirty-two clergy, many of whom were native Aleuts. The success of the mission’s holistic approach was affirmed by the faithfulness of the Aleuts to their Orthodox faith, despite the cruel pressure and acquisitive materialism of movements to forcibly Protestantize and Americanize them after the purchase of Alaska in 1867. In 1970 Herman was canonized as the first North American Orthodox saint.

Engaging the Earth in Protestant Mission

Protestant missionary engagement with the earth has been diverse, wide ranging, and closely attentive to the details of human interaction with the environments upon which humans depend for sustenance. Although the “civilization” model has probably prevailed throughout most of the history of Christianity, the popular assumption that missionaries have destroyed the land is a product more of contemporary environmental discourse than an historically-informed opinion. Obviously Christians have exploited and abused the land for centuries, and missionaries have benefited from their relationship with colonial economies. But mission history reveals a complex picture in which missionaries have also become guardians of natural resources and prophets of sustainability. The first Shona dictionary produced by missionaries in Rhodesia, for example, contained an appendix listing the names of all the indigenous trees and plants.

Civilizing the wilderness. The dream of creating a new Garden of Eden inspired missionaries who experienced the mission field as a disorderly, spirit-ridden wilderness needing to be tamed. The vision of subduing nature and replacing the wilderness with the fields and farms of civilization was a common trope among early European Protestant missionaries. Western missionaries often sought to replicate the rural villages from which they had come and aspired to create a self-supporting “yeoman class” as the basis for healthy churches in Africa and Asia. In North America, the tidy farms and orchards of Moravian Indians in Pennsylvania and Ohio were seen as a sign of their Christian character. Idealistic missionaries naively assumed that teaching indigenous converts to farm would ensure that their rights would be respected by white immigrants.

The “pastoral ideal” in nineteenth-century Protestant missions has been extensively studied and criticized, and the Protestant missionary’s faith in the spiritual and moral power of modern farming has been a source of contemporary scholarly controversy. The poster child for this dispute is Robert Moffatt, of the London Missionary Society (LMS), often called “God’s Gardener” because he was literally a gardener before he went to southern Africa as a missionary in 1817, taking with him his gardener’s tools and books on botany and agriculture. Anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff have meticulously documented how Moffatt used modern methods for the production of crops as a means by which to attack traditional religion and authority structures. By introducing irrigation to water his gardens, for example, he both undercut the power of the chiefs, by rendering their rain-making unnecessary, and challenged the traditional authority of women based on their control over agricultural production. In his sermons on God’s providence, Moffatt tried to drive a wedge between traditional religious authorities and control of the natural world. In the eyes of modern scholars such as the Comaroffs, the work of missionaries like Moffatt represents the worst of cultural imperialism. But for mission history, Moffatt remains a founding father of Tswana Christianity, whose
methods—for better or worse—were consistent with those of missionaries both before and after him.

**Observing creation.** Modern science provided the framework for tremendous interest in the natural world as Protestant missionaries used their observations of nature as a way to attack the perceived superstitions of non-Christian religions and worldviews and to affirm God’s creative and providential power. When William Carey traveled to India in 1793, he carried 108 botanical magazines in his luggage. Along with his work in Bible translation and education, he helped establish the famous botanical garden in Serampore, edited a guide to Indian plants found there, and, in 1820, founded the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India to promote agricultural development.

The missionary contribution to the observation, classification, and preservation of species is a huge untold story, of which a few brief examples must suffice. Many of the most astute missionary observers of the natural world were products of the Scottish Enlightenment. Perhaps the most famous exemplar of Protestant missionary natural science was explorer David Livingstone, whose *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (1857) provided meticulous observations of nature and African people’s relationship to it. The front page of the book, interestingly enough, shows an etching of the tsetse fly rather than a Christian symbol. Livingstone was only one of a multitude of nineteenth-century missionary observers with special interest in God’s creation. Missionary to Liberia William Savage discovered and named the gorilla and packed off bone specimens to Harvard scientists in the 1840s. For the sake of scientific research, he had to fight curiosity dealers for possession of the gorilla bones. George Post, missionary in Syria and professor at American University of Beirut, published in 1896 as his life work *The Flora of Syria, Palestine, and Sinai.*

**Missionary Environmentalism.** In the 1800s, scientific observation could develop into full-blown missionary environmentalism, especially when natural and man-made disasters threatened human well-being. A turning point in missionary self-perceptions about their roles in natural disasters occurred with Timothy Richard. This great Welsh Baptist missionary to China devised an extensive famine relief system in response to the Great Famine of 1876–79. Richard saw that scientific studies could have helped to prevent the famine in the first place through greater knowledge of biology and agriculture, as well as through economic and political reform. He wrote, “The highest truths, whether found out by discovery or revelation, are the wonderful laws of God in nature, in human life and in God’s own perfect character, and the highest inspirations to service, peace and progress are derived from the knowledge of these divine laws in all departments (2 Peter 1:2–3).”

Another Protestant missionary who embraced science as a means toward advancing human well-being in relationship to the land was John Croumbie Brown. Like Moffatt and Livingstone an LMS missionary, Brown first noticed massive drought in southern Africa in a tour through the Karoo in 1847. He became aware that torrential rains carried topsoil to the sea, leaving a drought-stricken area with no water storage. Brown attributed destruction of the land to human sin, in violation of God’s moral order. Through individual conversion people would be restored to a right relation with God, and through their changed lives they would work to restore God’s intentions for his creation. In 1862 Brown became official botanist for the Cape Colony, in which capacity he analyzed the rapid destruction caused by colonial policies and settlement, including deforestation, desertification, and species extinction. As botanist and later as a father of modern forestry, he wrote fifteen books on hydrology and land management and especially on forestry in Africa and Europe. He also corresponded with a vast network of missionary informants who shared his passion for collecting plant specimens for the sake of scientific research and improved land management.

**Living off the land.** The history of agricultural missions is one of the great unwritten chapters of mission studies, and the least documented of the three main foci of missionary development—education, health care, and agriculture. At the height of European colonialism, the “agricultural missionary” became a staple part of so-called “industrial” missions. Often located in the context of colonial “land grant” mission stations, the purpose of the agricultural missionary was to increase local capacity for food production, including the introduction of modern farming methods, drought-resistant seed varieties, and fruit trees such as mangoes, guavas, and papayas. Agricultural missionaries introduced crop rotation, contour ridges, and reforestation projects, even as their efforts enabled missions to be self-sustaining in food production. They typically saw their work as integral to the missionary message of abundant life through conversion to Jesus Christ. Along with healing by medical doctors, their work to ensure food security was one of the most visible and obvious benefits of the missionary presence in colonial settings. Agricultural missionaries naturally shared attitudes toward land common to their own eras, but their professional training and empirical observation often allowed for accommodation to local conditions. Despite their mistakes and captivity to modern scientific farming and management techniques, agricultural missionaries filled one of the first formal conservationist roles in the non-Western world. They also communicated valuable ecological information from the margins of empire back to its heartland.

**Land Rights—an Issue of Basic Human Rights**

During the 450 years of European colonialism, the relationship between human rights and protection of land resources for native peoples has been an important subtheme in the history of missions. From Moravian David Zeisberger trying to protect the farmlands of his Indian converts from rapacious European colonists in Pennsylvania, to the Jesuit reductions among Guarani Indians in Paraguay in protection against Portuguese slavers, missionaries have known that land rights are essential for communal survival. By the mid-twentieth century, industrial and technological expansion, population increase, and the rapid loss of natural resources because of multiple forms of human abuse and exploitation combined to create a perfect storm of ecological degradation in “mission fields” around the world. The missionary legacy of human rights protection for oppressed peoples began evolving into a nascent missionary environmental movement.

The history of agricultural missions is one of the great unwritten chapters of mission studies.
Who owns the earth? Missionaries were pioneer defenders of indigenous land rights. As Western colonists moved into the areas of the people among whom they worked, missionary defense of land rights became a prime realm of their advocacy for human rights. Two famous examples from mission history illustrate this trend. In the 1830s U.S. president Andrew Jackson decreed the removal of the Cherokee Indians from their homelands in Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, and Mississippi. Under missionary tutelage the Cherokees had become Christianized settlers farmers. Congregationalist missionaries protested the Cherokee removal from their land to no avail. Missionary Samuel Worcester, who had translated the Bible into Cherokee and founded their first newspaper, was imprisoned because of his opposition to federal policies. Ultimately Worcester traveled the “trail of tears” with his people to their reservations in Oklahoma. Another example of missionary efforts to protect native land rights was that of LMS missionary John Philip, who went to Cape Colony in 1819 and became involved in supporting the land rights of the Cape Coloured, who faced massive displacement and virtual enslavement by white immigrants. Philip pushed the British Parliament to pass Ordinance 50, which gave some land rights and rights to their own labor to the KhoiKhoi in 1828. Missionary activism helped the Cape Coloured obtain the franchise—rights they kept until the apartheid government of 1948 stripped them away.

In addition to sheer greed, part of the problem of white colonialism was that European colonists introduced the idea of private land ownership wherever they went and ignored communal land rights. In response to colonial land seizures in the name of white ownership, missionaries sometimes supported private ownership by native peoples to help thwart European takeovers. In other cases they worked to expand and improve communal areas. Ironically, often the colonial land grant mission station eventually became the center of indigenous communities because the native people had been pushed off all the other land. Missionary defense of land rights thus involved varied compromises with the harsh imposition of Western definitions of “civilization” and private ownership.

Protecting the earth. The rise of the ecological age in the mid to late twentieth century saw the merger of the missionary land rights/human rights tradition with environmentalism. After the end of European colonialism, local and regional rulers began exploiting the environment for their own personal benefit, including selling their country’s resources to the highest bidder. Missionaries became eyewitnesses to increasing abuses of human rights through seizure of tribal lands in countries such as Indonesia, Burma, the Philippines, and Malaysia. As natural resources were exploited by corrupt elites, often in alliance with multinational oil, timber, or agricultural corporations, increasingly issues of human rights were defined as issues of land rights.

For example, in Ecuador “missionary kid” Randy Borman began in 1977 to organize seven Cofán communities to protect their rain forests from exploitation by oil companies, cattle ranchers, and plantation owners. By resurrecting native crafts and traditional forest lore, the Cofán launched the world’s first “community-based ecotourism project” to help them sustain their traditional habitat. In Zimbabwe in 1988 another son of missionaries, Inus Daneel, worked with traditional chiefs to launch a grassroots reforestation movement that focused on planting indigenous trees in communal lands. By modifying both traditional and Christian rituals into grassroots tree-planting ceremonies, rural villagers planted hundreds of thousands of trees a year for nearly fifteen years, worked on guily reclamation and water conservation, and started conservation clubs in local schools. Borman and Daneel are examples of how missionary identification with indigenous peoples built bridges with modernity for the preservation of indigenous lifeways.

Catholic sisters have also started missionary movements for ecological justice. With the recognition that resource degradation most dramatically affects the subsistence-level poor, sisters run income-generating projects and environmental training in poor communities in the Philippines, Bangladesh, Panama, and other locations. For example, Maryknoll sisters from the Philippines, Latin America, and the United States together run a model farm and forest that helps Afro-Panamanian families cultivate native medicinal plants in a push for ecological sustainability. The vulnerability of God’s creation, combined with the vulnerability of the world’s poorest people, together create a strong motive for cross-cultural mission in the twenty-first century.

As with human rights advocacy, missionary support for ecological sustainability can be dangerous. On February 12, 2005, two hit men hired by cattle ranchers in Brazil shot Sister Dorothy Stang point blank as she stood in the rain, reading Bible verses to them about God’s justice for the poor. A sister of Notre Dame de Namur, Stang had moved to Brazil from Ohio in the 1960s and began assisting landless peasants seek better lives for themselves in the Amazon through ecologically sustainable practices. When killed, she was on her way to meet with a group of peasants whose homes had been torched by loggers and ranchers who were illegally seizing their land.

In addition to missionary activism, ordinary church people have responded to global poverty and ecological degradation through projects of their own. For example, the Fair Trade Movement was first organized by church people. This movement supports ecological sustainability by pledging to purchase agricultural products produced with environmentally sound practices by small producers who receive a fair price for their work. Another example of contemporary church-based activism is the Network of Earthkeeping Christian Communities in South Africa (NECCSA), which “seeks to encourage and engage local Christian communities in earthkeeping ministries.” It has a wide range of concerns, including developing liturgies and prayer resources for churches, fostering theological reflection on Christian stewardship, supporting action on climate change, rejecting genetically modified seeds, and other environmental issues of special importance to Christians at the African grassroots.

Future Missionary Earth Care

As this article has tried to show, because the Gospel is news of abundant life (John 10:10), concern for God’s creation is intrinsic to Christian mission. In an era of ecological degradation and
concern for the future of the planet, Christians are busy reframing their relationship with nature. What are the implications of environmental consciousness for mission practice today? What is the earth-keeping agenda for missionaries and mission agencies in the twenty-first century?

Renewed theological reflection. While this article has not discussed theology, it is obvious that increasing missionary involvement in environmental issues carries theological implications. Questions of soteriology (the salvation of all creation?), images such as the earth as “God’s body,” the meaning of Jesus Christ’s redemption of the cosmos, the rejection of “dominion theology,” renewed emphasis on the creation rather than the fall, and the nature and purpose of holistic mission practice are some of the theological issues that have emerged in relationship to environmental mission. An urgent issue for evangelical mission reflection is to consider the relationship between human salvation and the rest of God’s creation.

Interreligious cooperation. Because God created the world and declared it good, environmental activism requires cooperation across religious divisions. Scholars of religion Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim have for many years been gathering theologians and environmentalists to reflect on the religious roots and implications of their work. They held major scholarly conferences that resulted in ten collected volumes on multiple roots and implications of their work. They held major scholarly conferences that resulted in ten collected volumes on multiple theological and ecological concerns. Tucker and Grim work with the Forum on Religion and Ecology. In recognition of the need for religious and spiritual traditions to contribute to the movement to save the earth, the deeply interreligious nature of theological reflection on ecology is one of the key features of this Yale forum. Mission leaders need to study and reflect upon the implications for mission practice of this wide-ranging interreligious environmental dialogue.

Training and professional expertise. Ecological mission is not a matter for amateurs. As with movements toward “scientific farming” in the early twentieth century, many mistakes are being made. Just as with specialization of medical care, missionaries need to be trained in earth care. Those undertaking serious environmental projects need both to have deep insight into local cultural systems and to have access to trained hydrologists, foresters, and other experts. Changing people’s relationship to the land is both a deeply spiritual and a practical form of intervention into traditional worldviews. Mistakes are made from ignorance of traditional lifeways. The decreasing number of Western missionaries who have grown up on farms makes ecological mission more of a stretch than it used to be.

One well-documented example of ignorance is noted in a scholarly study of the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) in Niger. SIM became involved in “modern” agriculture in the 1950s. At the mission farm school, missionaries introduced plows, chemical fertilizers, and single-crop farming into land unsuitable for these practices. The result was desertification and loss of indigenous trees. Individual ownership was introduced through destruction of the native trees, as well as marginalization of women by blocking them from farming. By the 1980s SIM missionaries had shifted from destructive modern farming to reforestation efforts, including the establishment of nurseries and digging of wells. But in indigenous culture, tree-planting marked boundaries for the appropriation of land: “Trees are the issue in debates over who cleared land first, who is intruding into someone else’s fields, whether land is bush or fallow, and whether or not land is available for pasture.” Villagers thus uprooted trees for fear they would allow the government to claim their land. Just as SIM had destroyed the land through zealous propagation of what it took to be modern farming practices, so now SIM promoted tree-planting with little regard for the social context of land use.

The positive benefit of missionaries being involved in earth care is that career missionaries often have a deeper understanding of local cultures than do development professionals who fly in and out and who do not know the local language or culture. If missionaries have lived among a people for a long time, they can play a vital role in earth care. But this benefit presupposes that the missionaries have had some kind of training in cultural anthropology, are committed to indigenization, and have access to the technical knowledge needed for truly beneficial earth care.

Rethinking mission practices. While “power encounter” has seen a resurgence within Christian practice over the past several decades, it needs to be interrogated closely from the perspective of environmental consciousness. Does the power encounter involve the defeat of demonic forces, or can it become an excuse for ignoring traditional conservation practices? Christian conversion, as defined by modernization, often unleashes individualistic economic behaviors that encourage exploitation of natural resources if new Christians see themselves outside the realm of traditional or customary law. A theology of prosperity and God’s blessing can become an excuse for personal greed. Missionaries and church leaders need to distinguish religious competition from nature-based practices that help to preserve God’s creation. The individualism of Western-style conversion can wreak havoc with communal understandings of earth care, especially if urbanizing Christian elites begin defining rural ways of life as demonic.

To urge mission leaders to compile “best practices” in relationship to earth care does not mean romanticizing traditional cultures. Yet from the perspective of creation care, too long have Christian missions rightly been accused of throwing out the baby with the bath water in their competition with “paganism.” As mission practices evolve, so should missiological reflection on earth care. For example, one issue being raised about the proliferation of long distance, short-term missions is the waste of fossil fuels they entail through frequent travel. Should the end of cheap oil and the reality of climate change influence mission practices? At what point does the globe-trotting of mission executives and volunteers become an ecologically unsustainable practice or sign of privilege? Should missions be rethinking a theology of place based on environmental considerations?

An urgent issue for evangelical mission reflection is to consider the relationship between human salvation and the rest of God’s creation.
relationship with nature is intrinsic to mission “best practices”—whether framed as human survival or taken up for the sake of God’s creation itself. The days are gone when an abundance of forest and wildlife can be seen as the “howling wilderness” waiting to be subdued for Christian civilization. In a context of overpopulation and environments on the edge of extinction, paradigms of stewardship need to replace those of dominion.

The question before us is how—not when, or even whether—evangelical missions will enter the realm of earth care, for “eco” projects are springing up in missions like mushrooms after the rain. It is time that a mission forum or formal clearinghouse be established to study, to collect examples of best practices, and to give solid practical and theological advice to missionaries who find themselves either by choice or by necessity entering the realm of earth care.

Notes
1. This article is edited from an address at the Overseas Ministries Studies Center, December 2009, given to a conference of mission leaders for the purpose of promoting missiological reflection. In accord with its intent to provide an impressionistic overview of the sweep of practices and issues, footnotes are kept to a minimum.
3. Ibid., p. 173.
4. Official statements from both conferences mentioned the need for Christians to care for God’s creation. For the Common Call of Edinburgh 2010, see www.edinburgh2010.org. For the Cape Town Commitment, see IBMR 35 (April 2011): 59–80, or online at www.lausanne.org/cctcommitment.
16. On Ten Thousand Villages, see www.tenthousandvillages.com/php/about.us/about.history.php.

Correction
In his thoughtful “Theological Assessment” of the Cape Town Commitment, Robert J. Schreiter, C.P.P.S., writes, “The question of the relation of God’s covenant with the Jews and God’s salvific activity in Christ, treated explicitly at Manila (A.3), does not reappear at Cape Town” (IBMR 35 [April 2011]: 90).

His statement was based on a draft of the document sent to him, not the final version of the Cape Town Commitment, which was published in the same issue of the IBMR (pp. 59–80). In the published version, the issue does appear quite explicitly in section II.B.1:

We affirm that whereas the Jewish people were not strangers to the covenants and promises of God, in the way that Paul describes the Gentiles, they still stand in need of reconciliation to God through the Messiah Jesus. There is no difference, said Paul, between Jew and Gentile in sin; neither is there any difference in salvation. Only in and through the cross can both have access to God the Father through the one Spirit.

a. We continue, therefore, strongly to affirm the need for the whole Church to share the good news of Jesus as Messiah, Lord and Saviour with Jewish people. And in the spirit of Romans 14–15, we urge Gentile believers to accept, encourage and pray for Messianic Jewish believers, in their witness among their own people.

The editors regret the error.
“A well-balanced emphasis on spiritual life and high academic standards distinguishes the quality of this scholarly community.”

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Christian Mission and Earth-Care: An African Case Study

M. L. Daneel

There are signs in world Christianity of a growing awareness of the global environmental crisis. Yet, despite the well-intended calls of Western church leaders for their people to respect the integrity of creation, one cannot say that the restoration of an abused planet earth has been identified by them as a frontier to be crossed by way of a comprehensively mobilized missionary outreach of the church. In this article I wish to draw attention to a case study of African Initiated Churches (AICs) in Zimbabwe that, over a fifteen-year period (1988–2003), developed a remarkable ministry of earthkeeping. Their effort poses an arresting challenge to the world church.1

Zimbabwe’s “War of the Trees”

The resolve in rural Zimbabwe to “declare war” on deforestation, soil erosion, and related forms of environmental destruction grew in the context of a research project conducted during the mid-1980s. I was probing the crucial role of religion in the mobilization of the liberation struggle (chimurenga) prior to Independence. During extensive discussions with traditionalists and AIC leaders, most of them key role players during the war, we agreed that the “lost lands” that had been recaptured politically were still being lost ecologically at an accelerated and alarming rate. Something massive and revolutionary was required to arrest the slide toward environmental bankruptcy and the mood of helplessness in rural society. We therefore decided to launch a new movement of “green fighters” as an extension of the pre-Independence liberation struggle, one shifted in this instance into the field of ecology. In the subsequent drafting of organizational plans and mobilizing of a force of earthkeepers, we declared hondo yemiti, the “War of the Trees.” Whereas the major concern to start with was nursery development and tree planting, the new struggle, according to our organizational charter, had three aims: afforestation, the protection of water resources, and wildlife conservation.

At headquarters, the organizational and financially empowering agency was the Zimbabwean Institute of Religious Research and Ecological Conservation (ZIRRCON), the institutionalized and extended version of my research team. Founded in 1984, this body took responsibility for the initiation and development of two affiliated organizations: the Association of Zimbabwean Traditional Ecologists (AZTREC), which comprised the majority of chiefs, headmen, spirit mediums, former combatants, and a large group of commoners in Masvingo Province; and the Association of African Earthkeeping Churches (Aaec), which, at its peak counted some 180 AICs, mainly prophetic Zionist and Apostolic churches, then representing an estimated 2 million adherents. During the 1990s the entire movement of African earthkeepers represented the largest nongovernmental organization for environmental reform at the rural grassroots, not only in Zimbabwe but in all of Southern Africa. According to internationally recognized ecological luminaries, such as Larry Rasmussen, Mary Evelyn Tucker, and John Grim, who visited us in Zimbabwe, ZIRRCON’s inculturated and ritualized practices of earth-care was as innovative as any indigenous green movement they had observed elsewhere in the Two-Thirds World.

The accomplishments of the movement during the first fifteen years of our existence—the period during which I acted as ZIRRCON’s director—are briefly the following: Fifteen to eighteen mother nurseries, some of which cultivated more than 100,000 seedlings in a given year, and a host of small-scale satellite nurseries run by women and schools were established. An estimated 12–15 million trees were planted during that period, in several thousand woodlots, by AZTREC and Aaec peasant communities and also by women and school children in the central and southeastern communal lands of Zimbabwe. The variety of trees planted included:

- fruit trees in orchards for personal and commercial use;
- exotics such as eucalyptus for building operations;
- indigenous trees for firewood and the restoration of denuded land;
- leucaena for cattle fodder, firewood, and nitrate-fixing in arable lands; and
- indigenous hardwood, such as kiaat and pod mahogany, as a long-term investment for future generations.

ZIRRCON’s earthkeepers became known for cultivating more indigenous fruit tree seedlings, thorn trees, mountain acacias, and ancestor-related trees than any other institution had ever done in the country. Government officials, including President Mugabe, attended and participated in our annual tree-planting ceremonies.

The Women’s Desk, with several departments, ably supervised the income-generating projects of eighty women’s clubs, which included cloth manufacturing, bakeries, soap production, the pressing and refining of sunflower oil, and vegetable and fruit production. These clubs also facilitated the struggle against soil erosion by filling erosion gullies with stones and planting vetiver grass in the affected areas. The spirit mediums and male tribal elders in turn assisted the chiefs by restoring the customary laws on the protection of trees and wildlife in the ancestral sanctuaries of holy groves. Offenders were apprehended and brought to chiefs’ courts, where they were heavily fined and required to plant trees in denuded areas. Likewise, offenders who engaged in riverbank cultivation and spoiling the veld’s grass cover through the use of sleighs (hollowed out tree trunks, heavily loaded and pulled by donkeys or oxen) were served with heavy fines by the “green chiefs.”

Up to thirty youth clubs were developed at rural schools. The pupils concerned were taken on trips to identify birds and trees. In addition, members of Parks and Wildlife accompanied them to some of the larger game parks to teach them about big game and the species of game no longer found in the communal lands. They were also familiarized with issues of modern wildlife conservation. I personally introduced proposals for two major game conservancies: one in the communal lands mainly for the...
protection of the endangered klipspringer antelope, and the other for a joint project of collective, interracial game farming, incorporating some fifty farms to the east of Masvingo town. These plans, already approved by ZIRRCON, had to be abandoned because of the farm invasions allowed by Mugabe in the year 2000. A few years later an estimated 85 percent of the entire game population on Zimbabwe’s farms had been destroyed. So much for game conservation and protection of the country’s natural resources!

A Ritualized Mission

All tree planting ceremonies were ritualized in either traditionalist or Christian fashion. The ritual component shaped the green struggle as a holy war, directed by the Creator-God and forces from the spirit world. The rituals drew large contingents of rural participants, highlighted publicly the resolve and commitment of the green fighters, and united people in a common cause, regardless of diverse religious persuasions and lingering conflicts of the past.

AZTREC’s traditionalist rituals. The ceremonies of the Association of Zimbabwean Traditional Ecologists resembled to a large extent the old rain-requesting rituals of the past, called mukwerere. Sacrificial finger-milled beer would be brewed for the senior clan-ancestors, the varidzi venyika (guardians of the land), whose graves are in sacred groves on holy mountains, at times encompassing large mountain ranges. Sacrificial addresses to these ancestors, on the basis of traditional cosmology, entrusted the seedlings to the protective care of these guardian ancestors and brought to the fore the neglected ecological obligations of old, with appeals for their revival and implementation. As is typical for all rain ceremonies, the clan ancestors were also requested to appeal to the African high god, Mwari, for ample rain, in this instance to sustain the newly planted woodlots of trees.

Toward the end of the rainy season (i.e., AZTREC’s tree-planting season), a delegation of traditionalist tree-planters would be sent to the high-god shrines, 300 kilometers to the west, to report to the oracle on the progress of the green struggle. This visit took place because of the belief that Mwari and the senior clan ancestors control all struggles in the country—be they for political or for environmental liberation—from within a spirit war-council.

In both the traditional tree-planting and the oracle-reporting ceremonies, Christian earthkeepers were also in attendance. In order to demonstrate the retention of their Christian identity they would refrain from drinking sacrificial beer, but they assisted their non-Christian counterparts once the actual tree-planting took place. Likewise, they refrained from full communion with the oracular deity, even as they engaged in close association and dialogue with cult officials at the shrines. Thus, in an open-ended interreligious movement, the bitter strife between Zionist prophets and Mwari cultists of the past gave way to positive attitudes of understanding and tolerance in pursuit of a common cause.

The AAEC’s tree-planting Eucharist. The use by the Association of African Earthkeeping Churches of a tree-planting Eucharist integrated an earthkeeping ministry with the sacrament of Holy Communion. This development was of pivotal importance, for it brought environmental stewardship right into the heartbeat of church life and biblically based spirituality. In African agrarian society this was a powerful way of witnessing to “a change of heart” within the church, an illustration of revisioning the church at its core, allowing it to become a better vehicle for the missi-sonary good news it wants to convey. Moreover, this ceremony highlighted the characteristic trends of an emergent AIC theology of the environment, one not written in books but symbolized in budding trees sustaining a ravished countryside.

Key activities of the outdoor tree-planting sacrament included the following:

- **Preparations of the woodlot** included digging of holes for the seedlings, fencing, and naming the woodlot “Lord’s Acre,” which was the Christian equivalent of the traditional sacred grove, or marambatemwa (lit., “refusal to have the trees felled”).
- **Dancing and singing** around the stacked seedlings to praise God, the great Earthkeeper, and inspire his earthkeepers to engage in action.
- **Several sermons** by AIC bishops of different churches and ZIRRCON staff, followed by speeches of representatives of the Forestry Commission, Parks and Wildlife, government officials, and so forth, whereby the Eucharist evolved into an inclusive public, rather than an exclusive in-group, event.
- The sacrament itself was preceded by all Christian participants confessing publicly their ecological sins, such as tree-felling without planting any in return, promoting soil erosion through bad land-husbandry activities, river-bank cultivating, and spoiling wildlife by poaching game animals.
- **After confession**, each communicant picked up a seedling and moved with it toward the table where the bread and wine were administered. Thereby nature was symbolically drawn into the inner circle of communion with Christ the Redeemer, head of the church and of all creation. In such action the salvation of all creation and the emergence of a new heaven and earth are anticipated and proclaimed.
- After the use of bread and wine, the Christian communicants were joined by their traditionalist counterparts, who up to this point were observers of the proceedings. Then
the green army moved in unison to the “Lord’s Acre” to commit the seedlings to the soil.

- The seedlings were addressed as “relatives” by the planters as they placed them in the soil. You, tree, my brother . . . my sister. Today I plant you in this soil. I shall protect you. And give water for your growth. Have good roots to keep the soil from eroding. Have many leaves and branches. Then we can breathe fresh air, sit in your shade, and find firewood (when some of your branches dry).

- At the conclusion, many of the tree-planters would kneel in queues in front of the prophetic healers for laying-on of hands and prayer. Thus the healing of the barren earth and of human beings blended into a single event that witnessed to Christ, the crucified and resurrected Savior of all the earth.

**Ecumenical Sacrament and Mission Command**

In the tradition of the Zimbabwean AICs there are two mission-activating Eucharists. First, in Bishop Mutendi’s Zion Christian Church (ZCC) the celebration of the Eucharist during the Easter festivities became the springboard for an annual reconsideration and deliberate implementation of the classic mission command as found in Matthew 28:19. The sacramental good news of Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross, blended with his call for mission after his resurrection, provided the challenge for the mobilization of the entire church to engage in countrywide campaigns culminating in mass conversions and baptisms. Such outreach was always planned during the paschal celebrations and followed immediately after the climactic Eucharist administered by Mutendi, the ZCC “man of God.” Second, the practice was extended and given new content in the context of the first ecumenical movement of substance among the Zimbabwean AICs, founded in 1972 and popularly called Fambidzano (lit., “cooperative of churches”).

To the member churches the cornerstone text of their movement, John 17:21–23, called for church unity as a condition for effective missionary outreach, providing the challenge for the mobilization of the entire church to engage in countrywide campaigns culminating in mass conversions and baptisms. Such outreach was always planned during the paschal celebrations and followed immediately after the climactic Eucharist administered by Mutendi, the ZCC “man of God.” Second, the practice was extended and given new content in the context of the first ecumenical movement of substance among the Zimbabwean AICs, founded in 1972 and popularly called Fambidzano (lit., “cooperative of churches”).

Traditionalists assimilated the Gospel, observed the sacrament, and assisted with tree-planting.

Mwari [God] saw the devastation of the land. So he called his envoys (ZIRRCON/AECC leaders) to shoulder the task of delivering the earth. . . . Together with you, we the Apostles are now the deliverers of the stricken land. . . . We the deliverers were sent by Mwari on a divine mission. . . . Deliverance, Mwari says, lies in the trees. Jesus said: “I leave you, my followers, to complete my work!” And that task is the one of healing! We, the followers of Jesus have to continue with his healing ministry. . . . So let us all fight, clothing, healing the earth with trees! . . . It is our task to strengthen this mission with our numbers of people. If all of us work with enthusiasm, we shall clothe and heal the entire land with trees and drive off affliction [the evil of destruction]. I believe we can change it!

Although Wapendama did not specifically mention the Eucharist, his message in the context of Holy Communion implied that, at the point where the union between Christ and his disciples (cutting across denominational boundaries) is sacramentally confirmed, the mission of earth-healing integral to it is visibly acknowledged and revitalized. God certainly takes the initiative to deliver and restore the ravaged earth, but responsibility to deliver the stricken earth from its malady here and now lies with the Christian body of believers, that is, the church. Implicit in Wapendama’s words was the emerging AAEC image of Christ’s church as keeper of creation. Focal in it was the healing ministry of Christ extended through grace to the entire cosmos.

Wapendama’s insights did not represent a fully developed theology of the interaction of Eucharist and mission. Yet it signaled one of the ways in which AICs tended to update their sacramental-
cum-missiological tradition in the face of ecological needs. It also hinted at Africa’s understanding of the church’s comprehensive missionary task in this world, not as a privileged community of mere soul-savers, but in terms of the vision of Bishop Anastasios of Androussa that “the whole world, not only humankind but the entire universe, has been called to share in the restoration that was accomplished by the redeeming work of Christ.”

Features of “Green Mission Churches”

The AAEC’s engagement in the War of the Trees has clearly led to a breakthrough in AIC notions of the church as hospital. As pronounced by Bishop Wapendama and as is generally true for most prophetic churches, the healing ministry of Christ has been focal in the church’s mission. Healing of human affliction in the widest possible sense remained among the most important goods and results of the AIC’s prophetic ministry, but now it included more deliberately than before the holistic deliverance and salvation of Mwari’s stricken earth. This extended perception of salvation became practical to the extent that the church realized its role as keeper of creation, in a mission mobilizing its entire membership as active agents rather than a select group of officeholders. It was as if Bishop Wapendama anticipated in such healing of creation a new dimension of liberation in the church itself—liberation from an overriding preoccupation with the human condition. In healing the earth, by reaching out beyond the physical and mental ailments of human beings, by setting internal leadership and interchurch conflicts aside for a higher God-given purpose, the earthkeeping church, the earthkeeper himself or herself, was healed. In such liberation unto earth-service, the apostolate of the church obtained prominence and meaning.

Endless variation in the AAEC’s tree-planting sermons bore out the strong theological undercurrent of the understanding of earth-care as missio Dei and therefore as the mission of God’s church. Davison Tawoneichi of the Evangelical Ministry of Christ Church, for instance, preached at a tree-planting ceremony: “Earthkeeping is part of the body of Christ. It is so because we as humans are part of His body and the trees are part of us; they are essential for us to breathe, to live. So trees, too, are part of Christ’s body. Our destruction of nature is an offense against the body of Christ . . . it hurts Christ’s body. Therefore the church should heal the wounded body of Christ.”

This view complemented the above-mentioned assertion of Bishop Wapendama about mission as an extension of Christ’s healing ministry, only in this instance Christ’s body was understood as being itself afflicted by the abuse of nature. This statement underscored the growing tendency in AAEC tree-planting Eucharists to view Christ’s body in both its ecclesiastical and its cosmic connotations: through partaking in the elements of the sacrament, the earthkeepers witness to their unity in Christ’s body, the church, deriving from it strength, compassion, and commitment for the environmental struggle. Subsequently, they set out on their healing mission of afforestation to restore the cosmically wounded body of Christ.

How, then, did the green mission affect the life and shape of the earthkeeping church? Here are a few major ecclesiological shifts.

Expanded healing ministry. An expanded healing ministry became noticeable at prophetic church headquarters. The black “Jerusalems” were still healing colonies where the afflicted, the marginalized, and the poor could feel at home. But the concept hospitara visibly changed as dedicated earthkeeping prophets expanded their colonies into “environmental hospitals”

The earth-healing ministry appeared to provide new impetus and direction to church life, as well as numerical church growth.

New generation of church leaders. The AAEC also witnessed the emergence of a new generation of iconic church leaders: environmental missionaries whose evangelical drive included good news for all creation. They replaced the prominent first-generation AIC icons like Bishop Mutendi (ZCC) and Johane Maranke (African Apostolic Church of Johane Maranke), who functioned as so-called black Messiahs to their followers, illuminating the mediation and saviorhood of Christ in an existentially understandable idiom. Now instead of a single leader giving substance to the presence of the biblical Messiah in African rural society through the mediation of rain and good crops for peasants, through faith-healing, education, and sociopolitical involvement revolving around a single “holy city,” the mode of operation was shifted to an entire group of “Jerusalems” to help establish the grace and salvation implicit in Christ’s presence in the Creator’s neglected and abused garden. Thereby the entire oikos was declared God’s “holy city.” In these iconic missionaries Christ revealed a disturbing truth in the African context, namely that all agro-economic development and progress will be meaningless unless it includes environmental sanctification, nature’s restoration, an ecological economy that, under the reign of Christ, consciously strikes a balance between exploitive agricultural progress and altruistic earth-restoration. This is the true purpose of an expanded missionary mandate and message proclaimed by the AAEC’s iconic missionaries. Jürgen Moltmann described such a calling for all humanity as follows:

In the messianic light of the gospel, the appointment [of humans] to rule over animals and the earth also appears as the “ruling

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with Christ” of believers. For it is to Christ, the true and visible image of the invisible God on earth, that “all authority is given in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18). His liberating and healing rule also embraces the fulfilment of the dominium terrae—the promise given to human beings at creation. Under the conditions of history and in the circumstances of sin and death, the sovereignty of the crucified and risen Messiah Jesus is the only true dominium terrae… It would be wrong to seek for the dominium terrae, not in the lordship of Christ, but in other principalities and powers—in the power of the state or the power of science and technology.11

The AAEC missionaries gave expression in the African context to the messianic dominium terrae, not so much in conference debates, not through repetitious reference in sermons to Christ’s lordship in creation, but by mediating the power of

The green dialogue marked by interreligious tolerance and friendship by no means meant religious relativism.

Christ mentioned in Matthew 28:18 through persistent presence in village life, where commoners, the masses of people, all who wanted to participate, were empowered to share a new dominion of service. The “mediation” thus facilitated by the earthkeeping icons through tree-planting was not obscuring Christ’s lordship or saviorhood—as some evangelicals may be inclined to think—but was unveiling and illuminating dimensions of the mystery of divine presence in nature that may have gone unnoticed by many believers and nonbelievers alike.

The iconic missionaries all had their roots in peasant society. Whether they were salaried staff members at AAEC headquarters, full-time nursery or woodlot keepers, bishops and prophets with “environmental hospitals,” or women developing ministries of compassion, they all relied on the land for sustenance and were therefore well placed to demonstrate their churches’ solidarity with nature. Their identification with Christ’s lordship in all creation reminds one of the Old Testament prophets who related Israel’s salvation to the history of their holy land. As Amos prophesied the fall of the kingdom of Judah because of Israel’s overexploitation of the land and disregard of the poor, the Shona iconic prophets were attributing wanton destruction of the earth and related droughts, floods, and famines to human hubris and defiance of the universal reign of Christ.

New ethical codes. The AAEC’s afforestation programs stimulated a need for new ethical codes. Leading earthkeepers felt strongly that clear environmental laws should be drafted on an ecumenical platform and that strict church discipline should be implemented in the “green church” against all trespassers of such laws. Bishop Farawo, who was managing a large nursery as a veritable “Zion City of Trees,” initiated court trials for tree-fellers at the level of the church council and the punishment of wanton offenders through extra duties of tree-planting and aftercare in new woodlots to compensate for the damage done. Bishop Chimangwwa urged campaigns of conscientization to reinforce the Gospel message of the earth’s salvation. He considered general ignorance of the “gospel of the trees” to be the cause for “the threat of the destructive axe.” The bishop’s wife felt so strongly about the unchecked use of the “destructive axe” that she urged the church to have trespassers imprisoned until the urgency of environmental protection was fully understood.

The more radical exponents of the green struggle, who identified the church’s mission with environmental legislation and control, insisted that the prophetically exposed “wizards of the earth” be debarred from Holy Communion or even be excommunicated if they persisted in their evil ways. Evangelist Samuel Nhongo of the Zion Christian Church (an offshoot of the original ZCC of Bishop Mutendi), for instance, expressed such views as the following:

Simon Peter was told by Jesus that on him, Peter the Rock, the church will be built. Jesus said: “I give you the keys to lock and unlock!” It is in this light that I see the earth-destroyers whom we expel from the church. We cannot keep undisciplined tree-fellers, for they are the varozi [wizards] who should be locked out of the church…. The churches, the chiefs [AZTREC], and the government should sit down together and plan properly for this war. The church’s new environmental laws should be universally known and respected! Otherwise, we will be merely chasing the wind. In the Bible it says you have to leave the weeds to grow with the corn. This means the church cannot judge finally in this world. But cleansing of the church must proceed lest the [green] struggle stagnates.

Seen as an institution with legislative and disciplinary powers, the church—in the earthkeeper’s view—also becomes the vehicle of uncompromising struggle as it discerns and opposes evil forces that feed on mindless exploitation of the limited resources of the earth. In this mission the church is at risk, willing to be controversial, to suffer and sacrifice whatever discipleship in this realm requires.

New sense of common cause. Finally, the emergence of the “green church” meant the closing of ranks between Christian and traditionalist earthkeepers in a common cause. The implied commitment of the church to a form of open ecumenism set the stage for regular and continuous interfaith dialogue in joint action, a situation that fostered and complemented the development of an already existent AIC theology of religions. In the healing colonies of Zionist and Apostolic AICs, dialogue between prophets and patients has all along been focal in the attempt of healers to identify the causes of affliction in terms of traditional worldviews and to achieve religious ascendancy over, rather than appeasement with, the old spirit forces. Confrontation and transformation of the old beliefs were implicit in the “fulfillment theology” undergirding prophetic faith-healing praxis.

There was a great difference, however, between prophets developing policies of antithesis to traditional religion from within the relative privacy or protected confines of their healing colonies and the more open situation where earthkeeping required the conduct of joint religious ceremonies in the presence of the large numbers of out-groups who in the past were the still-to-be-converted “heathen,” or at least the “religious opposition.” Much greater caution was required in the evaluation of another’s religion when the “other” was always present in what had in effect become religiously pluriform brotherhoods and sisterhoods bonded together in a common cause! The earthkeeping brothers and sisters were no longer “opponents” but fellow pilgrims in the quest for eco-justice. The green dialogue marked by interreligious tolerance and friendship by no means meant religious relativism. The AAEC tree-planting Eucharist, as opposed to an ancestral beer libation, for example, highlighted the stark difference in religious approaches. Yet it was as if the ecological
struggle through the newly planted trees breathed the message: “You cannot afford the luxury of religious conflict if it causes the wounded earth to suffocate!”

I mention but one example of theological development in the ritualized interface between Christians and traditionalists. The preoccupation of the chiefs and spirit mediums with their guardian ancestors (varidzi venyika) whenever trees were planted caused their AIC counterparts to relate the role of the Holy Spirit to the world of the senior ancestors more positively than Zionists and Apostles generally allow for. Instead of the ancestral guardians being branded as "demons," fit only to be exorcised or disassociated from by Christian prophets, a certain reverence for them was observed by the Christian tree-planters. Their protection of nature became more readily identified with the biblical code of Christian stewardship, and the question was at least considered whether these ancestors do not represent a theologically acceptable form of African praeparatio evangelica. Could the church not at this point recognize a foreknowledge about and responsibility for nature, inspired by the universal God of all creation and developed by the pre-Christian sages of Africa? Whatever the answer to this question and however genuine the respect shown the chiefs by the prophetic earthkeepers, this preoccupation with the ancestors was also used by the maporesanyika (land-healing) preachers as a point of contact to introduce and explain Christ as the fulfillment of all ancestorhood, as the true muridzi venyika, guardian of the land, the “Ancestor” of all the universe, commissioned and empowered by the Godhead to introduce new life to all creation. In this vision of Christ’s fulfillment of traditional spirit guardianship, the attitude toward the old order—as reflected in the respect shown the participant chiefs—was less one of judgment than of encouraging the traditionalist elders to develop fully in the present earthkeeping dispensation the ecological instincts that have always permeated African holism. The message thus proclaimed and enacted, for all its conciliatory insight and tolerance, seriously questioned the popular myth held in many traditionalist circles that Jesus Christ is merely the white man’s mhondoro (tribal ancestor), who holds no more authority or power than the Shona hero-ancestors Chaminuka, Kagwi, and Nehanda. In AAEC theology Christ’s “ancestorhood” and his communication with the guardian ancestors in no way detracts from acceptance of his lordship in the biblical sense over all creation. Whatever the demands of human partnership in the struggle and however strong the drive for dialogue without bias, this cornerstone of Christian earth-stewardship remained. The entire tree-planting Eucharist testified to Christ’s lordship in heaven and on earth.

Conclusion

The War of the Trees poses a significant challenge for the church worldwide, one that hinges on a number of factors.

First, the point of gravity in global Christianity in terms of growth rates and numerical strength has shifted from North to South, from the so-called First World to the Two-Thirds World. Thus the churches of the South deserve our attention. In Africa the AICs, particularly in Southern Africa, form an important component of a rapidly expanding African Christianity (representing in some areas up to 40 percent of the overall Christian membership). Despite some obvious limitations in theological education, these churches excel in developing original, inculturated theologies at the grassroots of African society. Their relevance to the communities they serve warrants a closer look at their earthkeeping contribution.

Second, the AICs concerned have had little or no exposure to eco-theological literature and can therefore be said to have developed earth-care concerns as an indigenous response to nature-related biblical injunctions, relatively free from Western influence.

Third, the engagement of peasant families who were directly affected by environmental deterioration contributed to the development of a spontaneous grassroots theology, born of existential need rather than based on abstract reflection.

Fourth, ecological insights derived from praxis are at times overridden by theoretical, academic considerations. We therefore need to trace more deliberately the movement of God’s earthkeeping Spirit as it is already manifest in Christian communities if we are to revisit and understand the church’s mission on this beleaguered planet. The environmental ministry of the AICs in Zimbabwe provides an opportunity to this end.

Fifth, despite the tendency of observers to characterize the AICs as protest movements rather than as missionary institutions in their own right, the AICs do have a rich tradition of missionizing activity in Africa, a factor that contributes to their identifying their earthkeeping ministry with what they understand as mission.

The main aim of this article has not been to present an in-depth consideration of biblical foundations for earth-care, but to give a brief account of an African earthkeeping mission from the underside, where an imaginative attempt was made to liberate and heal an abused and overexploited earth. A few of the main tenets of tree-planting rituals have been highlighted. It has not been possible to include discussion of the underlying Trinitarian theology here, aspects of which could well be integrated into a broader missio-ecological theology for Africa, if not for the church universal. Coming from Zimbabwe, the testimony of the War of the Trees is, from a Western perspective, very much a voice from the margins. But spoken as it is from sub-Saharan Africa, it comes as a valuable word from the new heartland of Christianity.

These churches excel in developing original, inculturated theologies at the grassroots of African society.

Notes

1. This article is based on and reproduces part of a presentation I made on the same subject during the International Association for Mission Studies meeting in Buenos Aires in 1996. See “Earthkeeping in Missiological Perspective: An African Challenge,” by M. L. Daneel, Discussion Papers in the African Humanities 31, African Studies Center, Boston University.


Africa International University Granted Kenyan Charter as a “Mark of Quality”

Africa International University received its charter on March 4, 2011, in a festive celebration presided over by Mwai Kibaki, C.G.H., M.P., president and commander-in-chief of the defense forces of Kenya. It is only the thirteenth private university in Kenya to have attained full accreditation status. In his speech Kibaki congratulated “all those who have made this possible. I especially commend the sponsors for their immense efforts which have culminated in the actualization of their dream of a university.” He described the charter as “a mark of quality,” for AIU “already has a rich history.”

The president praised AIU for being “at the forefront in providing post-graduate theological training to Christian leaders in Kenya and the African continent,” noting, “Many of the inspiring and effective Protestant leaders in Africa have been trained in this institution. You have played an important role in ensuring that the men and women who serve in our churches are equipped with necessary ministry skills. I am confident that the award of this charter will help towards making this institution a world-renowned university that serves humanity.”

During the same ceremony Watson Omulokoli, professor of church history in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Kenyatta University, was installed as the AIU chancellor. He also serves as an adjunct professor at the Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission, and Culture, Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana. In 2006–8 he was a member of the Task Force for the Development of the National Strategy for University Education in Kenya.

Omulokoli also is patron of Bible Translation and Literacy East Africa, the national counterpart of Wycliffe Bible Translators and the Summer Institute of Linguistics, and is chairman of the trustee board of the African Institute for Contemporary Mission and Research. He was a 2010–11 resident at the Overseas Ministries Study Center (publisher of the IBMR), where he wrote profiles for the Dictionary of African Christian Biography. Negotiations to relocate the DACB’s research coordinating hub to AIU are underway. The database itself will be hosted at the Boston University School of Theology. Omulokoli pledged that AIU would be committed to “offer quality education with integrity” by maintaining “academic and intellectual excellence,” laying strong spiritual foundations, and pursuing its mandate of moral and ethical integrity in all its programs.

Later, AIU also announced the appointment of Andrew F. Walls as research professor in world Christianity in its Centre for World Christianity. Walls is professor of the history of missions, Liverpool Hope University, Liverpool, England; honorary professor at the University of Edinburgh and founder and former director of the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World there; and an IBMR contributing editor. The appointment will commence in September 2011.

The university comprises three schools: the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology, an “evangelical post-graduate theological institution to promote excellence in African Christianity”; the Institute for the Study of African Realities; and the School of Professional Studies. For details, go online to www.negst.edu.

—Daniel J. Nicholas
My Kenyan counterpart recently held a “God and Creation” workshop in a village called Mbauini, just a few kilometers from Rift Valley Academy and the Kijabe Medical Center, one of the largest mission complexes in the world. More than 150 missionaries live in the greater Kijabe area. The workshop that day focused on the acute problem of deforestation, and how Christians should be among the first to respond to such problems. Once carpeted by a lush cedar and African olive forest that fed streams out into the Rift Valley, many kilometers of the Kijabe escarpment now lie denuded of forest cover, and the streams have dried up. As my counterpart spoke with passion about the biblical foundations for creation stewardship and how we can honor Christ through caring for the environment, one member of the community, hearing this teaching for the first time, became obviously excited. With urgency he asked: “Why is it that for all these decades the missionaries right here have never told us that God was concerned about how we managed the forests? Why have they just watched this destruction taking place?”

For me as a member of the evangelical mission community, this question is unsettling. Kijabe, home to the Kikuyu people, is by evangelical mission standards a “reached” community. Thousands have accepted Christ, a Bible school exists, and churches of several denominations, some in existence for decades, dot the escarpment. A large majority of the population attends church—but the destruction of the forest has continued unabated. Critical supplies of wood and water that the forest provides are running out. Fortunately, a consensus is finally growing within the Christian community that people can and should glorify God through proper care of creation. Frequent discussions are now being held about finding ways to protect what remains of the original forest and about the difficult challenge of successfully planting new trees.

This story illustrates a problem around the world: too often followers of Christ have neglected the environment as not being important in God’s eyes. It also points to a promising and very powerful solution. When God is put back into the center of our perspective on creation, transformation can take place, both in the hearts of people and on the land that sustains them.

The Problem

The dwindling forests of Kijabe are just a microcosm of a growing reality. In many parts of the world, and particularly in Africa, countless communities are facing environmental degradation unprecedented in history. Critical problems include deforestation, overgrazing, erosion, loss of biodiversity, a warming and drying climate, and increasing difficulty in obtaining consistent supplies of food and water. These issues come together to cause increased hardship and suffering, perpetuating poverty, hunger, disease, and death.

Most disturbing is the speed at which these changes are taking place. In Kenya the government estimates that in just thirty years (1973–2003) an astounding 55 percent of the remaining woodland and forest cover was lost. With a growing population and rising demand for wood, the trend is accelerating in some areas, especially when drought strikes. Other nations in East Africa are similarly affected.

The consequences are seen most vividly in agriculture. Deforestation and farming on steep slopes lead to soil erosion and loss of precious water resources. As harvests decline, farmers inevitably become discouraged. From the early 1980s to early 1990s, the maize yield per acre was twelve bags for Rangwe community. Today (2005–9) it is four bags, a decline of 67 percent. For sorghum the yield was six bags. Now it is one bag, a decline of 83 percent. For beans, one tin sown yielded twenty tins; now one tin yields six tins, a decline of 70 percent. Yields for Tieku community declined even more sharply. Informal surveys conducted by Care of Creation Kenya (CCK; see www.careofcreationkenya.org) have found similar declines in productivity in many agricultural communities.

These numbers point to growing hardship for farmers, for their households, and for whole communities. The decline is even more critical when we recognize how central agriculture is for the vast majority of people in Africa and in other parts of the Majority World. In Africa small-scale agriculture is the single most common vocation. Local languages, cultures, people groups, and entire nations revolve around farming. This is how the greatest proportion of people make their living. Why, then, have evangelicals, who pride themselves on following the Great Commission and who are eager to spread the Gospel, all but ignored this reality? We plant churches, we train pastors, we teach theology, but we say little or nothing about farming.

Crucial Questions

To phrase the issue sharply, if there are so many Christians, why are the farming systems, water resources, forests, and livelihoods of people falling apart? As Christianity has grown rapidly in many parts of Africa, such as Kenya, why have the environmental and agricultural problems grown just as quickly? From an evangelical understanding the deforestation in itself and the very real problem of soil erosion are not the crux of the problem. The root of the problem lies in the simple but critical fact that the hearts and minds of people (and of societies) are corrupted by sin, and they lack moral and spiritual conviction of the need to be good stewards of creation.

My Kenyan staff members and I make a practice of asking Christian farmers, “What does your faith in Jesus Christ mean for your way of life as a farmer?” In most cases a look of bewilderment comes first, followed by, “I have never considered such
a question before.” Then there is often the honest confession, “I don’t know what my Christian faith means for farming.”

The evangelical missions community must recognize the significance of this tragedy. All too often we have completely omitted the environment from our list of priorities. When farmers in Kenya who have attended church for more than ten years state that their pastor has never preached a sermon related to agriculture, this is a serious tragedy. We need, by God’s grace, a broadening in the scope of what we think we should be doing in missions. Joseph Sittler has commented, “When we turn the attention of the church to a definition of the Christian relationship with the natural world, we are not stepping away from grave and to mud and soil. The world will die from lack of soil and pure water long before it will die from lack of antibiotics or surgical skill and knowledge.” Imagine a world in which churches and a wide range of ministries were able to provide concrete theological guidance on this issue and, by stimulating pursuit of practical, scientifically sound solutions, had the ability to lead the world by example. Imagine mission agencies of all kinds committed to a Christ-honoring creation stewardship ethic, refusing to be content with simply handing out relief supplies when hunger or famine struck. Imagine these agencies, in pursuit of a much larger vision, working hand-in-hand with local communities to restore watersheds and to rebuild degraded landscapes in order to prevent hunger or famine from afflicting people in the first place.

Environmental challenges are emerging almost everywhere. It is time that we ask for God’s help to implement a much bigger vision in our role in missions. This vision is consistent with God’s call for us to share the good news of Christ and to make disciples of all nations.

Here are some questions for evangelical missions to consider:

- If Christ intends to change people into his likeness, how should that transformation be lived out in terms of environmental and agricultural stewardship? How would Christlikeness be demonstrated in the life of a farmer or pastoralist, of a fisherman or businessperson?
- If we missionaries are to be real-life examples that demonstrate the Gospel in ways that bring about the kind of transformation we speak of and that are characterized by a biblically based commitment to creation stewardship, how would that change our mission strategy? How would it change our approach to those very farmers, pastoralists, fishermen, or businesspeople?
- In communities where women collect firewood from dwindling forests or where men are discouraged as productivity of their farmland declines, how should local pastors be trained and what role should they play in leading their communities to address these problems?
- What type of education would best prepare missionaries who are called to serve unreached people groups that are struggling with chronic hunger? What priorities should a mission agency emphasize in order to reflect a holistic Gospel that would bring both spiritual healing to the people and physical healing to their land?

The Opportunity

As Sittler indicates, we need a new tool in our toolbox, one that has the potential to bring uncountable benefits to people around the world in a way that glorifies God, and particularly to the poor. Has the evangelical church seriously considered the potential beauty of integrating missions and creation care into one cohesive whole? What if we combined efforts to fulfill the Great Commission with tangible efforts to bring healing to creation as well?

Notice the words of this commission: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19–20 NIV, used throughout). Jesus did not command that we make mere converts. He called us to make disciples, whose lives would change the world. Discipleship transforms people, communities, and entire nations.

What would discipleship into a biblical worldview on creation stewardship look like? As the first step, we as missionaries have an urgent need to be disciplined ourselves on this issue. We often lack the biblical foundations and conviction to preach, teach, and develop Bible studies that offer God-honoring attitudes and behaviors in response to the environmental problems of our day. Christ certainly desires and deserves to reign supreme as King in every aspect of his followers’ lives, and how we care for creation should be included in that list.

Paul Brand, the famous medical missionary to India, once said, “I would gladly give up medicine and surgery tomorrow if by so doing I could have some influence on policy with regard

What priorities should a mission agency emphasize to bring both spiritual healing to the people and physical healing to their land?
efforts to show mercy to the poor and to restore the production of food supplies, the impact will be felt for generations to come (see Isa. 58:6–11).

Opening doors to unreached people groups. In countless communities around the world the church has little or no presence. In many cases these communities are facing serious environmental decline as well. A mission strategy designed to bring healing to the creation by striving to replenish the wood, water, and food supplies needed by the people will be met with open arms. Christ’s love demonstrated in practical ways will quickly break down barriers, cultivating abundant opportunities to share the Gospel with people much more receptive to receiving it.

Drawing in people who would otherwise shun the church. A considerable number of people are part of the environmental movement. Many of them, however, have rejected the church because it has been so quiet on this topic. When we begin to provide a visible and meaningful response to the issue and offer thoughtful teaching and discussion of the topic in our churches, our witness to these potentially energetic allies will be dramatically strengthened. A biblically based creation stewardship ethic can not only offer these people a foundation that supports the passion they already possess, but also guide them into expressing their passion in a way that brings glory to God.

Enlisting today’s young people into missions. In comparison to their parents’ generation, Christian young people around the world are far more concerned about environmental issues. This grassroots interest holds tremendous promise, and the critical task is to channel that energy in the best possible direction. Combining missions with caring for creation opens up huge possibilities for people who never thought of themselves as being eligible for “missions” in the traditional sense.

Evangelical mission agencies need to gladly recognize that a new type of missionary should be added to the team. We have seen wonderful work accomplished by medical missionaries and agricultural missionaries and by those who train pastors, plant churches, or translate the Scriptures. That good work must continue, but it is time to broaden our vision and add to these collective efforts. Integrating creation stewardship into missions can help us rediscover the beauty of holistic ministry that does not separate the spiritual from the physical.

The world today desperately needs Great Commission missionaries with expertise in forestry, fisheries, and sustainable agriculture. It needs godly men and women who are trained in appropriate technology, wildlife conservation, water resource management, environmental education, and similar fields. These missionaries should receive sound theological, scientific, and social training so they can demonstrate effectively the fullness of Christ’s love to the hurting people of our world.

Biblical Basis for Creation Stewardship

The need for the church to develop and then put into practice a biblical worldview on creation is critical. Once in place, this worldview will serve as the soil out of which a Christian environmental ethic can be grown. Two concepts are essential.

*We care for creation because Christ our Savior is Christ the Creator.* Colossians 1:15–16 is one of the most important places to begin building a biblical foundation for being excellent stewards of creation: Christ is “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible . . .; all things were created by him and for him.” Three truths come together to form a biblical worldview about creation: Christ is the cornerstone of our faith, he is the creator of all things, and all things were created for a divine purpose—“for him” (v. 16). We should care for creation not merely because it is a good idea but because we owe absolutely everything to the One who made it all. We cannot legitimately claim to love our Savior while at the same time participating in careless abuse or destruction of what he has created.

Creation’s inherent value comes from its ultimate purpose to stand as a testimony to Christ’s beauty; all things were created for his glory. As Jonathan Edwards wrote, “The Son of God created the world for this very end, to communicate Himself in an image of His own Excellency . . . When we behold the light and brightness of the sun, the golden edges of an evening cloud, or the beauteous [rain]bow, we behold the adumbrations of His glory and goodness; and, in the blue sky, of His mildness and gentleness.”

Since Christ exhorted us to love our neighbor as ourselves, we must also give careful regard to how our treatment of creation may affect others. Caring for creation, therefore, finds its firm foundation in the person and work of Christ.

*We care for creation because it is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.* Imagine that you are part of a Christian community where a lake no longer sustains your people because of over-fishing, or where cattle can no longer thrive because of over-grazing, or where crop yields are dropping each year because of soil and water erosion, or where the river that passes by your town is so polluted that people cannot swim in it. Then as a Christian, stop to ask, “What is God’s will for our community in these situations?”

We evangelical Christians have rarely asked this kind of question, although we readily pray for God’s wisdom and direction about whom to marry, which church to attend, and what job to take. Should we not be just as willing to prayerfully pursue God’s will in matters pertaining to creation?

In Christ our perspective about life and the way we live should be radically different from the patterns that we see in the world (Rom. 12:2). We should be asking on a regular basis: “God, what is your will for us as your people living on this part of your creation?”

Biblical Basis for Agricultural Stewardship

Earlier we asked what a person’s faith in Jesus Christ might mean for his or her way of life as a farmer. As follow-up questions we might ask: How does God fit into the picture of agriculture? Does the Bible have anything to say about farming? The answers to these questions have the power to completely transform our view and practice of agriculture, both in Kenya and around the world.

The world today desperately needs Great Commission missionaries with expertise in forestry, fisheries, and sustainable agriculture.
How we do agriculture can glorify God and reflect our commitment to Christ. Examine the accompanying diagrams, then consider two questions. Which community is the Christian community? Which community is honoring God in its use of the land?

Whenever we have presented these images to Christian farmers in Kenya, they have almost invariably selected the second image. Though most of them had never before considered such a question, their typically swift response reveals that, embedded deep within, is an understanding that God expects something better.

What we see in the second image—contouring on the slopes to prevent erosion, a forest still intact on the hillside, trees planted in the village and in the fields, pasture that is still in good condition, and a pond with a stream that still flows—all helps to illustrate a simple but fundamental concept. The beauty of a healthy, productive, and well-cared-for agricultural landscape can be a testimony to the beauty of people whose lives have been changed by Christ. Our gardens and farms should bear tangible witness to the fact that we are committed to Christ. If the Gospel can heal and transform people, then surely it can heal and transform how we farm.

To consider this concept further we should also examine a passage like 1 Corinthians 10:31 (“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God”). This clearly reflects that resource by obeying the fishing regulations, for the glory of God.

Farming is a noble way of life because God was the first farmer. In places like Africa, farming is often perceived as being the lowest possible occupation to pursue. The discouragement of farmers in the face of declining crop yields is passed on to the next generation. Parents urge their children to get a good education so that they do not have to be “a poor farmer like me!” The poverty of poor production from the land leads to poverty of the heart and mind, and hope grows faint if farming is increasingly seen as a futile and fruitless way of life.

A worldview that belittles farming as a way of life is decidedly not biblical. Neither is it helpful as Christian leaders, local farmers, or other segments of society consider the challenging task of feeding growing populations and future generations. Much is at stake here. How farmers care for (or do not care for) their land will have enormous repercussions for future food supplies. As Christians, we are in a position to restore to farming the dignity and respect that it deserves.

How then can missionaries and the church promote a biblically based message that affirms farmers and that encourages them to become excellent stewards of their land? We must turn to Scripture—in this case Genesis 2:8 and 15 (“Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. . . . The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it”)—and place God back into the center of the picture.

The priceless truths these two verses contain can usher in a critically essential shift in worldview. The poverty of heart and mind that plagues many farming communities in the Majority World can be healed and transformed with this passage. In Scripture, God was not just a bystander when the Garden of Eden came into being. God emerges as the First Farmer, who planted the very first garden.
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description (Gen. 2:15). It is critical for missionaries and church leaders to build this type of worldview into our farming communities.

**Missions Integrated with Creation Stewardship**

So far, we have considered three main ideas: (1) our world is in desperate need of Christ-centered leadership on creation stewardship; (2) a wonderful opportunity exists to provide that leadership by embracing creation stewardship as an important component of evangelical mission efforts; and (3) we have a sound scriptural basis for pursuing such an endeavor in that Christ our Savior is the Creator of all things. We now must ask, “Is there evidence that such an approach actually works in the context of missions? Can a biblical worldview on creation change both people’s perspective and their behavior?” The outcomes seen in the work of Care of Creation Kenya (CCK), summarized briefly here, represent a solid “yes” in answer to both questions.

Before looking at the results, it is important to note that CCK’s efforts have mostly involved work with professing Christians from a broad range of denominations. That is, CCK’s ministry is more about discipleship than evangelism. Numerous conferences and workshops conducted by CCK have shown that church and community leaders, Christian schoolteachers, farmers, and others can be awakened to take practical steps in caring for creation. The key to this awakening is a discipleship and vision-casting process that helps leaders, farmers, and community members explore the environmental crisis through the lens of a biblical worldview.

Positive results from the Second International Conference on God and Creation. Among many smaller seminars and workshops, CCK has hosted two international conferences on God and Creation, held in January 2004 and March 2006. Each conference was attended by about 250 church and community leaders from countries across East Africa. A post-conference evaluation of the March 2006 event produced comments that indicated a transformation of worldview had taken place.

Some 85 percent of respondents made comments similar to the following:

> For the first time I have seen myself as a real steward of the creation. . . . [I will] make sure my sermons include creation stewardship. (Margaret Makandi, Meru area)

> I was deeply challenged. . . . I have been the best tree cutter but have never replanted anything. My sermons only focused on spiritual needs and never touched on the physical things which God has created. (Festus Kamunde)

> I was challenged to hear that God is coming to reconcile the whole creation to himself, and I feel the need to repent before God as I have neglected his creation. (John Mwangi Kerugoya)

Positive results in changed behavior. The post-conference evaluation also revealed that changes in behavior had taken place. Nearly 30 percent of respondents reported building awareness through speaking, preaching, or organizing workshops or seminars on creation stewardship. Twenty-four percent reported taking action through tree-planting initiatives (with 16,000 trees being planted). New tree nurseries were also established, with 8 percent of respondents reporting that a combined total of 15 new nurseries had been started. Smaller numbers reported specific lifestyle changes, such as the practice of conservation agriculture, the development of curricula for their church or Bible school, and so forth.

**Positive Results of the FGW Program**

In distinction from the broader issue of creation care in general, and apart from conferences or workshops, CCK also focuses on promoting a biblical vision for agricultural stewardship. A conviction we hold as a mission agency is that God does not want his people to tolerate the serious food shortages that millions of people in many countries face on a chronic basis. We believe he wants us to pursue a larger vision of equipping farmers in those countries to revitalize their land and to free their people from crippling dependence upon outsiders. These objectives are the ultimate goal of CCK’s Farming God’s Way (FGW) program.

The basic premise of FGW is that we can glorify God by pursuing excellence in agricultural stewardship. Biblical training is combined with the practice of conservation agriculture to reverse the effects of land degradation. Applied on the ground, the technique is simple and effective. It simultaneously protects and improves the productivity of the land, but it also represents a significant change from traditional methods. Therefore, it must be thoughtfully introduced to farmers.

Since 2006, CCK has been conducting its own trials, learning how to appropriately introduce this method to local farmers. Combining the actual technique with biblical discipleship is proving to be an effective approach, and we are beginning to see remarkable results. Tremendous potential exists, not only for alleviating the physical poverty that farmers face, but also for restoring their dignity and for eliminating the spiritual and emotional poverty that afflicts so many. Testimonials from farmers in Ndeiya, a community on the edge of the Rift Valley, give evidence that CCK’s efforts are bearing fruit. This approach is leading to changed perspectives and improved agricultural productivity.

> I have now learned that we have completely left God out of our farms. Your teaching has opened my heart to realize that we have strayed from God’s will, and I know God is calling us back to the garden. (Henry Njoroge Munjuga)

> I used to hate farming, but now I love it and dream about it every day. (Hannah Wanjiku)

> I have been following the teaching since 2007, and as a result my heart and mind have been completely changed. My crop yields have been very different and have been the talk of many as they admire my farm. (Elizabeth Ng’ang’a)

These testimonials are backed up by CCK’s data on crop productivity. In October 2008 at Kiawanda Primary School, maize on the FGW plot produced double the yield (12.2 bags per acre) as compared to the output of the adjacent control plot (6.1 bags). One year later, in October 2009, the FGW maize plot produced triple the yield (17.7 bags per acre) as compared to...
the control plot (5.9 bags). Similar improvements were also seen in bean production. Paul Thuo, a local farmer, grew beans FGW-style in 2009. His field yielded 65 percent more beans compared to his control plot managed in the conventional way. Likewise, Elizabeth M.’s field yielded 36 percent more beans in comparison to her control plot.

It is important to note that 2009 was a drought year, which complicated the collection of raw data from a number of farms in Ndeiya. The FGW plots were doing quite well during a time when most farmers were experiencing almost complete crop failure. Grain from these FGW plots was actually stolen before harvest figures could be collected. In spite of this setback, the limited data, along with photos of the fields, show that FGW trials were outperforming all other crops in the area.

These results demonstrate that promise of positive change has begun in Ndeiya. This ministry is helping farmers to embrace their biblically based responsibility to be good stewards of their land. Many of them are expressing legitimate joy in discovering that their Christian faith can be applied to their way of life, and they are beginning to see the physical fruit that comes from better stewardship. Another encouraging development relates to reforestation. Some farmers are now thinking beyond their field crops and are discussing the next steps that should be taken in healing their land. They are asking, “What trees should we be planting?”

**Conclusion**

These Kenyan farmers’ hope for eternity is being complemented by a corresponding hope for today. Their lives are demonstrating how the Gospel can change both people and their land. Similar conclusions can be drawn from the statements and actions of those who have attended the God and Creation conferences and workshops. When we put God back into the center of environmental and agricultural matters, where our Creator deserves to be, he equips and enables us to begin making the critical changes that are needed.

We as Christians have before us a glorious and exciting opportunity in terms of integrating missions with legitimate efforts to care for creation. Of all people on earth, we have absolutely the best reasons to become actively involved and to demonstrate the fullness of Christ’s love through a holistic approach that embraces environmental stewardship as we seek to fulfill the Great Commission.

**Notes**

2. In rural Kenya large gunnysacks are commonly used to measure yield. One such bag of maize weighs 90 kilograms (200 lbs.). Thirty bags per acre would equal 2.7 metric tons (3.0 short tons) per acre.
3. Care of Creation Kenya (CCK; http://kenya.careofcreation.net) is an evangelical mission organization dedicated to awakening the church to its responsibility in environmental and agricultural stewardship. It is a registered NGO, with offices located near Limuru, Kenya.
6. For a fuller statement of biblical principles of environmental and agricultural stewardship, see Craig S. Sorley, *Christ and Creation: Our Biblical Calling to Environmental Stewardship and Farming That Brings Glory to God and Hope to the Hungry: A Set of Biblical Principles to Transform the Practice of Agriculture*. Printed in 2009 in Kenya, these books can be obtained by writing to the author at craig@careofcreation.org.
8. CCK intern Sarah Zomer conducted the follow-up evaluation for the 2006 conference; 105 of the 250 attendees participated. Similar follow-up was not carried out for the January 2004 conference.

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**Orality: The Not-So-Silent Issue in Mission Theology**

**Randall Prior**

I recently had a student from Indonesia in my class. He had completed theological studies and was an ordained minister before migrating to Melbourne with his family. He had settled into a newly formed ethnic Indonesian congregation and accepted the role as their leader. His task was to build up the congregation and to help immigrant relatives of the members to find their feet on Australian soil. Limited financial resources in the congregation meant that he was paid only a small amount of money for this ministry, and so he supplemented his income by driving a school bus in the mornings and afternoons. His love for the Gospel, his dedication to his community over a period of time, and the quality of his leadership all led to his church congregation growing impressively. As a result, he sought to become formally recognized as an ordained minister within the Australian church context, which meant that he needed to complete further studies.

From the very first day of class he impressed me as a man devoted to the Christian faith, with a strong sense of vocation to a ministry of leadership. It soon became clear, however, that if I were to impose upon him the same requirements as for the remainder of the class—namely, written pieces of critical and analytic discourse—then he would fail the course. While he was perfectly capable of handling the work, had a zeal for the class material, and impressed his class colleagues, his cultural background was oral. After some consultation with a faculty

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July 2011
colleague, an arrangement was made for him to do his assignments orally. As a consequence, he gained a “credit” grade for the course. Soon afterward he was formally inducted as the minister of the Indonesian congregation and continues to give inspiring leadership to his people.

This anecdote raises issues and questions beyond the field of the delivery of formal theological education. With the relative decline of the church within the Western world and the rapid increase in the membership of the church in areas of the world where oral cultures dominate, a question is raised about the very shape of theology itself. Let me illustrate what I mean by way of experience and observation over a generation of involvement in the South Pacific.

Orality as an Emerging Issue

It is notable that in the global arena of theological conversation and engagement, the voice from the Pacific islands is almost entirely absent. One might gain the impression that little or no theology is being done within this part of the world. In fact, the opposite is true—the task of doing theology is being energetically pursued, and theological engagement is widespread and passionate. The key obstacle is that the form of this theology is not readily available as written and published material.

In 1992 Brother Silas, an Anglican Franciscan friar working in Papua New Guinea, commented, “Melanesia is a region where one would expect to see intense theological activity. It has a high concentration of Christians in tight-knit communities, who talk about their faith. . . . I believe such activity is indeed taking place but is often overlooked by church leaders and theologians because it is informal and presented in an unconventional way. The people’s theological insights should be welcomed and encouraged by the churches, but because they are not readily reduced to the language of formal theology they are often suppressed as wrong or relegated to the fringes of church life.”

In one of a handful of publications about South Pacific theology that has emerged in book form in the last generation, Mohenoa Puloka, from Tonga, writes, “The relatively late emergence of written language in Tonga (begun in 1826) . . . and mostly the lack of a taste for writing in general, has made theology in Tonga exist largely in verbal form as oral tradition. The absence of any great theological work in this case is not surprising.”

The plain fact is that South Pacific cultures are oral cultures, for which the producing of material in written form is culturally alien. On a recent visit to the Pacific Theological College, in Suva, Fiji, I heard a faculty member comment, “Even our best Ph.D. students, once they have completed their doctoral dissertations, return to their home countries, and we never hear from them again—they stop writing!”

The best access to South Pacific theology is through the main journals from that region of the world, namely, the Pacific Journal of Theology (published in Suva) and the Melanesian Journal of Theology (published in Goroka, Papua New Guinea). Many of the articles come from local islanders and give insight into the issues and directions of theology in that vast and sparsely populated part of the world. Yet in a 2005 IBMR article surveying developments in South Pacific theology and the emergence of local Pacific island voices over the last generation, Charles Forman concludes with the following telling comment: “The men and women whose thoughts have been examined here are part of the new cosmopolitan elite, the ones who have traveled around the Pacific or to other parts of the world and are at home with the use of English as their international language. They are not, by and large, village people who are steeped in the traditional society, nor are they likely to be suffering personal heartache at the loss of traditional ways like an old villager who shed tears over the loss of communication with ancestors. . . . Their writings are not for the rank-and-file Christians but for the intellectually advanced.”

The implication here is that anything that may be identified as a theology of the people within the local village communities of the South Pacific nations will not take the form of an articulately written article by an educated individual. Its form will almost certainly be oral and therefore not immediately available to people outside the village community.

What is true of the shape of theology in the South Pacific is similarly true in other parts of the world. Addressing a gathering of archivists on the importance of oral theology, African John Pobee noted, “It is often asserted that churches in Africa have no theology. When one probes what is meant by this remark the response is that they have not produced theological treatises and tomes, systematically worked out volumes which stand on the shelves of libraries. But it is not exactly true. Sermons are being preached every Sunday, which are not subsequently printed. Such sermons are the articulations of the faith in response to particular hopes and fears of peoples of Africa. They are legitimately called Theology. Oral Theology. This oral theology and oral history may be said to be the stream in which the vitality of the people of faith in Africa, illiterate and literate, is mediated. As such the material cannot be ignored.”

Pobee then lists evangelization, conversion, sermons and preaching, hymns and songs, praying, and conversation as the media of oral theology.

John Parratt, who has conducted extensive research in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific, holds a view similar to that of Forman. In his Introduction to Third World Theologies, Parratt observes: “It is worth noting that what is known as ‘Indian Christian theology’ has been articulated and developed through the writings of highly educated theologians, often in the medium of English. Without questioning its validity as an indigenous expression of Christian faith in India, it should be pointed out that it is not necessarily representative of the grass-roots theologies of Indian Christians. There are many indigenous Christian movements in India which do not produce theological writing but nevertheless express their Christian faith in Indian ways.”

In noting the energy of theological activity among African women, Parratt comments in a similar vein: “It is also true that the theology of the majority of African women is not written down but oral. . . . It is communal theology and not individual. Professional theologians feel frustrated with this kind of theology because they cannot engage with it as done in the Western theologies. However, it is theology all the same, and Africa, which is basically an oral society, has to take oral theology seriously.”

Acknowledging the paucity of available material from the Caribbean and the consequent claim that little theology is being done there, Parratt responds: “The truth is that Caribbean theology, heavily birthed in the oral tradition, has continued.
Caribbean culture is indeed an oral one...there is oral literature comprising the numerous proverbs, riddles, folk tales that are used to instruct persons about life issues. There is oral music with which the region is familiar.

Acknowledging the Validity of Oral Theology

In different parts of the world it is now becoming clear that forms of oral theology are beginning to be taken seriously as valid theology.

Within the Pacific. The year 1985 was something of a watershed year in the development of theology in the South Pacific. In that year, three important events occurred. One was the launching of the Melanesian Journal of Theology, another was the publication of the anthology Living Theology in Melanesia: A Reader, and the third was the convening of the consultation entitled “Towards a Pacific Theology.” It will be helpful to say something about each of these.

In the introduction to the first volume of the Melanesian Journal of Theology, editor John May explains that the purpose of the journal is to “develop indigenous theology in Melanesia.” It will include theology “in all its manifold aspects...it will draw on the already existing oral sources of indigenous theology in Melanesia, whether in Pidgin or in local languages: the stories and songs, the adaptation of myths, the solutions to practical problems found by prayer and consensus.” Subsequent volumes of the journal have sought to make this local form of theology available to a wider audience by documenting it and publishing it, acknowledging, of course, that the very publishing of oral material creates ambiguity.

In the anthology Living Theology in Melanesia: A Reader, May, also this book’s editor, speaks about the publication, the first to contain expressions of faith and theology entirely by Melanesian authors, as marking “a turning point in the development of indigenous theology in Melanesia.” With the anthology divided into three main sections, May notes that “the structure of this anthology is a statement of its priorities. Part I devotes considerable space to ‘village theology,’ on the analogy of what has been called ‘peasant theology’ in the Philippines and Minjung or ‘people’s theology’ in Korea...The real life setting (sitz im leben) of Melanesian theology is the prolonged discussion on the beach, under a tree or round the fire, the singing (festival) or lotu (worship). The community does theology by reaching a consensus in reflecting on its practice.”

The special consultation “Towards a Pacific Theology,” held in July 1985 in Suva, Fiji, drew together leaders and teachers from across the South Pacific who gave attention to both the content and the methodology of theological issues as these apply to the Pacific. At the end of the gathering, a number of recommendations were agreed on. In relation to so-called Pacific theology and, in particular, to its traditional setting in an oral context, the recommendations included steps to recognize the oral foundations of the cultures and to accomplish two distinct goals: to give validity to oral forms of theology, and to seek to make this oral theology available in written form. The consultation urged that:

- the Pacific Conference of Churches provide writing workshops for theological teachers who want to publish their ideas but need help in the methods of writing;
- the churches initiate action by which the local congregations will be helped to reflect theologically through various art forms such as song, dance, drawing and decorating. We believe that the Pacific churches have a contribution to make to the entire world in the use of these modes of theological expression.

Just over a decade later, in 1996, over 150 participants from around the Pacific gathered in Aotearoa/New Zealand for a consultation on local theology. The report of the gathering makes interesting reading. It represents a move toward a culture where oral theology is preferred to literate theology. The author of the report, a Roman Catholic lecturer in theology and anthropology at Holy Spirit Seminary, Papua New Guinea, reflects: “It was not a conference dominated by tedious academic papers, but rather an interweaving of creative presentations from participants grouped according to culture.” After recounting a protracted period of conversation about a woven mat and oral discussions on marriage, death, hospitality, land, birth, and struggle, he asks: “What is special and unique about the way we do theology in Oceania? Who does theology? Where? When? Why? How?” In summing up, he writes: “It was obvious at this conference that theology can be done differently...The questions were many, often leading to further questions about the nature of the theological enterprise. ...Traditional sources of theology have their place. But those attending this conference couldn’t help but be impressed by the rich diversity of theological resources in Oceania.”

It is difficult to measure how much the impetus for the validating of oral theology within the South Pacific has been maintained since, say, the year 2000. In his 2005 survey of Pacific theology, Forman gives no real attention to it, and a fuller treatment that appears within a doctoral dissertation written by Kambati Uriam, a Pacific Islander, covering the period 1947–97, also makes little mention of it. In fact, Uriam’s summary assessment of attempts to develop a Pacific theology are rather critical, asserting, like Forman, that Pacific theology has tended to remain the activity of graduates from colleges and universities.

While it may be said that there is only limited recognition of oral theology, the issue clearly seems to be firmly on the agenda for the younger generation of South Pacific islanders.
Beyond the Pacific. Validating of oral theology in other parts of the world is also gaining momentum. In the postscript to his 2004 publication on Third World theologies, Parratt notes that in several parts of the world oral forms of communication are the norm, and that in an expanding number of parts of the Christian world, theology is “essentially oral, expressed in prayer, group discussion and story.” He adds: “Indeed there is no alternative to this in countries where literacy rates are often very limited. Art forms and dance may also be utilised to express Christian insights and experiences. These may be no less profound than those found in a weighty tome of systematic theology, for theological insight is not the prerogative of the literate only. … While such oral theology may be difficult to pin down and systematise, it has increasingly become a rich source for the literate and ‘academic’ theologian.”

To make his own point, African John Pobee quotes well-known colleague John Mbiti: “African oral theology is a living reality. We must acknowledge its role in the total life of the church. It is the most articulate expression of theological creativity in Africa. This form of theology gives the church a certain measure of theological selfhood and independence.” Confident of the emerging importance of oral theology, Pobee then calls for a “conversion” in the way in which theology is commonly understood. “To be alive to the place and importance of oral theology and oral tradition is to undergo a conversion experience which is multifaceted. First it means giving up on our written work and creating space for the oral. … Most of us . . . take the written word as the norm in the search for truth. But we need the conversion experience in which we see that not everything is contained in the written tradition and culture, and that many more people in this world communicate first of all orally and in art.”

It will be just a matter of time before such conversion occurs, for the number of Christians from predominantly oral cultures is growing exponentially, and the literacy-preferred West is becoming a minority voice in the theological world. Perhaps one of the clearest reflections of this conversion is in the establishment, as recently as 2005, of the International Orality Network (ION). This network traces its origins back to various forms of the communication of the Gospel—both audio and video—through the twentieth century, including Christian radio broadcasts, the insights about the power of media by Marshall McLuhan, and, more recently, the significant initiatives among evangelical mission movements to reach the “unreached” peoples of the world, over 70 percent of whom are recognized to be oral-preferred communicators.

A significant step in the development of ION came in the year 2000. In Amsterdam in that year, a conference convened by the Billy Graham Association brought together 10,000 evangelists for the purpose of organizing them into an integrated group and equipping them for evangelism in the twenty-first century. One of the outcomes was the establishment of a loose association of Christian organizations committed to working together to bring the Gospel to oral peoples, to disciple them, and to nurture indigenous church communities among them. Consciousness of the issue of orality was raised, and increasing numbers of mission groups began to think more deliberately about the communication of the Gospel among oral peoples. In 2004 the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization convened a forum in Thailand to discuss thirty-one issues of Christian mission, one of which was orality. From that conference came the publication of Making Disciples of Oral Learners, which was jointly produced by the Lausanne Committee and ION and has now been translated into Korean, Chinese, French, Spanish, and Arabic.

ION is a rapidly growing network, now with partners also in Africa and Asia; it convenes forums, engages in research, and helps fund field training, leadership programs, and theological education, all with an exclusive focus on communicating the Gospel among oral communities. The orality movement was given priority attention at the Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, held in October 2010 in Cape Town, South Africa.

The Form of Oral Theology

There is more to be said about the particular forms of theology that are dominant in oral communities. It is important to note the developing insights coming from those who have looked more seriously at the cultural anthropology of oral communities. It is not simply that people in oral cultures lack the ability to read and write and that, if such people were to give attention to overcoming this inability, then they would catch up with their sisters and brothers in more literate communities. Nor is it the case that the forms of theology emerging from oral communities are simply an oral equivalent of what is produced in literate communities.

The case has been made persuasively that oral cultures are not second-best; rather, they are uniquely ordered in a way that sustains and perpetuates orality. Referring to Water Ong’s groundbreaking work on orality, cultural anthropologist Michael Rynkiewich comments, “We have come to appreciate that orality is not just the lack of literacy. Orality and literacy both presuppose a mind-set, a way of experiencing the world that is not commensurate one with the other.”

Rynkiewich then identifies three marks of distinction between oral and literate cultures. First, oral cultures employ particular means of ensuring that important things are held in memory—in particular, by repetition and the involvement of the whole body rather than simply the mind. Thus, oral cultures are marked by the use of ceremony, dance, art, poetry, and so on. Second, oral communities are fundamentally communal, and the making of memory involves the whole community, often in action rather than in the use of words. Memory, then, has more of a social character in oral communities. Third, Rynkiewich notes the importance of the distinctive relationship between the teacher and the learners in an oral community.

In my observation and experience in the South Pacific, these same three features are evident. South Pacific cultures traditionally give prominence to dance, ritual, and ceremony; they are fundamentally communal.
lists a number of features of the dynamics of Melanesian communities. While his intention is not to compare oral and literate communities, and while he is wanting to set down some important information to guide leaders of small groups in the oral Melanesian communities, his observations are consistent with those made by Rynkiewich.

A more detailed reflection on oral cultures is provided in two recent doctoral dissertations. In his recently published study of the Builsa people of Ghana, Jay Moon identifies the features of the oral culture of the community within which he was working. Objecting to the popular advocacy of storytelling as a “cure-all” in communicating the Gospel in oral cultures, Moon claims that oral cultures have a rich diversity of features that need to be understood and used wisely. He highlights the importance of proverbs for the Builsa and uses them as a means of facilitating a contextual (oral) theology among the people. His insight into the orality of the people enables this exercise to work effectively.

Roy McIntyre pursues a similar approach in contextualizing theology, using a ceremony connected with cultural practices in Bangladesh as a means of drawing the people into Christian discipleship. Given his intention to “disciple oral learners,” he capitalizes on the particular importance of ceremony for this oral community, using it to contextualize theology.

### Conclusion

The purpose of this article is to raise awareness of orality as a key ingredient in contemporary Christian mission and to support the emerging view that oral communities are culturally distinctive in more ways than simply their orality. Today, with the majority of the Christian world now including oral communities, and with the insight we are gaining into the distinctive characteristics of Christian theology within these communities, it is time for both local and global Christian mission to study more carefully the matter of validating oral theologies and, indeed, the redefining of theology itself.

From the point of view of an emerging Pacific theology, set as it is in oral communities, we should no longer be measuring authentic theology by the quality of a written piece of work done by an individual islander who has successfully gained the skills of a literate culture. Rather, theology—as a passionate engagement with the God who became incarnate in Jesus Christ, who seeks to be the giver of life for all people of all cultures and the head of local communities of the church across a diverse world—deserves a broader definition that will allow oral expressions of theology to find their place.

### Notes

1. Surprisingly, even publications that give attention to Third World theologies may omit contributions from or about the Pacific. An example is Dictionary of Third World Theologies, ed. Virginia Fabella and R. S. Sugirtharajah (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2000). This volume fails to mention Pacific theology, and of over one hundred contributors, not one comes from the South Pacific. In a more recent work, John Parratt explicitly notes the absence of a voice from the Pacific, acknowledging that “the most important of these [areas ignored in the book] is the Pacific.” See John Parratt, ed., An Introduction to Third World Theologies (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004), p. 13.


4. Pertinent to the omission of any reference to the Pacific region in Parratt’s Introduction to Third World Theologies is his comment that “while oral theology flourishes, this has not yet been matched by a similar written output” (p. 13).


8. Ibid., p. 151.


17. Parratt, Introduction to Third World Theologies, p. 183.


21. Ibid., p. 51.


A Malawian Christian Theology of Wealth and Poverty

Gorden R. Doss

Africa today has a large presence in world Christianity. In 2010 an amazing 494.6 million believers, or 22 percent of all Christians, resided in Africa. Philip Jenkins and others have documented the shift of the numerical center of Christianity into the Global South. Yet, despite these gains, the many theological voices of African Christianity are not well heard in the rest of the world. America and Europe continue to dominate Christian scholarship, broadcasting, the Internet, and publishing, even though these activities are expanding in Africa.

The people of America and Europe rarely read or hear the theological thinking of Africans. I suspect that some may have a very negative stereotype, thinking, “Do Africans living in a village even do theology at all?” The answer, as this article seeks to demonstrate, is a resounding “Yes.” Andrew Walls is correct when he speaks of the “immense theological activity” in the “great theological laboratory” of Africa. The reason for this intense theological activity is that African Christians, like all other believers, seek meaning for the major issues they face every day.

Paul Hiebert wrote of “the right and responsibility of the church in each culture and historical setting to interpret and apply the Scriptures in its own context,” and African Christians are indeed performing that task. But African believers do not do theology only for themselves. Even though the continent is underrepresented in the media, African believers, because of their large presence in world Christianity, are increasingly doing Christian theology for the whole world.

Theological pluralism and the need to develop a “supracultural theology” through a “metatheological process” that reaches a “consensus on theological absolutes.” The metatheological process enables Christian communities to learn from each other and hold each other accountable. African Christians and Western Christians thus need dialogue that is characterized by mutuality and collegiality for the sake of our shared global mission.

This article seeks to give voice to the theological reflections of a small group of Malawian Christians on the meaning of wealth and poverty, an issue about which they are well qualified to speak. As I dialogued with the group, it became clear that first, being a “theologian of the church pew” does not necessarily mean being a shallow thinker. On the contrary, my interviews confirmed that people lacking theological education and in some cases having very little formal education can think profoundly. I think the group compares rather favorably with their ecclesial siblings in a typical North American church. Second, these believers grappled with some of the same deep issues as the greatest theologians, albeit without having the formal language and categories to use. In some ways, not being formal theologians helped the group to do better theology because they did not feel obliged to solve all of the ambiguities of human existence, or to force issues into prefabricated theological solution boxes. Yet I do not want to idealize the group, for their level of education also imposed limits on them.

The research group lived in underdeveloped, rural northern Malawi, a nation ranked by the United Nations as one of the ten poorest in the world. By coincidence, the research took place at a time when the chronic poverty and underdevelopment of the area had become acute. A series of crop failures caused by drought, overcultivation, and lack of fertilizer had produced several years of serious food shortages.

The group included four men and four women, divided equally by educational attainment. The less educated were subsistence farmers, and the more educated were employed. The best educated was a man with a bachelor’s degree in social science who taught high school. All were active lay members of Seventh-day Adventist congregations. The eight, one-hour interviews I conducted with each person were in Chichewa, Chitumbuka, or English, depending on the participant’s preference. The responses summarized below come from the sixty-four individual interviews.

My experience in Malawi—thirty-one years in all, first as a missionary kid and then as an adult worker—gives me the chance to be a bridge person who can give voice to the group outside of Malawi. The passion that drove me to the research came from my experience when I lived in Malawi of having felt “filthy rich” when comparing myself with Malawians, and yet “poor” when I compared myself with colleagues in America. Existential anguish and frustration confront the missionary who lives in between wealth and poverty.

The Experience of Poverty

I asked the participants to describe their personal experiences with poverty, particularly during the recent food crisis. Predictably, there was a range of personal suffering because of differences in family income. Several individuals described going for periods with just one meal a day and some days no meals. The men and boys hunted for small animals, the women and girls picked edible weeds, children came down with kwashiorkor (severe malnutrition caused by a diet with insufficient protein), and everyone got sick more easily with malaria or viruses. When they became ill, there was no money for treatment.

Yet even for those who suffered most, the worst pain was neither physical nor material but social and relational. Poverty isolated individuals from the group and made them feel inferior. Poverty weakened ancient, cherished traditions of generosity within the extended family system as scarce supplies were rationed to the immediate family. In the past the communal safety net had prevented any individual from suffering more than the group as a whole suffered. This meant that only those who were ostracized for antisocial behavior fell out of the safety net and became known as poor. But now the traditional safety net is largely gone, and individuals can suffer serious personal deprivation even though they are respected members of society. Such persons feel the social stigma of a traditionally ostracized person, even if the group does not intend to isolate them. The
feeling of being ostracized can itself lead to unworthy behavior, which in turn can give rise to intentional social isolation. Herein resides the real anguish of poverty.

Participants whose supplies had been adequate to meet basic family needs experienced a great deal of social pressure and spiritual angst as they were asked for help, sometimes several times a day. Hungry children crying and children coming to beg for gaga, the hard husks of the maize kernel that are usually fed to chickens. The high school teacher said that his wife always gave something, even if only a small dish of maize.

Poverty also raised deeply theological questions for the group: Is there a God in heaven? Why did God create me? Why was I born? Doesn’t God hear my prayers? Does God see me as an unrepentant sinner? Most said that the recent hard times had drawn them closer to God, yet two individuals said stress had pushed them away from God and caused them to stop going to church for periods of time.

Another part of the experience of poverty was the struggle against envy (nsanje in Chichewa). Envy is a “discontented or resentful longing aroused by another’s possessions, qualities, or luck.” It is particularly apparent in societies, including Malawi’s, “characterized by absolute shortages of the resources necessary for physical survival.” Envy is a universal human emotion that is perceived to be dangerous and destructive. Envy is one of the most difficult emotions to admit because it is often expressed by symbolic actions that conceal the real motives. The prevalence of envy throughout a society generates fear of being the object of envy, or of being accused of being envious, or of admitting to oneself that one is envious.

The group talked freely about the general problem of envy, although only three of the eight admitted having been envious themselves. The Malawian National Anthem includes the lines “Put down each and every enemy / Hunger, disease, envy [nsanje],” showing a societal awareness of, and resistance to, the attitude.

The group described envy as a cluster or sequence of interactive emotions and behaviors. First, another person receives unusual material benefits (such as a lot of money or an unusually large maize crop) or nonmaterial benefits (e.g., many intelligent and beautiful children) or repeated good luck that sets that one apart from the group.

In the second movement of envy, others begin to have “no love” for the person and to have “sore hearts” because they have not prospered similarly. These feelings are expressed in gossip, used as an equalizing tool. A favored accusation is that theft, deceit, or witchcraft was used to obtain the special benefit. Occasionally acts of theft, vandalism, or personal violence are committed against the envied person.

The third movement sees envious people, especially if they are “good Christians,” denying to themselves and others that they feel envious and trying to put on a facade of good relationships, perhaps by offering phony congratulations.

A separate movement, carried out by the one who has benefited, seeks to achieve envy prevention or at least envy reduction. Well-off persons do this by being friendly, humble, and nonostentatious and also by sharing. When possible, the new asset is concealed or minimized. False information about the extent of the asset or how it was obtained may be corrected. Sometimes protection is sought through witchcraft.

Six of the eight participants thought that Christians have less envy than non-Christians, and two thought that the rate was about the same. All agreed that there was some envy in the church and that it was dangerous. The people asserted that several things can decrease envy among Christians. One is the Holy Spirit, who is active in people’s hearts, showing them their sin and helping them to overcome the temptation of envy. Furthermore, all humans are seen as being the same before God because he loves all and Jesus died for all. True Christians do not want to bring the benefited one down, even though they do want to advance themselves in appropriate ways. The group was unanimous in wanting the church to do more teaching about the sin of envy, which they saw as a major spiritual pitfall that weakened a believer’s spiritual life and walk with the Lord.

**Perspectives on Wealth and Poverty**

A study of Chichewa and Chitumbuka words for wealth and poverty is illuminating. One of the main sets of words suggests a thematic difference from the West in viewing wealth and poverty. A wealthy person is “one who finds well” (opeza bwino), while a poor person is “one who does not find well” (osa peza bwino).

“The finding” (peza) with regard to money is used so frequently that it seems like a cultural theme. The “finding” motif contrasts with the Western “having” motif (“the haves” and “the have-nots”). The having motif suggests the accumulation and management of capital such as real estate or money by people whose daily survival is not in question. The finding motif suggests the discovery, distribution, and consumption of supplies essential for daily survival. Traditional Malawi had simple housing, no banks, and no technology for long-term food storage, making significant capital accumulation impossible and unhelpful.

The finding motif overturns certain stereotypical Western views about Africans and poverty. For Africans, the whole ethos of resource management is that of an active, dynamic pursuit of essential resources in a highly contingent, disorderly, and unpredictable universe. This perspective produces a work ethic that is different from, but no less vigorous than, that of the West.

One of the assumptions about wealth that differs between peoples is how much wealth and goodness is actually available. The capitalist West favors the theory of unlimited supply; many
Especially to be feared is wealth that comes quickly, because it can make a person lose spiritual and social balance.

express the rigid zero-sum view that “your gain equals my loss”; rather, they believed that God’s will is the strongest determining factor in being wealthy or poor.

The group named twenty-one factors that cause poverty, which together constitute a rather sophisticated analysis. I have categorized these factors under three headings:

- **controllable** by the individual (5): drunkenness, laziness, not putting one’s heart into one’s work, womanizing, and HIV/AIDS (when caused by freely chosen behavior);
- **partially controllable** (3): a feeling of being predestined for poverty, lack of education, and unemployment;
- **not controllable** (13): HIV/AIDS (when caused by coercion and as a general societal phenomenon), being orphaned, being born into poverty, the cultural shift away from the extended family, dependence on foreign income, having no children, having no talent for farming, having little intelligence, having little opportunity, lack of vocational education that would provide employment, low prices for farm produce, sickness, and structural problems such as lack of marketing facilities.

Although the poverty-causing factors cannot be given equal weight, it is helpful to observe how few can fairly be assigned to individual responsibility. No amount of hard, intelligent work could deal with all of the factors arrayed against some individuals in the group’s environment. Yet the group did not succumb to a victim mentality.

**A Theology of Wealth and Poverty**

In the first round of individual interviews, I asked the participants to bring biblical texts that helped them understand wealth and poverty, and texts that they found problematic. The texts, which they brought to almost every interview, functioned alongside some prepared questions as effective conversation starters. Major points of a theology of wealth and poverty emerged. In what follows, I list only biblical texts that were brought by the group; they were not supplied by me as interviewer or added later as part of my interpretative analysis.

**God determines wealth and poverty.** It is God “who gives you power to get wealth” (Deut. 8:17–18). Using a literalist hermeneutic, the participants found this text to be quite clear. God does not give everyone the same abilities or opportunities. The poor should trust God’s wisdom and not be bitter or rebellious toward him or envious toward wealthier people.

**Satan, not God, causes poverty and suffering.** God sustains humanity, while Satan does all he can to undermine God’s sustaining work. God wants all to live happily, but the devil twists things to make us blame God. The person who says “God wills me to be poor” is wrong. God wants no one to be poor but wants everyone to prosper. He gives opportunities to everyone who calls on him. The group went back and forth on what the sovereign God wills and what he merely allows, allowing the ambiguity and some contradictions to remain unresolved.

**Some people do not live at the economic level God wills or allows.** Through illicit means, such as theft or witchcraft, some live at a higher level than God intends. However, they will inevitably lose their ill-found prosperity. Because of not returning a tithe, laziness, dishonesty, corruption, drinking, or immorality, some live at a lower level than God intends. Returning to biblical principles of tithing, lifestyle, diligence, and hard work can cause such people to live at the higher economic level God intends for them.

**Humans have a secondary but vital role.** Just as those rebuilding Jerusalem worked with one hand and held a weapon with the other (Neh. 4:17), so people need to have the right tools and need to use them with all their energy in order to find wealth. The parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32) shows that the gifts of God must be used wisely and properly, or else the fortunate person will fall into poverty. Most Malawians think they can change their economic state for the better, they said. Sometimes people feel caught for periods of their lives, but at other times they feel more free. For example, when children are in school and parents cannot find tuition, they feel trapped, but once children are grown, parents have a greater sense of freedom.

**God exercises loving care for the poor.** A shepherd sees and understands all of the troubles of his sheep (Ps. 23). Jesus identifies with the poor because, “though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor” (2 Cor. 8:9). He hears and answers prayers for help, even if he does not grant all requests. But God’s care, in the view of the participants, is not the libertarianism “preferential option for the poor.” They affirmed that God loves the poor and the wealthy equally, although they evinced a lingering suspicion that God might actually prefer the wealthy because of the concrete blessings they enjoy.

**Wealth is potentially dangerous.** The group did not naively long for wealth but rather saw great peril in wealth. “Wealth hastily gotten will dwindle, but he who gathers little by little will increase it” (Prov. 13:11). The problem of envy, already discussed, is reflected here. “Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble with it” (Prov. 15:16). “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” (1 Tim. 6:10). Especially to be feared is wealth that comes quickly, because it can make a person lose spiritual and social perspective and balance, and because it may indicate an illicit connection with the spirit world.

**Spiritual life has priority over material well-being.** “But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matt. 6:33). “Do not worry about your life... For life is more than food, and the body more than...
Some faithful Christians live in long-term poverty. “Indeed all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim. 3:12). Struggle and testing are always part of the Christian life, and poverty is often part of the testing. “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time” (1 Pet. 5:6). God permits some committed Christians to suffer poverty, while nominal Christians may have an excess of wealth to test and sanctify believers, to save some who would otherwise be lost, and to give the wealthy an opportunity to help the poor.

Problemsatic Texts and Issues

Texts brought by the group that they considered to be problematic indicate areas in which they have conflict. Below are the main texts and issues they raised.

Why does God sometimes give wealth that destroys the recipient? If Solomon prayed for wisdom (1 Kings 3:7–9), why did God give him wealth, which destroyed him? Solomon apparently knew himself well enough to know that he should not ask for wealth. Did God not know what Solomon would do? Maybe God just did not want to see his king suffer from poverty. Clearly, the Malawian believers were grappling with the issue of God’s determination versus human free will, and, in the background, with the issue of theodicy.

Does poverty place a person at a disadvantage for salvation? “Some pretend to be rich, yet have nothing; others pretend to be poor, yet have great wealth. Wealth is a ransom for a person’s life, but the poor get no threats.” (Prov. 13:7–8). Appearances are deceptive, for one may be poor in this life but rich toward God, and vice versa. Wealth and poverty are not to be associated automatically with either righteousness or wickedness. Yet for concrete-minded Malawian Christians, the issue persists. The poor person apparently lacks necessary power or opportunity, and the group found it difficult to disassociate wealth completely from salvation.

Why does poverty persist for people who have the joy of the Lord? “All the days of the poor are hard, but a cheerful heart has a continual feast” (Prov. 15:15). The Bible exhorts Christians to “rejoice,” and Malawians often tell each other to “be happy” (tsangalala). “So—we are rejoicing, Lord! Where is our feast? We sing happy praises every Sabbath! Where are our blessings?”

Was African poverty and suffering caused by the curse of Noah? Noah’s curse (Gen. 9:18–25) was the most problematic text brought up by the group. Seven of the eight participants stated that Africa was under the curse of Noah. According to one participant, “Africa suffers the consequences of Ham’s sins, just as the whole world suffers the consequences of Adam’s sin. . . . Because Africa is poor, the curse must have come here. . . . Noah’s curse was similar to that of Elisha on the mocking children [2 Kings 2:23–24].” It is well known that racists have held this view—but why does it persist in Malawi?

It seems to me that the anticolonial movement, along with Adventist teaching against it, should have dispelled this view from the minds of this group. Could it be that the curse-on-Africa view persists because it has plausibility within the Malawian worldview? In African Traditional Religion, every happening has a cause related to the spirit world. When a bad thing happens, a cause must be identified and dealt with to prevent the bad thing from reoccurring. Perhaps the scale of Africa’s suffering is such that only a biblical explanation will suffice for these believers. Perhaps naming Noah’s curse as the cause of Africa’s suffering may be seen as a functional, if problematic, solution. The participants saw the cross as a key to removing Noah’s curse, though why that had not already happened at Calvary or through the conversion of so many Africans to Christ was not clear.

Malawian Theology of Wealth and Poverty

To situate the group’s theology of wealth and poverty in relation to other positions, the typology developed by David Williams, a South African, can be helpful. Williams presents seven Christian perspectives or models of wealth and poverty.

His “Wealth to Be Restructured: Liberation Theology” model, with its call for political action and structural reform, did not resonate with the group. The “Wealth to Be Created: Reconstructionism” model, with its insistence that the poor are responsible for their own problems and must be left to find their own solutions, did not seem at all Christian to them. The “Wealth to Be Ignored: Contentment” model seemed unchristian because of its passivity and nonengagement with the poor.

The group’s perspective was a combination of Williams’s remaining four types. In this hybrid model, the “Wealth to Be Given: Charity” model and the “Wealth to Be Shared: Christian Community” model were dominant. That is, the group believed that Christians have an obligation to give without thought of reciprocity to all who ask for help, even if only with a very small charitable gift. Christian charity functions best within the church community, where believers share generously with one another.

The poor person apparently lacks necessary power or opportunity, and the group found it difficult to disassociate wealth completely from salvation.

Conclusion

Those of us who live in relatively more wealthy circumstances can learn some valuable lessons from this Malawian research group. Africans Christians deserve more respect than they usually get for their profound engagement with the Bible and Christian
The eight Malawians whom I interviewed gave of themselves generously, candidly, and insightfully.

poverty in a way comparable to that described by the group. We also need to accept the fact that much of world poverty cannot be resolved by the individuals caught in its grasp.

The social and relational anguish of poverty is something we need to understand. Poverty has the potential of making Malawian Christians (and others) feel isolated from wealthier Christians in other nations. This implies that the value of mission activities such as short-term trips should not be measured in monetary terms alone. The charitable gifts that are given must be accompanied by intentional relationship-building activities. Members of the research group would feel incredibly affirmed as human beings by having ongoing friendships with people in the West.

Malawian Christians can remind the West that material aspirations need to have a limit. While we have a right to claim God’s blessings to provide life’s necessities, our aspirations need to have some constraints. In keeping with Williams’s Self-Limitation model, Christians need to define an appropriate level of necessity for themselves, within their context, and then stay within it.

The group can teach us about the spiritual peril of envy. Naming envy gives definition to a human sin that needs to be forgiven and overcome by grace. I remember feeling painfully envious when one seminary classmate was promoted to a huge pastorate, while I was in a tiny one. At the time, however, I did not name the feeling or recognize it as a spiritual problem in the way that I could name lust, greed, or hatred. Until I did the research for this article, I was unaware of the extent of envy within American society. I was fascinated to learn that in American society envy is often expressed in compliments, affirmation, and praise. As I began listening to certain compliments, I began to recognize envy and passive aggression in their undertones. We may not vandalize a neighbor’s new car, but envy may propel us to buy a new car for ourselves that we cannot afford. Gossip can blosson at the workplace when our colleagues are promoted and we are not. Is it possible that our struggle for limitless upward mobility is driven by envy?

The group’s perspective should lead us to challenge certain views of poverty. Ignoring or being disengaged from poverty, as suggested by Williams’s Contentment model, is not an acceptable alternative. Neither is the view of the Reconstructionist model, namely, that the poor cause all their own problems and should be left alone to solve them. The research demonstrated how many causes of poverty are beyond the ability of individuals to solve. This is not to suggest naively that the work of development and aid in places like Malawi is trouble free, but Christians must stay engaged in the most helpful, effective ways possible.

The Prosperity Teaching model is cruel to committed Christians whose poverty persists, because it implies that they are people of little faith and low spiritual maturity. In fact, living as a true Christian in poverty probably requires more faith than living in prosperity. Prosperity theology can be arrogant and self-congratulatory when more prosperous people preach it to less prosperous ones.

The eight Malawians whom I interviewed gave of themselves generously, candidly, and insightfully. Although there was a wide variation in their attainment of formal education, they all gave evidence of being thoughtful, intelligent people who grapple with humanity’s deepest issues. As Christians, they showed themselves to be knowledgeable in Scripture, strong in their faith, and deeply committed to their Lord. I was personally blessed by my extended encounter with them. Like other African believers, they have a valuable contribution to make to world Christianity.

Notes


5. Ibid., pp. 102–3.

6. This article is based on Gorden R. Doss, “A Malawian Seventh-day Adventist Theology of Wealth and Poverty and Missiological Implications” (Ph.D. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Ill., 2006).

7. Four participants had eight years of education or less, and four had twelve years or more.

8. In 2005 the Malawi Union of Seventh-day Adventists had 343,000 members and was the fourth largest denomination in Malawi. In my perception, the larger Malawian context produces a great deal of commonality in life experience for most Christians.


13. Although I am unable to document a consistent Adventist teaching against the curse-on-Africa view in Malawi, I remember my father and others teaching against it, as did I. In my studies in Adventist schools from high school through graduate school, the rejection of the position was consistent.


15. David T. Williams, Christian Approaches to Poverty (San Jose, Calif.: Authors Choice, 2001).

The Biblical Narrative of the *Missio Dei*: Analysis of the Interpretive Framework of David Bosch’s Missional Hermeneutic

Girma Bekele

This article examines David Bosch’s missional hermeneutic, using it as an entry point into his understanding of the biblical foundation of mission. Until his tragic death in 1992 in a car accident, Bosch was chair of the Department of Missiology at the University of South Africa. He studied New Testament under Oscar Cullman at the University of Basel. The development of his theological thought was also shaped by his experience as an Afrikaner, as an ordained minister of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), and as a missionary in the Transkei. The sociopolitical and theological setting of South Africa during apartheid was, as it were, the anvil against which he hammered out his ideas of the vocation of the church within the world. His vision of missionary self-understanding and of the church as the “alternative community” is rooted in a strong conviction that the New Testament must be read as a missionary document.

Bosch follows the same general outline in both *Witness to the World* (1980) and *Transforming Mission* (1991): first, a discussion of mission crisis (this section is brief in the latter work), followed by a scriptural foundation of mission, an overview of historical perspectives on mission, a presentation of the emerging missionary paradigm, and development of a relevant theology of mission. A certain understanding, interpretation, and application of the Scriptures characterize each paradigm of Christian missionary history as it engages with its own particular context. Bosch is convinced that the task of each generation is to unlock, as if with its own time-conditioned key, the biblical foundation of mission and the biblical narrative of the *missio Dei*. He insists that, since the New Testament is “essentially a missionary document . . . it is incumbent upon us to reclaim it as such.”

**Misssional Hermeneutics: An Ecumenical Task**

While recognizing that there are “no immutable and objectively correct ‘laws of mission’ which exegesis of Scripture [can] give us,” Bosch argues that a faithful reading of the New Testament prevents any church in any historical context from seeing itself apart from the missionary enterprise, for “the history and theology of early Christianity are, first of all, ‘mission history’ and ‘mission theology.’” If the theology of Karl Barth “offers a much-needed purification of Christian thinking,” given the liberal context to which he had to respond, Bosch offers in comparable fashion a rediscovery of missionary hermeneutics of the New Testament, in response to the postmodern missionary crisis. Bosch affirms Martin Kähler’s famous saying that “mission is the mother of theology.” He traces the roots of mission to the very person, life, mission, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the community that he established, as recorded in the New Testament. The life and agenda of Jesus of Nazareth is the standard for authentic Christian mission. The task of the church in every generation and in every sociopolitical and historical context, then, is “to test continually whether its understanding of Christ corresponds with that of the first witnesses.”

In formulating his case for the emerging postmodern mission paradigm, Bosch presents a missiological reading of Jesus and his followers as an absolutely necessary hermeneutical key to comprehensively unlocking the biblical foundation of mission. A variety of missions can be found in the New Testament, but the authors spoke about the same Jesus to people within the specific contexts of their own communities. Likewise, our task, within our context, is to speak about Jesus—but not in just any way we might choose. The “speaking” is limited, not only by our own context, but also and “fundamentally by the community’s ‘charter of foundation’, the event of Jesus Christ. The events at the origin of the Christian community—the ‘agenda’ set by Jesus living, dying, and rising from the dead—primarily established the distinctiveness of that community, and to those events we too have to orientate ourselves.” The integrity of our mission must be judged against this background. Thus Christocentrism, as Bosch’ former student Charles Fensham observes, is embedded in Bosch’s hermeneutic as he describes the missionary foundation of the church.

Bosch argues that this does not mean establishing a one-to-one correspondence between the lives of Jesus and his followers and our contemporary lives in order to define mission and attempt to solve our current problems. Quoting Gustavo Gutiérrez, he argues that to adopt such one-to-one literalism “would be to succumb to ‘the temptation of concordism, which equates the social groups and forces within first century Palestine with those of our own time.”

**The Bridge**

How do we bridge the gap between “mission then” and “mission now”? How do we begin to build our biblical foundation of mission—do we start from the Bible itself and adapt it to our situation, or do we work in the other direction? There is no universal answer; each generation must answer this for itself. Bosch proposes what he calls a creative critical hermeneutic, which is based on the following three assumptions. First, we must admit that a single, universally valid missionary policy is impossible to construct—the attempt not only would be naive but also would be unfair to an authentic reading of the Bible, for it would involve seeking biblical precedents to justify everything that the church calls “mission” in the contemporary world. Bosch argues that “we usually presuppose far too readily that we may summon the Bible as a kind of objective arbitrator. . . . In this way we are blinded to the presuppositions lurking behind our own interpretations.” For Bosch, the Bible remains fundamental, and the quest to find its deeper message on mission remains a never-ending task for every church in every generation. Christian disciples need to be vulnerable, to lay aside all forms and ideals about mission, and to genuinely retain the will to be challenged, to repent, and to grow continually.
Second, our attempt to understand the self-definition of the biblical authors and their first readers is tinted by our own socio-political, cultural, and economic context. As Bosch commented to his students, “Every one of us reads the Bible from a particular vantage-point which colours our interpretation. Factors include: (a) our church tradition; (b) our culture; (c) our personal experiences and the way we experience religion; and (d) our social position, such as whether we belong to the privileged or the underprivileged sector of society.” That is, one cannot read the text of the Bible impassively, nor approach it as a neutral reader and objectively claim to know the mind of the author. Theo Sundermeier provides a personal elucidation of Bosch’s view, saying that such a task is “intrinsically impossible. . . . No matter how far I advance in understanding, I always encounter my understanding of the text. I never find the plain, irreducible meaning of the text.” The fact that there is one Bible but many traditions attests to the fact that there are various interpretive frameworks, with varying degrees of validity, but each with its own blind spot!

Third, the only hope for Christian unity lies in continuing to seek proper enlightenment from the Bible itself as the common ground for ecumenical dialogue. The Bible tells us about missio Dei; without it, we have no mission. A search for unity should motivate us toward a mutual and faithful hermeneutic. Bosch recognizes that the West is wrong to claim hermeneutical and theological supremacy. He also observes that the Enlightenment principle that truth is truth only insofar as it can be objectively discovered has had an ambiguous impact on theology. The shortcomings of the historical-critical method are rooted in the objectification of truth and meaning that the Enlightenment insists on, and in its interpretive framework, which claims the ability “to discover the original meaning of a text, in other words the meaning the author wanted to communicate to his first readers.” Bosch points out that there will always be differences in understanding of missions, since diverse interpretive frameworks emanate from differing contexts. Imposing one’s own view and definition of mission as ideal, exclusive, or indeed the “gold standard” is presumptuous and presupposes a false claim that one has the only key to biblical interpretation. For Bosch, biblical interpretation is the honest, communal, and never-ending task of the whole people of God, for the Bible is the book of the universal church of Christ. We continually need to seek clarity on Scripture, hoping “to formulate . . . approximations of what mission is all about.” We must “learn to listen to each other and begin to see the relativity of our own contexts.” Such an approach will lead to humility, continued conversion, repentance, mutual correction, ongoing learning, and the strengthening of Christian unity.

**Bosch argues persuasively that an authentic hermeneutics is always missional.**

Authentic Hermeneutics

Bosch argues persuasively that an authentic hermeneutics is always missional, which means that the New Testament, itself a product of missionary engagement with the world, must be read from the vantage point of mission. He affirms the view of Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller, who argue against a perception of the New Testament as merely a “confessional” history or collection of documents on internal Christian doctrinal struggles and in favor of the view that “the mission question is intrinsic to the Bible.” On this premise, Bosch seeks to bridge the gap between the art of theological/biblical scholarship and the missiological vocation of the community of faith. His goal can be described as the homecoming of wandering theology, for theology has long sought to establish itself independently from the missional life of the community of faith. For him, theology has “no reason to exist other than critically to accompany the mission Dei.” At the same time, Bosch wants to bring scholarship to mission study in order to free it from overly specific articulations of mission on the basis of “particularity and preference.” Biblical scholarship can fail to see the missionary mandate of the Bible, but “compared to biblical scholars, missiologists in particular will have to acknowledge that they tend to let the texts say what they want them to say.” Both disciplines—biblical and missiological—are necessary. Biblical scholarship guards against the tendency to read one’s own preconceptions into the text without regard for its original meaning, while missiology pushes biblical studies away from a fixation on the ancient context so as to be open to what the Bible means today.

While recognizing that there is no easy or fixed way to move from the New Testament to contemporary missionary practice, Bosch proposes what he calls “a critical hermeneutic” in understanding the always-relevant event of Jesus as it is recorded in the New Testament. In doing so, he recognizes that there will always be a plurality of self-definitions both in the Bible and in the history of the church. “The critical hermeneutic approach goes beyond the (historically interesting) quest of making explicit early Christian self-definitions, however. It desires to encourage dialogue between those self-definitions and all subsequent ones, including those of ourselves and our contemporaries. It accepts that self-definitions may be inadequate or even wrong. . . . It assumes that there is no such thing as an objective reality ‘out there,’ which now needs to be understood and interpreted. Rather, reality is intersubjective; it is always interpreted reality, and this interpretation is profoundly affected by our self-definitions.”

Pleading as he does for a critical hermeneutic, Bosch warns against any narrow approach. In his early works he points out the limitations of two broadly defined hermeneutical traditions, describing the evangelical tradition as “deductive” and the ecumenical one as “inductive.” He notes however, that in the real world there is “no such thing as a purely deductive method. Evangelicals are deceiving themselves for . . . [one] reads the Bible in terms of [one’s] own context.” He also criticizes the inductive method, favored by ecumenicals, because “context can become more than just a ‘hermeneutical key.’ It could come to determine everything, to such an extent that Scriptures ultimately can do little other than simply accede to the demands of the context.”

In any interpretative framework, we should not routinely expect to find an antithesis between the meaning of the biblical text in its own time and what it means now; rather, we should treat the meaning then and the meaning now as interdependent forces in a creative tension. Understanding the constancy in the meaning of the text as well as the contingency of its subsequent meaning in history requires a dialectical process. Through a deliberate act of hermeneutical conversation, we can progress to an accurate understanding of the text on its own terms that also speaks to our context. For Bosch, this challenge is a constant one, and he appeals to Walter Brueggemann as he concludes, “There are no simplistic or obvious moves (from the Bible) to contemporary
misional practice.”18 Having a biblical foundation does not mean possessing a direct, one-to-one correlation with the Bible, but it does require overall consonance with what the biblical text said and meant. In the same way, the New Testament writers made creative use of the Old Testament, as opposed to providing mere citations. Bosch is persuasive in arguing that “good exegesis is produced where the exegete’s own horizon has been opened in the way the biblical author’s horizon was opened. The text remains the firm point of orientation. But understanding it is not merely a reproductive process but a creative one.”19 This means, as Fensham elucidates, that “grasping this ‘consonance’ comes from and leads to an attitude that assumes provisionality, vulnerability, creative tension and weakness.”20

Analysis

Bosch’s vision of missional hermeneutics is not without its own shortcomings. The first and most obvious weakness is his lack of interest in the missiological reading of the Old Testament, which is particularly apparent in Transforming Mission.21 This weakness accentuates his heavily Christocentric accent. He devotes less than 4 pages to the Old Testament, compared with 163 pages for the New Testament. “It might be asked whether one should not begin with the Old Testament in the search for an understanding of mission. This is a legitimate question. There is, for the Christian church and Christian theology, no New Testament divorced from the Old. However, on the issue of mission we run into difficulties here. . . . There is, in the Old Testament, no indication of the believers of the old covenant being sent by God to cross geographical, religious, and social frontiers in order to win others to faith in Yahweh.”22

Bosch then extends tentative approval to Horst Rzepkowski’s assertion that “the decisive difference between the Old and the New Testament is mission.”23 Although he recognizes that the stories of Ruth and Naaman and the universalistic expressions in the Psalms, in Isaiah 40–66, and in Jonah all have significant implications for the idea of mission as frontier-crossing, he describes their significance as “genuine gold nuggets” that one could find only with “persistence among the rocks and rubble.”24 This statement is not only too brief, it also (unintentionally) neglects the missiological continuity between the Old and the New Testaments and, as Senior and Stuhlmueller correctly put it, the way that the latter’s taproot of universalistic missionary thrust can be traced to the former.25 Bosch’s limited usage of the Old Testament—the very book that he uses to build his case for Yahweh’s compassion as the foundation of Christian mission and, by extension, of the core of Jesus’ ministry—is self-invalidating.26 His reading of Jonah is severely limited, focusing on the prophet’s resentful missionary attitude. While Bosch is correct in his interpretation that Israel was not expected to go out into the Gentile world, it was expected, by its very being, to be holy and set apart for a purpose higher than mere survival.27 “Being” is as important as “doing,” if one is to fully explain mission in the broadest sense. By placing the emphasis on the “sending” aspect of mission, Bosch discounts a missiological reading of the Old Testament. This tack in his analysis is surprising, since Bosch explicitly dismisses any attempt to define mission too narrowly or on the basis of only one criterion.

The overall thrust of the Old Testament as the movement of missio Dei to the world originates, first, in the motif of God’s self-disclosing creation and, second, in the call of Abraham, which encompasses the choice of Israel, his descendants, “to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice” (Gen. 18:19). Understanding Israel as the vehicle for the coming of the Messiah, the hope of all humanity, and understanding the messianic promise as having been realized, first and foremost, in the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and, secondarily, in the establishment of the church as continuation of Jesus’ redemptive work reveal the entire sweep of salvation history to be interconnected aspects of the one mission of God. A missiological reading of the Old Testament, then, must go beyond the narrow sense of “sending” in English; as Andreas J. Köstenberger rightly contends, “Bosch vastly exaggerates the discontinuity between the Testaments.”28 Bosch’s overattention to the “sending” aspect of mission may have led him to overlook the missiological significance of some major themes in Genesis, John,29 Hebrews, 1 Peter, and Revelation, as well as other books of the Bible. In this particular sense, Bosch falls prey to his own criticism of theologians who are self-servingly restrictive in their selection of texts while trying to justify a too narrow theory of mission.

Second, Bosch’s understanding of Scripture as an interpretative, rather than a record, of divine revelation stands in need of critical appraisal.30 This principle is one of the presuppositions that Bosch offers in articulating his view of the biblical foundation of mission. But he cannot have it both ways. Critics such as J. G. Du Plessis have a valid point when they protest that Bosch cannot sustain his conviction that all subsequent missions should be assessed on the basis of the model of the Scriptures, and particularly of the New Testament, while at the same time diminishing the Scriptures’ revelatory essence. Bosch recognizes the difficulty of finding universally agreeable criteria to determine the validity of mission, and he warns against an interpretive hubris that forces one’s own contextual reading into the text. He also wants to protect his intersubjective basis for mission from both relativism and absolute contextualism. He does this by appealing to the Reformed tradition, in which he stands, of sola Scriptura. He believes that “we should judge every context by establishing what is and what is not divine, true and just in that context”; for him, “it is Scripture (and if we wish, tradition) that relates us and our context to the church and mission of all ages, and we cannot do without this.”31 Bosch’s “third way” intends to take into account both (1) the historical-critical and theological approaches and (2) the whole inspired thrust of the biblical message; but he weakens one dimension of that very dialectic when he promotes an understanding of the Bible as the authors’ interpretation of divine revelation, as opposed to the Bible itself as being a revelatory record. As Du Plessis puts it, “To speak of the Bible as interpretation of revelation and not a recording of it only suspends the question of its status.”32

A third weakness in Bosch’s argument appears in the unwitting vagueness he created by trying to be faithful to the historical-critical approach while also critiquing it for its entrapment within the negative forces of Enlightenment. His alternative approach—the creative missional hermeneutic, which insists on a dialogue between our self-definition and various self-defineds of historical Christian communities dating back to the time of
the New Testament—suffers from vagueness. He argues for what he calls “a fusion of horizons,” where the meaning of the text in its original context meets its meaning today. He has not, however, adequately provided criteria, at least at a macro level, for determining what the text meant for the original readers and for finding a meaning consonant with that in the present. He does not provide a clear starting point, nor does he answer whether the starting point should be our horizon or that of the biblical authors. Instead, he wants both but shows greater inclination toward the Eurocentric approach to the Bible by remaining faithful to the historical-critical method. While he makes a case for a connection between the biblical evidences for mission and contemporary missionary praxis, his approach—the third way—leaves itself open to a hermeneutical misreading of the Bible from the vantage point of the rich and the powerful, who can easily appeal to the Bible to spiritualize their privilege and their hold on power. He has failed to be consistent in his insistence that the Bible is to be read from the so-called theology of weakness, since vulnerability and failure cannot have the same meaning for both the oppressed and the oppressor. For the latter, this theology could easily provide an escape from both a moral and a theological dilemma.

Bosch’s ambivalent stance, combined with his understanding of the Bible as the interpretation of (or information about) a revelation, but not itself a revelation, creates an unintended sense of uncertainty, particularly for the church of the poor and oppressed. Such “enlightened” uncertainty may even deprive the church of biblical justification for its understanding of mission. The notion that the New Testament writers’ self-definition can be critically deconstructed, since their works are constituted by “human limitations of perspective” in addition to divine provisory, has far-reaching consequences. Primarily, though Bosch does not intend to do so, it raises a question about the reliability of the Scriptures and thereby creates a sense of uncertainty. Jesus and his mission become what subsequent readers decide for themselves as they unpack the “sayings” of Jesus’ contemporaries. The danger of this approach is that it opens the door to an almost infinite range of subjective interpretations of Jesus.

Finally, Bosch leaves the distinct impression that the best one can get from Scripture is missionary models, rather than a biblically justified mandate. Such a notion can open the door to endless uncertainty. It is true that any definition of mission has some gray areas. Perhaps the analogy that Bosch himself used to interpret the “signs of the times” is helpful. He writes: “Even if we are not equipped to decide between absolute right and absolute wrong, we should be able to distinguish between shades of grey and choose, for the light grey and against the dark grey.”33 Analogically, a biblically justified missionary mandate (however gray it might be) can be perfected through the faithful effort of churches in any generation, taking their context seriously. It is also imperative to recognize that the truth-giving work of the Holy Spirit, which Bosch sees working outside of the walls of the church, applies also to illuminate Scriptures within the walls of the church. As Köstenberger puts it, “Without this confidence in our Spirit-aided ability to apprehend the teaching of Scripture, we would sink into utter despair, into a relativism where any knowledge of absolute truth is excluded, and into a kind of epistemological solipsism (the autonomy of self in the process of arriving at knowledge) where human existence is ultimately absurd.”34

Conclusion

Despite these criticisms, the Bible remains the core foundation of mission for Bosch, and he argues strongly that any mission must take seriously the central thrust of the message of Scripture—the Heilsgeschichte. Bosch’s accomplishment in this regard is, in one way, a fulfillment of the question that he left unanswered at the end of his review of major works on biblical foundations of mission. The unanswered question that he posed was whether the church’s missionary activities today “bear any resemblance at all to what biblical scholars call ‘mission’ and also if and how it can appeal to scripture for its missionary service. Perhaps we need a book written by a theologian who is both a missiologist and a biblical scholar—if such an animal exists.”35 He attempts to be that animal in his later work, notably in Transforming Mission.

Bosch argues persuasively for missional hermeneutics as an open-ended process, and he begins his contribution by identifying key self-definitions that undergird various paradigms and accents within the New Testament. He provides an excellent exegetical missiological analysis of the biblical books he chooses to study, but he remains too selective in his choice of books.

Bosch provides an excellent exegetical missiological analysis of the biblical books he chooses to study, but he remains too selective in his choice of books.
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My Pilgrimage in Mission

David J. Hesselgrave

In many ways my missionary pilgrimage is a reflection of my ancestry and parentage. Although I was not a missionary kid, my parents and their parents were deeply religious people, though in very different ways. Those differences help to account for both my missionary calling and my missiological trajectory.

Parentage

As for my grandparents, I personally knew only my maternal grandmother, but I was influenced by all four. All hailed from Lodi, a small Wisconsin town hard by the southern reaches of the Wisconsin River. Both sets were committed to their respective churches, but those churches were very different from each other.

My maternal grandfather, August Johnson, and his family were Methodists of a kind that mother later termed “modernistic.” She told of her dismay that her Methodist pastor preached as often, and with equal appreciation, from masterpieces of secular literature as from the Bible.

My paternal grandparents, David Hesselgrave and his wife, Hannah, were deeply committed members of the Universalist Church. Their names were first on the list of charter members of the Universalist Church in Wisconsin, which they helped organize a “Gospel Tabernacle” that later affiliated with the Assemblies of God. Originally a farmer and blacksmith, Grandfather Hesselgrave studied and practiced law but refused to apply for admission to the bar because law practices at the time often conflicted with his sense of justice. He never attended seminary but was an ardent student of Scripture and was ordained in the Universalist Church. He attended the first Parliament of World Religions in Chicago in 1893 in order to hear representatives of the various religions; he was most impressed by Swami Vivekananda, organizer of the Vedanta Society in the United States.

Humanly speaking, I owe my salvation to the influence of my parents. My father, Albertus Leroy Hesselgrave, and mother, Hannah, were deeply committed members of the Universalist Church. Their names were first on the list of charter members of the Universalist Church in Lodi (founded in 1875), and they helped start another one in nearby Prairie du Sac. Originally a farmer and blacksmith, Grandfather Hesselgrave studied and practiced law but refused to apply for admission to the bar because law practices at the time often conflicted with his sense of justice. He never attended seminary but was an ardent student of Scripture and was ordained in the Universalist Church. He attended the first Parliament of World Religions in Chicago in 1893 in order to hear representatives of the various religions; he was most impressed by Swami Vivekananda, organizer of the Vedanta Society in the United States.

My early years were marked by other family influences as well. Fourteen years my senior, my brother, Glenn Leroy, brought years of pain and sorrow to the whole family through his waywardness. But he was roundly converted on what the doctor predicted would be his deathbed but, providentially, proved to be a bed of healing and salvation. The change was so instantaneous and dramatic that it left an indelible impression on me.

Very different but of equal importance was the quiet dedication of my sister, Lyla Annabelle, who always seemed to me to be akin to the angels. I reasoned that if she was in need of salvation, I certainly was. So at the tender age of eight, I kneeled with my mother and prayed to receive Christ.

My childhood was blessed by a veritable parade of notable evangelists, preachers, and missionaries who were invited not only to our church and summer Bible camp, but also to our home. I was impressed by all of them, but mostly by Peter Deyneka, Sr., the irrepressible founder of the Slavic Gospel Mission. His depictions of the spiritual need of Russia’s helpless and hopeless millions were unforgettable. Perhaps I too could be a missionary to Russia some day?

At University and Seminary

If my parentage and upbringing provided incentive for Christian service, it was learned and dedicated seminarists who did most to set its direction. After his conversion, my brother introduced the family to the Evangelical Free Church of America and its seminary in Chicago. I matriculated at the seminary in 1942, and it was my good fortune to be mentored by the seminary dean, Carl R. Steelberg. He recommended me to a fairly large adult Sunday school class on the south side of Chicago, which I taught with the help of his weekly incisive lesson ideas and the use of Wilbur Smith’s Peloubet’s Notes (on the International Uniform Sunday School Lesson). Steelberg modeled fidelity to Scripture and confirmed my call to Christian ministry. He even took special pains to confirm my choice of a life partner and the love of my life, Gertrude Edith Swanson, a member of First Evangelical Free Church in Rockford, Illinois—a flagship church of the Evangelical Free Church of America.

Three degree programs at the University of Minnesota also did much to shape my thinking. As an undergraduate, 1947–50, I was a philosophy major at a time when, as Suzanne K. Langer termed it, philosophy was being transposed into a “new key.” Philosophers had largely dispensed with questions having to do with the existence and nature of God, and also with “evangelical missions and [the] watch-and-ward societies of the world of our fathers,” in favor of the “symbolism of reason, rite and art” (Philosophy in a New Key [New American Library, 1951], p. 246). My adviser was Paul Holmer, a leading Kierkegaardian scholar soon to be appointed dean of Yale Divinity School. But it was the golden era of philosophy at Minnesota, and almost every school of philosophy was represented, from the Christian existentialism of Holmer to the atheistic cynicism of my professor of historical philosophy.

After completing undergraduate requirements in philosophy I came to the conclusion (incorrect as I discovered later) that philosophy was altogether too esoteric and impractical. Accordingly, in graduate studies that followed a term of missionary service in Japan, I changed my major—and at a most opportune time. Various universities, including Minnesota, were in the process of developing advanced degree programs in the new discipline of cross-cultural (or intercultural) communication. At Minnesota, this program was headed up by William S. Howell, a pioneer in

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the area who proved to be most helpful to me. In addition, and for the first time ever, doctoral students at Minnesota had the option of taking a supporting program in lieu of a minor. That allowed me to take advanced courses in various disciplines and introduced me to certain writings destined to become grist for the mills of missiologists as well as cross-culturalists generally—the writings of Ludwig Wittgenstein, George Homans, Abraham Maslow, Edward Hall, Marshall McLuhan, David Berlo, Edward Sapir, and Benjamin Whorf, to name a few.

But there was something more in store for me as a graduate student—particularly as an older student—than “book learning.” That “something more” grew out of rubbing shoulders on a daily basis with internationally recognized scholars in a variety of disciplines, almost all of them unbelievers. Ultimately it culminated in an oral examination that can serve as an example of the “something more.”

My doctoral examining committee must have been unique in that it included heads of four departments of the university, probably because I was among the first to opt for the new supporting program course of study. But what struck me most was the fact that my learned and unbelieving examiners seemed to be genuinely interested in my evangelical faith—not just what I believed but also why I believed as I did. They asked what I thought I believed as I did. They asked what I

thought of Albert Schweitzer’s views of Christ and the Bible as well as his motivation for becoming a missionary. They inquired as to my understanding of the dating and reliability of the New Testament documents. They wanted to know whether I thought Paul Tillich’s definition of “God” could be sustained on grounds of either reason or revelation. They inquired as to my thoughts concerning the philosophy of naturalists such as Sidney Hook. I thought they would never get to the kind of questions for which I had prepared so diligently, though they finally did.

Why do I mention this? Because, as could be expected, graduate studies yielded the kind of information that came to be incorporated into my seven-dimensional framework of cross-cultural communication and much else that was to appear later in various of my monographs and books. For me, the overall experience at the university served to rule out serious flirtation with relativism, existentialism, fideism, or any form of faith that was true for me but not necessarily for everybody else. But I also became convinced that some unbelievers—perhaps including one or two members of my examining committee—not only needed to know, but actually wanted to know, solid reasons for believing. At the time of my orals, I was not as well prepared to provide those reasons as I should have been. I aspired, by God’s grace, to do better in the future.

Noteworthy

Announcing

The African Association for the Study of Religions (AASR) and the International Association for the History of Religions will hold their 2012 regional conference July 18–23 at Egerton University, Njoro, Kenya, on the topic “Sports, Leisure, Religion, and Spirituality in Africa and the African Diaspora.” Organizers are seeking brief proposals for papers before August 30, 2011, which should be sent to convener Damaris Parsitau, dparsitau@yahoo.com, or to chairman Afe Adogame, a.adogame@ed.ac.uk, who is AASR general secretary. The conference is being held in collaboration with the Pan African Strategic and Policy Research Group. For conference details, go online to www.aasr.org/PDF/5thAASRConferenceinAfrica.pdf.

The Evangelical Missiological Society will hold its 2011 annual meeting September 29 to October 1 in Scottsdale, Arizona, as part of the North American Mission Leaders Conference, cosponsored by CrossGlobal Link, The Mission Exchange, and EMS. The conference has “Reset: Mission in the Context of Deep Change” as its theme. The EMS gathering will focus on “Urbanization: Mission in the Context of the City.” For details, go online to www.emsweb.org, or e-mail info@emsweb.org.

The Dongsoon Im and Mija Im Korean Christianity Program of UCLA will sponsor the 2011 Im Conference of Korean Christianity at UCLA, Los Angeles, on October 21. The conference, which will be hosted by the university’s Center for Korean Studies, will focus on the topic “Global Connections of Korean Christianity.” A book is planned on the same topic. For details, go to http://koreanchristianity.humanet.ucla.edu.

The biennial Shenk Mission Lectureship will be held October 27–29, 2011, at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana. The theme, “Mirror on the Globalization of Mennonite Witness,” will be discussed by presenters including John A. Lapp, project coordinator of the Global Mennonite History Project; Walter Sawatsky, professor of church history and mission and director of the Mission Studies Center at AMBS; and Jonathan J. Bonk, editor of the International Bulletin of Missionary Research. The Shenk Mission Lectureship is named in honor of Wilbert R. Shenk, missiologist, author, and IBMR contributing editor. For details, e-mail Jamie Ross, ross.jamielynn@gmail.com.

The United States Catholic Mission Association will hold its 2011 mission conference October 28–30 in Miami, Florida, with “Push Out into the Deep: Communion and Missionary Discipleship” as its theme. The keynote presenters scheduled are Miguel H. Diaz, U.S. ambassador to the Holy See, former professor of theology at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John’s University, in Minnesota, and former president of the Academy of the Catholic Hispanic Theologians in the United States; Stephen B. Bevans, S.V.D., professor of mission and culture, Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, an IBMR contributing editor and author of An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective (2009); and Madge Karecki, S.S.J.-T.O.S.F., director, Office for Mission Education and Animation, Archdiocese of Chicago, and a missionary for twenty-one years in South Africa, where she was associate professor of missiology and Christian spirituality, University of South Africa. Seven dialogue sessions and a focus on Haiti and its implications for missionaries are also planned. For details, go online to www.uscatholicmission.org, or send an e-mail to USCMA executive director Michael Montoya, M.J., mmontoya@uscatholicmission.org.

“International Development in Missiological Perspective” is the theme of the joint American Society of Missiology–Eastern Fellowship of Professors of Mission annual meeting, November 4–5, 2011, at Maryknoll Mission Institute, Ossining, New York. Presenters and attendees will examine the “growing awareness of the importance of ‘religion and development,’” said ASM–Eastern Fellowship president Benjamin L. Hartley.
As things turned out, the completion of graduate studies in 1965 marked the beginning of my tenure at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS), in Deerfield, Illinois. But before proceeding to that part of my story, it is necessary to go back and illustrate how it was that missionary service in postwar Japan from 1950 to 1962 led me to pursue doctoral studies in the first place.

**Missionary Service in Postwar Japan**

Early on, Gertrude and I shared a long-standing interest in overseas missions. Her interest was Congo, mine was Russia. Neither country seemed an option in 1950, when we made our interest in missions known to the Board of Overseas Missions of the Evangelical Free Church of America. When we did, Executive Secretary Hugo Rodine suggested that we consider joining the Calvin Hansons in pioneering the work of the Evangelical Free Church in Japan. Hearing of that possibility, a professor at the university called me into his office one day. Dispensing with pleasantries, he said, “Mr. Hesselgrave, I hear that you may be going to Japan as a missionary. I have just returned from Japan as a member of an official commission on higher education in that country. I think it well to warn you that the Japanese people are not at all interested in pie in the sky by-and-by. What the Japanese want is a changed economic picture in the here and now.”

After arriving in Japan in 1950 and working with the people for a time, it became apparent that the professor’s assessment of the situation was more correct than that of many missionary recruiters, who had indicated that great numbers of Japanese were ready to embrace the Christian Gospel. Actually, both assessments were partially correct. But a much more incisive understanding of the religious situation in Japan was necessary—one that would account for various factors that both my professor and the recruiters had failed to see.

First, though many postwar Japanese were indeed ready to “accept Christ,” the number who followed through was pitifully small. Missionaries almost invariably responded to the problem by introducing new evangelistic strategies and methods. However, nothing missionaries could say or do seemed to make much difference.

Second, in spite of the heroic stand and significant sacrifice of certain Christian leaders and laypersons during the war, the acid of widespread compromise had practically eviscerated the larger church. As a result, postwar Christian efforts tended to be overly dependent upon the instigation and direction of foreigners. That did not augur well for the future of the church.

**Personalia**

**Elected.** Thomas D. Eliff, Southern Baptist pastor, denominational leader, and former missionary in Zimbabwe, as president of the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, effective March 16, 2011. Twice elected SBC president, Eliff, 67, was pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Oklahoma (1985–2005). He then served as IMB senior vice president for spiritual nurture and church relations (2005–9). In that role, he taught and counseled missionaries and helped mobilize churches for mission involvement. Since then he has led Living in the Word Publications, a writing and speaking ministry. Eliff succeeds Jerry Rankin, who retired July 31, 2010, after seventeen years as IMB president. Executive vice president Clyde Meador was interim president.

**Appointed.** Andrew Small, O.M.I., as national director of the Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States (www.onefamilyinmission.org). Small, 42, who succeeds John E. Kozar, was associate director of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Office of National Collections and director of the Collection for the Church in Latin America. Previously, he worked in the Office of International Justice and Peace in the USCCB Department of Justice, Peace, and Human Development. He helped develop policy for the bishops on a range of issues, including the overall U.S. trade and foreign aid policies and human rights issues, with a special emphasis on Latin America and Africa. He has also worked in pastoral ministry in Houston and Rio de Janeiro.

**Died.** Hans Kasdorf, 82, missiologist, educator, and author, March 26, 2011, in Fresno, California. Following studies in Canada and Oregon, he taught linguistics at Fresno Pacific College (1968–78) and Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary (1978–93), both in Fresno. After retirement he taught at Freie Theologische Hochschule, Giessen, Germany (1994–98). Kasdorf wrote and researched in the areas of mission, history, and theology, publishing in English and German. He is author of Christian Conversion in Context (English, 1980; German, 1989). A native of Siberia, he emigrated to Brazil in 1929 with his parents and spent nearly twenty years in the rain forest of southern Brazil helping his family build a life for themselves as homestead farmers.
Third, although visiting evangelicals ordinarily communicated a “simple Gospel” to the masses, more liberal academics were much more likely to address more educated audiences. I note this factor here because it was critical to my own ministry, especially during the six years we spent in Kyoto. The reason is not hard to find. Toward the end of the nineteenth century the evangelical faith of many Christian leaders in Japan—including those at Doshisha, a Congregationalist university in Kyoto—had been adversely impacted by higher criticism from Germany and universalism from America. The legacy of those importations was still very much in evidence at the time of our ministry.

As for the prominence of foreign personnel and ideas, the majority of missionaries (myself included) were evangelical but comparatively inexperienced and relatively unknown. Most visiting lecturers, in contrast, were liberal, well-known scholars—the likes of philosopher/theologians Paul Tillich, Charles Hartshorne, and Nels F. S. Ferré. Their lectures often attracted members of an educated public and tended to call the authority of the Bible into question in ways that reflected the controversies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Tillich, for example, derisively pointed out that some Christians, including some in his audience, mistakenly believed the Bible to be literally true. He insisted that much of it is mythological. For example, the biblical accounts of creation and the Christ are mythic and symbolic in much the same way as are stories in the Kojiki of Shintoism and the Jataka Tales of Buddhism. He went on to assert that it is in myths and symbols such as these that the teachings of all holy books, including the Bible, have their deepest meaning. Coming from learned and professedly Christian theologians, statements such as these undermined the interest of some students in our Bible classes. At times it became almost as important to defend the authority of the biblical text as it was to explain its meaning.

Finally, as concerns the Japanese culture, I gradually came to see more and more clearly that Japanese friends who committed themselves to Christ only to retreat from that commitment when it became uncomfortable were not necessarily “wishy-washy.” On the contrary, they were getting mixed messages on the one hand, and simply being Japanese on the other. In “being Japanese” they stood ready to be Christian in much the same way as most Japanese are Shintoist or Buddhist or Confucianist and so on, depending on circumstances and the applicability of these respective teachings. This mind-set—at once so deep-seated and deleterious—became for me a matter of great concern. My research disclosed a methodology that made much of this seemed out of character. But it was unarguably significant. My research disclosed a methodology that made much of the “inadequacies” of Western philosophy and theology and that taught the “inescapable logic” of Nichiren Buddhism, the absolute authority of the Lotus Sutra, and the practical benefits of worshipping the Daimoku, or “Sacred Title” inscribed by Nichiren. In the context of Japanese culture as usually portrayed, much of this seemed out of character. But it was unarguably effective.

I had planned to complete my doctoral studies and dissertation on Soka Gakkai and then return to Japan. Accordingly, in 1965 we made provision for our oldest son, David Dennis (who had enrolled in the University of Minnesota), and prepared to ready ourselves, son Ronald Paul, and daughter Sheryl Ann for our return to Japan. Then one day in June of that year, we were contacted by Kenneth S. Kantzer, newly appointed dean of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, concerning a possible faculty appointment.

Thirty Years at Trinity

The decade of the 1940s was pivotal, not only for the nations of the world, but for churches and missions as well. American evangelicals organized the National Association of Evangelicals in 1942. Its missionary arm was the Evangelical Fellowship of Mission Agencies (now The Mission Exchange). United in their
My missiological pilgrimage has been a series of learning and shaping experiences from beginning to end. From my forebears I learned the importance of religion. From my parents I learned the necessity of personal repentance and trust in Christ. From my fellow students and professors at the university I learned that truth and love really do go together, not in acquiescent compromise but in courageous and courteous dialogue governed by Scripture. And from my wife and children I have learned that, apart from our Lord Jesus himself, there is no greater gift than a believing, loving, and supportive family.

As I near the end of my ministry and earthly sojourn, I express gratitude to God and all who have preceded, accompanied, and succeeded me in one capacity or another during the long journey—whether in the church or on the field or at the academy. More than I, they are the ones who have contributed to the growth of the Japan Evangelical Free Church, Trinity’s School of World Mission and Evangelism, the Evangelical Missiological Society, and the many churches and ministries with which I have been associated over these many years. I bless the Lord for them and thank them all.

Some seminaries espouse a kind of unwritten law forbidding faculty members from criticizing their fellows. That was not true at the reconstructed TEDS. Precisely because of our deep commitment to the authority of Scripture, we faculty members sometimes took issue with each other on matters of interpretation. This was true for me as I felt I needed to critique Stott’s reinterpretation of the relationship between sociopolitical action and Gospel proclamation, doing so in our Trinitian World Forum (vol. 15, no. 3 [1990]; vol. 16, no. 3 [1991]). Without so much as a mention of the hermeneutical issues involved, some of Stott’s ardent supporters responded with expressions of disdain. Stott himself, however, took pains to respond to the hermeneutical issues involved and with the utmost of Christian grace. Though I could not agree with either his argument or his counterargument in this particular case, the candor and kindness with which Stott engaged the issues were absolutely exemplary and most encouraging.

With the 1980s came a very different sort of strictly personal challenge. My association with Donald McGavran dated back to 1965, when he invited me to visit Fuller Theological Seminary. As is well known, McGavran’s church growth school of thought enjoyed great success throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Also well known, though on the other side of the ledger, was the relative disregard with which the Fourth Assembly of the WCC (held in Uppsala in 1968) treated his plea on behalf of the “two billion” (referring to unevangelized peoples).

Late in life, McGavran came to the place where he divided missionaries/missiologists into two camps: one camp committed to world evangelization and the other committed to “improving human existence.” Connecting the first group to a “high view of Scripture” and theological orthodoxy, he advocated the establishment of a new missiological society, one in which agreement on essential Christian doctrine could be expected to serve the Great Commission cause of “discipling men and women in segment after segment, caste after caste, class after class of society.” In several letters in 1987–88, McGavran urged me to take the lead in organizing this new society. After prayer and discussion with Gertrude, I agreed, and for several years in the late 1980s and early 1990s, this enterprise occupied a lion’s share of my time and energy. Others joined in the effort, and the Evangelical Missiological Society is the result.

**Conclusion**

My missiological pilgrimage has been a series of learning and shaping experiences from beginning to end. From my forebears I learned the importance of religion. From my parents I learned the necessity of personal repentance and trust in Christ. From my fellow students and professors at the university I learned that truth and love really do go together, not in acquiescent compromise but in courageous and courteous dialogue governed by Scripture. And from my wife and children I have learned that, apart from our Lord Jesus himself, there is no greater gift than a believing, loving, and supportive family.

As I near the end of my ministry and earthly sojourn, I express gratitude to God and all who have preceded, accompanied, and succeeded me in one capacity or another during the long journey—whether in the church or on the field or at the academy. More than I, they are the ones who have contributed to the growth of the Japan Evangelical Free Church, Trinity’s School of World Mission and Evangelism, the Evangelical Missiological Society, and the many churches and ministries with which I have been associated over these many years. I bless the Lord for them and thank them all.
Joseph Kam: Moravian Heart in Reformed Clothing

Susan Nivens

How did Joseph Kam, a Dutch leatherworker who at one point went bankrupt, later go on to lead one of the most significant mission efforts in the Dutch East Indies? Kam first went to Maluku in the Dutch East Indies in 1815, when he was well into his forties. From 1815 to 1833 Kam revitalized the 200-year-old Indische Kerk (Church of the Indies) in central Maluku, thus laying the foundation for the establishment of the church in other parts of Maluku province, Java, northern Sulawesi, and Timor.

Two Religious Communities’ Missional Influence

Joseph Kam was born in September 1769 in the Utrecht region of the Netherlands. His father, Joost Kam, operated the family leatherworks and wig business. The Kams, a devout Calvinist family, were members of the Reformed congregation in their village. Joseph’s older brother Samuel became a Reformed minister, so it was left to Joseph to learn the family trade. His father was friendly with the Moravian Brethren who lived in the nearby town of Zeist and had regular contacts with them through his business. As a young man, Joseph began to regularly fellowship with the Moravian Brethren. He attended their prayer meetings in his hometown of ‘s-Hertogenbosch but remained a faithful member of the Reformed Church. By this time the Moravians in the region no longer required those who attended their meetings to leave the Reformed Church, and in turn the latter allowed their parishioners to be involved informally in such meetings.

The Dutch Reformed Church and mission. From the early stages of its inception in 1571, the Dutch Reformed Church pursued missions, as evidenced in theological discussions and in the training and sending of missionary teams beyond their borders. This provided a ready platform for Kam to serve in the Dutch East Indies.

Beginning in 1590 with Hadrianus Saravia, Dutch church leaders began to discuss the Dutch church’s part in missions. Saravia, one of the great theologians of the Dutch and Anglican churches, argued for Christian leaders to promote evangelism among the unchurched both at home and afar. Twenty-eight years later, Justus Heurnius, a young theologian from an influential church and university family, wrote a dissertation arguing for foreign mission among the indigenous peoples of Asia and proposed a mission methodology. His essay brought the topic to the floor at the Synod of Dordrecht in 1618, where it was endorsed. Another influential Dutch theologian at Leiden University and friend of Heurnius was Gisbertus Voetius. In response to theological questions to the church in the Amsterdam district from a missionary in the East Indies, Voetius penned a theology of mission. From 1623 to 1633 the Leiden professor of theology, Antonius Walaeus, was appointed to run the Seminarium Indicum, a training program for missionary pastors to the East Indies. He had twelve successful students. Although the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC, Dutch East Indies Company) opposed forthright evangelism and caused the close of this training program, the VOC regularly employed ordained ministers in the Indies and sometimes looked the other way while the ministers pursued evangelism of the local populace. Over 900 ordained ministers were contracted by the VOC to serve in the Dutch East Indies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, although only about 100 of them were resident pastors. From the perspective of the Reformed Church in the late eighteenth century, mission service in the East Indies was not a novel idea.

Even as the Dutch Reformed Church endeavored to pursue mission through partnership with the Dutch East Indies Trading Company, this collaboration often proved to be limiting to the indigenous church. From 1624 to 1632 Heurnius, the Reformed missiologist who became a missionary, was in conflict with the VOC’s governor-general of Batavia, who wanted a governing role in church discipline. When Heurnius resisted, he was jailed and then was removed to another VOC office in India. Other similar occurrences involving the governing role of the VOC or policies that restricted evangelism meant that conflict with missionaries was common. At times the VOC prevented missionaries from returning to a region where they had already begun planting churches.

While missions was not unheard of in the Netherlands, the Pietist movement of the eighteenth century did create renewed energy for missions in the Dutch Reformed community. In December 1797 Johannes Theodorus van der Kemp led a group of twenty Dutch Christians, including twelve Reformed ministers, to form an official Protestant sending agency, the Nederlandsch Zendeling-Genootschap (NZG, Netherlands Missions Society). The NZG was not officially part of the Dutch Reformed Church, but the founders and subsequent numbers of NZG missionaries ordained by the Reformed Church created close ties. This Dutch Reformed missions focus was part of Kam’s church upbringing, and it provided a foundation for the Moravian missions zeal that Kam later encountered.

The Zeist Moravian community. Besides this missions emphasis within the Dutch Reformed Church, Kam was also deeply affected by a local Dutch Moravian community, with its informal methods of discipleship and its examples of sacrificial missionary service. By this time, the population of the Netherlands was primarily aligned with the Reformed Church, but Count Zinzendorf’s connections with the European nobility opened the way for Moravian influence in the Netherlands. The dowager princess of the House of Orange desired Moravian missionaries to go to some of the Dutch colonies. Through her blessing and the tenacity of Zinzendorf, leader of the new community of Herrnhut, a small group of Herrnhutters established a Moravian community in the town of Zeist, only sixty kilometers from ‘s-Hertogenbosch. The settlement in Zeist was firmly established in 1746. Not a few nobility visited the community in the 1750s and “showed much satisfaction and pleasure at the regulations of the congregation.” Located in the center of the Netherlands near significant crossroads of trade, religion, and education,
Firsthand accounts from outside observers show that the Zeist Moravian settlement maintained many of the Herrnhut distinctive in their worship, teachings, and operations. In 1760 Samuel Kenrick, a wealthy Englishman descended from a dissenting family, visited the Moravians in Zeist and made a scathing report to friends back in England after witnessing the Moravians’ emotional display of love for Christ in their worship services. Nevertheless, he was impressed with their harmonized singing, comparing the quality and style to the opera in London.14 Another visitor, the Methodist evangelist John Wesley, wrote of his visit in his journal. Traveling in the Netherlands in 1783, he decided to visit the Zeist community, as he was “sick of inns” and the exorbitant fees he paid in Amsterdam. Arriving on his eightieth birthday, he commented that the community resembled a small village, not unlike the larger colleges at Oxford University.15

As a tradesman, Kam’s father often visited the Zeist community on his business journeys, and Joseph frequently joined his father in these trips. Eventually a group of these Herrnhutters, known as Diaspora Brethren, held fellowship and prayer meetings in the village of ‘s-Hertogenbosch, which the Kam family attended regularly, while maintaining active membership at the Reformed Church. Out of these interactions grew Joseph Kam’s ardent desire to take the Gospel across cultural barriers. His drive was later summarized by mission leaders who interviewed him: “Because since a youth [Kam] had witnessed [God’s] overwhelming love through the Savior, [Kam’s] gratitude compelled him to live for Him, and if possible, to be involved in the priorities of His kingdom.”16

By the time Joseph Kam was a regular visitor at Zeist, during the last two decades of the eighteenth century, the international mission work of the Moravian Church was well established in Moravian circles. At their prayer meetings the Zeist Moravians read reports from their missionaries, praying for those who served overseas and weeping for those who died in their field of service. The community also emphasized three foundational concerns of their worship, teachings, and operations. In 1760 Samuel Kenrick, a wealthy Englishman descended from a dissenting family, visited the Moravians in Zeist and made a scathing report to friends back in England after witnessing the Moravians’ emotional display of love for Christ in their worship services. Nevertheless, he was impressed with their harmonized singing, comparing the quality and style to the opera in London.14 Another visitor, the Methodist evangelist John Wesley, wrote of his visit in his journal. Traveling in the Netherlands in 1783, he decided to visit the Zeist community, as he was “sick of inns” and the exorbitant fees he paid in Amsterdam. Arriving on his eightieth birthday, he commented that the community resembled a small village, not unlike the larger colleges at Oxford University.15

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By the time Joseph Kam was a regular visitor at Zeist, during the last two decades of the eighteenth century, the international mission work of the Moravian Church was well established in Moravian circles. At their prayer meetings the Zeist Moravians read reports from their missionaries, praying for those who served overseas and weeping for those who died in their field of service. The community also emphasized three foundational concerns of the Moravians: to practice love over doctrinal debate, to preach redemption through the blood of the Lamb, and to heed the call to missions among the unevangelized.17

While Kam desired to be an overseas missionary, his schooling and his family’s needs prevented him from taking the typical route to overseas service as an ordained seminary graduate of the Reformed Church. Kam’s father had designated Joseph to train in the family trade, so he had not been formally educated beyond primary school. For this reason a seminary education was not accessible to him. Additionally, concern for his aging parents held him at the family business. When his father died, he felt compelled to maintain the business to support his two younger sisters, who were frail and unmarried. Not long after this the business went bankrupt, and Joseph then acquired a job as a civil servant in The Hague.

In 1804 Kam and his two sisters moved to The Hague, where he continued his association with both the Reformed Church and the Moravian Brethren. Although previous generations of Dutch Calvinists had opposed the Moravian settlement at Zeist,18 it is apparent that by Kam’s time, participation in both fellowships was accepted. Soon after settling into a new job and location, Joseph married Alida, the sister of a Reformed minister. At the same time, he continued attending Moravian meetings when his work allowed it, loved to sing their missions songs, and still felt great compassion for the lost, although mission work seemed to be a far-off dream. In January 1806 Alida gave birth to their first child, a daughter. Alida, however, died within two months, and their infant died a month later.19 This crisis at age thirty-six turned Kam back toward missions again. In December of the next year, he offered his services to the NZG.20

Kam’s Missionary Training

Kam’s unconventional background and late start in ministry came at an unsettling juncture in Dutch history. There was trouble with the British on one side, and occupation by France under Napoleon on the other, but these developments set in motion the exemplary cooperation of three different missions groups: the NZG, the Moravian community of Zeist, and the London Missionary Society (LMS). This cooperation came in two phases: first in the Netherlands between the Reformed and Moravian groups, and then between the Reformed and the LMS. Because he was not a member of the Moravian Church, Kam applied in 1808 to the recently formed Netherlands Mission Society. He testified that he desired to “serve the Redeemer and promote His Kingdom because of my gratitude for my unity with Him.” The NZG examiners were delighted with Kam, commending him for being “fair-minded, quiet, modest, and serious.”21

Cooperation between the NZG and the Zeist Moravians. The first level of cooperation occurred between the NZG and the Moravian community at Zeist to give the now forty-something Kam training for ordination and practical issues of overseas ministry. As a fledgling missions society, the NZG had no official training program, so Kam was mentored by reputable Reformed ministers, including his older brother Samuel and a much younger Rev. Kaakabeen. The primary goal was ordination, which would allow Kam to administer the sacraments and properly explain doctrine. In addition to theology, he studied some liberal arts subjects, as well as music, which, after missions, became his second love. In particular, he grew fond of playing the organ.22

As Kam finished his training and passed his examination by the NZG in 1811, the British seized and controlled the Dutch East Indies until a post-Napoleonic war treaty was signed between the two nations in 1816. This was a time of harsh poverty in the Netherlands during the French occupation and forced conscription of young men to fight in Russia for Napoleon. Despite the daily
troubles of the occupation, the NZG wasted no time in seeking the assistance of their like-minded brothers in Zeist. To receive training in the practical side of ministry, Kam spent six months as an assistant under the leadership of the Moravians at Zeist. This period gave Kam discipline and physical stamina as he entered a more practical time of training. A typical day found him rising at five o’clock, eating, and attending the Morning Blessing at six. Then he studied until lunch, followed by some sort of activity, perhaps a walk or “in a workshop” for a few hours. Then there were two more sessions of worship in singing, and finally he finished the day with some purposeful reading.  

Beginning in January 1812, Kam and two German NZG candidates-in-training, Gottlob Brückner and Johann Christoph Supper, spent their weekends serving Dutch Reformed congregations in the isolated, illiterate farming communities of Leusden, Brevoort, and Hamersveld in the Amersfoort district. After a three-hour journey on foot to these villages, they spent all of Sunday in visiting the sick and teaching the Bible, catechism, singing, and reading. These farmers were generally happy to learn, so Kam resolved “with much patience to imprint on their memory the principles of the beautiful Christian religion.” This first partnership between the Reformed and Moravian communities had prepared his mind, heart, and body for service.

Kam identified quickly with the people and land where he was sent; eight weeks after his arrival, he married a Eurasian woman, Sara Timmerman. Kam’s Blended Missional Approach

Kam’s eighteen years in the Dutch East Indies revealed his blend of upbringing and training. Sometimes he clearly promoted the administrative structure and doctrines of the Dutch Reformed Church, while at other times he implemented Moravian methodologies and teachings. In other instances his teaching and practices appear to be a combination of the two.

To appreciate Kam’s contribution to missions in Maluku, we need an overview of the condition of the Ambon church. During this era, Ambon Island was the center of the spice trade and administration, especially for the Dutch. On his arrival in Ambon in 1815, Kam found many congregants, but not a single ordained pastor. The Indische Kerk had been in the region under the sponsorship and authority of the VOC since 1605. Indigenous pastoral training had been ignored, however, and indigenous believers could achieve only the position of religious teacher or “comforter-prayer,” that is, itinerant prayer-healer. Some villages on other islands had been without a pastoral visit for fourteen years, but the believers had been faithfully waiting for an ordained minister to baptize their children, catechize and confirm the converted animists, serve the Lord’s Supper, and solemnize most of their marriages. In the city of Ambon some people had given up on church, and one of the two church buildings was being used as a warehouse.

Reformed values. The Reformed side of Kam’s Christian experience immediately responded; the sacraments had been neglected and were an urgent matter. Kam spent most of his first year in interisland boat travel and hiking inland in order to serve these abandoned congregations. Around 7,500 were baptized, many others examined and confirmed, while still others partook of communion for the first time in over a decade. On these trips, Kam also took time to advise and encourage the local elders. He visited over seventy villages his first year and thereafter made it a habit to visit them annually to perform these particular duties. This type of visit became a regular part of church practice, and some people gave Kam the name “Tukang Sakremen” (the “sacrament-smith”). He set up a printing press and published Christian reading materials in Malay for the undemanding to use in services. He unwaveringly opposed Christians’ participating in ancestor worship and other traditional religious practices by destroying worship implements and altars. All these priorities show Kam as following the format and doctrine he gained from the Reformed tradition.

Moravian spirit. Kam’s Moravian heart led him to give himself completely to the Malukan people, and he settled down to stay. In other Moravian-like ways, he sought practical, efficient solutions to barriers, emphasized evangelism and discipleship, and taught habits for Christian community.

He identified quickly with the people and land where he was sent. This was evident when, eight weeks after his arrival, he married a Eurasian woman, Sara Timmerman, who belonged to an influential Ambonese family. Not only was Sara a supportive wife, she was also his equal partner and spiritual soul mate in teaching and mentoring. Joseph wrote in his limited English to the LMS in June 1815: “At the 28 of April I married with Miss Sara Maria Timmerman, a lady of great ability, and accompanied with a pious spirit. She is not affraid to sit down in our heathen mess
En route to Ambon in 1814, Kam spent six months in the port of Surabaya, in eastern Java. While there, he ministered to the expatriate worshipers and formed a fellowship group called Saleh Surabaya (the "Surabaya faithful"). In line with his Moravian discipleship, sharing the Good News was the most urgent and important work of the group. During his short time in Surabaya, Kam influence led a young German clockmaker named Johannes Emde to see the need to evangelize the Muslims of eastern Java—something that was against long-standing VOC policy of avoiding any provocation of Muslim communities. Shortly thereafter, Emde witnessed to a young Eurasian Javanese of noble descent named Coenraad Coolen. Emde and Coolen, while taking different approaches to sharing the Gospel with Muslims, are considered the cofounders of the church in East Java.39

Besides taking the Indische Kerk of the Maluku Islands into a new era of growth, Kam was the NZG’s point man for mission work in the eastern end of the Dutch East Indies. All new candidates for that region were sent to Ambon, where Kam trained them in church matters, while his wife taught them Malay so they could carry out their duties in the trade language. No doubt she also gave them numerous insights on the indigenous culture and the role of women in that region. In this manner they trained fourteen men for service, although only a few stayed or survived illness. Despite these setbacks, together the Kams mentored three others who had significant impact in two other major Protestant movements in what is now eastern Indonesia: Reynt le Bruyn, Johann Schwarz, and Johann Riedel.40 Le Bruyn labored ten years in Kupang, Timor, rebuilding the Protestant Church of Timor by partnering with an Ambonese Christian man. They followed a program similar to Kam’s.41 And in 1831 Schwarz and Riedel were sent to Minahasa in northern Sulawesi, where they helped establish eleven mission stations. By 1880 an incredible 80 percent of the population, including most of the traditional religious specialists, had reached individual decisions to make Jesus their Lord.42

Kam’s mission impact in the Dutch East Indies was more than could be expected from an undereducated tradesman whose midlife missionary training was a hodgepodge of Moravian discipleship, informal Reformed studies in doctrine, and internship in pastoral functions and administration. His Moravian passion for evangelism, combined with the Moravian penchant for mentoring, led to the beginning of the first church among Muslims in East Java, the spread of the church throughout the Maluku Islands, and a sweeping turn to Christianity in Timor and northern Sulawesi. The Reformed doctrine and church structure, Bible translation, and indigenous pastoral training revitalized the weary and neglected Indische Kerk and gave the new church in these regions of the Dutch East Indies a firm foundation for continued growth. As a result, this vast eastern region became aligned with Jesus Christ, leaving the doors open for the continued growth of Christianity in present-day Indonesia.

Notes
1. Almost all major sources on Kam are in Dutch, with a few resources in Indonesian. I am grateful to my husband, Richard J. Nivens, for his assistance in adapting computer-generated translations from Dutch to English into more natural English. My own proficiency in Indonesian made the Indonesian resources easier for me to understand and translate; any errors in translation, however, are mine alone.
2. During the colonial era, the Dutch and English made attempts to spell local place-names, and these archaic spellings have persisted, despite the regularization of those place-names by Indonesians since independence in 1945. In English, “the Moluccas” is now more accurately written as Maluku, and “Celebes” became Sulawesi, and so on. For the purposes of this article, for place-names that continue from colonial times, I use the preferred Indonesian spelling. For other cases I will use the place-names that were contemporary to the time period about which I am writing; for example, Jakarta (modern) will be Batavia (colonial).
3. Ido Hendricus Enklaar, Joseph Kam, “Rasul Maluku” (Joseph Kam: “Apostle of Maluku”) (Jakarta Pusat: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1980), p. 10 (hereafter Kam [Indon.]). This Indonesian version of Enklaar’s biography of Joseph Kam is shorter and somewhat different from Enklaar’s 1963 Dutch version.


12. Ibid., p. 439.


21. Ibid.

22. Ibid., p. 15.

23. Enklaar, Kam (Dutch), pp. 7–8.

24. Ibid., p. 9.

25. In 1605 six Ambonese people were baptized into the fellowship of the Dutch Reformed Church in Ambon in the Maluku Islands.


27. Enklaar, Kam (Dutch), p. 33.


32. Enklaar, Kam (Dutch), p. 44.


34. Enklaar, Kam (Dutch), pp. 143–44.


36. Enklaar, Kam (Dutch), p. 129.

37. Williams, The missionary gazetteer, p. 17.


41. Ibid., p. 301.

42. Ibid., pp. 422–23.

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Thirty Books That Most Influenced My Understanding of Christian Mission

Jan A. B. Jongeneel

As a teenager I started to read books on Christian missions in my parents’ home in Kockengen, a village near Utrecht, Netherlands. They were supporters of the Reformed mission among the Toraja people in Sulawesi, Indonesia. While I was a student at the university, I received from my father a signed copy of the Reformed Mission League’s volume *Alle volken* (All Nations) (The Hague: Van Keulen, 1963), which I still possess.

**In Training**

As a student in theology at Leiden University, I studied Christian missions, following the curriculum decided by my church, the Netherlands Reformed Church. The professor required extensive knowledge of only one book: Hendrik Kraemer’s *Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1938). This volume, which Kraemer wrote in seven weeks, was the first missiological work I studied carefully; it became the book that most impacted my understanding of Christian mission. Before studying this classic work, I examined *Der Islam* (Basel: Basler Missionsbuchhandlung; Stuttgart: Evang. Missionsverlag, 1956), by Emanuel Kellerhals. He pointed to Kraemer as one of the three key figures for studying the history, doctrine, and nature of Islam from the standpoint of a Christian missionary.

During my stay in the mission house at Oegstgeest (1968–71), I combined the drafting of my Leiden University dissertation (on the rational views of Enlightenment philosophers on Jesus Christ) with preparatory studies for doing missionary work in Indonesia. The latter were focused upon the unity and variety of people groups in the Indonesian archipelago, their languages, history, and religions, with special reference to Protestant Christian missions and churches. I frequently talked with Bernard J. Boland, a former missionary who at the same time was completing his Ph.D. study on Islam in Indonesia, published as *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971). Most of my teachers in the mission school, later known as the Hendrik Kraemer Institute and nowadays located in Utrecht, were former missionaries in Indonesia. Some of them wrote books in Indonesian, others in Dutch or English. The rector at that time, for instance, published some stimulating studies. Evert Jansen Schoonhoven’s inaugural address at Leiden University, which dealt thoughtfully with the tensions between mission and tolerance, was published as *Zending en tolerantie* (The Hague: Boekencentrum, 1947). His successor, Ido Enklaar, published *De scheiding der sacramenten op het zendingsveld* (The Separation of the Sacraments on the Mission Field) (Ph.D. diss, Amsterdam, Holland, 1947), in which he criticized the Dutch missions (and Indonesian churches) that did not allow all baptized members to immediately take part in the Eucharist.

**In Indonesia**

During my stay in Indonesia (1971–80), I published a bibliography of religious studies and Christian theology in Malay and Indonesian since the seventeenth century. The second volume of this work contains one chapter on missiology and another on polemics and apologetics. In both chapters publications written by Indonesians alternate with translations of Western books. Reference is made to studies of two pupils of Johannes C. Hoekendijk, my predecessor at Utrecht University, who became the founding fathers of missiology as a theological discipline in Indonesia: the Indonesian theologian Johannes L. C. Abineno, who wrote *Sekitar theologia praktika* (Regarding Practical Theology) (Jakarta: BPK, 1969), with a large chapter on Christian missions, and the Dutch missionary Arie de Kuiper, who wrote *Missiologia: Ilmu pekabaran Indjil* (Missiology: The Science of Preaching the Gospel) (Jakarta: BPK, 1968). Their thoroughly grounded studies helped me to express my own thoughts in Indonesian.

In the same period, Asian theology outside the setting of Indonesia began to attract my attention. A seminar for Asian and Western teachers of Christian ethics in the theological colleges of Southeast Asia, held at Singapore and organized and chaired by the Japanese theologian Kosuke Koyama, at that time dean of the South East Asia Graduate School of Theology, brought me in touch with Asians other than Indonesians. I began to read and grasp Koyama’s *Waterbuffalo Theology: A Thailand Theological Notebook* (Singapore: SPCK, 1970). And I also decided to study Asian theology in general, with the help of surveys such as Douglas J. Elwood, *What Asian Christians Are Thinking: A Theological Source Book* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1978). Over time, my own lectures in dogmatics and ethics in Indonesian colleges became more Asian and less Western. Even famous Western theological handbooks became somewhat irrelevant in my teaching because they did not deal very deeply with many of the acute problems that the Indonesian churches and my Indonesian students were facing.

**At Utrecht University**

After my appointment as lecturer (1982) and professor (1986) at Utrecht University, I carefully studied two monographs written by famous predecessors: François E. Daubanton, *Prolegomena van Protestantsche zendingswetenschap* (Prolegomena of Protestant Mission Science) (Utrecht: Kemink, 1911), which is a historical survey and analysis of nineteenth-century mission studies; and Johannes C. Hoekendijk, *Kerk en volk in de Duitse zendingswetenschap* (Church and People in German Mission Science) (Amsterdam: Kampert & Helm, 1948), which is a historical description and analysis of German concepts regarding the link between church/mission and ethnicity (German: *Volk*).

Both classic studies, never translated into English, inspired me to draft my missiological encyclopedia in two volumes. This time-consuming endeavor brought me in touch with thousands
of mission studies published between 1800 and 2000 in various Western languages and generally available in the excellent libraries of Utrecht University, the Hendrik Kraemer Institute at Oegstgeest, Yale Divinity School in New Haven, and the Missionary Research Library in New York. Five studies especially attracted my attention and influenced my missiological thinking (apart from numerous bibliographies, encyclopedias, and dictionaries). In the order of their publication:

- a fine normative work by the German Gustav Warneck, the founding father of missiology as an academic discipline: Evangelische Missionslehre: Ein missionstheoretischer Versuch (Protestant Mission Theory: A Mission-Theoretical Endeavor), 5 vols. (Gotha: Perthes, 1892–1903), which has not been translated into English;
- the best missiology ever written by a Roman Catholic scholar, the Belgian André V. Seumois, O.M.I., Introduction à la missiologie (Introduction to Missiology) (Schöneck-Beckenried: Administration der Neuen Zeit­schrift für Missionswissenschaft, 1952), never translated into English;
- a broad study of teaching world mission and evangelism in Western Protestant theological institutions by the Norwegian Olav Myklebust, The Study of Missions in Theological Education, 2 vols. (Oslo: Egede Institutet, 1955–57); and

Some of these five books are rooted more implicitly than explicitly in Christian spirituality. Other books, however, are entirely devoted to missionary spirituality and prayer. In this field Roman Catholics have often written more impressive works than Protestants: for instance, Pierre Charles, S.J., La prière missionnaire (The Missionary Prayer) (Paris: Casterman, 1935), and Michael C. Reilly, Spirituality for Mission (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1978). When I was stressed or facing problems, I did not take one of these studies but like to read a chapter in the classic work of the Norwegian Ole Hallesby, Prayer (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1931), where I find comfort. During a very difficult period in my life when I was dealing with depression, however, I found myself unable to read books or articles. I only could repeat the rhymed psalms that I had memorized as a youngster and hymns such as “Safe in the Arms of Jesus” (Fanny Crosby and W. Howard Doane, 1868), which functioned as mantras and helped me go forward. Thanks to God Almighty and Jesus Christ the Shepherd, I recovered 100 percent from depression and started to read and study again.

A Broader Focus

After this severe experience my academic interest switched from missiology as an academic discipline to the perception and reception of Jesus as the Messiah/Christ over the centuries, both within and outside of Christianity. I began work on my voluminous Jesus Christ in World History (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2009; reprint: Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 2011), with the assistance of Robert Coote. It never could have been written without the help of earlier studies by other scholars on the perception of Jesus Christ in Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, Marxism, Western philosophy, the arts, and so forth. In this regard it is good to mention the following three books as paving my way: M. M. Thomas, The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance (London: SCM Press, 1969); Olaf H. Schumann, Jesus the Messiah in Muslim Thought (Delhi: ISPCK/HMI, 2002); and Roland H. Bainton, Behold the Christ (New York: Harper & Row, 1974). Moreover, such a comprehensive study never could have been realized without carefully studying leading historians such as Arnold J. Toynbee, A Study of History, abridged by David C. Somervell (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1951), and leading philosophers such as Karl Jaspers, The Origin and Goal of History (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1959). I have wrestled not only with Jaspers’s concept of “axis” and “axial period” but also with the linear understanding of time and history, rooted in the Hebrew Bible, over against the cycle or wheel. The Romanian scholar Mircea Eliade (The Myth of the Eternal Return [New York: Pantheon Books, 1954]) and Keiji Nishitani (Religion and Nothingness [Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1982]), a representative of the Buddhist Kyoto school in Japan, proved to be excellent guides for understanding the pre-Christian cyclical view of time and history, which is still strong today in Asia and other parts of the non-Western world and sometimes also exercises considerable influence in church life. Two outstanding theologians were of great value for my rethinking and profiling the lordship of Jesus Christ in world history and subsequently the finality of the Christian mission: Hendrik Berkhof, Christ the Meaning of History (London: SCM Press, 1966), and J. E. Lesslie Newbigin, “The Gathering Up of History in Christ,” in The Missionary Church in East and West, ed. Charles C. West and David M. Paton (London: SCM Press, 1959).

I think that, from my youth, I learned more from oral tradition than from books. Oral communication not only precedes written communication (in childhood) but also succeeds it (communication with dying people is usually oral). About conversion and church planting I may have learned more from stories in Asia and Africa than I did from Western publications. Nevertheless, missionary and missiological books are needed, not only popular books that sell well, but also—and perhaps most important—profoundly academic mission studies. In my limited free hours I like to read missionary biographies and autobiographies, but as a scholar I systematically pursue in-depth studies on the nature of the worldwide Christian missionary involvement and the art of communicating the Gospel with neighbors of other faiths. I have been much encouraged to notice that classic studies such as Kraemer’s Christian Message (reprint: Bangalore: Center for Contemporary Christianity, 2009) and Newbigin’s article mentioned above are nowadays accompanied by excellent non-Western missionary and missiological studies. I especially like in-depth studies by first-generation Christians such as Lamin Sanneh, Translating the Message (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1989).

Finally, I learned a lot from the forty-one dissertations that I supervised at Utrecht University in the past two decades. As a scholar, I was often impressed by the way of thinking of my non-Western Ph.D. candidates, coming from a context different from my own. As a believer, I listened with humble appreciation to the life stories of the two Asian Ph.D. candidates who in their home countries also became “new” Christians.
On the Front Lines with the China Inland Mission: A Review Essay

Daniel W. Crofts

Conventional wisdom suggests that Western missionaries in China changed course by the 1920s and 1930s. Instead of itinerant preaching in pursuit of individual conversions—stock-in-trade for the hardy pioneers who reached China in the latter decades of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth century—the more culturally flexible team players of the post–World War I era jetisoned evangelism and instead emphasized good works. They organized medical dispensaries, hospitals, schools, and universities, and they worked to establish YMCA chapters and agricultural cooperatives.1

Hazel Todd (1893–1941) and Arnolis Hayman (1890–1971) of the China Inland Mission (CIM), the principals in two recently published books, offer striking exceptions to the conventional wisdom. For Todd and Hayman, as for the organization that brought them to China, evangelistic outreach remained the sine qua non. Their lives involved abundant good works, but as the means toward an end. Working among “the poorest of the poor” at a time of political upheaval and desperate hardship, they were sustained by a deep and unquestioning faith.2 Their working among “the poorest of the poor” at a time of political upheaval and desperate hardship, they observed. Denominational missionaries who worked in “large enough places to have hospitals and schools” left “most of the hard places to reach untouched.” They worked among “up and outs,” Todd wrote, “and we among down and outs. We also can generally get closer to the people just because we do live in closer touch with them.”3

In order to get close to the people, CIM missionaries needed to speak the language. The first order of business for newly arrived CIM recruits was a crash course in what would now be dubbed Chinese immersion. The women went to a special CIM school in Yangzhou; the men to a comparable facility in Anqing. After months of intensive study, young apprentices were directed to a locale where they could improve their language skills and begin evangelistic work under the supervision of experienced older missionaries. Over time those greenhorns who had the right mix of skills and tenacity learned to stand on their own feet. Hayman, who first reached China in 1913, learned both Chinese and the language of the Black Miao, aboriginal peoples who clustered in eastern Guizhou, where he headed several mission stations. Todd, who first arrived in 1920, found herself able to communicate effectively in Hunan by 1922. When relocated to Anhui in the late 1920s, she gained comparable facility with a quite different dialect. Marauding Chinese soldiers during the troubled 1930s were startled—“that foreigner talks Chinese.”4

Hudson Taylor’s Mission

The China Inland Mission was the brainchild of British evangelist J. Hudson Taylor. It was a “faith mission”—meaning that it was entirely dependent on voluntary support. It abjured denominational backing or overt fund-raising. Its goal was to carry the Christian message to ordinary folk in China’s vast interior. Initially British, the CIM became genuinely international. A significant number of its missionaries originated in the United States, continental Europe, and the Commonwealth (Canada, Australia, and New Zealand).4 Hazel Todd was born in Minnesota and lived in Los Angeles before heading to China; Arnolis Hayman, born to a missionary family then living in Ceylon, grew up in New Zealand.

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The CIM’s outreach to the small-town and rural backwaters of China was largely invisible to outside observers. “Christians in America know nothing about our mission,” Todd tautly observed. Denominational missionaries who worked in “large enough places to have hospitals and schools” left “most of the hard places to reach untouched.” They worked among “up and outs,” Todd wrote, “and we among down and outs. We also can generally get closer to the people just because we do live in closer touch with them.”5

Hazel Todd: CIM Veteran

Todd’s letters, expertly edited by Robert Gardella, were originally sent to her family in California. She remained single and self-reliant. The cause of evangelism gave her life a focus and direction that snuffed out any competing personal agenda. Much of her life was spent on the road, preaching at periodic markets and outstations. She routinely walked long distances and stoically accepted spartan creature comforts. Her attachment to narrow CIM orthodoxies was absolute. Christian “Modernists” who accepted the theory of evolution were attempting “to tear down faith in the Bible.”6 She regarded traditional Chinese religion and a belief in “idols” as superstitious nonsense—an obstacle to be exposed and overcome. An outburst of Chinese nationalism among students in the 1920s was “anti-foreign and anti-Christian.” She keenly resented unfairness and inequality—“so many people lack proper food and clothing while others have such plenty”—without asking why an all-powerful God allowed such conditions to exist in the first place. She could recount how a mob destroyed the mission in Changde, even while serenely insisting that “the Lord has a purpose in all this.”7

Because the CIM emphasized “direct evangelism,” it gave...
lower priority to medicine. Fewer than 2 percent of its missionaries in China were doctors. But early-twentieth-century advances in Western medical technology encouraged missionary amateurs to learn by doing. Quinine could overcome malarial attacks, injections of serum could provide some immunity against deadly typhoid and cholera, and santonine could kill intestinal roundworms, a nearly universal scourge in rural China. Todd was appalled by the medical conditions she encountered—ghastly infant mortality, a lack of sanitation, and virulent diseases that had been controlled in prosperous industrial countries. “A greater knowledge of medicine and how to use it would be worth nearly everything to me,” she exclaimed within months of first being dispatched upriver. Not until a furlough in the late 1920s did she receive any formal medical training. Upon her return to China she discovered that medical work could be “just as productive in spiritual results” as overt evangelization. She was told by her

patients that she could “beat” Chinese doctors—and that she should concentrate on medicine and leave to others the visiting of church members and “working to reach outsiders.” Candidly reporting both her medical triumphs and her shortcomings, Todd personified the CIM’s ambiguity regarding the proper balance between medicine and evangelistic outreach.10

Todd’s writing was direct and forceful, with pithy assessments of people and circumstances. A fellow missionary was “our pocket edition of Scotland.” He had been “fearfully spoiled before coming to China, and his hat still is not big enough for him.” An old woman had “a face long enough to eat butter out of a churn.” Todd knew that a pet might give her welcome companionship, but “in a land where many starve for lack of the plainest food, I beguridge the rice to feed even a cat.” Amid wartime destruction and misery in 1939, she announced that “this paper would catch fire and burn very quickly if an attempt was made to explain or give my opinion of the situation here.” Fascinated by the power of words, she once announced that “books are always more interesting to me than people.”11

But even if Todd had a solitary side, that was not the whole story. When asked to take charge of several young apprentice women in 1930, she summarily scuttled formal CIM nomenclature conventions and started referring to her new companions by their first names. In effect they became a family that worked congenially together. They celebrated each other’s birthdays and exchanged small presents at Christmas. But the arrangement did not last. Ruth and Margaret Elliott were reassigned to different stations. Most traumatically, Eva Knight died suddenly in 1936. “In all my life I have never had a more loyal friend,” Hazel Todd lamented. She reflected wistfully on how she had become “lonesome.” For over a year the only missionary in a county of “half a million people,” she rarely encountered any other foreign or American woman or anyone “with whom I can speak English.”12

Todd admired Chinese Christians. Her letters include frequent words of appreciation—for the young woman who resisted family pressures to accept an arranged marriage, for the pregnant woman with bound feet who walked nine miles to take Communion, and for the three hundred believers who flocked to attend a Christmas celebration at an unheated building in an outlying town. She bemoaned the loss of “one of the finest Chinese Christian workers with whom it has been my privilege to work, who has walked many a mile with me preaching the gospel and shepherding the flock”—killed, alas, by Communists. Todd took a special interest in Paul Hsu, who started to prepare for a career as an evangelist when she sponsored his enrollment at a Bible institute in Changsha.13

But Todd’s letters also reveal much about the disconnect between missionaries and their intended beneficiaries. In all kinds of ways, some trivial and some consequential, the Westerners and the Chinese poorly understood each other. Todd noted that paring knives were unknown in China—therefore Chinese cooks left “the peeling” on vegetables such as carrots and cucumbers. But cleavers were another story—“when chipping up anything they do it quicker and better than we do.” Todd was annoyed when local women showed greater interest in seeing the inside of the home where the mission women lived than in listening to the sermon. Subtle matters of language usage deterred easy communication. “The Chinese after all are so different from what we are, and it is easy to say the wrong thing or say it in the wrong way,” Todd reported in 1925. Weeks before her untimely death in 1941, the same thought persisted—“many of the Chinese ways of thinking and talking remain strange to us.”14

Like any organization of its era, the CIM was led by men. But its ideology demanded that all Christians had a paramount obligation to spread the Gospel. Christian women therefore had a responsibility to reach out to Chinese women. Over time, CIM women came to outnumber men, a pattern apparent in other missionary organizations. And even if women were supposed to be subordinate to men, those with leadership potential increasingly found ways to exercise their talents. Hazel Todd was a striking case in point. “Women need some way of expressing themselves,” she once wrote. “In the past having large families was enough,” but she sought “something more.” Her letters reflect a growing confidence in her own capabilities. Ultimately she achieved greater seniority than any other CIM missionary in Anhui. Defying gender-based constraints, she and her fellow women ran a “prize station”—one of “the best in the mission.”15

Arnolis Hayman: With the Communists

Arnolis Hayman’s book is a heretofore unpublished memoir of the author’s harrowing fourteen months as a captive of the Communists between October 1934 and November 1935. Anne-Marie Brady, a New Zealand Sinologist, wanted to know more about the experience of a fellow New Zealander. She tracked down Hayman’s sons in Australia and now has edited the document they shared with her. Composed soon after Hayman’s release, his memoir provides a rare window onto the Long March, one of the legendary episodes of Chinese history.16

Brady sees Hayman as “a courageous and extremely modest man, with a deep commitment to China and the Chinese people.” He and a CIM companion, Alfred Bosshardt, had the misfortune to fall into the hands of the Second and Sixth Red Armies, headed respectively by He Long and Xiao Ke—just at the time when Chiang Kai-shek’s Guomindang forces were attacking Communist enclaves in upland South China. Hayman’s and

Todd was annoyed when local women showed greater interest in seeing the inside of the home where the mission women lived than in the sermon.
Bosshardt's captivity, in a rugged region of northwestern Hunan, occurred at a time when the main columns of the Long March under Mao Zedong were careening west and north, ultimately to find sanctuary in faraway Shaanxi.17

Hayman's memoir recounts a harsh mix of banality and terror. The forty-four-year-old Hayman and the thirty-eight-year-old Bosshardt were closely confined, especially after an abortive escape attempt. For weeks they might remain imprisoned in a darkened room, doing their best to maintain each other's spirits. Then suddenly they would be roused to march, as the Communists moved from hamlet to hamlet. The prisoners never had enough to eat. By the end of his captivity, Hayman could no longer walk and weighed barely one hundred pounds. His companion, Bosshardt, "had never seen a famine patient look so thin as I appeared." Food brought for them by intermediaries who were attempting to secure their release was confiscated before it ever reached them. But kindly guards sometimes enabled them to purchase an occasional duck egg.18

The grimmest aspect of Hayman's memoir is his repeated mention of Communist captives being summarily executed. It was a "common occurrence." The victims included those whose families could not meet ransom demands, Guomindang soldiers, especially officers, and infirm or elderly persons whose presence would slow Communist movements. Farmers whose circumstances were better than the average were denounced as "local tyrants" and especially endangered. Hayman was sickened by the stench of beheaded corpses and anguished by the "heart-rending screams" of prisoners, including women and girls, who were tortured to reveal where money might be hidden. His "true picture of Communism as we saw it" involved a night guard who would hold his "long knife-like sword in a threatening posture" and "try to provoke us."19

Hayman, like Todd, gained support from the CIM's characteristic Christian fatalism. Everything that happened was part of God's plan—the path of history reflected providential design. Hayman's role was to witness, as best he could, not to complain. Yet he had never before encountered such a fiercely uncomprehending audience. His captors were entirely dismissive of Christian teaching. Instead, Communist ideology "became almost a religion to them," and they earnestly tried to propagate their faith. In Communist eyes, Hayman and Bosshardt were their deadly enemies—advance agents for the "imperialists" who wanted to "partition and enslave China." They "colluded with despotic gentry and landlords" to "mislead and tame the local people," and they also "secretly conducted military scouting." Hayman's familiarity with "the backward culture of the Miao" showed that he intended to weaken and divide the Chinese state.20

Hayman and Bosshardt initially gained solace from their copies of the New Testament and a devotional textbook, Daily Light on the Daily Path, which offered "precious" biblical "morsels" that often seemed strikingly apropos to the two captives. Brady, who edited Hayman's memoir, discovered that his references to passages in Daily Light enabled her to fix the dates of their movements. But after they attempted to escape, their reading materials were confiscated and "put to the basest use possible."21

Hayman, like Todd, had learned that medical outreach complemented evangelism. Following the example of other missionaries, he opened a "dispensary" and found that "the number of patients who came to me for care was always on the increase." The more informed of his Communist captors shared his appreciation of Western medicine. Their ransom demands included not just anti-aircraft guns and "wireless apparatus," which they did not get, but also medicines, which they did. As Hayman's and Bosshardt's health deteriorated, sympathetic guards brought in a Chinese doctor to treat them with a traditional potion. "If bitterness was a standard of quality," Hayman dryly observed, "we should certainly have been healed." The subsequent ministrations of an acupuncturist also failed to aid the severely malnourished Hayman, but the experience did leave him with "more respect for the bravery of many patients who constantly submitted to such treatment!"22

Compared to the two-plus decades of Todd's letters, the Hayman memoir is less varied and more formulaic. Todd's letters extend from her apprenticeship as a young adult through to her emergence as an accomplished CIM veteran. She calls attention to the turmoil and tragedy of China during the 1920s and 1930s—as warlords, Communists, the Guomindang, and the Japanese violently struggled for power, while the conditions of life for ordinary people deteriorated from bad to worse. Hayman's memoir focuses on his harsh experiences during a single year, when he feared for his life and could not pursue his calling. He was held in a few remote towns and often so secluded that he could not observe what was going on around him. His writing is more unadorned, though he dashed off a few bright sentences—"Hygiene was often preached to us by the Communists but they gave us little opportunity for putting it into practice."23

But the retrospective significance of the Hayman memoir is substantial. His captors ultimately became the rulers of China—or, more accurately, part of the like-minded nucleus that elevated the ruler of post-1949 China. Only three foreigners participated in the Long March. Otto Braun, agent for the Soviet Union's Comintern, did not speak Chinese. That left the two missionaries. Bosshardt

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Hayman, like Todd, gained support from the CIM’s characteristic Christian fatalism: everything that happened was part of God’s plan.

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how successfully the Communists recruited “poor farm tenants” who were mired in debt and often did not have enough to eat. He also reported that Communists scrupulously paid for everything they got from the poor. He and Bosshardt admired the speaking power of one young Communist promoter, “the Lecturer”—they “longed to see him born again and coveted his zealouslyness for the preaching of the Gospel.” On balance, Hayman’s and Bosshardt’s accounts of their shared captivity are largely complementary. But Brady correctly observes that Hayman’s narrative offers more specific detail, that it is more introspective, and that it better captures “the boredom and monotony of a hostage’s life.”

Readers of Hazel Todd’s letters watch her grow over time, only to see her life snuffed out. A typhoid-induced heart attack suddenly felled her in November 1941. She was not yet fifty years old. Arnolis Hayman’s memoir recounts the dramatic high point of his life, protracted for an excruciating fourteen months that left him near death. Once liberated, he revived and resumed his work for the CIM. But yet another ordeal awaited him. He and his wife were interned by the Japanese from 1942 to 1945. Hayman thereafter moved to Australia, became an Anglican minister, and stayed active until 1971, when he died at the age of eighty-one.

Todd and Hayman, seen together, offer many insights about CIM evangelicalism. They labored almost a century ago in the obscurity of “the traditional villages and market towns of China’s vast underdeveloped countryside.” Their counterparts today, as Robert Gardella reminds us, work in places that the outside world neither knows nor cares about. On a recent visit to a remote outpost in South Sudan, New York Times columnist Nicholas D. Kristof pronounced himself awed by the “selfless” commitment of Catholic priests and sisters, who give their lives to “serving the world’s neediest.”

Notes


10. Ibid., pp. xv–xvii, 19, 21, 42, 44, 71, 75–80, 94–95, 98, 146, 200, 202–5, 211.

11. Ibid., pp. 70, 79, 101, 147, 173.


17. Ibid., p. ix. Hayman was released in November 1935, just before the Second and Sixth Red Armies headed west to join forces with Mao in Shaanxi; Bosshardt remained in captivity until April 1936, by which time the trailing columns of the Long March had reached Yunnan, north of Kunming.

18. Ibid., pp. 61, 84–92, 119, 131, 141, 148.


22. Ibid., pp. 60, 74, 111, 131, 136–37, 138.

23. Ibid., p. 128.


Book Reviews

Catholic Engagement with World Religions: A Comprehensive Study.


The trend in writing books on the Christian theology of religions is to move them as far away as possible from sectarian divisions within Christianity, let alone the dogmatic positions taken by sectarian theologies. The editors and authors of this book, however, move as far as possible in the opposite direction. Theirs is a book written from the point of view of Roman Catholicism and the church’s magisterial teaching on the basic doctrines of the church. Any theology of religions, they aver, not only must take into account that tradition but also must grow out of it and must remain within the boundaries it describes.

One will look in vain in this book for substantive references to religious studies—to the psychologies, anthropologies, sociologies, and philosophies of religion. A theology of religions must look to Scripture, the teachings of the church fathers, and Roman Catholic theologians down through the ages, with the official pronouncements of the church councils and the popes forming the boundaries of where this developing sector of dogmatics may go. This is old-school theology dealing with the newest, and perhaps most crucial, of global religious crises.

The question posed by the book might be stated this way: How has Roman Catholicism as represented by magisterial teaching engaged the world’s religions theologically and practically, and what is the status/future of that engagement for us today? The book is divided into four parts: history, dogmatics, theology of religions, and engagement. Twenty-five authors write scholarly, mostly brilliant summaries of the historical period, doctrine, theological loci, or practical engagement assigned to them.

The historical section is perhaps the most interesting portion. Its six differently authored chapters fit together quite well, and its opening chapter on the development of the concept of religion within the church, by Peter Henrici, provides one of the most useful interpretive principles for understanding that history. As the term “religion” moved from a reference word for the official Christian church only to a term that acknowledged other religions did exist (but were still not worthy of theological consideration), to religion as a generic category that might just warrant theological commentary, to the de facto religious pluralism of today, one can see correspondingly sophisticated theological positions taken by church theological voices. A consistent theological terminology develops around issues that become more complex as the notion of religion grows. Præparatio evangelica, ecclesiarum Abel, pedagogia divina, and semina Verbi are Latin hooks on which one can still hang most of the church’s official pronouncements, past and present, regarding the other religions.

A second interpretive principle emerges from one of the most intriguing insights this historical sweep produces—it concerns the halting attempts even today for the church actually to produce a constructive theology regarding the non-Christian religions. One would think that a theological system that wholeheartedly endorses the idea of theology as a cumulative, developing endeavor would have no trouble with this. But the story seems to show that the theologia constructiva was constantly confused with and/or inhibited by a theologia defensiva, a battle against indifferentists such as deists and other cultured despisers of religion. For example, would the church’s eventual censure of (and then centuries later endorsement of) Matteo Ricci’s “constructive theological attempts at inculturation in China” have been as strongly negative if it had not been fighting indifferentists such as deists and materialists back in Europe? And are today’s constructivist Catholic theologians painted with the same broad brush as the indifferentists of today—the relativists and secularists and atheists? And if they are, is this confusion inhibiting the development of a desperately needed Roman Catholic theology of religions?

Part 2 is a theological framework the editors/authors provide to show the boundaries within which a Roman Catholic theologian of today must work: “We write as Catholics guided by our Church’s authoritative teaching” (p. 151). These eight chapters would be a useful stand-alone summary of the church’s theology on the eight topics chosen: God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, revelation, humanity, church, mission, and faith. The framework provides more than a theological boundary, however. It also stresses the point that knowledge of one’s own faith identity is essential as a foundation for dialogue with other religions. The first step in any interreligious dialogue is for each participant to know and state clearly “the place from which one listens and speaks” (p. 179).

With sixty-two pages, Part 3, the theology of religions section and also the theme of the book, is less than half as long as any of the other three sections. And of the four chapters in this section, three are mostly critical analyses of pluralist approaches to the theology of religions. Is this also evidence of an overreliance on defensive theology?

But let us focus on Karl Becker’s chapter in Part 3, “Theology of the Christian Economy of Salvation.” Becker here observes that there are unanswered questions surrounding the relationship of Roman Catholicism with other religions that need to be addressed. Primarily they swirl around the issue of timing: Why did God send his Son so late in historical time? Why has Christianity grown so slowly? Why are the other religions thriving today? These indeed are some of the questions the magisterium needs to address with a constructive theology in mind.

The last section of the book—“Particular Religions in Their Own Right and in Relation to Catholic Faith”—consists of chapters on interreligious dialogue in general and then specific chapters.
on Judaism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. These chapters expertly summarize the teachings of the religion and then compare the religion’s teachings with those of Christianity. The chapters are fair, even generous, to the non-Christian religions, and because of its history-of-religions approach, this section would make this book a good candidate for being the main text in a world religions course taught in a Catholic theological school.

I like this book a lot. I like the implicit lesson it teaches that all theologies of religions must be rooted in a religious tradition of some sort. None of us can float above the fray and claim some sort of ethereal theological objectivity. I like the idea that theology, especially constructive theology, is a slow business. When measured against eternity, what is a decade or two taken to discuss an issue seriously? And, Protestant as I am, I like the idea of the cumulative nature of theology—the idea that our histories, and all of our histories together, are there to be mined for insights and to be built on with respect. We must not lose the wisdom of our fathers and mothers.

But having said that, I find myself a bit impatient, and I wonder if Roman Catholic theologians, the ones who wrote these essays, could not speed up the constructive theological enterprise just a little. The clash of religions is at a crisis point, and we need all the theological wisdom we can get!

Perhaps the best way to summarize this excellent book is to say that if what you are looking for is the best Roman Catholic thinking on what it means to be Roman Catholic in today’s religiously plural world, then this is the book for you. But if you are looking for theologically faithful ideas on how Roman Catholic Christians can better think about, relate with, and witness to people of other religions, you will be disappointed. The book describes the theological framework within which Roman Catholics live, but it prescribes very little beyond offering endless cautions about the importance of staying within that framework. I am afraid that we need more than good description in this age of religious crisis.

—Terry C. Muck


By Archbishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos).


As archbishop of Albania since 1992, Anastasios Yannoulatos is widely credited with facilitating the revival and reconstruction of the Orthodox Church there in the midst of extremely difficult circumstances. This came following his years of missionary service in Africa and his scholarly activity as the premier Orthodox missiologist in the ecumenical movement, where he is one of the presidents of the World Council of Churches and honorary president of the World Conference of Religions for Peace. During his distinguished career he has published more than 230 essays and articles (in several languages) and is a contributing editor of the International Bulletin of Mission and Research.

The essays in this volume are selected from those that first appeared between 1964 and 2003. They cover the...
full spectrum of missiological concerns, with special emphasis on the theology of mission and biblical authority according to classic Christian teaching. This important contribution of the Orthodox churches in the ecumenical movement has resisted any drift into theological relativism.

The Orthodox understanding of mission is not well understood or appreciated by many Protestants, with its particular attention to aspects such as spirituality, resurrection, liturgy, ecclesiology, and eschatology. All of these issues, and many others, are helpfully addressed here. This compendium is thus an authoritative reference from a trusted source that fills a gap in missiological literature.

As Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople says in his introduction to the volume: “We congratulate you for this present most valuable work, [and] we pray fervently that the Triune God . . . may bless [you] again and again with His mystical graces in the power of the Holy Spirit, and with unshakable health to continue” (p. xiv).

—Gerald H. Anderson

Gerald H. Anderson, a senior contributing editor, is Director Emeritus of the Overseas Ministries Study Center, New Haven, Connecticut.

Asian American Christianity: Reader.


Asian American Christianity is a timely and much-needed book that makes a significant contribution to the growing study of Asian-American Christianity, providing broader and more diverse perspectives than are available in most other sources on the topic. For example, it includes a number of articles about South and Southeast Asian-American Christianity, making a conscious effort to represent more than just those whose ancestors are of East Asian origin. Just as historical and contemporary American Christian life cannot be understood without studying religious experiences of the various ethnic Americans—African-Americans, Latin Americans, Native Americans, and others—so the growing presence and influence of Asian-American Christians and churches require more careful study of their history, experience, and theology.

As Timothy Tseng rightly points out, “There is no sustained university-based program that focuses on the study of Asian American Religion,” and this book helps to “fill a vacuum in the study of religion in the United States” (p. 15).

At the same time, this volume reveals that it is not an easy task to present a coherent portrayal of Asian-American Christianity, for at least two reasons. First, the history of Asian-Americans is shorter than that of other ethnic minority groups in America. Although there is certainly the history of early Filipino, Chinese, and Japanese immigrants that goes back mainly to the nineteenth century, it still cannot be compared to the longer African and Latin American history, which traces back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Besides, as a number of contributors in this volume repeatedly emphasize, “Asian American Christianity today is predominantly comprised of post-1965 immigrants and their children,” particularly Koreans, who are largely a Christianized group (p. 16).

The second difficulty is the great ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and historical
diversity that exists among Asians in the United States, as reflected in the variety of essay topics presented in this volume. Many Asian-American communities are still struggling with a deep tension between the first-generation immigrants and American-born generations, which is the topic of many essays in parts 2 and 3 of the book.


To present an organized picture of Asian-American Christianity and to give the topic coherence is a challenging undertaking. This Reader, with its indispensable collection of sources and perspectives, makes a significant contribution by tracing the group’s identity and theology. Although its effort to represent diverse Asian-American Christian groups in one volume sometimes makes for difficult reading, it is an important sourcebook.

—Katherine H. Lee Ahn

Katherine H. Lee Ahn is Adjunct Assistant Professor of Church History at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, and the founder of the Center for Women in Ministry and Mission.

Light a Candle: Encounters and Friendship with China. Festschrift in Honour of Angelo S. Lazzarotto, P.I.M.E.


This Festschrift compiled by missionary Angelo Lazzarotto’s friends and colleagues presents a fitting tribute to a longtime friend of China and founder of the Holy Spirit Study Centre in Hong Kong. Unusually, perhaps, for a Festschrift, it is also an excellent collection of essays, here divided into five parts: traditional China, archival materials on the history of Chinese Christianity, Sino-Vatican relations and the history of the modern Catholic Church, and two smaller sections on Maryknoll/P.I.M.E. cooperation and contemporary China. The book developed out of a conference on the interdependence of church history and the historiography of Christianity in China; it brings the links between religious orders and the shape of the Chinese church into focus through personal reflections and analysis.

Since this is a Festschrift, the first section comprises essays honoring Fr. Lazzarotto. There are tender, personal tributes, but in the best tradition of biography, several are also enlightening as to the universal human condition and the value of the life of a mission. The rather masculine language of some essays points to their authors’ vintage—as do anecdotes such as one noting that missionaries were allowed a visit home every twelve years after World War II, and this a concession. The inclusion of biography alongside academic essays reminds that the academic is merely analysis of the human, the composite of individuals: Lazzarotto was a participant in the history of the twentieth-century church. Gerolamo Fazzini’s profile of Lazzarotto captures the title of the volume in its highlighting of the small things, the details of friendships, which constituted Lazzarotto’s missionary strategy and no doubt endeared him to Chinese literati. Mission is never unproblematic, however, and two of the best essays in the volume, some “idiosyncratic reflections” by Paul Rule on being Chinese and Christian, and a rich article by R. G. Tiedemann on the controversy over the formation of an indigenous Roman Catholic clergy in China, show why. In the midst of celebration, a note of profound sadness sounds at the “history of failed experiments in what today we call inculturation” (p. 331), as Rule puts it. Tiedemann’s article documents in painful clarity the woeful failure of the church over centuries to nurture Chinese priests, and especially a Chinese episcopate. The compromise of the missionary—being and relinquishing—is held taut for the reader across the volume.

—Chloë Starr

Chloë Starr is Assistant Professor of Asian Christianity and Theology at Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Connecticut.


This volume by Dyron Daughrity, assistant professor of religion at Pepperdine University, Malibu, California, joins the mushrooming rank of textbooks on what church historians and theologians now speak of as “world Christianity.” In the introductory chapter Daughrity emphasizes the recent changes in Christianity, within itself and in relation to the other three “world religions.” Within itself, Christianity, now claiming one-third of the total world population of just under seven billion, is undergoing dramatic changes. The bulk of its membership is no longer found in the Global West or North but in the Global South—Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania. The other religions that can claim to have a global presence are Islam (20.87 percent), Hinduism (13.41 percent), and Buddhism (5.78 percent), but their reach is far from worldwide. Both Hinduism and Buddhism are confined mostly to Asia, and even Islam is dominant only in the so-called Islamic Crescent. Of these three religions, only Islam is a real competitor of Christianity, which enjoys a decided advantage thanks to its intentional adaptability; this fosters genuine growth and a lasting impact in the places in which it is established. As Daughrity puts it, Christianity “is always changing, geographically, theologically, liturgically, and socially” (p. 17). As a result, we are witnessing “a universal, transcultural, multi-lingual religion” (p. 19).

How can a borderless religion such as world Christianity best be studied? Daughrity has wisely adopted a geographic approach, dividing his exposition of world Christianity into eight areas corresponding broadly to continents (the Middle East, Eastern Europe, Western Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania). Each chapter is preceded by extremely useful maps and statistics, and each one is divided into three sections: geography, history of Christian development, and the current situation of Christianity in the region. Daughrity gives equal treatment to various strands of Christianity, including Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, Orthodoxy, and Pentecostalism. Though he memorializes the achievements as well as the failures of foreign missions, he also highlights the work of native Christians in making the imported Christianities their own.

All in all, The Changing World of Christianity is an encyclopedic treasure trove of information, a real tour de force that can rarely be carried out by a single author. In fewer than 300 pages Daughrity has succeeded brilliantly in his task of providing a “global history of a borderless religion.” Readers will be quickly disabused of any notion that Christianity is a Western religion and at the same time will have a vivid sense that the future of Christianity is bright. Written in a lucid and accessible style, this book will serve as an excellent text for undergraduate and continuing education courses on Christianity as a world religion.

—Peter C. Phan

Peter C. Phan is the inaugural holder of the Ignacio Ellacuria Chair of Catholic Social Thought at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.
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Christians and Pagans: The Conversion of Britain from Alban to Bede.


In Christians and Pagans Malcolm Lambert provides a detailed account of Christianity in Britain from its origins in Roman Britain to its dominant presence in the “Christian Britain” of the eighth century. Lambert is a meticulous scholar. His reading of the early texts is careful and observant, and his mastery of the extensive scholarly literature is evident in the footnotes. Many of the recent advances in understanding early British Christianity come from archaeology, which obviously fascinates Lambert. His leisurely and precise descriptions of finds are fascinating: fifth-century Eucharistic vessels from Water Newton in Huntingdonshire reveal the liturgical sophistication of an early church; two centuries later, in a grave ten miles from Canterbury, a warrior’s belt buckle depicting Woden enables one to appreciate what the Christian evangelists were up against.

Lambert’s account has numerous strengths. One is his treatment of the “lost church” of the first five centuries. Drawing on archaeology, Lambert shows us a church that from the outset grew bottom-up through the initiative of ordinary Christians and that, even after Constantine’s adhesion to Christianity, remained a minority vis-à-vis the pagans. Another strength is Lambert’s affectionate and insightful treatment of major figures. Columba, Cuthbert, Hild, and Bede come alive, also particularly Patrick, “most remarkable of all British Christians” (p. 49). A third strength is Lambert’s appreciation, stated repeatedly throughout the book, that it was hard for Christianity to penetrate elite societies that celebrated gore and were deeply imbued with “the paganism of the battlefield” (p. 178). Lambert tells stories of monks (often the main missionaries) who were committed to nonviolence. But kings, who also played dominant roles in Christianization, could murderously dispose of relatives as well as enemies. Abbot Adomnán of Iona, Lambert notes, attempted to lessen the violence by restricting the slaughter to fighters with his Law of the Innocents.

Lambert’s title led me to expect that he would keep his focus on the impact of paganism and Christianity upon each other. Lambert rightly emphasizes the magnitude of the task of Christianizing the British Isles, which were deeply rooted in polytheism. And he points to Gregory the Great’s famous letter to Abbot Mellitus, which changed papal policy on the means of Christianizing; instead of destroying pagan structures, Mellitus should cleanse them and adapt them to Christian use. But cleansing, Lambert realizes, takes time and involves character and practices, as well as buildings. I wondered whether, as the centuries went by and the Christian literary sources increased in quantity, Lambert was losing his earlier focus on archaeology, thereby understating the syncretism that was widespread in the lives of the people. And I wondered whether he could have done more to detect the syncretism that is present in literary texts. For example, in sermon 8 from Vercelli MS 5, a ninth-century Anglo-Saxon preacher told the story of Christ’s birth with Caesar and his retinue coming to Bethlehem. This adaptation of the story to a society in which kings had long been dominant was a bold bit of inculturation—a term that Lambert does not use. But it makes one wonder to what extent, as Christianity became dominant, paganism lived on.

—Alan Kreider

Alan Kreider is Professor of Church History and Mission (retired), Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana.

Eschatology and Ecology: Experiences of the Korean Church.


In Eschatology and Ecology, Paul Hang-Sik Cho of St. Andrew’s Theological Seminary in Manila, Philippines, grapples with Korean Protestant Christianity’s predominant indifference to ecological concerns. An insightful study, it is the publication of the author’s doctoral thesis, completed in 2004 at the University of Kent at Canterbury.

Cho painstakingly explores the link between Korean churches’ lack of
ecological concerns and their prevalent other-worldly eschatology, which is deeply rooted in dispensational premillennialism, originally introduced by American missionaries. In part 1 he depicts in detail the ecological state of Korea, identifying and analyzing its destructive causes in relation to the country’s rapid economic development. Providing a brief historical background to traditional Korean religions, part 2 focuses on examining the religious, sociopolitical, and economic soil of premodern Korea, which was conducive to the acceptance of the dispensational premillennialist eschatology. Part 3 investigates the historical and theological backdrop of dispensational premillennialism, critically probing the impact of its pessimistic and escapist eschatology upon ecological issues. Cho convincingly argues that this particular brand of millennialism has espoused an eschatology that severely undermines Christians’ sense of environmental responsibility, for it embraces a dualistic worldview and simply awaits a divinely ordained cataclysm.

Eschatology and Ecology is an important work that rightly calls attention to the profound dimension in shaping ecological attitudes in Korean Christianity. However, it does not fully reflect on the complexity of Korean churches’ social involvement, which, at some critical junctures in the history of the nation, defied the typical other-worldly, escapist social ethics of dispensational premillennialism. These churches were a vanguard in the independence movement against Japanese colonization, a prophetic advocate for democracy under the suppressive government, and the soil for the emergence of minjung theology during industrial modernization. Although dispensational premillennialism undeniably shaped its dominant eschatology, Korean Protestantism has manifested a complex and dynamic pattern of social engagement.

—Joon-Sik Park

Joon-Sik Park is the E. Stanley Jones Professor of World Evangelism at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio, Delaware, Ohio.

Scottish Orientalists and India: The Muir Brothers, Religion, Education, and Empire.


By the time John and William Muir arrived in India for careers in the Bengal Civil Service (in 1826–27 and in 1835–37), the sway of the East India Company’s Indian empire already reached across the entire Indian Ocean basin—from Africa and Arabia to China. “Rule of law” within this empire required blending hundreds of local cultures into overarching structures of charters, codes, laws, regulations, and treaties. Since such vast imperial domains could not be administered, much less protected, without enormous inputs of Indian manpower, money, and methodology, the essential stability and strength of this huge empire required loyal service from many hundreds of thousands of soldiers and civil servants from elite communities of India. It was therefore crucial for policies and procedures of governance to reflect a deep respect, sensitivity, and understanding of the manifold moral and religious customs, norms, and traditions held by India’s many peoples. Acquisition and accumulation of such understandings required heavy investments of energy on the part of hundreds of individual scholars, Indians and Europeans alike. Those who strove for such understanding came to be known as “Orientalists”—or, for those studying Sanskritic India, as “Indologists.”

Both Muir brothers, in turn, became magistrates in the North-West Provinces (NWP) of Hindustan, and both became renowned scholars and educators. John, the elder, was a Sanskritist. Except for a stint as principal of Sanskrit College (Benares), his career of a district officer was mainly solitary. After retiring as judge at Fatehpur, he devoted his last thirty years in Edinburgh to Oriental scholarship and educational causes. William, with his mastery of Urdu, Persian, and Arabic, ranged more widely among circles of high-born (asharfi) Muslim scholars. He ascended to ever higher positions—NWP Board of Revenue, Intelligence, India’s foreign secretary, NWP lieutenant-governor, and Secretary of State’s Council of India (London). He became principal and then vice-chancellor of Edinburgh University, retiring two years before his death in 1905. Rich troves of his correspondence, especially with his brother, reflect ever wider horizons of scholarly interest and intellectual power.

Avril Powell’s meticulous and magisterial study shows, in detail, how elements of the Scottish Enlightenment and
Scottish Evangelicalism were blended together within seminal productions of Sanskrit and Islamic history and society. As importantly, she brings out of obscurity scholarly contributions made by hosts of native Indian munshis and pandits (diplomatic agents, interpreters, scholars, tutors, and translators), not to mention many ulama and other varieties of “religious experts” with whom European scholars engaged in constant two-way exchanges of empirical and linguistic data. As with Powell’s earlier *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India* (1993), this study places special emphasis upon Indo-Muslim and “Islamicate” contexts. One Muslim scholarly official stands out, often more clearly than anyone else. Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan (1817–98), renowned leader of Islamic reform and “modernity,” remained a respected friend (dost and aziz) of William, with whom he was no less a strenuous antagonist in debates over issues of religious, historical, and educational significance. The Company’s evangelical officers had to tread much more discreetly on matters of religious concern than did their missionary colleagues, “whose convictions were worn on their sleeves” (p. 15). Official regulations requiring strict “neutrality,” with violation leading to dismissal, left some Europeans feeling that the Raj was, if anything, anti-Christian, if not actually Hindu.

—Robert Eric Frykenberg

Robert Eric Frykenberg is Professor Emeritus of History and South Asian Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy.


This inaugural volume in the Pentecostal Manifestos series is groundbreaking. *Thinking in Tongues* can be summarized not only as skillfully transforming Pentecostal anti-intellectualism into Pentecostal philosophy but also as laying its foundations. Smith begins with a sketch of a Pentecostal worldview by unapologetically articulating the implicit “philosophical intuitions” within Pentecostal spirituality (chap. 2). He then covers new ground by offering a third-order metatheoretical reading of Pentecostal spirituality, with a view to teasing out its latent “prephilosophical commitments” in terms of epistemology (chap. 3) and ontology (chap. 4). Next, he explores the contributions of Pentecostal philosophy within the contemporary philosophical milieu by challenging the reigning paradigms of both philosophy of religion (chap. 5) and philosophy of language (chap. 6).

A critique of *Thinking in Tongues* reveals the ingenious methodological strategy used to explicate a Pentecostal philosophy. While contemporary philosophical apparatus (mostly Continental) is used to interpret Pentecostal spirituality, Pentecostal spirituality itself is transformed into a philosophical critique that interrogates both secular and Christian philosophies. Finally, Smith uses Pentecostal philosophy itself to evaluate Pentecostal beliefs that do not reflect the spirituality they are meant to represent. This intermingling of philosophy and Pentecostalism has produced a philosophically rich text firmly rooted in spirituality.

Smith’s epilogue invites a further view to not only add to or fill in his “caroon” of Pentecostal philosophy but “even revise the image” (p. 151). In response, it is clear that, among other things, Smith’s insightful notion of the politics of tongues-speech could be filled out and developed into a full-fledged political philosophy. Furthermore, his Pentecostal critique of philosophy of religion could be revised as function as a critique of the “philosophy of religion(s),” which would then locate Pentecostal philosophy not merely as a species of Christian philosophy but as a legitimate self-reflective tradition within the wider academy, which presently is left to choose between either the tyranny of Enlightenment universalism or the despair of postmodern nihilism.

This excellent monograph is a must-read not merely for Pentecostals and Christians but for all those who are seeking to defy Stephen Jay Gould’s NOMA and bring about a “healing of the aporias” between religion and secularism within our contemporary world.

—Brainerd Prince

Brainerd Prince, a Ph.D. candidate at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, is working under Gavin Flood on the integral philosophy of Sri Aurobindo.

Dissertation Notices

Cho, Bok Sup.

The IBMR can list only a small sample of recent dissertations. For OMSC’s free online database of nearly 6,200 dissertations in English, compiled in cooperation with Yale Divinity School Library, go to www.internationalbulletin.org/resources.

Gardner, William Lorin.

Harvey, Richard Simon.

Kim, Raymond Beom Seok.
“To Understand the Role of Prayer in Relation to Church Growth, with Special Reference to Sydney Full Gospel Church.” D.Min. Pasadena, Calif.: Fuller Theological Seminary, 2010.

Lee, Sandy Sun-Ja.

Pop, Calin A.

Song, Jong-Rok.
Strengthening the Christian World Mission

Seminars for International Church Leaders, Missionaries, Mission Executives, Pastors, Educators, Students, and Lay Leaders

September 12–16, 2011

How to Develop Mission and Church Archives.
Ms. Martha Lund Smalley, Yale Divinity School Library, New Haven, Connecticut, helps missionaries and church leaders identify, organize, and preserve essential records.

September 19–23

The Internet and Mission: Getting Started.
Mr. Wilson Thomas, Wilson Thomas Systems, Bedford, New Hampshire, and Dr. Dwight P. Baker, Overseas Ministries Study Center, in a hands-on workshop show how to get the most out of the World Wide Web for mission research.

September 26–30

Doing Oral History: Helping Christians Tell Their Own Story.
Dr. Jean-Paul Wiest, Jesuit Beijing Center, Beijing, China, and Ms. Michèle Sigg, Dictionary of African Christian Biography, Nairobi, Kenya, share skills and techniques for documenting mission and church history. Cosponsored by St. John’s Episcopal Church (New Haven).

October 10–14

Nurturing and Educating Transcultural Kids.

October 17–21

Culture, Interpersonal Conflict, and Christian Mission.
Dr. Duane H. Elmer, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, helps Christian workers strengthen interpersonal skills and resolve conflicts among colleagues, including host country people. Cosponsored by Baptist Convention of New England, CrossGlobal Link, and Evangelical Covenant Department of World Mission.

October 31–November 4

The Church on Six Continents: Many Strands in One Tapestry—III.
Dr. Andrew F. Walls, honorary professor, University of Edinburgh, and former director of the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World, presents OMSC’s sixth Distinguished Mission Lectureship series—five lectures with discussions. Cosponsored by SIM USA.

November 7–11

Church and Mission in Europe—East and West.
Dr. Peter Kuzmič, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and Evangelical Theological Seminary, Osijek, Croatia, explores the new context and new role for churches and missions in a changed Europe, both East and West. Cosponsored by Christ Presbyterian Church (New Haven) and Franciscan Missionaries of Mary.

November 14–18

The Megashift in Global Christianity: Implications for Christian Mission.
Dr. Wonsuk Ma, Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, Oxford, England, and senior mission scholar in residence at OMSC, draws out the seminal significance of Pentecostal/charismatic missiology for Christian mission. Cosponsored by Park Street Church (Boston, Massachusetts) and Wycliffe Global Alliance.

November 28–December 2

The Gospel of Peace Engaging the Muslim Ummah (Community).
Dr. David W. Shenk, Eastern Mennonite Missions, Salunga, Pennsylvania, explores the church’s calling to bear witness to the Gospel of peace in its engagement with Muslims whether in contexts of militancy or in settings of moderation. Cosponsored by First Presbyterian Church (New Haven) and The Mission Society.

December 5–9

Leadership, Fund-raising, and Donor Development for Missions.
Mr. Rob Martin, First Fruit Institute, Newport Beach, California, outlines steps for building the support base, including foundation funding, for mission. Cosponsored by COMHINA and Latin America Mission.

January 2–6, 2012

Missionaries in the Movies.
Dr. Dwight P. Baker, Overseas Ministries Study Center, draws upon both video clips and full-length feature films to examine the way missionaries have been represented in the movies over the past century.

January 9–13

The Lion’s Roar: The Book of Amos Speaks to Our World.
Dr. M. Daniel Carroll R. (Rodas), Denver Seminary, Littleton, Colorado, explores the relevance for Christian mission and ethics today of the call of Amos to perceive the hand of God in history, to establish justice, and to practice acceptable worship.

January 16–20

Anthropological Insights for Diaspora Missiology.
Dr. Steven J. Ybarrola, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky, applies insights from the anthropological study of migration, urbanization, diasporas, and transnationalism to the relatively recent field of diaspora missiology.

January 23–27

Ethnicity as Gift and Barrier: Human Identity and Christian Mission.
Dr. Tite Tiémoué, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, works from first-hand experience in Africa to identify the “tribal” issues faced by the global church in mission. Cosponsored by Africa Inland Mission and Trinity Baptist Church (New Haven).
Book Notes

Brockman, David R., and Ruben L. F. Habito, eds.


Crews, C. Daniel, and Richard W. Starbuck, eds.

Endres, David J.
American Crusade: Catholic Youth in the World Mission Movement from World War I through Vatican II.

Essamah, Casely B.

Fox, Frampton F., ed.
Violence and Peace: Creating a Culture of Peace in the Contemporary Context of Violence; Papers from the 15th Annual Centre for Mission Studies Consultation, Pune.

Koehler, Paul F.

McGee, Gary B.
Miracles, Missions, and American Pentecostalism.

Nickel, Gordon.
Narratives of Tampering in the Earliest Commentaries on the Qur’ān.

Padilla, C. René.
Mission Between the Times: Essays on the Kingdom. 2nd rev. ed.

Rommen, Edward.
Get Real: On Evangelism in the Late Modern World.

Thelle, Notto R.
Who Can Stop the Wind? Travels in the Borderland Between East and West.

Vethanayagamony, Peter.
It Began in Madras: The Eighteenth-Century Lutheran-Anglican Ecumenical Ventures in Mission and Benjamin Schultze.

Woolnough, Brian, and Wonsuk Ma, eds.
Holistic Mission: God's Plan for God’s People.

In Coming Issues

Interreligious Dialogue:
Conversations that Enable Christian Witness
Terry C. Muck

Can Christianity Authentically Take Root in China? Some Lessons from Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Missions
Andrew F. Walls

The Second Text: Missionary Publishing and John Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress
David N. Dixon

Comity Agreements and Sheep Stealers: The Elusive Search for Christian Unity Among Protestants in China
R. G. Tiedemann

A “New Breed of Missionaries”: Assessing Attitudes Toward Western Missions at the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology
F. Lionel Young III

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