Book Reviews

Reading a Different Story: A Christian Scholar’s Journey from America to Africa.


This is a beautiful book that begins by telling stories of Susan VanZanten’s childhood days in an insular Dutch Calvinist community in the Pacific Northwest and ends by briefly celebrating the stories of the acclaimed Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The narrative between is a memoir of a Christian literature professor’s intellectual and personal development through graduate school and four different Christian colleges in the United States. While not a work of literary criticism, this well-written book nonetheless provides the reader with glimpses of a scholar’s love of literature as it turned from American novelists Faulkner and Melville to African writers Gordimer, Coetzee, Achebe, and others. Readers unfamiliar with these works—American or African—are given just enough of a taste of VanZanten’s appreciation for them to want to investigate them further.

Theological seminaries, Christian colleges, and other educational institutions in the Global North still struggle to reconfigure their curricula to take into account the southward shift of world Christianity. VanZanten’s intellectual autobiography provides a set of signposts for such reconfiguring. As befits a memoir, these signposts are of a personal rather than a prescriptive nature, but they are helpful for academics in North America and elsewhere who find themselves at institutions that, amazingly, still largely teach Christianity as though Africa, Asia, and Latin America were mere footnotes to a Mediterranean and European story.

Graduate students and younger faculty members at North American Christian colleges will find VanZanten’s book especially helpful as a way of reflecting upon their own growth as scholars and teachers. Struggles to overcome the anti-intellectualism and sexism found in the evangelical subculture are recounted in this book, which will surely give solace to Christian students and faculty alike who face similar challenges today at many institutions. One also learns the history of how Christian colleges in North America slowly grew in their curricular appreciation of world Christianity. As a graduate of one of those institutions, I had little knowledge of the curricular struggles going on some twenty years ago when I took a course on African literature. Today, I regularly assign works of fiction by Shusako Endo and Chinua Achebe in my history of world Christianity courses. I have VanZanten and other teachers like her to thank for the gift those works continue to be for myself and my students.

For all its strengths, this book will not resonate as well with scholars less influenced by the culture of American Christian colleges of the past half-century. For such persons this memoir will still be informative, however, even if the mostly Reformed interlocutors with whom VanZanten engages—Jacques Ellul, Arthur Holmes, Abraham Kuyper, Francis Schaeffer, Nicholas Wolterstorff, and others—may seem foreign to them.

As new Christian colleges and universities are established and grow in the Global South, and especially in Africa, I wonder how VanZanten’s book will be received in the future and in places not as far away as they once were thought to be. Curricular changes of a different sort will need to take place there too, and yet another “different story” will need to be told.

—Benjamin L. Hartley

Benjamin L. Hartley is associate professor of Christian mission and director of United Methodist studies at Palmer Theological Seminary, the seminary of Eastern University, in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania.


During the year 2010 several international conferences commemorated the centenary of the epochal 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh. Four of these—in Tokyo, Edinburgh, Cape Town, and Boston—were truly international and largest theological consortia, and the Center for the Study of Global Christianity, at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. This focus highlighted “the inseparability of students, theological education and missions” (xviii). Divided into four parts, 2010Boston treats the world Christian movement, mission in the twenty-first century, student perspectives, and reports and conclusion. The section on student perspectives encompasses such topics as African-Americans in relation to missions in Africa and the rise of faith-based organizations. The final section features a review of the conference from a student perspective and a review of the other Edinburgh 1910 conferences. The book ends by including the worship guide that was used in the conference’s multiple locations.

Todd Johnson presents a helpful review of Edinburgh 1910 in comparison with the status of global Christianity in 2010. Dana Robert examines the critical, positive role students played in global missions in the period 1810-2010. Angelyn Dries sheds light on Catholic missions, and Brian Stanley evaluates the vision, as well as the blindness, of Edinburgh 1910. The book highlights other well-known
academics as well, including Athanasios Papathanasiou, Peter C. Phan, Ruth Padilla DeBorst, Brian McLaren, and Daniel Jeyaraj. But the last word belongs to the students who participated, thereby representing “a critical mass of young people gathered in one place, [enabling] creative intellectual stimulation, spiritual formation for mission, and dynamic and outward looking social contexts.” One can hope that they were inspired to “transform the world in their own generation” (25). As significant as the gathering was, the students left with many questions unanswered, which calls for ongoing conversation.

2010Boston is a helpful addition to the growing literature on mission and world Christianity.

—Casely B. Essamuah

Casely B. Essamuah serves as the global missions pastor, Bay Area Community Church, Annapolis, Maryland. He is coeditor of Communities of Faith in Africa and the African Diaspora (Pickwick Publications, 2013).

Culture Change in Ethiopia: An Evangelical Perspective.


As with a flowing river, change is culture’s only constant. This volume is a primer on culture change, with specific reference to postimperial Ethiopia. The first chapter offers a brief survey of the wrenching changes that have swept, tsunami-like, over Ethiopia’s political, social, and religious landscape in the period extending from Haile Selassie’s attempts at modernization after World War I through the 1974 Marxist revolution and its aftermath.

One challenge confronting the author is the necessity of generalizing complex and variegated contexts. In the case of Ethiopia, with ninety mother tongues and as many distinctive cultural groups, the nationalist fiction of a collective “we” is challenging to maintain beyond the monodimensional surface of its map. A succession of feudal emperors, culminating with Haile Selassie, tried to foster and reinforce a sense of common Ethiopian identity by imposing Amharic as the lingua franca and by creating a formidable military establishment with the assistance of the United States. But this thin veneer could not conceal the deep cultural dissonances and the shallowness of officially authorized memory. The author therefore treads carefully when he speaks of “cultural leadership values” (chap. 3) and “cultural leadership patterns” (chap. 4). He is on surer ground when he reviews the impact of Haile Selassie’s modernization program in chapter 5, and the influence of American and Soviet ideologies on Ethiopia’s modernization and homogenization efforts. In many ways chapters 6, 7, and 8 are the most original and insightful chapters in the book. Here, the author deftly analyzes the dynamic influences and tension-fraught intersection of powerful religious and ideological streams upon Ethiopian peoples and their defining cultures. The book, written in a highly personal style, will probably be most useful for undergraduate students of Ethiopian church history who share the author’s evangelical perspective.

—Jonathan J. Bonk

Jonathan J. Bonk, a senior contributing editor, is executive director emeritus and senior mission consultant, Overseas Ministries Study Center, New Haven, Connecticut.
Health, Healing, and the Church’s Mission: Biblical Perspectives and Moral Priorities.


This book provides a contemporary American Christian perspective that scholars interested in cultural studies of healing and medicine will find useful. Swartley’s work engages several issues of possible interest for non-Christian audiences and those outside of theology and religious studies.

First, Swartley shows that Christian healing has been dynamic and that the Bible’s “voice on healing is not monovocal” (15). He situates Christian healing historically and contemporarily (in the United States) within social and political relations—between Christians and non-Christians, as an issue that divided Christian sects, and in the relationship between citizen groups and states. Second, Swartley shows that many Christians in the United States, a nation equipped with so many medical technologies and pharmaceuticals, are continually reconfirmed in their faith in biblically inspired healing by their encounters with biomedicine. He argues that Christians, in constituting an ethical community, should seek to shape the American health care reform debate through engaging issues such as economic inequality and the importance of service over self-fulfillment in healing.

These insights and questions emerge especially in the later chapters. After an introduction in which Swartley writes candidly about his personal experiences of illness and reliance on Christian prayer and teaching, the book is divided into three parts. The first demonstrates the centrality of healing in Christian thought, showing that the Old and New Testaments, as well as the church as a community, uphold healing as a theological and practical priority. The second part, devoted to exploring health care, historicizes mutual-aid practices of the Anabaptist tradition, global missionary evangelism, and witnessing within the Christian community. The third part offers a considered reflection on economic and moral emphases in current and future American health care reform, a topic that often descends into partisan representations that pit government and citizens against each other in a tense or needy relationship. Swartley cites examples of historical payments to physicians and contemporary ethical challenges faced by medical workers. For example, he does not cite the standard hot-button politicized examples of contraception and abortion provision but instead focuses on personal conflicts such as lying to insurance companies to get coverage for poor patients (231).

Swartley has brought together important themes—such as Christian missionaries’ views of non-Western healing practices and disability in the Bible—in a coherent essay on healing in the mission of the Christian church, but some topics are left unexplored. Chapter 8 on Christian missions mentions the fact that medical missions were an important vehicle for the conversion of non-Christians but does not delve into the topic, considering, for instance, comparisons between Christians’ experiences of illness and healing (such as his own) and the experience of the not-yet-converted inquirer or seeker. He discusses the example of Mennonite women medical practitioners serving in global missions when they were not admitted to practice in the United States, but he does not analyze the impact of such service on either Christian communities at home or in foreign fields (238).

Swartley rightly reminds American readers: “We must convert our thinking about what health care is and why it exists. Let’s not forget history and what it teaches us about the church’s primary role in health care” (195). He has shown that Christians have found inspiration in the example of Jesus and the Scriptures, while acknowledging differences of orientation toward healing within the Christian community. Yet Swartley has also shown Americans that they are not the only ones who have brought healing to others. His account of two Nigerians visiting and praying with his wife in the hospital is memorable; these strangers to the United States did not want her to be alone at a weak moment. Such stories offer both secular and religious readers much to ponder.

Shobana Shankar

Shobana Shankar is assistant professor of history at Stony Brook University, SUNY.

Asia in the Making of Christianity: Conversion, Agency, and Indigeneity, 1600s to the Present.


The story of the conversion of a community or an individual to Christianity draws the attention not only of theologians but also of scholars from wider fields, since it involves a complex array of changes in society as a whole. Asia in the Making of Christianity is a welcome addition to the existing literature on the topic for a number of reasons. First, a wide variety of countries are covered in one volume, which confronts readers with multiple issues and perspectives and allows for comparison and exploration of emerging patterns. Second, the contributors to the volume focus on the perspective of converts themselves—their struggles, inspirations, and perceptions—rather than those of missionaries, while not neglecting wider sociopolitical situations. Third, the volume establishes that, in the Asian context, the changes entailed by Christian conversion have occurred in both directions. Conversion has not been a one-way process, with Christianity being the only agent of transformation. The introduction to the book clearly and convincingly argues the above points, and the contributors, by and large, address the key aims of the project with careful scholarship.

The chapters on China examine the translation of religious terms used to convey key Christian concepts as a process of reconfiguring religious experience rather than as a superficial adoption of Christian understandings from the West. The Indian cases present struggles of higher-caste individual Hindus to relate Christian faith to Hindu religiosity and tradition. They show how conversion involves ambiguity between Christianity as a faith and as a catalyst for modernity. The contributors argue that the transition from indigenous religions to Christianity has been a matter of assimilation as a result of careful consideration, rather than an abrupt departure from the past, and that in the process converts provide creative and pertinent theological insights for Indian churches. Whereas the Japanese case examines the conversion of two Buddhist priests to Christianity in their search for faith, raising the question of
enculturation versus commitment, the chapter on Korea discusses the moral struggle between politics and religion as shown in the life of a Catholic layperson who was a key leader of the independence movement and who assassinated the Japanese resident-general of Korea. Conversion as discussed in the chapters on Burma, Bangladesh, and Thailand raises challenges of the understanding and reinterpretation of both Christianity and the religious traditions in these three societies.

Though some chapters may vary from the thrust of the volume as set out in the Introduction, and though some do not quite fit into the part of the book to which they are assigned, this volume provides rich insight into various theological, philosophical, sociopolitical, and religious perspectives on the Asian interpretation and embrace of Christianity.

—Sebastian Kim

Sebastian Kim is professor of theology and public life at York St. John University, York, U.K.

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Western Christians in Global Mission: What’s the Role of the North American Church?


Now that the church in the Majority World has become a missionary sending force, where do North American churches and their missions efforts fit? Paul Borthwick probes this question in this book aimed at evangelical audiences and focused on local-church involvement in global mission. Throughout the pages of this volume, he shares insights and practical advice gained over decades of interaction with churches in North America and Christian leaders from around the world.

Borthwick opens with a brief overview of our globalized world, with its increasingly young and urbanized population. Next he explores the strengths and concerns of the North American church and contrasts these with those of churches in the Majority World.

Though world conditions have changed, Jesus’ call to compassion remains constant. North American Christians do have a part to play in God’s work unfolding around the world, but they need “to learn to participate from a platform of servanthood rather than power” (104). Instead of providing models, Borthwick offers guiding questions for building relationships based on friendship. North American Christians need to assume a posture of humility in order to grow into what Borthwick calls “purposeful reciprocity” (128), in which they will be able to learn from their brothers and sisters in the Majority World. The form that mission involvement by North American Christians takes will emerge from the relationships that are formed as Majority World churches share their testimonies and their understanding of ministry in their context.

Borthwick acknowledges that issues of control present the biggest challenge in mission partnerships. His work would have been strengthened by conversation with a broader range of Christian traditions—for example, ecumenical Protestants, who have used a partnership model for mission for decades. Also, issues of accountability should not be ignored, if the goal of mission partnerships is for all involved to grow in faithfulness.

—Karla Ann Koll

Karla Ann Koll is professor of history, mission, and religions at the Latin American Biblical University, San José, Costa Rica.
Celebrating a Century of Ecumenism: Exploring the Achievements of International Dialogue.


This book surveys the developments and challenges for ecumenical relations in the last hundred years, with some detailed examination of specific topics. This combination gives it the quality of being a road map for the future, making it thought-provoking for interested readers, including ecumenical scholars.

The early chapters discuss the overall achievements of multilateral dialogue. Here the contributors are refreshingly honest. See, for example, Wesley Ariarajah’s discussion of the achievements and limitations of the World Council of Churches (chap. 2). Such critical honesty clears the way for hope. This tone is clear also in Mary Tanner’s analysis of Faith and Order. The second part charts a series of detailed accounts of bilateral dialogues. While this book is about the merits of dialogue, it also serves as an incentive for action—moving, as Tanner puts it, from “library shelf . . . to being woven into the fabric of our lives and relationships” (20).

Peter Bouteneff observes that to date the fruits of ecumenical work often fail to reach beyond those who have already “signed up” for the project. The achievements of recent ecumenical efforts, however, should not be underestimated. Two observations stem from these achievements: first, there is a sense of new confidence in what engagements of this kind can produce. Second, the book itself has the feel of both looking forward to the possibilities ahead as well as back in celebration of past achievements. In so doing, the chapters encourage readers to engage more deeply with Christians of different traditions. Cecil Robeck (chap. 11) notes that ecumenical dialogue has taught him more about his own Pentecostal faith. John Radano’s book reminds us that in such ecumenical engagements with the other, we discover more about ourselves and actually become better equipped to strive for the unity of the church.

—Catriona Laing

Catriona Laing is associate curate of St. Barnabas, Dulwich, London, and a member of the Inter-Faith Theological Advisory Group for Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.

From Times Square to Timbuktu: The Post-Christian West Meets the Non-Western Church.


The shift of Christianity’s demographic center from the Northern to the Southern Hemisphere has occasioned further diversification of the faith along theological, institutional, and political lines. In From Times Square to Timbuktu, Wesley Granberg-Michaelson speaks from his ecumenical convictions and experience to call the global church to unity. If globalized Christianity is fractured Christianity—Granberg-Michaelson cites estimates that there are currently over 40,000 denominations—and if the North-South divide has become the preeminent boundary marker in world Christianity, then the ecumenical movement needs a new vision and focus. Providing that vision and focus is the purpose of this short book.

Granberg-Michaelson sets the stage for his proposal by surveying the world Christian demographic, denominational, and ecumenical terrain. As the title hints, a special emphasis of the book is on the realities of global migration, though Granberg-Michaelson is actually interested in how migrants bring new forms of Christianity from places like Timbuktu, the statistical center of Christianity in 2010, to Times Square. He is also concerned to identify the various ways world Christianity is divided and to label these divisions as disobedient and sinful.

The bulk of the book is occupied by Granberg-Michaelson’s evaluation of the past, present, and future of the ecumenical movement. While canvassing a variety of global efforts, he gives sustained attention to the World Council of Churches, the Global Christian Forum, and possibilities for local and congregational ecumenism. Writing on the eve of the WCC’s Tenth Assembly, in Busan, Korea, Granberg-Michaelson is at his most concrete when outlining steps for that body to face the new global realities. His advice for congregations—embrace migrants, antiracism, and charismatic worship—is welcome but necessarily more programmatic.

From Times Square to Timbuktu is a valuable interpretive statement of recent trends in world Christianity by a Northern Hemisphere ecumenical leader, and it should be read by anyone interested in how those trends intersect with ecumenical issues. It would also make an excellent introduction to world Christianity for congregational study groups.

Granberg-Michaelson’s vision for the ecumenical movement is to prioritize shared global fellowship, worship, and mission over interminable debates about doctrine and homosexuality. Ecumenical visions that downplay doctrine are hardly new, and it is uncertain that this one can overcome the limitations of past proposals.

It may be necessary to specify the place of doctrinal discussion in global ecumenism, as well as to clarify that not all Christian differences are sinful. Ecclesial diversity, as this book well demonstrates, may also be a sign of the Spirit.

—Jamie Pitts

Jamie Pitts is assistant professor of Anabaptist studies, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana.

The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Billy Graham and John Stott.


With this his latest work, Brian Stanley, professor of world Christianity at the University of Edinburgh, makes a first-rate contribution to IVP Academic’s valuable History of Evangelicalism series. The five volumes of the series address the intellectual and social history of the rise, expansion, dominance, diffusion, and disruption of evangelicalism between 1700 and 2000. Of value as a series, the individual volumes are well able to stand alone. Students interested in modern religious history and evangelical movements in the modern age, as well as those inquiring into the roots of evangelicalism and its reach into world Christianity, will benefit from Stanley’s judicious analysis of evangelicalism’s geographic, cultural, and theo-
logical life during the second half of the twentieth century.

Stanley’s discussion of evangelical Christianity’s strong missionary focus, “one of the most powerful religious forces on the globe” (25), makes the book particularly valuable for students of Christian mission history. Stanley tells this vibrant and complex story effectively, narrating evangelicalism’s revival-punctuated growth from its religious roots in North America and Europe to its fruits in the Majority World, and to its boundaries and questioned identity at the start of the twenty-first century. Especially noteworthy for students of mission history will be accounts of evangelicalism in a global context (chap. 1), mission, evangelism, and revival (chap. 3), the 1974 Lausanne Conference and engagement with the Majority World (chap. 6), and the rise of new charismatic and Pentecostal movements (chap. 7). Stanley concludes with thoughtful observations on what the twenty-first century may hold for evangelicalism.

—Adam Baron

Adam Baron is a postgraduate student of modern religious history at King’s College London, U.K.

Theologies of believers are often closely related to their biographies. This autobiography of Alan Tippett, written as a gift to his wife, Edna, for their fiftieth anniversary, provides a good example. The book offers an account of a voracious reader, researcher, writer, and teacher. Tippett was above all a Methodist minister and missiologist, drawing upon his missionary experience, which motivated him to be constantly searching for a holistic approach to mission in cross-cultural contexts. To address this need, he equipped himself as an anthropologist and ethnohistorian. He dedicated his life to training missionaries, using the tools these broad perspectives offered for understanding the changes that hitherto-colonized nations around the globe were undergoing in moving into the postcolonial situation. His teaching career included a decade as professor of anthropology and Oceania studies at Fuller Theological Seminary’s School of World Mission, in Pasadena, California.

Struggling to establish himself as a Methodist minister in Australia, Tippett arrived in Fiji in 1941 as a foreign missionary. Only thirty years of age, he was immediately appointed as missionary superintendent over 7,000 church adherents in 78 preaching places. Though he could not speak a Fijian language (109), he was expected to supervise 8 ordained Fijians, 48 catechists, 18 village teachers, and 398 local preachers. Colonialism was still strong, and colonized people were accustomed to accepting the leadership of foreign missionaries without questioning. But the experience was an eye-opener for Tippett that presented a challenge to work toward a postcolonial era of mission. He devoted the rest of his
life to pursuing that vision by learning the languages, cultures, and worldviews of the people he served and engaged with in Fiji, the Solomon Islands, Ethiopia, and Papua New Guinea. Tippett summarizes his contribution as follows: “If I have made any worthwhile contribution to missiology for the postcolonial era, . . . I have aimed at bringing anthropology as a science, the Bible as a record of God and humanity in relationship, and Christian mission as its medium for demonstration until the end of the age, together in a missiology adequate for the post-colonial era” (428–29).

When Tippett wrote of the postcolonial era, he was thinking of it in a narrowly political and socioeconomic sense of changes that were expected to come after the end of colonialism. Understandably, since he concluded writing in 1978, the new genre of postcolonial studies that emerged in the last decades of the twentieth century still lay in the future. Edward Said’s Orientalism did not appear until 1978, and postcolonial studies have progressed beyond the transfer of political power and formation for independent nations with the purpose of engaging the legacies of colonialism’s discourses and social structures. Postcolonial studies have made inroads into Christian mission studies and theologies. They challenge Christian communities in the Southern Hemisphere that continue to hold uncritically onto structures and management styles inherited from the historical denominations. In spite of the attempt of Christians to indigenize Christianity, people of other faiths in some regions still see Christianity as a legacy carried over from colonialism embedded in the old matrix of colony-commerce-Christianity.

As a child of his time, Tippett viewed non-Western cultures on the whole as needing to be redeemed by Western Christianity. A self-identified evangelical, he had difficulty with emerging ecumenical mission paradigms such as dialogue and Christian presence, and he was concerned about syncretism. His commitment to Christian mission as he understood it, however, was commendable, and he is an exemplary witness to those who wish to be missionaries. His narrative echoes with the stories of a number of missionaries who left the colony-commerce-Christianity. As a missioner to those who wish to be missionaries. Horner recognizes that there are major obstacles that bypass God’s vision and undercut the opportunities of kingdom expansion. Is the church shaped by culture or by Christ? Are we glorifying God or humanity by being more concerned with temporal life than eternal consequences? Is the church’s reluctance to preach the Gospel an indication of its indifference to unreached people groups?

To address these questions, the author establishes a theological framework of kingdom-focused ministry and offers a historical review of effective mission movements. He rounds off his argument by surveying best practices of mission-minded churches, all of which is meant to inspire leaders to catch the missiological vision, to think and act strategically with staying power, and to fulfill God’s desires to reach the world for Christ. This stirring wake-up call to U.S. congregations may encourage a focus on God’s expanding kingdom.

Also, however, Horner’s approach could foster continuing evangelical particularism in four main areas. First, it views proclamation as God’s only method of saving the nations from the damnation of hell, which ignores social activism as a means of missions, as well as presenting a restricted definition of salvation that is singularly based on the Great Commission and emphasizes geographic delimitations. Second, it assumes that the Western evangelical churches bear the full weight of God’s mandate, which reinforces the Eurocentric view of mission history while ignoring the substantial contribution of the Majority World to global missions.

Third, even though there is hope of a future recovery through God’s empowerment, the interpretation of mission easily slides into having evangelicals doing missions to reach the nations for and not with Christ. Finally, a Christocentric motif runs throughout the project, which does not embrace the Trinitarian missional God of Scripture.

Unfortunately, these subtle evangelical nuances could feed myopic preconceptions that would undermine the purpose of inspiring a global perspective on Christ’s expanding kingdom.

—Robert L. Gallagher

Robert L. Gallagher is associate professor of intercultural studies, and chair and director of M.A. Studies, Department of Intercultural Studies, Wheaton College Graduate School, Wheaton, Illinois.

Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective.


Best known for his work on ethics and especially for his defense of pacifism, John Howard Yoder taught theology of mission from 1964 to 1983 at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, in Elkhart, Indiana. Since Yoder planned to have the lectures transcribed and printed for his students’ use, the course was recorded twice. The transcription and printing, however, did not occur, and the tapes were lost for more than thirty years. The editors of the present volume transcribed tapes from the 1973 course along with the nine lectures that still exist from the 1976 course, thus fulfilling Yoder’s original plan. While Yoder’s insights on mission are valuable, the lectures are dated and reflect the situation when he delivered them, especially the theories of mission prevalent then. One can only wonder how Yoder would have modified them in light of the last forty years.

The great value of the book is Yoder’s thorough defense of and advocacy for the believers church model by which he means a gathered church of committed members. Standing firmly in the Anabaptist tradition, he bemoans the Constantinian shift, which moved primitive Christianity from a voluntary organization to an organ of the state. In Yoder’s reading of Paul’s missionary work, Paul planted churches only in areas where there were existing communities of prepared people, namely, synagogues. Not that he thinks that all members of synagogues converted to becoming Christ
followers, but that those who left the synagogue, along with believing Gentiles, became a new community of faith. This gathered community model is worked out in a consistent manner, though he strains to describe the expansion of the church before the Radical Reformation, since for Yoder the presence of a group of believers in a missionary environment is necessary for the Gospel to advance. He therefore baptizes the monastic movement, albeit reluctantly, as the gathered community from which mission occurred.

This theme of the new community of faith, rather than the activity of an individual missionary, being the missionary presence runs like a red thread throughout the book. When, after 400 pages, he arrives at his method of mission, “migration evangelism,” the reader has been prepared to understand that only a community can effectively carry out the command of Christ to disciple the nations “as you go.” Indeed, the editors include as an afterword a pamphlet with this title that spells out his missionary method. Scattered throughout the book are illustrations that come from his missionary work in Europe after World War II and particularly his time doing relief work in Algeria, then French-controlled.

Yoder makes a strong case for community in mission and the sending of teams rather than solitary missionaries to plant churches. What is lacking, however, is reference to the work of the Holy Spirit in animating these communities of faith, which are witnessing primarily by their presence and lifestyle rather than by a demonstration of spiritual power. Also missing is an acknowledgement that these communities of faith can become ghettos rather than beacons of the Gospel to advance. He therefore baptizes the monastic movement, albeit reluctantly, as the gathered community from which mission occurred.

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—James J. Stamoolis

James J. Stamoolis, a former missionary to South Africa, is the author of monographs and articles on the missionary work of Eastern Orthodox churches.

Missionary Methods: Research, Reflections, and Realities.


This book is a compilation of some of the papers presented at the 2012 annual conference of the Evangelical Missiological Society, commemorating the publication of Roland Allen’s book Missionary Methods: St. Paul’s or Ours? (1912). The authors of the papers agree that the foundation of any missionary methodology must first be biblically and theologically sound; then adding insights gained through missiological studies—anthropology, linguistics, history, and so forth—brings us

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Dr. Atul Y. Aghamkar — Fall 2014

While teaching missiology and urban studies, Dr. Atul Y. Aghamkar continues to do research in the area of Hindu diaspora. He is professor and head of the Department of Missiology at South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies (SAIACS), which offers postgraduate theological and research degrees at its campus in Bangalore, India. Previously, he taught and directed the Department of Missiology at Union Biblical Seminary, Pune, Maharashtra, where he and his wife, Suman, also planted churches with the Christian and Missionary Alliance of India. A Pune native, Dr. Aghamkar is coauthor of Christian Missions in Maharashtra: Retrospect and Prospect (2010).

Ruth Padilla DeBorst — Spring 2015

Ruth Padilla DeBorst has been involved in leadership development and theological education for integral mission in her native Latin America for many years. She serves on the board of the Latin American Theological Fellowship and on the networking team of the International Fellowship for Mission as Transformation. She and her husband, James, serve in the Center for Interdisciplinary Theological Education, in Costa Rica. Ruth also has been associated with Christian Reformed World Missions, the Comunidad Internacional de Estudiantes Evangélicos (IFES), and World Vision International. The DeBorst lives in Costa Rica and are members of the Casa Adobe community.

OVERSEAS MINISTRIES STUDY CENTER

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Gary Corwin’s paper opens the second part of this book with an examination of North American missionary methodology during the last one hundred years, taking a close look at the various ideologies that have influenced missionary work. David Hesslegrove’s paper continues the discussion on praxis, with a brief review of contextualized preaching about the wrath and judgment of God. A look at the rise of orthodoxy in mission practices, by Anthony Casey, brings the reader to consider an often overlooked area, that of reaching peoples whose culture and history are steeped in oral tradition.

The final chapters are case studies: Joel Thiessen’s examination of missionary endeavors in the multi-ethnic reality of Canada today, Robert Bennett’s paper on reaching animistic societies, John Mehn’s paper on training church leaders in Japan, and Mark Williams’s analysis of missionary methods among the Muslims of the Philippines.

These papers, along with Ott’s challenging conclusion, give the reader much food for thought and make a valuable contribution to the study of missionary methodology.

—Penelope R. Hall

Penelope R. Hall, a Canadian, serves as a consultant for theological studies and theological libraries in the Majority World. She served as a missionary/Bible translator in South Viet Nam (1966–75) and in Ecuador (1978–88), with some months spent in Malaysia, Thailand, India, Ethiopia, Central America, and Europe.
Books that begin life as theses do not always shift genres well, but Proclaiming the Peacemaker may be an exception. There is still some evidence of the Ph.D. eggshell, but Rowan makes us nearly forget the origin of this book by his gift for clear and systematic analysis. I could be spared some of the asides affirming the significance and quality of writers he quotes, but others in his intended audience may find these reassuring. The potential for the book’s impact lies not just in its message but in its suitability as a teaching text—and not just in Malaysian contexts.

—John Roxborogh

John Roxborogh is an honorary fellow at the University of Otago Department of Theology and Religion, Dunedin, New Zealand, and formerly lecturer at Malaysia Theological Seminary, Seremban, Malaysia.

Paul through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in First Corinthians.


Most travelers who sail the ocean of studies that harbor at Paul’s Corinth have approached from the West (31). Kenneth Bailey sails from the Mediterranean to explore how Middle Eastern Christians have understood 1 Corinthians (19). He has “three basic concerns”: first, to demonstrate the impact of Hebrew rhetorical style on Paul’s composition (19, 39, and Appendix 1); second, to show that Paul’s use of metaphor creates, not merely illustrates, meaning (19, 30); and third, to use “translations of 1 Corinthians into Syriac, Arabic and Hebrew” to address textual and rhetorically critical questions (19 and Appendix 2). In this review I will sample Bailey’s treatment of Isaiah 28, his handling of Paul’s body metaphor, and his use of Oriental versions of the Bible to discern the meaning of 1 Corinthians.

Bailey draws on the work of James Kugel to categorize several types of parallelism from the “heightened prose” of the prophets. Isaiah 28:14–18 illustrates a combination of these forms. Bailey sees a pattern that he calls “the prophetic rhetorical template” (39–40). A glossary (527–29) provides helpful definitions of terms such as cameo, which refers to “clusters of . . . one or more Hebrew parallelisms” that form the “building blocks” of homilies (527). Bailey applies this template to “Paul’s hymn to the cross” in 1 Corinthians 1:17–2:2 (72). A “seven cameo ring composition” is framed by three groups of additional cameos on either side. At the top, Paul writes that he was sent “to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom” (1:17 ESV). At the bottom, he underscores “I . . . did not come . . . with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (2:1–2). Paul’s references to the Gospel and human eloquence are inverted to highlight his essential message within the frame: “we preach Christ crucified” (1:23a) (72–101).

In 1 Corinthians Paul gives the material reality and metaphor of the body great weight. While Bailey rightly refers to parables in the prophets, the constitutive use of metaphor is not peculiarly Middle Eastern. Indeed, the parable of the body was a common trope of Greco-Roman political rhetoric. Bailey sees clearly that Paul related the physical body of the Christian to the social body of Christ. Both bodies are “for the Lord” (6:13, 15, 19) and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit (6:19; cf. 3:16–17). Physical bodies and their gendered nature are not evil, nor are they

The Overseas Ministries Study Center has served church leaders and missionaries from around the world since 1922. Each year some fifty long-term residents from as many as twenty countries contribute to OMSC’s vibrant community life. Similarly broad is the ecclesiastical spectrum represented in the OMSC community—Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Evangelical, Pentecostal, Anabaptist, Reformed, Lutheran, Independent—all of whom find at OMSC a welcoming and nurturing community.

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unimportant. Indeed, they are eschatologically significant. “Human sexuality . . . is part of the inner core of the whole person called the body, and that body will be raised. [So,] sexual immorality is a forcible separation from Christ and . . . destructive to the body” (185, 195). Bailey sees Paul combating the Cynic-Stoic ideal of self-sufficiency by calling each member of the body to demonstrate “the same care for one another” (12:25). Striking a chord that resounds throughout Bailey’s work, he draws attention to “the strong tendency . . . for each tradition to become self-sufficient and say to the rest of the Christian world, ‘We don’t need you! We have our language, liturgy, history, theology, tradition and culture. All we need, we find within ourselves’” (343).

With Paul through Mediterranean Eyes, Bailey nourishes the joints of Christ’s social body. Perhaps he is a joint, a Western-become-Middle-Eastern Christian. Moreover, he has crossed the isthmus at Corinth to deliver the gems of Syriac, Arabic, and Hebrew texts into the hands of Western sojourners. For example, “the Arabic [of Ibn al-Sari’s translation of 1 Cor. 15:44] reads Yuzra’ jasad nafsani (it is sown a personal body). . . . The Arabic form nafsani has to do with humanness. [The word] ruhani, has to do with the Spirit. . . . A physical person who is ruhani is a Spirit-filled physical person. One or both of these two key words appear in twenty of the Syriac, Arabic and Hebrew versions . . . and in none of them are there any overtones of a ‘disembodied spirit’” (465–66). The material “body of a person,” sown in death, will be raised, filled, and directed by the Holy Spirit. Jesus’ own Spirit-filled physical and social body is the model. Paul swam in the briny cultural waters of Hellenistic Judaism structured by Roman power. Bailey stresses that Paul’s arm and pen stroked in parallel with Israel’s prophets.

—Gregory R. Perry

Gregory R. Perry is associate professor of New Testament and director of the City Ministry Initiative, Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri.

Formation for Life, Just Peacemaking, and Twenty-First-Century Discipleship.


Twenty-two writers contribute to this volume of nineteen essays. Each chapter develops a different theme related to just peacemaking. The essays, with several additions, were contributions at a conference cosponsored by Fuller Theological Seminary’s Just Peacemaking Institute and the Lord’s Day Alliance.

In his fine foreword Richard Mouw sets the tone, viewing the fourth and sixth of the Ten Commandments—Sabbath worship and not killing—as foundational. He suggests that every week as believers gather for worship, they should do well to view their meeting as a renewal of commitment to the Decalogue—that is, as worship centered in the holiness of God with a commitment to justice.

The book is presented in two parts. The first section is energized by accounts of just peacemaking. The second section is a description of the practice of a new paradigm for peacemaking. Stassen introduces that section by presenting ten practices for just peacemaking that are mostly derived from the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7). These ten practices inform the presentations for the second half of the book. Each is grounded in specific teachings of Jesus. Each practice is also a practical commentary on the principles of the WCC-sponsored Decade to Overcome Violence (138).

The practices are understandable and practical: nonviolent action, independent initiatives, conflict resolution, acknowledging responsibility, human rights, sustainable economic justice, international networks, United Nations, reducing weapons, and joining groups. Imagine the foment in a study group viewing such practical commitments through the lens of the Sermon on the Mount!

More attention in the opening pages about the organization of the book would have been helpful; that said, it is a very readable tome. This book is not a “can do” announcement. Rather, it is a humble quest for Christ-centered praxis with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in just peacemaking.

—David W. Shenk

David W. Shenk is a global consultant with Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM). A globalist, author, and teacher, he leads the EMM Christian/Muslim Relations Team, Peacemakers Confessing Christ.

Asian Politics and Ecumenical Vision: Selected Writings of Feliciano V. Cariño.


Asian Politics and Ecumenical Vision is a posthumous collection of writings by Feliciano Cariño, whose overarching concern was to present an authentic, living, Asian theology to make Christianity more relevant to Asian people. Cariño’s theological reflection includes the actualization of Christian faith in the context of the political dictatorship of his own country, the Philippines; challenges arising from the Asian reality of religious plurality and poverty; and the role of Christianity in Asian countries facing globalization.

The editors arranged Cariño’s writings into four groups. The articles in part 1 emphasize the importance of formulating a living theology in Asia that goes beyond Western ready-made theologies so as to be legitimate and relevant to Asian people. In part 2 we see Cariño struggling to articulate the role of the churches in the rapidly changing political, economic, social, and religious geography of Asia. Part 3 displays Cariño’s passion for the building of a better society and for enlightening Asian Christian intellectuals for that task. In part 4, Cariño, sensing the impact of globalization in Asia, asks Asian churches to be more positive as agents in keeping up with global trends and to forge a new future of Asian peoples.

Readers may find the articles in each part to be loosely connected, since they were prepared as lectures in various settings, but the book as a whole clearly shows a development in Cariño’s theological stance and his perceptions of major issues in the Asian theater. His consistent concern, as for many Asian theologians, was to give the Christian Gospel reality as an actual belief held by Asian people in such a way that Christianity would make sense to them.

Cariño’s articles faithfully represent the struggles Asian theologians went through in articulating authentic Asian theology from the 1960s up to the early 2000s. During this period many Asian theologians attempted to de-Westernize theology in Asia. Cariño contributed significantly to this discourse, and we can feel his struggles on each page. One aspect of his thought that I would cautiously point out is that Cariño’s emphasis on praxis may be misperceived to be ideological and partisan rather than a genuine Christian effort for social and political improvement. But that would be to misread him. Unfortunately, in most Asian countries praxis-oriented church movements have
often faced resistance from the typically conservative religious consciousness of Asians.

This book well captures Cariño’s authentic Asian struggle to bring the Gospel to Asian people. Readers will benefit from the insights of an Asian theologian-practitioner who sought to be faithful both to Christian truth and to Asian reality.

—Moonjang Lee

Moonjang Lee is senior pastor of Doorae Church, Seoul, South Korea. Previously he taught at Trinity Theological College, Singapore; University of Edinburgh, Scotland; and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Massachusetts.

The Rebirth of Latin American Christianity.


Latin American Christianity has undergone drastic changes in the last sixty years, moving from a predominantly Roman Catholic, clergy-dominated religion to a panorama of diverse lay movements, charismatic groups, Pentecostalism, mass evangelism, and prophetic voices demanding justice and human rights in the midst of political repression. In an astute analysis of how Latin American Christianity has been transformed since 1950, Todd Hartch attributes this rebirth to five significant movements: that of witnesses and evangelists, the prophetic movement committed to the poor and oppressed, the Pentecostal and charismatic movement, the ascent of the laity, and the recognition of the universality of their religion and subsequent missionary expansion. He convincingly documents how Protestantism, primarily Pentecostalism, has grown exponentially throughout the continent, but not at the expense of Catholicism, for the rise of Protestantism has served as a catalyst for Catholic revitalization. In addition to exposing the rapid growth of Spirit-filled religion focusing on speaking in tongues and faith-healing, Hartch aptly documents the transformative role of base ecclesial communities (CEBs) and new ecclesial movements (NEBs), which are largely formed and led by laity and which offer an alternative for Catholics confronted by the growth of Pentecostalism.

After 500 years of receiving missionaries, Latin American church organizations are now sending their own missionaries around the globe and in many cases are being very successful. Brazil’s Universal Church of the Kingdom of God serves as one example of how an indigenous religion has been exported and adopted in other countries. Since it has experienced a rebirth, Latin American Christianity is quite different from what it was in the mid-twentieth century.

—Ronald A. Whitlatch

Ronald A. Whitlatch serves as mission interpreter, working with the United Methodist Church General Board of Global Ministries. He served as a missionary pastor in Argentina (1983–2001).


It is a courageous person who writes a book on a new subject area. Timothy Yates has previously published on the history of Christian missions, but now he seeks to explore the mission to the indigenous people of New Zealand, though

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Without the background of extensive knowledge of New Zealand history in particular. Rather than base his work on secondary literature with a little work in the archives, he has taken an opposite path. This book is thoroughly grounded in the missionary correspondence of the CMS and, to a lesser extent, the missions of the Wesleyans and the Society of Mary. Its weakness, however, is its limited knowledge of local historiography. As a result, the text is rich with detail but offers no new insights on its subject matter. Missions get a bad press in that historiography, but this book does not offer a corrective.

It might have been different. Missions histories have offered rich insights on the history of the new Christian nations, but Yates acknowledges that his approach is traditional narrative history—and at times the narrative seems lost in colorful detail. The book concludes with chapters on indigenous agents and on conversion, along with an appendix reviewing a recent book by Richard Quinn. But these pages do not really make sense of what was distinctive about the mission to New Zealand. Yates has provided a clear and accurate narrative, but 200 years after the first missionaries, a very secular society needs a stronger explanation of the place of missions in its history.

—Peter J. Lineham

Peter J. Lineham, professor of history, Massey University, Auckland, New Zealand, is the author of No Ordinary Union (Wellington, N.Z., 1980), Bible and Society (Wellington, N.Z., 1996), and Destiny (Auckland, N.Z., 2013).

Environmental Missions: Planting Churches and Trees.


As an environmental policy researcher, erstwhile forest manager, and practicing Christian, I was excited when this volume hit my desk. I commend the author for his commitment to his faith and to the earth. But sadly, the book disappoints on a number of levels. The most significant problem is its restricted evangelical-centric approach. The author declares himself to be a “radical evangelical Christian” (96), which he seems to confuse with orthodox evangelicalism—believing that an opportunity to spread the Gospel should never be overlooked, whatever the cost. Here the cost is the grounding in a broader understanding of environmental mission and ministry. With more than a quarter of the book constructed around evangelical theology, it makes for chaotic—and at times offensive—reading. Where, for example, is the moral virtue in trying to convert a dying Hindu (106), or the connection to eco-theology?

The author is also ecologically confused. He offers tirades against the logging of old-growth forests, yet he characterizes our secular existence on earth as a wilderness or wasteland and God’s kingdom as a garden—surely a metaphor for the taming of nature? One is pleased to see the author make linkages to global environmental initiatives such as the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change. But Bliss would have benefited greatly from adopting a more ecumenical approach, for a rich and by now extensive literature examines many of his themes in a far more credible and nuanced manner, dealing with topics such as the nature of contemporary earth care, environmental stewardship, and “green” ecclesiology and missiology. Here I would recommend Clive Ayre’s recent book Earth, Faith, and Mission: The Theology and Practice of Earthcare (Mosaic Resources, 2014). Faith, like the planet, needs to be diverse to survive, and a single denominational approach is essentially a monoculture.

—Tim Cadman

Tim Cadman, a licensed Anglican lay minister in New South Wales, is a research fellow, Institute for Ethics, Governance, and Law, Griffith University, Queensland, Australia.