A person’s understanding of Christian mission—whether as evangelism, evangelization, witness, proclamation, prophetic dialogue, service, or whatever else—is inexorably intertwined with that person’s context(s). Likewise with anyone’s practice or reception of mission. The significance of context applies also to a whole people’s understanding, practice, and reception of Christian mission. Our multifaceted settings shape how mission is conceived, conveyed, and caught.

I do not anticipate much pushback from readers of the International Bulletin of Missionary Research on this claim. I would not be surprised, however, to find a range of viewpoints about the relative importance of the universal meaning of Christian mission versus contextually particular sensibilities about what mission involves.

David Bosch persuasively demonstrated the point about mission’s contextual particularity through tracing the way the church’s understanding and practice of mission have been shaped by the various milieus in which it has carried out mission. In this issue of the IBMR, Volker Küster advocates “intercultural theology” as necessary to avoid truncated, contextually confined views of mission (or of anything else). Gloria Tseng brings to light “the historical peculiarities of the indigenization of Christianity in China during the early decades of the twentieth century.” Andrew Eason analyzes the interrelation between William Booth’s practice of mission through the Salvation Army and the specific influences of his nineteenth-century life setting.

We can see the inherently interrelated character of “mission” and “contexts” as well in recent major statements on Christian mission, including three associated with the gatherings commemorating the centenary of the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference.
Conference. The Tokyo 2010 “Declaration,” issued by “representatives of evangelical global mission structures,” included a pledge of “finishing the task” of “making disciples of every people in our generation.” The document’s specific notions of people groups, “reaching” such groups, measurable progress, and “finishable task” arise from that gathering’s shared universe, one developed in a post-Enlightenment context that lent credence to such concepts. We must also note the galvanizing effect of the year a.d. 2000 on this energetic movement. Second, the Edinburgh 2010 “Common Call” was affirmed by “representatives of world Christianity, including Catholic, Evangelical, Orthodox, Pentecostal, and Protestant churches,” which reflects the ecumenical movement and its complex seedbed of origins, including Euro-American imperialism. Finally, the evangelical 2010 “Cape Town Commitment,” arising from more interdisciplinary and worldwide contextual connections than its Tokyo 2010 counterpart, was “a confession of faith and a call to action,” offered in the hope that evangelicals as well as “churches of all traditions” might find it helpful toward the overarching end that Christians would “make disciples” and “love one another.” Each of these 2010 gatherings reflects distinctive elements of the twentieth-century settings in which they were birthed.

Three other major statements, each from the fall of 2013, similarly show their contextual marks. The forty-anniversary declaration by the Asia Missions Association (AMA) touches on five topics associated with the conference theme, “Discipleship in the Twenty-First-Century Mission.” While also showing the AMA’s distinctively evangelical ethos, the statement reflects the organization’s historical and other contextual sensibilities in the assertion that heretofore “foreign patterns” of mission practice must be eschewed for ones that are “authentically Asian” (topic 5). The second statement is “Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes,” announced by the World Council of Churches (WCC) at its Busan Assembly. (See the four reflections on this document in this issue.) A statement of sweeping breadth, it presents a “broad appeal, even wider than WCC member churches and affiliated mission bodies, so that we can commit ourselves together to fullness of life for all, led by the God of Life!” The document arose from the ecumenical movement’s historical backdrop, but because of Christianity’s worldwide growth and multicentered points of gravity, it incorporated input from streams not connected to the WCC—most especially Roman Catholic and evangelical voices. Finally, Pope Francis’s apostolic exhortation Evangelii gaudium (Joy of the Gospel) is paradoxically both the most comprehensive and the most specific of all the recent statements in terms of the addressees. It invites “all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ,” even as it aims to “encourage the [Catholic] Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization.” Evangelii gaudium also contains specific appeals to the world’s political and economic decision-makers and to various levels of the Catholic Church hierarchy, and it closes with a prayer to Mary, the “Mother of Evangelization.” Numerous contextual marks—of Francis himself, of a long-cultivated Catholic sense of public responsibility, and of the current historical moment of the global economy and of worldwide Catholicism—are abundantly evident.

Christian mission—with whatever terms we may choose to characterize it—is inexorably intertwined with context. Consider how this factor, along with its inherent universal and normative traits, is exemplified a fresh in this issue’s insightful and varied analyses.

—J. Nelson Jennings

Note: Web addresses for the mission statements discussed are available in the October 2014 HTML edition online at www.internationalbulletin.org.
Intercultural Theology Is a Must

Volker Küster

Intercultural theology emerged as an attempt to secure a lasting position for the interrelated discipline of missiology, comparative religion, and ecumenics at various German and other European theological faculties. Missiology is a latecomer among the theological disciplines. The first chair in Germany was established in Leipzig in 1896 for the then already retired Protestant minister Gustav Warneck (1834–1910). Most of the ten or so chairs for missiology, comparative religion, and ecumenics—in different combinations—found in German theological faculties were postwar openings. That the three fields would come to be combined is understandable. As they encountered the people they hoped to convert, Christian missionaries were introduced to religions that were foreign to them, and they often began to study them for apologetic purposes. In order to translate the Bible they became well versed in linguistics. At the same time, the confessional schisms among Christians were an embarrassment for the missionaries and difficult for them to explain, leading the missionary movement to become one of the sources of the modern ecumenical movement. As the so-called younger churches of the Third World achieved emancipation in the aftermath of the two World Wars, not only the interreligious and interconfessional but also the intercultural dimension flourished.

In Europe, scholarly research on the entanglement between mission and colonialism, on the one hand, and the rapid growth of cultural and religious pluralism that resulted from migration and globalization, on the other hand, shook to its foundation the Christian sense of mission with its accompanying claims to absoluteness. Theological discovery of the cultural and religious other in the last quarter of the twentieth century led, at the periphery of academic theology, to a temporary interest in contextual theologies, the churches in the Third World, and interreligious dialogue. Gradually, however, the focus shifted back to the European context. Mission has been assigned a place within practical theology and is assumed to focus on church growth concepts. For its part, ecumenics has been dominated by dogmatics, with the classic theological controversies between Protestantism and Catholicism given pride of place. Often what remains is comparative religion. Theological Eurocentrism can therefore easily prevail again. Intercultural theology tries to integrate and bring together what belongs together within a common field of discourse. It explores the interconfessional, intercultural, and interreligious dimensions of Christian faith.

How does one become an intercultural theologian today? Previously, the “standard” way to become a missiologist and religious scholar was to study theology, write a dissertation, and go overseas as a missionary. The dissertation itself was often written in a nonmissiological, theological discipline that one would be able to teach in a seminary on the mission field. Upon returning home, the budding missiologist or religious scholar would write a second, more advanced book (habilitation) about his “own tribe.” The topic for the habilitation could be further theological questions in the area of mission history, an issue related to the development of local churches and theologies, or, in the field of comparative religion, an investigation into the other religions the missionary had encountered in the mission field.

In my generation this pattern has changed. Students now spend a semester abroad somewhere in the Third World, often followed by a number of field trips. The qualifying books (dissertation and habilitation) are normally both written within one’s own discipline. This more academic orientation continues through guest lectureships and cooperative research projects with colleagues from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, often resulting in long-term studies. Finally many of the doctoral students that I supervise are themselves from overseas and pursue academic careers in their home countries. Some of their contemporaries have already secured positions at seminaries in the United States, something that in Germany and the rest of Europe is still an exception. In what follows I map the current field of intercultural theology and open its toolbox.

Mapping the Field of Intercultural Theology

The three dimensions mentioned above supply a rough-and-ready division of the field of intercultural theology into the encounter with other religions, with other theologies, and with other churches.

Encountering other religions. Christianity shares a long history in Europe with Judaism and Islam. At its beginning it spread within the environment of diaspora synagogues and was regarded by the Roman Empire as a sect of Judaism, which was accorded the status of a “permitted religion” (religio licita). After the Second Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70 and the Jews were displaced from the Holy City, the Jewish presence in European territory increased through migration. By the turn of the millennium, the center of gravity of Jewish life had shifted to the west.

Immediately after its rise in the seventh century on the Arabian Peninsula, Islam spread out aggressively, harassing Europe. In the south, Muslim troops crossed the Strait of Gibraltar, and for more than 700 years the Moors held the Iberian Peninsula (711–1492). In the east, they invaded the territory of the Byzantines and repeatedly assaulted Constantinople, which finally fell in 1453. Muslims also ruled over Sicily for more than two and a half centuries (827–1091). Even though Charles Martel stopped the Muslim advance in the battle of Tours/ Poitiers (732), the Muslim presence in the south of Europe lasted another 700 years, until Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella of Castile reached the final victory and drove the Muslims back across the Mediterranean in 1492. The Jews were expelled from Spain on this occasion as well. The territorial recapture of the Reconquista was followed by the Conquista, the conquest of territories in the New World.

In the meantime, under pressure from the Roman Catholic papacy, the rulers of central Europe set out eastward on the Crusades (1096–1291). Despite all their efforts, their objective of liberating Jerusalem and the Holy Land was doomed to failure because of the difficult logistics. The Muslims, on their part, were able to
establish a foothold in eastern Europe. The tedious Turkish wars (1423–1878) against the further expansion of the Ottoman Empire (ca. 1299–1923) and consciousness of the presence of the “Turks at the gates of Vienna” (1529 and 1683) have become proverbial for European Islamophobia. What is often forgotten when the history of this conflict is recounted is the relative tolerance that the Muslim rulers showed toward both Jews and Christians as “people of the book.”

Traces of the resulting cultural exchange can still be seen today in Andalusia and in Sicily. The ambiguities of religions are obvious; their life-enhancing teachings are often in glaring contrast to the brutal violence they engender.

During the Crusaders’ depredations in the east there were also excesses against the Jews. The Crusaders taunted them as infidels in their own country and as murderers of the Messiah. In Luther’s writings one finds vicious words about the Jews.6

Christian intellectuals found themselves needing to face the question of why they wanted to keep the religion of their former colonizers.

Age-old Christian anti-Judaism ultimately resulted in the gas chambers of the Third Reich. Through the industrially organized murder of six million European Jews and provoking the flight of more than 280,000 Jews from Germany alone, the Nazis and their collaborators robbed Europe of the better part of its intellectual and creative potential.

In the meantime, through the colonial project—and in its wake Christian mission—Europeans came into contact with the indigenous religions of Africa and the Pacific, as well as with Asia’s religions, especially Hinduism and Buddhism. Often a strict neglect of other religions and cultures ran up against the necessity of translating the Christian message. Without knowledge of the other’s cultural and religious context, this task could not be carried out. That missionaries documented and translated the sacred texts of the foreign religions they encountered and even at times became committed researchers is a further indication of the ambiguity of the processes of intercultural and religious exchange. The first translations of the sacred texts of Asia in the nineteenth century sparked the intellectual interest of philosophers such as Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860). Up to the present in Europe, however, Hinduism and Buddhism have, in the main, established themselves outside migrant communities only in the areas of well-being and interior design. There have been no noteworthy conversions.6

Following World War II, Christian guilt in regard to the Holocaust led to a reversal of the Christian churches’ orientation toward Judaism. On the Roman Catholic side, this shift was intended to be addressed during the Second Vatican Council (1962–65). Political intervention from the Arab world, however, led to the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (Nostra aetate), which reoriented Roman Catholic attitudes toward non-Christian religions as a whole. Its promulgation became the hour of birth for a modern theology of religions. For its part, the World Council of Churches, which represents Protestant and Orthodox churches, has located the relation between the church and Israel under Faith and Order. Only after the foundation in 1971 of a secretariat for interreligious dialogue was the relationship of the churches to Judaism declared to be a question of dialogue as well. In a certain sense Jewish-Christian dialogue even became the nucleus of the modern dialogue movement.7

Whereas a theology of religions seeks to identify the role of other religions while staying securely within one’s own frame of reference, a theology of dialogue crosses the boundaries of one’s own faith and thereby makes oneself vulnerable.8 In the end, the theology of religion is caught in the dilemma of exclusivism versus inclusivism: if the religious other does not convert to Christianity, is he or she doomed to eternal perdition, or is this person already included in God’s plan of salvation? Postmodern pluralist theology of religions wanted to overcome this dilemma by crossing the Rubicon and moving on from ecclesiocentrism, that is, exclusivist Christocentrism, toward a theocentric-inclusivist position, and finally to reach a position beyond theism versus nontheism.9 It ended, however, in a sort of meta-inclusivism. The theology of dialogue is following a different path. Its double commandment is to give witness to one’s own faith and to try to understand others in a way that enables them to recognize themselves in what is said about them. In this way theology of dialogue gives full recognition to the exclusivist/inclusivist dilemma embedded in every religion.

In the end, the question of who is having a dialogue with whom and about what can be answered only by stating that dialogue is a happening that takes place between adherents of different religions. From one perspective, believers can speak only for themselves, but at the same time they are Grenzgänger (commuters), representatives crossing the borders between two religious communities. Dialogue takes different forms: dialogue of life, of the mind, and of the heart. The dialogue of life is preconceptual and is oriented toward the peaceful coexistence of the people in a given place. Dialogue of the mind takes place between learned representatives of different religious traditions. In it the loyalty of the dialogue participants to the particular dogmas of the different religious traditions is at stake. As a result, an agreement to disagree is often an inevitable outcome; even so, a common search for truth is indispensable for mutual understanding. In dialogue of the heart, mystics of the different traditions meet. Their sharing of spiritual experiences in meditation and prayer is postconceptual.

Encountering other theologies. Following World War II, reorganization of the world led to widespread decolonization in Africa and Asia. By then the expulsion or detention of many missionaries during the war had already allowed “younger churches” to cut the umbilical cord tying them to expatriate mission bodies and churches. The influence of national emancipation movements only reinforced the trend. Christian intellectuals found themselves needing to redefine their position in the context of nation building and to face the question of why they wanted to keep the religion of their former colonizers. In Latin America, which was still overwhelmingly Catholic and where most of the countries had become independent in the nineteenth century, the reformational spirit of the Second Vatican Council led to an “ecclesiogenesis,” as Leonardo Boff, one of the most prominent liberation theologians, would later phrase it.10 The rise of the base Christian communities was, however, triggered in part by the acute lack of priests, which forced the poor to step in and organize themselves in terms of church life. The Second Conference of Latin American
Bishops, held in 1968 in Medellin, Colombia, was indebted to liberation theology, which had its roots in the base Christian communities. The theological proponents advocated resistance against poverty and oppression, which they saw as consequences brought about by the neocolonial practices of the modern capitalist world order and its compliant accomplices in the military dictatorships and oligarchies at the periphery. Liberation theology, probably still the most well-known Third World theology, has its counterpart in the inculturation and dialogue theologies of Africa and Asia.

Like no other generative theme of the Christian faith, Christology suits as a hermeneutic key and a benchmark for assessing contextual theologies. Even today, no believer can avoid answering Jesus’ question: “Who do you say that I am?” (Mark 8:29). Christology eventually determines whether Christian faith has taken root or not.11

African theologians give Jesus praise names such as Chief, Master of initiation, Healer, and Ancestor, a practice we recognize from New Testament times, when Jesus was elevated with titles such as Messiah and Kyrios, which came, respectively, from the early church’s Jewish background and from its Hellenistic context. Yet the African titles must also undergo a reevaluation, for Jesus chose the way of suffering and discarded all insignia of his lordship. African women theologians offer the critique, moreover, that through adaptation of the traditional titles, patriarchal notions in African religion and Christianity reinforce each other.

In Buddhist contexts Jesus is on occasion regarded as a bodhisattva, a human being who reached enlightenment but did not enter nirvana because of compassion for his fellow creatures. In Hindu settings either the divine side is emphasized and Jesus becomes an avatar, the incarnation of a god, or the emphasis is placed on the human side and Jesus is portrayed as a guru. In a way similar to traditional African religion, the theology of the cross does not resonate with Asian religions. A god who is suffering remains foreign to these thought-worlds. Only the discovery of the suffering of Jesus Christ in the suffering of the people, in South Korean minjung theology or the black theology of South Africa, for instance, has led to a breakthrough of the theology of the cross in these contexts.12 In the encounter with the suffering Christ among the common people they meet with Latin American liberation theology, which perceived Jesus in the suffering campesino or Indio. Again we are confronted with the ambiguity of religions: Christians can be found on both sides of these conflicts.

In 1976 representatives of these emerging contextual theologies met in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, to form the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT).13 The meeting triggered a fruitful intercultural dialogue that corrected mutual deficits. Africans and Asians criticized, for instance, the cultural blindness of the Latin Americans, while the latter questioned the Africans’ and Asians’ lack of attention to the socioeconomic and political dimensions of their particular contexts. During EATWOT’s first General Assembly, in New Delhi, India (1981), African theologian Mercy Amba Oduyoye proclaimed the “irruption within the irruption,” referring to the entrance of women onto the Third World theological scene, which had so far been dominated by men, just as this first generation of Third World theologians had ruptured into the theological domain of the West.14 Third World female theologians soon were engaged in a double delimitation: over against Western feminists as well as their own countrymen.

Christianity is a globalized religion, whose center of gravity has recently shifted from Europe to the South. Christian churches and academic theology have the potential to contribute to the current discussions about globalization as well as about cultural and religious pluralism. Both the churches and academic theology look back on a long history of expansion, crossing borders, inner differentiation, and change.

Encountering other churches. When Westerners visit churches in Africa, Asia, or Latin America, their first impression, even today, is that they are encountering distortions of their own tradition. In Latin America, because of the near extinguishment of the native peoples and their indigenous cultures and religions, the Roman Catholic Church is informed by architecture and spiritual traditions of Hispanic and Portuguese provenance. In the Feast of the Dead, the traditional Feast of Corpus Christi in Mexico, however, the death cult of the traditional religion of the Maya and Aztecs is evident.15 Among the descendants of the indígenas, faith in Pacha Mama, the goddess of the earth, lives on.16 Folk Catholicism has formed a synthesis with this indigenous spirituality. Where descendants of black slaves have formed minority communities, as in Brazil, syncretistic amalgamations with traditional African religion have come about inside the Catholic Church, as well as in new religious movements such as Candomblé and Umbanda.17 At its beginning even liberation theology despised folk religion, not to mention the attitude of the official church hierarchy.

In Africa, the churches are—for economic reasons—“flattened” versions of their Western prototypes. Nevertheless, the provenance of the former missionaries is still evident. Even so, an African kernel is hidden under the Western husk, whether in the songs and dances in the worship services of the mainline churches or in the African Instituted Churches, which were founded by indigenous prophets. Where formal Africanization does not suffice, double belonging is practiced: the traditional religion remains alive, and the healer is consulted when the priest or the mission hospital cannot bring about the desired healing. “Our people live with their dead” (a dictum of African theologian Christian Baëta, 1908–94) expresses a bond with the ancestors that is still relevant. Where it is not granted space within the church, it will break through outside.18

Anyone who strolls after sunset on the mountains of Seoul will see numerous red neon crosses on neo-Gothic church towers or multistory buildings. Korean churches feature hymns translated from Western originals, monitors above Plexiglas pulpits, and sacro-pop bands, as well as a strong impression of continuity with the Presbyterian and Methodist mission churches of the nineteenth century. In Seoul’s neo-Gothic Myongdong Cathedral, Mass is celebrated in the same way it is everywhere else in the Roman Catholic world church.

Another face of Korean Christianity, however, comes with the five o’clock morning prayers, the long free prayers in tongues,
and the prayer mountains, which are all closer to the peninsula’s primal shamanist religiosity. Even the open neglect of indigenous spirituality in the ubiquitous Pentecostal churches arises from the wish to contain the evil forces in traditional religion. Comparison with the folk religiosity found in Catholic and Orthodox churches in rural areas of southern and eastern Europe is probably too facile, but a retrospective view shows similar amalgamation processes during the Christianization of Europe.19

Opening the Toolbox

To conclude, I discuss three methodological and terminological tools at the disposal of intercultural theologians: aesthetics, hermeneutics, and ethics.

Aesthetics. People’s first contact with the other is through sense perception. Art has a prominent position in this connection as a source in its own right for theology and comparative religion alike.20 Yet even in everyday life we see clothing, commodities, and homes that are foreign to us, and in doing so we look into the face of the other. Strange smells and sounds arouse and engage our senses. Cautiously, when we are welcomed for a meal, we feel what is unknown to us and taste food that is new for us. Slowly a process of translation begins as we seek for equivalences in the foreign culture that allow points of contact, and the wish to understand the other emerges. At this point aesthetics joins with hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics. In order to understand the other, I have to accumulate knowledge about him or her. Acquiring such knowledge is a dialogical process; the other must be able to recognize himself or herself in my perception and interpretation. At the same time, the other will be able to understand me only if what I want to communicate has relevance in his or her context. We are therefore already in the middle of the hermeneutical circle. In the case of mission, the hermeneutical character of understanding means that, if missionaries do not open themselves to the foreign culture and fail to make their message relevant in the new context, it will trail off unheard. The basic hermeneutic structure of contextual theologies was an invention by local Christians to meet the universality-particularity dilemma. The hermeneutical circle between text and context has to be passed through over and over again. This makes visible the identity-relevance dilemma. While the context is the variable, the text is the relational constant. The potential meaning of the text cannot be exhausted in any one reading; at the same time, the text itself sets the boundaries for its appropriate interpretation. If the context is the criterion of relevance, then the text is the criterion of identity for every contextual theology. Each new reading has to fit into the broad stream of Christian tradition. The emerging unity-plurality dilemma is inherent to interconfessional hermeneutics, which keeps searching for unity beyond all differences.

Since Christian faith is accessible only in a culturally mediated form, every form of contextualization is an intercultural act, and the Eurocentrism that typified much of the nineteenth-century missionary awakening was inherently a dead-end street. Contextual hermeneutics is at the same time, therefore, also the nucleus of intercultural hermeneutics. An important impulse comes from interreligious encounter: the habitus of respect for the other and the willingness to make oneself vulnerable allow the creation of space for difference. Intercultural hermeneutics then also has an ethical dimension.

Ethics. Those who wish to encounter the other must cross the borders of their own community, just as their counterparts must. The border-crossers meet each other in an interstitial, or third space, as postcolonial critics like to label it.21 In this third space an attitude of respect for the person and position of the other is indispensable. Leaving one’s comfort zone makes one vulnerable, not only over against one’s counterpart, but also in one’s own community. People who constantly cross borders come under suspicion: Will they be “turned around”? Will they become the “mole” of the other side among us? The space in between the two communities is not neutral or free of power constellations. Locations of origin, formed by cultural and religious pluralism, impact the third space as well. Whose community is in the majority? Whose is in a minority position? Who discerns or stipulates what is orthodox and acceptable to believe? Still, borders remain permeable as long as people are willing to cross them. Nobody returns unchanged. The knowledge acquired about the other that is brought back percolates also into the border-crosser’s own community.

The metaphors of hospitality, of the feast, and of neighborhood—which are used to speak of the attitudes of respect and vulnerability—bear within them limitations of time and location. The right to hospitality usually lasts three days; for guests who stay longer, different rules apply. The feast interrupts everyday life and can become a space of encounter from which we return changed as we reenter daily life. This “return” or “reentry” is a passage from liminality into organized living together. Neighborhood implies that people have their own space, but the space has borders with those of the particular other. Fences have gates, doors have thresholds, but only on invitation are they allowed to be crossed. In relationships, distance and proximity, respect and empathy must be balanced.

The crisis of what were once optimistically called “multicultural” European societies, especially those of Germany, France, Great Britain, and the Netherlands, has its cause in the decades-long lack of a concept of integration. Integration here does not just mean assimilation to the dominant culture (Leitkultur), summoned by nervous politicians. Nor does it mean indifference, long practiced and often embellished as “tolerance,” toward the idea that everyone should live according to his or her own standards. Integration in a positive sense means that migrants should participate in the receiving culture without neglecting their own cultural and religious identity.

Integration in a positive sense means that migrants should participate in the receiving culture without neglecting their own cultural and religious identity.
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO STUDY HUMANITY FROM BOTH SCIENTIFIC AND THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES? How might Christian theology inform the work of anthropological ethnography and theory? Might such integrative work yield results that are valuable for the purpose of solving human problems? This conference will bring together scholars from anthropology, theology, and Christian ministry to discuss common interests and potential collaboration on topics such as the significance of humanity’s divine image for human personhood and the construction of culture; the underlying reasons for humanity’s destructive behavior toward self, others, and the environment; and the role that purpose and hope play in human thought and practice.

www.eastern.edu/OKHconference
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In the interplay between the mainline churches and the influx of religions in migrant circles, a religious diversity develops. “The future is mestizo,” the slogan of the Hispanic theologian Virgilio Elizondo, is increasingly applicable in old Europe, for multiple belongings to different cultural and religious communities through intercultural and interreligious family ties are growing there also.24 The often-evoked secularization, the decline of organized religion, and the fading of traditional norms and value systems are countered by a patchwork religiosity and spiritual bricolage, which freely shops around for what religions have to offer. Identities must perpetually be renegotiated, a truth that ultimately applies to all members of communities that are culturally and religiously diverse. Therefore, a theology that is reflexive and is aware of the fluidity and ambiguity of religious traditions must necessarily be intercultural.

Notes

5. See, for example, Luther’s pamphlet Von den Juden und ihren Lügen (Wittenberg: Hans Luft, 1543).
6. Numbering 120,000, Hindus compose 0.12 percent of Germany’s population (2011), and at 270,000, Buddhists, 0.27 percent (2012); see Religionswissenschaftlicher Medien- und Informationsdienst e. V. (REMI, Marburg), www.remid.de.
7. On the Roman Catholic side, the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, instituted by Pope Paul VI in 1974, came under the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (since 1988, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity). This latter organ, founded by John XXIII in 1960, was also in charge of Nostra aetate.
9. See, for example, John Hick and Paul F. Knitter, eds., The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1989); see also Küster, Einführung, 132–53.
13. See Küster, Einführung, 154–86.
16. See Marcelo de Barros Souza and José Luis Caravias, Theologie der Erde (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1990), 48–58.
22. See Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture (New York: Routledge, 1994).
Revival Preaching and the Indigenization of Christianity in Republican China

Gloria S. Tseng

Even though by the turn of the twentieth century the Protestant missionary enterprise had built an impressive edifice of churches, schools, and hospitals in China, political events in China and national mood swings during the new century’s early decades provided as much cause for concern as for optimism regarding the future of the Chinese church. The century began with the Boxer Rebellion, the worst popular violence against Chinese Christians and Western missionaries in Chinese history. Later, Chinese Christian intellectuals, who had profited by their association with the missionary movement and were briefly caught up in the excitement of the May Fourth period (1917–21), found themselves struggling as the spirit of open inquiry gave way to increasingly bitter anti-imperialist campaigns and concomitant anti-Christian movements in the course of the 1920s. In light of the nationalistic fervor sweeping across China, many within the missionary enterprise agonized over the need to “indigenize” the Chinese church.

As Lian Xi persuasively argues in Redeemed by Fire, however, the real signs of life and momentum for growth in the Chinese church were to be found outside the Western missionary enterprise, from movements that exhibited a good deal of syncretism of traditional folk beliefs and Christian ideas, such as the Jesus Family and the True Jesus Church, to fundamentalist preachers such as John Sung (1901–44), Wang Mingdao (1900–1991), and Watchman Nee (1903–72), who waged an unrelenting battle with liberal theology and the popular social gospel of their day. These key figures in the history of the Chinese church came of age in the generation following the Boxer Rebellion.

The Boxer Protocol of 1901 had imposed an indemnity of 450 million taels on the Qing government for damages to foreign life and property during the uprising. By 1912 the Qing had collapsed and given way to a republic. The period from the last decade of the Qing to the first few years of the Republic saw a surge in the number of missionaries coming to China and a brief period of relative openness to Christianity among China’s educated elite. Such openness soon turned to hostility, however, as the spirit of open inquiry gave way to a series of vehement anti-Christian and anti-imperialist movements: in 1922, in 1924–25, and in the course of the Northern Expedition in 1926–28. As a result of the antiforeign climate of the Northern Expedition and the anti-Christian violence associated with it, the missionary enterprise suffered an exodus of missionaries and never regained its post-Boxer high point.

Thus, it was not easy to foresee that a wave of revival would sweep through Chinese churches from the late 1920s through the 1930s and that the agents of such revival would be homegrown Chinese Christian leaders who operated outside the missionary enterprise and who in fact had no formal theological training. John Sung and Wang Mingdao, both extremely active in itinerant ministry, were two of the most prominent leaders instrumental in infusing churches across China with vitality. They indigenized the Chinese church by reviving it, without ever making “indigenization of the Chinese church” an issue in either their sermons or their writings.

The Shape of the Men and Their Ministries

Though the revival experienced by numerous Chinese urban churches in the Republican period took place largely outside the Protestant missionary orbit, it nonetheless grew out of and owed a debt to that enterprise. Both John Sung and Wang Mingdao were second-generation Christians. Wang’s parents were members of the London Missionary Society in Beijing; Sung’s father was a native evangelist of the American Methodist Episcopal Mission in Xinghua (present-day Putian), Fujian Province. As boys, both had attended mission schools, and both families were of very modest means.

The childhoods of the two men and their experiences with the mission church were very different, however. Wang’s mother was a widow who had given birth to Wang in 1900 in the throes of the Boxer siege of Beijing’s legation quarter, where the Wangs were taking refuge, and shortly after Wang’s father had committed suicide out of despair. Wang grew up with the urban poor and was converted by an older classmate in middle school. In his memoir The Fifty Years, Wang recalled a church that was uninspiring and a school atmosphere that exhibited pitifully little Christian ethos. By contrast, Sung’s recollections of the Christian adults around him were generally positive. In My Testimony he recalled vividly a revival that took place in Xinghua when he was nine (or eight by Western reckoning, for the year was 1909) and the subsequent growth of the church his father pastored, testifying as well to his father’s miraculous healing from tuberculosis-like symptoms after the young Sung’s earnest prayers. He also had his first taste of evangelism and preaching by following his father on preaching journeys in the countryside and occasionally stepping in for the older Sung.

Wang Mingdao and John Sung were distinctive personalities. Wang was a northerner and meticulous in personal habits; Sung was a southerner and had a dramatic flair. Wang carried himself with the dignity of a traditional Chinese gentleman; Sung was unkempt. Wang’s sensibilities were steeped in the Chinese classics: he kept his diaries in the terse style of classical Chinese, even though his writings intended for publication in his lifetime were all in the vernacular. Sung kept his diaries in the vernacular and was known for his colorful and rustic preaching. Both were excellent students, but Wang experienced bitter disappointment with thwarted ambition and was unable to continue his education beyond the secondary level. Sung, in contrast, was given an opportunity to study in the United States and ultimately obtained a Ph.D. in chemistry from Ohio State University.

Both men possessed a Christian heritage, the foundation of which had been laid by missionary labors for over a century, yet both built their ministries in reaction against this missionary

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The main difficulty for historians is the near impossibility of assigning the sermons to any specific historical setting.

devotion to their calling. Both kept up a very active, even grueling, speaking schedule. Beginning in the mid-1920s, when he first received national recognition, Wang spoke in twenty-four of China’s twenty-eight provinces and in over thirty different denominations.7 Even though the group of Christians who gathered around him in the Christian Tabernacle in Beijing was nondenominational, he willingly accepted speaking invitations from any and all denominations. The later 1920s and early 1930s were busy years for both Wang and Sung. According to Wang’s own tallying, in 1929 he spent a total of eight months outside Beijing on six different trips and went to five provinces. As responsibilities with the Christian Tabernacle increased, Wang sometimes accepted fewer invitations from outside Beijing. In 1933 he spent “only” four and a half months outside Beijing on six trips that took him to seven provinces.10 Never the pastor of any one congregation, John Sung was even more the itinerant preacher. One of Sung’s daughters recounted that Sung was home only one month out of the year, spending the remaining eleven months on the road—in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan and among the Chinese communities in Southeast Asia. His travels continued even into the Sino-Japanese War until the last few years of his life, when he was terminally ill and bedridden.11 These two men’s extraordinary commitment to their faith leads one to view the indigenization of Christianity as taking place when the Christian message took hold of believers in such a way as to compel them to pour out their lives for it.

Their Message

The message that Wang and Sung preached was surprisingly simple. Ironically, the faithfulness of Wang and Sung to the Bible was a major factor that set them outside the mainstream of the Protestant missionary enterprise of their day, a time of increasing skepticism within the missionary community toward traditional understandings of the Gospel. Important theological and missiological shifts were taking place in Christian intellectual circles, and at their heart was erosion of confidence among leading Christian scholars regarding the traditional tenets of the faith, such as the divinity of Jesus Christ, the virgin birth of Jesus, the miracles recorded in the Bible, and the bodily resurrection of Christ.12 Yet precisely the age-old message of repentance, the forgiveness of sins through Jesus’ atoning death, and the hope that forgiven sinners have in the resurrected Christ lay at the heart of the sermons preached by Wang and Sung. Neither man wrote out his sermons in advance. Wang writes in The Fifty Years that he most often began with a specific message to be given to a congregation and then proceeded to expound on it with relevant scriptural passages and illustrations from ordinary life.13 Thus, strictly speaking, there were no sermon notes. Nonetheless, Wang was the main contributor to the journal he founded in 1927, the Lingshi jikan, or Spiritual Food Quarterly, and he states in his autobiography that his articles are much the same as his sermons. The articles mainly fall into three categories: expositions of Christian doctrine, teachings on Christian living, and rebukes against modernist theology and corruption in the church and society.14

All the records of Sung’s sermons at evangelistic meetings and his teachings at Bible conferences were taken down by others. Even his memoir My Testimony was an oral account taken down by a fellow Chinese Christian. Sung’s sermons and Bible teachings were all expository. He almost always took a scriptural passage and expounded it verse by verse, but he always linked it to one of his central themes—repentance, rebirth, or Christ’s atonement on the cross—often taking creative exegetical liberties in so doing. The impact of Wang and Sung and the affection with which they are held among Chinese Christians can be seen in the fact that, to this day, Wang’s writings and Sung’s collected sermons are among the pieces of literature most widely available in Chinese Christian circles, though published mainly outside China proper. And in recent years, both men’s diaries have also become available.15

That is, there is no shortage of the two men’s sermons or
writings. The main difficulty for historians, however, is the near impossibility—especially with Sung—of assigning the sermons to any specific historical setting. One simply has no information regarding when and where a sermon was preached. The situation is somewhat clearer in Wang’s writings, which were published in the 1970s in the multivolume Wang Mingdao wenku, almost all of which first appeared in Wang’s Spiritual Food Quarterly. Clearly the aim of the Chinese Christians who painstakingly gathered and distributed these two men’s sermons or writings was to edify fellow believers, not to satisfy the curiosity of future historians. Fortunately, at least two collections of sermons with information about their context still exist: one a collection of twenty-five sermons preached by Sung during an eleven-day revival meeting that took place on the island of Gulangyu, off the coast of Xiamen in Fujian Province, November 3–13, 1934; the other a collection of twelve sermons preached by Wang in Guangzhou (formerly known as Canton), Hong Kong, and Macao over the course of forty days in October–November 1932. The sermons and the original prefaces, combined with information culled from the two men’s diaries, offer a partial glimpse into their preaching ministries, which in turn reveals the idiosyncrasies that accompanied the indigenization of the Chinese church in this period.

The Ministry of Wang

The most perplexing aspect of the two men’s ministries is their impact and effectiveness despite their conscious and intentional rejection of the Western theological tradition. Eschewing metaphysics, Wang’s sermons and writings are marked by theirplainness and common sense. His exegesis comes slightly closer to biblical studies than to theology, but study of the Bible as an academic discipline is not what preoccupies him. Instead, he focuses on the integrity of a Christian’s personal life and the church’s moral witness to a corrupt society. Wang’s 1932 preaching tour in Guangzhou, Hong Kong, and Macao was the fifth trip that he had taken outside Beijing that year. Arriving in Guangzhou in early October, he preached at numerous locations and occasions—churches, schools, seminars, and a retreat—for a month and six days. After Guangzhou, he preached at a Baptist church in Hong Kong for nine days, and then at a Baptist church in Macao for three days. Altogether he preached over forty sermons on this trip, and those who produced the 1933 collection of twelve sermons hoped that the slim volume would be the first of several, eventually making all of Wang’s sermons on this southern preaching tour available, apparently a goal never achieved.

One sermon from this trip, “Why Does God Allow Those Who Belong to Him to Experience Failure?,” suffices to illustrate Wang’s concerns and modus operandi. First is a clear moral message to be given to God’s people, often readily evident in the title of the sermon. In this case, Wang seeks to address the issue of failure, or perhaps ineffectiveness, in the personal lives or ministries of Christians. Second is Wang’s faith in and faithfulness to the biblical record. Whatever the issue at hand, a precedent is to be found in the biblical narrative, from which lessons are to be drawn. In this sermon the biblical precedent comes from Joshua 7. Wang first gives the biblical context: the passage is about the Israelites’ attack on Ai, after their successful destruction of Jericho, a much larger city. He reminds his audience of God’s promise of success to Joshua as recorded in 1:1–9, thus setting up a paradox or dilemma: “What might have been the cause? Did Jehovah’s promise become empty? Did God give them victory in Jericho and defeat in Ai? The people of Israel did not understand; the elders did not understand. Joshua himself did not understand.”

Then Wang proceeds to retell the story of chapters 7 and 8—how Joshua and the elders sought God for an answer to their defeat; how they were instructed by God to identify the person who had secretly hoarded some of the valuables from the city of Jericho; the execution of Achan by stoning and the destruction of what he had secretly kept against God’s express command; and the following second attack on Ai and victory. Wang then challenges his hearers with a series of exhortations:

Friend! Look under your tent—is there anything that should be destroyed? Is there anything under the church’s tent that should be destroyed? Is there anything that should be destroyed under the tents of those involved in ministry? What are the things under the tent that should be destroyed? They are sins in our hearts—the sin of mammon worship, the sins of deceit and hypocrisy, the sins of hatred and envy, the sins of promiscuity and impurity, the sin of self-exaltation, the sin of loving the world more than God! Folks, these are the hidden things that need to be destroyed, which cause us to be defeated by our enemies. These things hinder the church’s revival and cause the defeat of those involved in ministry. . . .

May the Lord enable us to rise up after defeat and obtain victory!

Wang’s sermons and writings were not characterized by great theological insight or erudite biblical exegesis. Yet there was evidently a spiritual hunger among Chinese believers for his reasoned and pragmatic application of the biblical narrative to Christian living and the witness of the Chinese church, as evidenced by the steady stream of invitations he received. Furthermore, behind such plain teaching was the testimony of a life of well-attested integrity.

The Preaching of Sung

Textual analysis alone can even less explain the impact of Sung’s ministry, for Sung’s rejection of formal training in theology and biblical studies led to very weak exegesis. Yet the circumstances in which Sung’s sermons were written down, gathered, and

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The indigenization of Christianity in early twentieth-century China defies reductionist sociological or political explanations.

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In the end, the greatest debt owed by Chinese Christians to Western missionaries was the Bible; when the Bible became a Chinese book, Christianity also became Chinese. Even when Chinese Christians rejected what they perceived to be the luke-warm or even decadent mission churches of their day, they embraced the faith by embracing the book. Moreover, the process of indigenization did not stop with Wang Mingdao and John Sung; rather, it continues to unfold in the twenty-first century. The historical factors that once caused Wang and Sung to reject mission churches and Western theology (and thereby cut the Chinese church off from the rich Christian legacy that predated the Western Christianity of their day) are gradually losing their potency. In time, Chinese Christians should appropriate the heritage of the church universal for themselves and in turn contribute to the shared legacy of all Christ’s followers across cultures and throughout the ages.

Notes

1. Lian Xi, Redeemed by Fire: The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2010).
2. At the exchange rate then current, 450 million taels would have equaled about £67 million or $333 million according to Jonathan Spence, The Search for Modern China, 3rd ed. (New York: Norton, 2013), 224–25.
4. For the work of these missions in Beijing and Putian, see R. G. Tiedemann, Reference Guide to Christian Missionary Societies in China: From the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 2009), 176, 182.
7. School of Oriental and African Studies, “The Morrison Collection—Robert Morrison (1782–1834)—Biography,” www.babelstone.co.uk/Morrison/Morrison/Biography.html. The translation was completed in 1819, but its publication by the Anglo-Chinese College of Malacca under the title Shentian shenghu (Wondrous Holy Book or God’s Holy Book are two of the possible renderings of Morrison’s title) was not until 1823.
9. Wang, Wushi nian lai, 73.
10. Ibid., 95–96, 98, 99, 104.
14. A sampling of the essays Wang published in the 1920s and 1930s illustrates his unrelenting battle against modernist theology: “Who Is Jesus?” (1927); “How Long Will You Be Double-Minded?” (1929); “Union or Separation?” (1930); “The Danger Facing the Modern Church” (1932); “Why Do I Believe in the Divine Inspiration of the Bible?” (1933); “The True Meaning of Being Born-Again” (1933); and “Can Man Establish the Kingdom of Heaven on His Own?” (1933).
19. Preface to the 1933 edition of Wang, Wang Mingdao xiansheng jiangdaoji; no mention is made of his other sermons on this trip.
22. See Sung’s preface to the 1935 edition, which is also in the 1936 reprint edition (see note 17).
24. Sung, Lingli jiguang, chap. 5, sec. 2. Sung had a tendency to be very imprecise with numbers. A thousand is a very conservative estimate.

Errata

Two errors appeared in book reviews in the July 2014 issue of the IBMR. In a review of a book by Brian Stanley, on pages 158–59, part of the title was inadvertently deleted. The correct title is The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Billy Graham and John Stott. And in a review of a volume edited by Craig Ott and J. D. Payne, on pages 161–62, it was incorrectly stated that the work is available in a low-cost PDF format. The book is published in paperback, and the correct price is $14.99.

The editors regret these errors. The online HTML and PDF editions of the IBMR for July 2014 have been updated to reflect these corrections.
The Strategy of a Missionary Evangelist: How William Booth Shaped the Salvation Army’s Earliest Work at Home and Abroad

Andrew M. Eason

When William Booth died, in 1912, a major newspaper in England remarked, “The world has lost its greatest missionary evangelist.” Although eulogies frequently border on hyperbole, there was truth to the paper’s assertion. Few of Booth’s Victorian contemporaries had done more to promote the cause of Christianity around the globe. Most notably, he had played the pivotal role in transforming a fledgling East London mission into an international religious empire that, at the time of his death, or “promotion to glory,” claimed a presence in fifty-eight countries and colonies. Consequently, the word “missionary” was a fitting adjective to place in front of “evangelist,” capturing the passion and essence of Booth’s life and ministry within Protestant evangelical circles. The development and expansion of the Salvation Army may have been a collective affair, involving the sacrifices of countless male and female Salvationists in Great Britain and many other lands, but there can be little doubt that the organization’s founding father was its foremost missionary.

In this capacity, William Booth proved to be an avid student of missionary methods. While lacking the formal training or extensive knowledge of a present-day missiologist, he was no unthinking combatant in the war against sin and human misery. On the contrary, Booth’s approach to missions reflected principles quite evidently mined from the Bible and borrowed from others. The Salvation Army’s first general was not an original thinker, but a discernible system lay behind his missionary activities, the substance of which was passed on to his own followers. George Scott Railton, a prominent early Salvationist, alluded to something of this methodology shortly after his leader’s death: “Each extension of The Army into foreign lands might be reported as a fresh achievement of the General, for, although he never, of course, himself went as leader, he invariably chose the leaders, and so wisely directed the . . . methods which were needed to adapt the work to various races and circumstances.”

Little has been written about the details of this missionary framework, but at least Railton acknowledged the vital role that Booth had played in this area.

The same cannot be said for subsequent treatments of the Army’s founding father, which have paid surprisingly little attention to the principles governing Booth’s approach to missionary work. Non-Salvationist biographers from Harold Begbie to Frank Prochaska bear some of the blame for this neglect, since they have frequently portrayed Booth as an ill-educated man driven more by instinct and practicality than by theory or religious doctrine. Yet even academic works written by Salvationists themselves have generally failed to articulate Booth’s missionary tenets or the sources behind them, as is evident not only in the valuable books on the Army’s first leader by historian Roger Green, but also in the scholarly studies of Salvationist foreign missions by Paul Rader, David Rightmire, Brian Tuck, and Edward McKinley. I seek to address this shortcoming in the existing literature by arguing that Salvationist work at home and abroad was shaped profoundly by Booth’s missiology, which was formulated and expressed with considerable consistency between the mid-1860s and the late 1880s.

Principles of William Booth’s Missiology

At the heart of William Booth’s approach to missions were four important principles: evangelism, cultural adaptation, self-support, and self-propagation. These precepts, which clearly shaped and guided Booth’s earliest personal ministry, soon went on to frame the work of all Salvationists around the globe.

Evangelism. First and foremost, the Army’s founding father advocated a missionary strategy based solely upon evangelism. The conversion of the lost was the raison d’être of Booth’s work, and such a motivation only intensified as his inner-city mission was transformed into an army of salvation. As Booth exclaimed in 1879: “We publish what we have heard and seen and handled and experienced of the word of life and the power of God . . . soul saving is the great purpose of the life and ministry within Protestant evangelical circles.


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simply to lead sinners to Christ, to convert people after the fashion of the apostles. Condemning the civilizing mission as costly, inefficient, destructive, and unbiblical, Booth argued that it was up to converts to “clothe and house and educate themselves.” At this stage in his life and ministry, he held stubbornly to the belief that the salvation of the soul was the only legitimate goal of foreign missions.

Refusing to separate the world into civilized and uncivilized regions, Booth urged the church to view the missionary task in more scriptural terms. Drawing inspiration from the apostle Paul’s sermon on Mars Hill (Acts 17:22–31) and plea for oneness recorded in Galatians 3:28, the Army’s founding father rejected the notion that a Westerner was fundamentally different from an Easterner. Just as every person was essentially “vile and devilish” when alienated from God, each was a brother or sister when joined to Christ. Cutting across the barriers of ethnicity and culture, this Pauline understanding of the world gave no privileged place to the West. Instead of divisions along the lines of race, wealth, and education, Booth encouraged Christians to divide the world’s inhabitants into the friends and enemies of Christ. For this reason he even toyed with the idea of abandoning the language of heathenism, which often was used by Victorians to denigrate the peoples of non-Western lands. Painfully aware that so-called Christian England had more than its fair share of sin and degradation, he found prevailing discourse about the natures of foreign lands to be unfair and unscriptural. While never managing to discard “heathen” terminology altogether, Booth’s pursuit of evangelism alone represented a significant departure from the Victorian civilizing mission.

**Cultural adaptation.** A second important principle of Booth’s missiology was cultural adaptation. Outstanding Salvationists from Frederick Tucker in India to Gunpei Yamamuro in Japan added flesh to the bones of this particular practice, but Army efforts at adaptation originated in Britain rather than in the foreign field. From the very beginning, Booth’s organization (initially called The East London Christian Mission) made a point of tailoring its message to the inhabitants of the inner city. As The Nonconformist, a religious newspaper, commented as early as 1868, “The great bulk of [the movement’s] advocates are working people, the language used is that of the working people [and] its habits are made to harmonise with those of the working people.” Religious services, for instance, were fashioned after the format of the Victorian music hall: sacred words were attached to popular secular tunes, and lively interactive theatrics came to define Mission and Salvationist meetings. Representing a deliberate attempt to appeal to working-class men and women who rarely found their way into local churches and chapels, acculturation was a prominent feature of Booth’s earliest ministry on the British home front.

Although accommodation to popular culture invited charges of sacrilege from ecclesiastical quarters, the Army leader’s response to his Christian critics was typically the claim that “all our teaching and operations are continuously justified by direct reference to the Scriptures.” Above all, Booth considered the principle of cultural adaptation to be consistent with the central aim of the Bible, the salvation of the lost. Here in particular he invariably turned to the words of 1 Corinthians 9:22, instructing his followers to become “with the Apostle [Paul] all things to all men in order that you may win them to your Master.” For Booth, accommodation was a legitimate tactic when the end in view was redemption. An army of salvation was called upon to utilize all kinds of aggressive and sensational measures in its efforts to win the world for Christ. So long as a practice squared with the authoritative and infallible Word of God, it was viewed as acceptable.

Booth’s understanding of cultural adaptation also owed something to Charles Finney, whose transatlantic revivalist campaigns and influential books inspired many Christians in the English-speaking world during the nineteenth century. While there is no evidence that Booth ever met the famous American, he had taken the time to read Finney’s Lectures on Revivals of Religion (1835) while employed as a pawnbroker’s assistant in Nottingham. Interest in this revivalist text was shared by Booth’s wife, Catherine, who declared it to be “the most beautiful and common-sense work on the subject I ever read,” in one early letter to William. From Finney the Booths learned that Christians should not be slavishly bound to traditional forms of revivalism, which relied more on divine readiness than on human initiative and planning. Christians should employ innovative strategies to awaken those asleep in their sins, measures that might capture the attention of the unsaved. Claiming that God had set down no prescribed ways of reaching the spiritually lost, Finney urged experimentation and adaptation tailored to the specific audiences one wished to reach with the Gospel. This evangelistic and pragmatic mind-set, born of the Armenian desire to see all people won for Christ, not only guided the Booths’ adaptive efforts at home but also became an equally distinctive part of the Salvation Army’s modus operandi as it moved beyond Britain in the early 1880s.

**Self-support.** Adaptation was aided and abetted by a third aspect of Booth’s missiology: an avowed commitment to self-support. By this he meant that “a large proportion of the money required to maintain and carry on the [Army must be] supplied by its own members.” Such a policy, incidentally, had been characteristic of the home front even before the organization’s first missionaries arrived overseas. Possessing no guaranteed salaries, Booth’s evangelists (known as officers) were required to raise a significant portion of their income from fellow Salvationists and from the sale of Army literature to the public. While this arrangement ensured that mission stations (corps) in Britain were largely self-supporting, it was admittedly a real hardship for the average officer, who typically possessed little in the way of material possessions. Despite the challenges accompanying such personal sacrifice, Booth remained firm in the belief that self-support was critical to the success of the Salvation Army at home and abroad. Consequently, even before the first Salvationists set foot in Bombay in 1882, he was informing the Indian people that his missionaries would “depend for their daily bread upon the God who sends them.” Highly critical of the older missionary societies, which paid their Western personnel fairly generous stipends,
he instructed officers to live simply in the field, relying on the native populace for most of their daily needs.\textsuperscript{25}

Self-propagation. For many Victorian missionary strategists, including Booth, the key to realizing some measure of financial independence hinged upon the attainment of a fourth missiological principle: self-propagation. In many respects this notion had also characterized Booth’s organization from the very beginning.\textsuperscript{26} New converts to his East London mission were expected to accept the biblical duty to witness found in Matthew 28:19–20 by winning one friend, acquaintance, or family member to Christ each year, pursuing what was considered, rather optimistically, to be “a plan for the world’s speedy conversion.”\textsuperscript{27} According to one religious newspaper, it was Booth’s “employment of the poor as missionaries amongst the poor” that helped to explain the success enjoyed by the inner-city mission, which reported eight mission stations and 1,500 conversions by the end of 1868.\textsuperscript{28} Native agency was seen to hold great promise, especially as the Salvation Army established new bases in distant lands. There was, for instance, the obvious fact that locally raised personnel were less expensive than foreigners, who incurred enormous costs in traveling from their home countries to a distant mission field. And as Booth fully appreciated, native agents possessed a superior knowledge of local languages and cultures. Consequently, when given the opportunity to reflect on the ideal missionary society of the future, he believed that it would “most certainly seek to raise up in every country, from the people among whom she labours, the supplies of men necessary for its conquest.”\textsuperscript{29} While these visionary words were surprising in their failure to mention the equal need for supplies of women, who already played an influential role in the nineteenth-century missionary movement, they did convey the Army leader’s genuine commitment to the principle of self-propagation.

Conclusion

Salvationist missions in their first quarter century clearly owe a considerable debt to William Booth, who deserves to be numbered among the leading missionary strategists of the Victorian age. His principles of missiology not only guided the Salvation Army’s initial work in Britain but also provided a framework for its pioneering efforts overseas during the 1880s.\textsuperscript{30} Inspired by the biblical and revivalist convictions of their founding father, Salvationist missionaries journeyed to places as diverse as India and South Africa, where they pursued a program of evangelism and cultural adaptation. Adopting various aspects of indigenous life (e.g., clothing, food, and shelter), they demonstrated, with some success, that the Gospel could be disentangled from its Western cultural packaging. Having largely abandoned their European lifestyles, Salvationist missionaries also realized a level of self-support in the field, although Booth himself had to concede that the “maintenance and extension of [missionary] work brings ever recurring difficulties of support.”\textsuperscript{31} Given the poverty of most converts, financial issues constantly burdened the Army’s leader. Even so, the organization managed to train a number of indigenous recruits, who then brought the Gospel message to their own communities. The effectiveness of their collective activity was apparent in the fact that by the late 1880s, more than a third of the Salvation Army’s 8,000 officers had been raised up locally.\textsuperscript{32} This characteristic was especially notable in India, leading one historian to suggest recently that the Army was “more anti-racist in practice than other missionary societies.”\textsuperscript{33} While never executed perfectly, the principles of self-propagation, self-support, cultural adaptation, and evangelism lay at the center of early Salvationist missions. These ideals may not have been unique to the organization—they bore the imprint of Scripture and transatlantic revivalism—but few used them to greater effect than William Booth. When viewed together, they demonstrate that the Salvation Army’s founding father was guided more by theory and religious doctrine than by instinct and practicality. Booth’s activities rarely came at the expense of well-formed thought, which fueled his tireless drive to do something for the masses around the world. Put simply, his behavior frequently was inspired by biblical convictions and theological notions. To miss these important connections between action and motivation is to misrepresent the man and to misconstrue the evangelical body that he did so much to shape at home and abroad.

William Booth in South Africa

William Booth in South Africa

William Booth deserves to be numbered among the leading missionary strategists of the Victorian age.
Notes


2. The Salvation Army Year Book for 1913 (London: The Salvation Army Book Department, 1913), 9.


5. See Roger J. Green, The Life and Ministry of William Booth: Founder of the Salvation Army (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005); and Green’s earlier work entitled War on Two Fronts: The Redemptive Theology of William Booth (Atlanta: The Salvation Army Supplies, 1989), While Green has done much to explore the theology behind Booth’s work, he has not addressed the founding father’s contributions to Salvationist missiology.


7. William Booth’s extensive involvement in social reform came only later, especially after the publication of his book In Darkest England and the Way Out, in late 1890. The extent to which this engagement altered the nature of Booth’s original missionary principles lies beyond the scope of this short article.


9. For more on Booth’s understanding of the word “missionary,” see his remarks cited in “Eighth French Anniversary,” The War Cry, March 23, 1889, p. 3.


13. One of the rare historians to recognize this fact was Albert E. Baggs, Social Evangel as Nationalism: A Study of the Salvation Army in Japan, 1895–1940 (Ph.D. diss., State Univ. of New York at Buffalo, 1966), 10. Sadly, however, his dissertation has never appeared in published form.


21. William Booth’s general indebtedness to Charles Finney has been well acknowledged by historian Norman Murdoch in his Origins of the Salvation Army (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1994), 12–25. Murdoch, however, does not draw a clear connection between Finney’s revivalism and the Salvation Army’s program of cultural adaptation.


23. All about the Salvation Army (London: S. W. Partridge, 1882), 7–9.


30. For more on these themes see Andrew Mark Eason, “Christianity in a Colonial Age: Salvation Army Foreign Missions from Britain to India and South Africa, 1882–1929” (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Calgary, 2005), 92–197.

31. Unpublished letter from William Booth to C. T. Studd, August 22, 1888, The Salvation Army International Heritage Centre, London. Studd was a member of the “Cambridge Seven,” the famous missionary party that had left England in 1885 to evangelize the Far East under the auspices of the China Inland Mission.


Guidelines for Contributors

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Reflections on “Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes”

The print edition of the April 2014 issue of the International Bulletin of Missionary Research carried key portions of the new World Council of Churches (WCC) statement on mission and evangelism. The entire document—presented last fall to the WCC’s Tenth Assembly held in Busan, Republic of Korea—appears online in the IBMR’s electronic edition. It can be read or downloaded in either HTML or PDF formats at www.internationalbulletin.org.

In the April issue we also promised that reflections on the statement by senior mission scholars would be forthcoming. Below are these reflections, written by experienced and capable leaders in Christian world mission. Excellent essays about the WCC statement have already appeared elsewhere as well, most notably in two recent issues of the WCC’s own International Review of Mission (102, no. 2 [November 2013] and 103, no. 1 [April 2014]).

The four reflections that follow are vital additions to the discussion of “Together towards Life.” Besides having stellar track records, the authors represent diverse vantage points from which to assess the statement. They have different degrees of proximity to it as well. Of the four analysts, two participated in the Busan Assembly; two did not. The four fall on different points of a sizable spectrum of organizational connection, or lack thereof, to the WCC. Three of the four were not involved in the multiyear process of formulating the statement; one played a significant role in the document’s development and is deeply familiar with the statement’s background and nuances. Diversity of nationality, gender, mother tongue, ministry responsibilities, and background are among the strengths the four analysts bring to bear in their reflections.

We are grateful for these authors’ reflections and are pleased to commend them to you for your careful study.

—Editors

The Missio Dei in Contemporary Context

Thomas Kemper

Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes” (TTL) is a notable contribution to the ecumenical theology of missio Dei closely associated with the World Council of Churches (WCC). It sharpens the theological vision and enlarges the ecclesiological framework of “Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation,” issued in 1982 and until now the most comprehensive WCC statement on its themes.

Presentation of the new, longer affirmation was a highlight, if not the main event, at the WCC’s Tenth General Assembly, in Busan, South Korea, in late October and early November 2013, but the document has importance beyond the WCC. Drafters included Roman Catholic and Pentecostal missionaries from beyond the Council’s Protestant and Orthodox member communions. Also, a broad theological outlook is wisely contained within a clearly delineated Triune formula that begins and concludes with creation, giving the document a more circular momentum than the typical linear thinking of Western theology.

The phrase “changing landscapes” in the title illustrates the historical and sociological framework, the present reality of the universal church in the first quarter of the twenty-first century. This context is nowhere clearer than in sections dealing with the growing missional involvement of the mission-founded churches of the Global South and East. As is well attested in ecumenical gatherings (Busan was a veritable United Nations!), the Christian center of gravity has shifted in geographic and missiological terms. The mission activism of churches in Africa and Asia so powerful today was less evident thirty years ago. Much of the most provocative formal and informal mission discourse at Busan came from representatives from the Global South and the East. In my own conversations there, I found an excitement about mission among Southern and Eastern students rarely present among young Westerners.

Four themes, or aspects, of TTL speak with special force to my experience of mission, which includes eight years of missionary service in Brazil (1986–94), local and regional professional ecumenical deployment in Germany, and, since 2010, service as chief executive of the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries. My agency—and I say this with thanksgiving rather than pride—is one of the largest of the remaining mainline Protestant organizations rooted in the nineteenth-century U.S. missionary fervor. My four themes also speak to my hope for mission in the years ahead.

The four are the concept of missio Dei, mission theology grounded in the Holy Spirit, “mission from the margins,” and the inclusion of health, healing, and wholeness, perhaps for the first time in a significant way, in an affirmation of mission and evangelism. I will leave to others a range of relevant questions, including whether “mission” and “evangelism” are the same or different in theology and practice, and whether the statement deals adequately with technology, ecology, and cosmology.

Missio Dei

Augustine is credited with early use of the term missio Dei to describe an aspect of God’s work in which the church and the faithful participate, but contemporary use of the concept in a more comprehensive way is closely associated with a conference of the International Missionary Council held in 1952 in Willingen,
West Germany. Willingen and a similar conference held in 1947 in Whitby, Ontario, were two of the mission gatherings that took account of the changing landscape of the church and society in the wake of World War II and anticipated the anticolonial movements of Africa and Asia that would eventually redraw both political and religious maps. *Missio Dei* at Willingen had a strong Barthian implication of mission as the work of the Triune God—indeed, a veritable missionary God. The mission of God is the foundation for the church’s mission, and “the mission of the church ensues from the nature of the church as the Body of Christ,” says the 1982 WCC statement on mission and evangelism, reflecting the spirit of Willingen.

In relation to the 1982 statement “Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation,” however, Jacques Matthey, former secretary of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, has rightly observed that there are multiple ways of understanding *missio Dei*. While one group sees the work of God carried out through the church, another sees God as active in the political and social affairs of the secular world, giving the church the mandate to discern and join the mission. The latter is the perspective sometimes identified with the contemporary WCC and is certainly evident in TTL, but the church as the means of mission is also strongly represented: “The church is a gift of God to the world for its transformation. . . . Its mission is to bring new life” (§10). This section concludes with a question: “How can the church renew herself to be missional and move forward together towards life in its fullness?” This question reflects an opening affirmation of God as the source of abundant life. Mission is described in section 2 as beginning “in the heart of the Triune God,” and in mission “the love which binds together the Holy Trinity overflows to all humanity and creation.”

**Grounded in the Spirit**

The question of renewal points toward the Holy Spirit as the initiating, sustaining, and re-creating presence in *missio Dei*. This focus provides a sense of grounding and a source of momentum quite different from the strong sense of human sinfulness that introduces the 1982 statement on mission and evangelism. It is more God-centered, more biblical, and more theologically hopeful. According to TTL, “By the Spirit we participate in the mission of love that is at the heart of the life of the Trinity. . . . All who respond to the outpouring of the love of God are invited to join in with the Spirit in the mission of God” (§18).

This strong emphasis on Spirit as the source and energizer of mission resonates with the creativity we experienced in 2011 at Global Ministries in the shaping of a relatively brief statement of mission theology. Our directors came at the task from multiple perspectives and reached consensus in an 850-word document that begins with creation—we called the document’s introduction “God’s Mission from Creation to Completion”—and invokes the Holy Spirit as the moving force in the divine mission in which we share in all of its steps and stages. In our conversations, and I think in the short document itself, we found assurance and hope through keeping the focus on ru’ach—Spirit—and concluding with a confession of renewal and continuity: “The Spirit is always moving to sweep the Church into a new mission age. With openness and gratitude we await the leading of the Spirit in ways not yet seen as God continues to work God’s purposes out in our own day in a new way.”

I was delighted to discover that our Wesleyan thinking about mission was in harmony with that of the larger ecumenical community. This congruity has paved the way for extensive use of TTL in our mission education efforts, especially with young people, who look for an affirmation of life and a grounding for hope and ecumenicity in their faith journeys.

**Mission from the Margins**

When viewed from the perspectives of practical theology, church history, and the cultural implications of mission, the development of the concept of mission from the margins is to me the most significant part of the WCC’s new statement. The “Ecumenical Affirmation” of 1982 contained small hints of awareness that Christianity’s center of gravity was shifting to the Global South and East; in the new statement, the shift has happened, and TTL turns on its head the inherited assumption that mission comes from well-established, well-funded, academic centers and flows toward the margins located in the poorer parts of the world. Here is a central, correct observation:

Mission has been understood as a movement taking place from the centre to the periphery, and from the privileged to the marginalized of society. Now people at the margins are claiming their key role as agents of mission and affirming mission as transformation. This reversal of roles in the envisioning of mission has strong biblical foundations because God chose the poor, the foolish, and the powerless (1 Cor. 1:18–31) to further God’s mission of justice and peace so that life may flourish. (§6)

The process through which mission-founded churches of the Global South take their places as full partners and participants in mission has developed over many decades, at least since the end of World War II, and was emerging, as mentioned earlier, at the 1947 conference of the World Missionary Council in Whitby. The younger churches let it be known there that they intended to play a role not only in determining how mission would take place in their locales but also in taking an active part in world mission and evangelism. The papers from Whitby speak of partners in “obedience to God” in the work of God’s mission. We are today seeing a full actualization of what was only an outline of hope in the Spirit in 1947. I see this blossoming every day in my work at Global Ministries. More than half of our missionaries in international service today have origins outside of the United States; our growing classes of young adult Global Mission fellows are increasingly international. We can truly speak of more than 300 missionaries “from everywhere to everywhere.”

I also was pleased to read in TTL that mission from the margins is an alternative missional movement against the perception that mission can only be done by the powerful to the powerless, by the rich to the poor, or by the privileged to the marginalized. . . . People on the margins have agency, and can often see what, from the centre, is out of view. People on the margins, living in vulnerable positions, often know what exclusionary forces
are threatening their survival and can best discern the urgency of the struggles; people in positions of privilege have much to learn from the daily struggles of people living in marginal conditions. (§38)

Refugees and migrants on the margins form another concern in the changing landscape of mission. They represent not only the care of persons on the move, but also the vigor of faith being brought to the old centers, such as Europe and parts of North America, by Christians from, for example, Africa. From the former margins is coming contagious renewal of faith, a topic that invites ongoing research and application.

Yet it is important that we not romanticize those who witness from the margins—many of them remain unacceptably poor and oppressed even while being vibrant participants in the missio Dei. This fact was strongly illustrated in a brief address at Busan by Bishop Duleep de Chickera of the Anglican Church of Sri Lanka. He offered a “victim theology” that understands Jesus as ministering especially to “victims,” described both in biblical and modern times as “persons expected to stay alive without security, be human without dignity, harvest a land no longer theirs and feed their children from empty plates. They are the unseen real who fill the earth: the ‘no people’ with a ‘no tomorrow’ to whom Jesus announced an emphatic ‘yes.’”

Jesus, said the prelate, brought victims into the center of the discourse and for that act was victimized, that is, crucified. Yet, once the Good News for the victim is articulated, it cannot be quashed, and the church has the mandate to keep bringing victims into the discourse. In this process, the marginalized are not passive; they are called to serve Jesus with dignity and equip themselves for active mission.

The inclusion of health, healing, and wholeness as expressions of mission strengthens the sections on advocacy for peace, justice, and liberation.

### Health, Healing, Wholeness

TTL is the first ecumenical statement on mission and evangelism to give prominent place to health, healing, and wholeness as expressions of mission. The context is broad and clearly stated: “Health is more than physical and/or mental well-being and healing is not primarily medical. This understanding of health coheres with the biblical-theological tradition of the church, which sees a human being as a multidimensional unity and the body, soul, and mind as interrelated and interdependent. It thus affirms the social, political, and ecological dimensions of personhood and wholeness. Health . . . [is] the sense of wholeness” (§51).

The assertion draws on insights developed over the last twenty years within the scope of the WCC’s Christian Medical Commission, as well as the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. The latter’s 2005 world conference in Athens explored the theme “Come, Holy Spirit, Heal and Reconcile—Called in Christ to Be Reconciling and Healing Communities.”

Mission responsibility in health and healing is seen as more than humanitarian service, although it is that too; the links established by the body-soul-mind definition of health and mission are found in the ministry of Jesus passed down to the church and actualized through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. This is refreshing theology, applied in TTL with particular relevance to the call of all disciples to live and share in community. Signs of God’s reign can be discerned, says the statement, when all the parts of our individual and corporate lives, including those of the marginalized, are brought together in love. This emphasis on community as an ingredient in health and wholeness (1) recognizes that congregations today are becoming involved in local and global health mission and ministry and (2) promotes the expansion of this form of the missio Dei.

The inclusion of health, healing, and wholeness as expressions of mission strengthens the sections on advocacy for peace, justice, and liberation, as well as helping to hold together assertions about the way mission unifies the community of faith. It also helps to shore up the helpful discussion of relations with adherents of other faiths. Healing and wholeness are common human concerns, goals in terms of the affirmation of abundant life and the integrity of all creation.

I am deeply appreciative to the men and women of many communions and cultures who worked together for years in producing TTL. I pray that the churches will heed its wisdom and join together in its vision of common mission and evangelism.

### Notes

1. TTL was accepted by the WCC’s policy-making Central Committee in September 2012 and was formally presented during the Tenth General Assembly.
4. Jacques Matthey, “Missiology in the World Council of Churches: Update; Presentation, History, Theological Background, and Empha-

8. Ibid.
A Missiological Reflection on “Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes”

Madge Karecki

The document proposed to the Tenth General Assembly of the World Council of Churches by its Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), “Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes” (TTL), echoes much of Catholic missiological teaching, and especially the thought of Pope John Paul II in Redemptoris missio and Pope Francis in Evangelii gaudium (EG). As a missiologist who has long had an interest in mission spirituality, I find TTL to be a multilayered tapestry woven throughout with biblical and missiological insights that reveal the challenges of what it means to participate in God’s mission in the world. It is not a document for the lukewarm and fearful among us!

Theme

As I studied the text, I found myself being drawn into the irresistible invitation to participate in the missio Dei, and once again I was humbled by God’s trust in humanity and the action of God’s Spirit in our lives. The CWME set the stage for the unfolding of the document with a profound statement of faith in its first eleven sections. Attention is placed firmly on “the Triune God who is the creator, redeemer and sustainer of all life” (§1). The next section states with forthright conviction that “mission begins in the heart of the Triune God and the love which binds together the Holy Trinity overflows to all humanity and creation” (§2). This section speaks of “the missionary God,” who sent the Son to the world so that we might be a people of hope. The members of the Christian community are then called to a renewed appreciation for the role of the Holy Spirit so that we realize that we are called to be living witnesses to the reign of God. These introductory theological sections prepare the way for a deeper examination of the mission of the Holy Spirit; we are reminded that “life in the Holy Spirit is the essence of mission, the core of why we do what we do and how we live our lives” (§3). Mission spirituality is named as a deep source of meaning and the motivating influence that can have a transformative effect on us and others.

After laying a theological foundation that calls Christians everywhere to mission, the CWME identifies the issues that impact on mission and that will be dealt with in the body of the document. Briefly, changing landscapes for mission and evangelism are identified as the cosmic sense of God’s mission and the interconnectedness of all life, the change in the geographic center of world Christianity, multidirectional migration, the emergence of strong Pentecostal and charismatic movements, people on the margins as agents of mission, and the consequences of a market economy that is founded on a belief in unlimited growth (§§4–7). After these contextually descriptive sections, the authors place these challenges to missionary evangelism in sharp contrast to the reign of God.

Sections 8–10 call for closer examination by us as individuals, congregations, and larger ecclesial structures because they deal with a commitment to evangelism, religious and cultural pluralism, and our resolve to work for Christian unity so that, together with all Christians, we may be instruments of healing and reconciliation. The CWME then tells us that in the four sections that form the body of the document we will be called on to “embrace dynamism, justice, diversity, and transformation as key concepts of mission in changing landscapes today” (§11). The authors are true to their promise. This leads to what I think is the most significant contribution of the document, namely, developing a theology of the role of the Holy Spirit in the mission of the Triune God.

Role of the Holy Spirit

The authors provide the Christian community with a comprehensive theology of the mission of the Holy Spirit. This theology is founded squarely on the biblical teaching of the Holy Spirit as the creative breath of God that moved over the whole of creation and is truly the life source of all humanity. Openness to the Spirit is exemplified in Mary’s readiness to participate in God’s creative plan, thus enabling her to share in God’s mission. It was her responsiveness and sensitivity to the work of the Holy Spirit, a work of grace, that enabled her to reply humbly to the angel’s message, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word” (Luke 1:38). Mary’s consent to her participation in God’s mission in the world gave free rein to the Spirit within her so that, in the mystery of the incarnation, Jesus could become God-with-us. What follows is fundamental biblical teaching about the mission of the Holy Spirit in empowering Jesus to reveal the Father’s love in his ministry, suffering, redemptive death, and resurrection.

Empowerment by the Holy Spirit is then shared with the disciples as Jesus sends them out on mission, and it continues to be shared by the community of the church in ways “beyond our imagination” (§15), so that today we too, by the Spirit, “participate in the mission of love that is at the heart of the life of the Trinity” (§18). Some may say that this is simply good biblical teaching. Indeed it is, but the document goes further and challenges us to become aware of the ongoing mission of the Holy Spirit in creation and realize that the Spirit is inviting us “to express our reconciled relationship with all created life” (§19). Our reconciliation with creation in Christ calls us to concrete expressions of eco-justice so that we respect “Mother Earth” and indeed all of creation, to the end that humanity and the whole cosmos will be made new.

TTL is not pietistic; it is prophetic. It speaks clearly about the issues plaguing our times. It calls us to respond to the Holy Spirit’s promptings as they open us to the grace of a conversion that leads us beyond the boundaries of who we think God is, who we are in relationship to God, and what God can do in us if we are open. The document reminds us that “our encounter
with the Triune God is inward, personal and communal but also directs us outward in missionary endeavour” (§26). This understanding implies ongoing discernment of how we are to share in the work of the Spirit in the midst of the struggles of humanity.

**Implications for the Faith Community**

What is called for is a transformative spirituality, which gives our lives their deepest meaning and serves as the motivation for the choices we make (§29). Spirituality shapes our lives and witness. Mission, then, is much more than the work we do; in itself it becomes a means of ongoing transformation of our own lives. Mission leads us into a more profound sharing in paschal mystery of Christ. It makes possible a kenotic participation in this mystery of the humility of God made visible in Jesus the Christ as we allow ourselves to be broken and poured out for others in the service of mission. This kind of spirituality, which is not for the faint-hearted, can be embraced only through the work of the Holy Spirit. Such spirituality needs to characterize the whole Christian community. Transformative spirituality is not escapism from the challenges of daily life; rather, a genuine spirituality of mission directly confronts the inequities in every society and opposes the false claims of consumerism, rampant individualism, greed, and power. It calls us to prepare the way for the manifestation of the Holy Spirit’s life-giving presence in justice, peace, healing, and reconciliation.

One of the traps that pious people fall into is thinking that they know all the ways that God can work. TTL dispels this mistaken way of thinking and warns against trying to tame the Holy Spirit. Pope Francis in *EG* (§§196–99) instructs Christians to venture out to meet people on the periphery of society not as objects of mission, but as partners in mission. TTL, in words similar to those of Pope Francis, calls believers to learn lessons about mission from people on the margins, who are vulnerable because of the precarious situations in which they live. They have tasted the bitterness of discrimination, exploitation, and exclusion, and they invite us to discern again how we might participate in the *missio Dei*. TTL devotes several sections to mission on the margins, with the message that, in every society, we need to stand in solidarity with people on the margins, seeking to transform political and economic systems so that they reflect God’s concern for widows, orphans, strangers, prisoners, homeless, and physically or mentally challenged persons, all of whom are our brothers and sisters. This calling means “rejecting values and practices which lead to the destruction of community” (§49).

As the document rightly asserts, the mission to which we are called by the Holy Spirit is at once personal and communal, but there can be no mistake that “the Triune God’s overflowing love is the source of all mission and evangelism” (§55). The church simply seeks to “fulfill God’s missionary purpose” (§57) and to bear witness to the spirit of Christ at work in the church in mission. TTL rightly calls this an ecclesiological approach “from below,” because mission, as presented in the teaching of this document, is not our project for the expansion of the church, but the church bearing witness to God’s gift of salvation to the whole world (§58).

Another connection is made between unity and mission. For the church today it is an experience of the “not-yet reality” of the unity that Jesus prayed for as recorded in the Gospel of John (17:21). The world needs the common witness of the churches engaging in joint efforts to lead people to the truth, who is Jesus the Christ. Once again TTL makes it eminently clear that unity is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the church, which gathers people to celebrate “unity in diversity,” that is, “to grow into an inclusive and mutually responsible community” (§66).

Evangelism as presented in TTL is “mission activity which makes explicit and unambiguous the centrality of the incarnation, suffering, and resurrection of Jesus Christ without setting limits to the saving grace of God” (§80). This is an unmistakable call to the kind of humility that must shape approaches to sharing the experience of knowing Christ. Confidence as we share our relationship with Christ can never come out of a sense of superiority or bravado; rather, it must reflect a spirit of service that is motivated by love. The document gets it right; we evangelize best as we demonstrate Christ’s love through respect for diverse people and offering concrete services that reveal the presence of the Holy Spirit in the reality of peoples’ lives. Authentic evangelism is not only giving witness but is an invitation to acknowledge the grace of ongoing conversion in our own lives (§§88–89). We ourselves are changed as we share with others the gift of knowing Christ and growing in relationship with him.

The prophetic vocation to which the Holy Spirit calls us in our multicultural and multireligious world means that there is no room for violence, disrespect, or discrimination. In Christ, evangelism offers hope and consolation. At the same time it offers a worldview that places the Gospel approach of Jesus at the center of life; thus, evangelism is always liberating as well as challenging to all people. TTL affirms the truth that the Gospel, the Good News, is meant for people of every culture and challenges every culture through the work of the Holy Spirit. Our role is to discern more consistently and truthfully how the Spirit is leading us to play our part in making God known and loved among all peoples.

**Conclusion**

The twelve affirmations that conclude the document (§§101–12) serve as both a summary of TTL and a clarion call to the church to engage in mission among the peoples of the world and all of creation. The affirmations make us aware of the necessity to be ever alert to the need for humility as we bear witness to the Holy Spirit’s work in the hearts of people at the margins of societies. If we walk humbly with others, they will be able to teach us to be surprised by how and where God works. The response of people in the Global South and East to the Spirit’s call to share in God’s mission is still another example of God’s ever-creative action in the world. Our task remains: we must, through common witness and solidarity with those most in need, reveal God’s desire and invitation that all of humanity and all of creation share in the “Feast of Life through Jesus Christ” (§112).

TTL rightly affirms the church’s missionary identity and reassures the need for us as Christians to commit ourselves anew to live in ways that give witness to God’s revelation in Jesus, that all “may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). This is a document that needs to be studied, reflected upon, and implemented in ways that actually bring about justice, peace, and unity for the sake of humanity and all creation. In this way the reign of God can become not merely a promise but a foretaste of God’s mission to the world in its ultimate fullness.
“Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes”

Samuel Escobar

As I sit down to prepare this response to a World Council of Churches (WCC) document on mission and evangelism, I cannot but reflect on the “landscape” from which I write. My most recent experience of missiological activity in Spain was a few weeks ago speaking in a gathering of Latin American missionaries in Europe. Over a hundred of them met at Torrox, near Málaga, representing fifteen countries. After that I crossed the peninsula to Seville in order to teach an intensive course about Christian mission organized by Irismenio Ribeiro, a Brazilian missionary who leads an extension theological center for the region. It was hosted by the Baptist church of Montequinto, where the pastor is Stella Maris Merlo, an Argentinian who has been serving as a missionary in Spain for thirty-three years. During the course we prayed for a team of Spanish missionaries that serve in Equatorial Guinea in western Africa under the European Baptist Mission. At the time for meals we were hosted by Gladys, a lady from El Salvador, a hard-working immigrant and one of the hundreds of Latin American volunteers who are active in Spanish churches these days. This is the reality of the global church in the twenty-first century, and as I experience it in Spain I cannot but praise the Lord as I trace back this reality to the two centuries of missionary work that have preceded us.

Four years ago we were celebrating the centennial of Edinburgh 1910, and this year we are celebrating forty years of the Lausanne Covenant and the movement that followed it. In fact, the Busan document of the WCC has reminded me of what I consider providential convergences for Christian mission in the mid-1970s. First, in 1974 evangelicals gathered in Busan to issue a renewed call to evangelism; in 1975 the Roman Catholic Church asked Pope Paul VI to issue a new encyclical. Though its structure and style are very different from those of the Cape Town Commitment, which issued from the Lausanne III gathering in South Africa in 2010, I find that the two documents contain important theological convergences.

Trinitarian and Pneumatological Emphases

At several key points TTL affirms a Trinitarian position. The first and second sections are clear theological statements in this regard, and the missiological unfolding of the faith that is affirmed comes in section 3:

Life in the Holy Spirit is the essence of mission, the core of why we do what we do and how we live our lives. Spirituality gives deepest meaning to our lives and motivates our actions. It is a sacred gift from the Creator, the energy for affirming and caring for life. This mission spirituality has a dynamic of transformation which, through the spiritual commitment of people, is capable of transforming the world in God’s grace. How can we reclaim mission as transformative spirituality which is life-affirming?

These days in Spain, mission is taking place in new and creative forms. I know several Latin American evangelical women who care for old people in Madrid or Valencia and who share with them spontaneously the Good News of God’s love in Christ. What they do they do not even dare to call “mission.” I can also think of anArgentinian missionary in North Africa who is a soccer coach and thus has access to hundreds of teenagers with whom at some points he can talk about Jesus Christ in a spontaneous and natural manner.

In a way, we have witnessed the end of the imperial age of mission, in which the Gospel was presented “from above” by Spanish conquistadores, British merchants, and American enthusiasts who sometimes followed too closely the colonial or neocolonial patterns of their nations. Now the younger churches are carrying on mission “from below”—not only through intentional missionaries, but also through Filipina maids in Muslim countries, illegal immigrants in the United States, African university students in Europe. As TTL states, “The Holy Spirit works in the world often in mysterious and unknown ways beyond our imagination (Luke 1:34–35; John 3:8; Acts 2:16–21)” (§15). We missionaries and missionologists must be ready for surprises as the Spirit keeps mission going, in his own way. The agenda for the future is very well stated in section 106 of TTL, with which I agree wholeheartedly.

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We are invited to a painful self-examination, which is especially significant coming from the WCC, with its reputation for administrative efficiency.

Protestant missionary movement. TTL refers to several of the key elements of this tradition, but it also calls us to a transformative spirituality: “Mission spirituality resists and seeks to transform all life-destroying values and systems wherever these are at work in our economies, our politics, and even our churches” (§30).

Farther on, however, TTL invites us to a painful self-examination, which is especially significant coming from the WCC, with its reputation for administrative efficiency. The following comments are incisive and challenging:

In reality, however, mission, money, and political power are strategic partners. Although our theological and missiological language talks a lot about the mission of the church being in solidarity with the poor, sometimes in practice it is much more concerned with being in the centres of power, eating with the rich, and lobbying for money to maintain ecclesial bureaucracy. This poses particular challenges to reflect on what is the good news for people who are privileged and powerful. (§48)

A moving case of missionary self-examination is described by Gerald M. Costello in his book Mission to Latin America: The Successes and Failures of a Twentieth-Century Crusade (Orbis Books, 1979). This book gives an account of the crisis of conscience that was experienced by many American Catholic missionaries in the 1950s and 1960s when they realized that their church was part of the Roman Catholic Church has lost the power of social coercion that it had until the 1970s, the point at which Spain had to adopt religious freedom if it wanted to become part of the European Union, the church still has money, power, and an array of educational institutions, many of which are partially supported by the state. I find it sad that when the bishops raise their voices, it is usually to defend old privileges. In the past the church used all available means to create a negative image of Protestants. Spanish bishops opposed bitterly the concept of religious freedom during Vatican II. The evangelistic activity of evangelical churches is not a case of proselytism, but a demonstration that there are other ways of living Christianity that attract persons who have never been confronted with the Gospel.

As a rule, we see no cooperation in mission between Catholics and Protestants in Spain. I can, however, mention two exceptions. There has been a measure of cooperation between Catholics and Protestants in the Bible Society. Since 2008 we have had an interconfessional translation of the Bible, which is finding growing acceptance in Spain and Latin America. Also, some Protestants are part of the Asociación de teólogos/as Juan XXIII (John XXIII Association of Theologians), which has an annual theological congress attended by as many as 1,500 participants. The association, however, operates without the blessing of the bishops. A volume published in 2010 compiled the final declarations or messages of the first thirty congresses, which began meeting in 1981. The concept of mission that these declarations present comes very close in language and style to sections of TTL.

For many Catholics the Protestant presence is a nonissue. I was very happy when I received my copy of the Atlas of Global Christianity, edited by Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross (Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2009), published for the centennial of Edinburgh 1910. Rosemary Dowsett and I had contributed a chapter about evangelicals, and I was thankful for the final product. However, I felt disappointed and sad when I read the chapter about Southern Europe (on Spain, Portugal, and other countries). Not once in the whole chapter are Protestants mentioned—they simply do not exist!

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Mission and Freedom of Religion

I find relevant and necessary the statements in the final sections of TTL about the nature of mission and evangelism (§109) and dialogue and cooperation in mission (§110). I have participated in international evangelical events since 1966, when at the Berlin World Congress on Evangelism John Stott invited us to reconsider the Great Commission in the Gospel of John. As René Padilla and I had been working in the development of a concept of mission that would have a Christological structure, we found Stott’s emphasis refreshing and seminal. By the time the Lausanne Congress came in 1974, the follow-up to the Berlin process had given rise to regional congresses in Europe, Asia, the United States, Canada, and Latin America and was confirming the validity and relevance of what we had been trying to do.

What I find missing in TTL is a reference to mission in the context of post-Christendom situations, such as the one I now face in Spain. TTL states that “authentic evangelism is done with respect for freedom of religion and belief, for all human beings, as images of God. Proselytism by violent means, economic incentive, or abuse of power is contrary to the message of the gospel. In doing evangelism it is important to build relations of respect and trust between people of different faiths” (§110). Evangelical missionaries in Spain find themselves doing mission in the context of a very traditional Christendom. Though the Roman Catholic Church has lost the power of social coercion that it had until the 1970s, the point at which Spain had to adopt religious freedom if it wanted to become part of the European Union, the church still has money, power, and an array of educational institutions, many of which are partially supported by the state. I find it sad that when the bishops raise their voices, it is usually to defend old privileges. In the past the church used all available means to create a negative image of Protestants. Spanish bishops opposed bitterly the concept of religious freedom during Vatican II. The evangelistic activity of evangelical churches is not a case of proselytism, but a demonstration that there are other ways of living Christianity that attract persons who have never been confronted with the Gospel.

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Through instruments such as the *Atlas*, we have at our disposal an incredible amount of data about peoples, nations, sociological trends, and cultural patterns. Some of us are also familiar with a formidable set of missionary institutions, denominational and interdenominational, each one with its agenda that reflects its theological convictions, as well as an accumulated wisdom that cannot be despised. There is data that cannot be changed, but institutions and patterns need to be open to change. TTL provides inspiration, theological foundations, and disturbing questions. As we practice our mission, we must be attentive to the Holy Spirit. We also must be attentive to new and spontaneous missionary developments in unexpected places that may contain suggestions as to the way in which the existing missionary enterprise may be reformed. This should not be difficult for people who believe in an *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*. And we can add that the renewal of spiritual vitality has had an impact on mission when it has been matched by creativity of structures and methods.

Notes
3. Asociación de teólogos/as Juan XXIII, *Congresos de Teología: Mensajes* (Madrid, 2010).

“Together towards Life”: Catholic Perspectives

Stephen B. Bevans

What might a Catholic theologian and missiologist have to say about “Together towards Life” (*TTL*, the new document of the World Council of Churches (WCC) on mission and evangelism)? What follows are my reflections from such a Catholic perspective, for the sake of brevity made in six points. Before I begin, however, I should say up front that I like this document very much; this Catholic perspective, while not uncritical, is one of basic appreciation of what the WCC has given us here.

First, I think it is important to note a real difference in the nature of this document compared with documents that are issued by the Roman Catholic Church, particularly documents coming from the pope and the Vatican, such as the documents of the Second Vatican Council or Pope Francis’s recent document on the joy of the Gospel, *Evangelii gaudium*.

Catholic ethicist Charles Curran puts it well when he says that documents from the WCC are documents that do not speak for the church, but to the churches. Just as important as the content of a document such as TTL is the discussion it creates among the churches and the churches’ feedback to the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME). A Catholic document, particularly one coming from Rome, is by contrast a document that speaks for the Roman Catholic Church. Unlike a WCC document, which has no real authority other than that it comes from an esteemed body of churches, a Catholic document is very authoritative and demands, according to the authority that it claims for itself, various degrees of acceptance from Catholics. Because of this, and perhaps ironically, Curran observes that a WCC document can actually be quite prophetic and groundbreaking, as TTL certainly is. It seems to me that documents such as *Evangelii gaudium* are also quite prophetic, but the pope has to take pains to make sure that his teaching is more relevant to the *entire* Catholic Church, in all its variety.

Second, as a Catholic I applaud the focus of TTL on the mission of the Holy Spirit, who, as the document says, “works in the world often in mysterious and unknown ways beyond our imagination” (§15). Such focus on the Spirit points to the activity of God in mission since the dawn of creation and to God’s presence in all of history and the world’s religions. It emphasizes that mission is not so much about bringing God into a godless or evil situation, but the naming of God always present among the world’s peoples and cultures. Such focus on the Spirit is a welcome enlargement of Catholic understandings of mission, which, along with other Western churches, has treated the Spirit as the “Cinderella of the Trinity.” In her wonderful book *She Who Is*, Catholic theologian Elizabeth Johnson quotes the eminent Dominican theologian Yves Congar, who wrote that Catholic piety often functions “to displace many functions of divine Spirit onto the pope, the cult of the Blessed Sacrament, or the Virgin Mary.” It is time for Catholics to recognize the pervading presence of God through all of history that is poured out upon Jesus at the beginning of his ministry and poured out upon us as we engage in mission.

Third, Catholics will resonate with TTL’s call “to move beyond a narrowly human-centred approach and to embrace forms of mission which express our reconciled relationship with all created life” (§19). Pope John Paul II spoke often of the need for ecological awareness as a moral issue and called for an ecological conversion. Pope Francis called on Catholics to protect creation in his inauguration homily in March 2013, and in *Evangelii gaudium* he wrote eloquently, “Thanks to our bodies, God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can..."
feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment, and the extinction of a species as a painful disfigurement. Let us not leave in our wake a swath of destruction and death which will affect our own lives and those of future generations” (EG 215). Protecting creation is at the heart of the church’s mission, which both Catholics and WCC member churches can affirm.

Fourth, according to Geervarghese Coorilos, metropolitan of the Niranam Diocese of the Syrian Orthodox Church in India and moderator of the CWME, the “defining perspective” of TTL is its strong conviction that mission is no longer from the affluent center to the poor or pagan periphery, but rather is done from the poor, the pope writes. We need to “acknowledge the saving power at work in their lives and to put them at the center of the Church’s pilgrim way” (EG 198). The robust Catholic tradition of social justice finds strong resonance in TTL.

In the fifth place, Catholics may be challenged and somewhat taken aback by the rather uncompromising condemnation in TTL of the “market ideology” of capitalism. The document unmasks the myth that “the global market will save the world through unlimited growth,” arguing rather that it is “a threat not only to economic life but also to the spiritual life of people, and not only to humanity but also to the whole creation” (67). Similarly, Pope John Paul II railed against a “culture of death” in his 1995 encyclical “The Gospel of Life,” and Pope Francis speaks strongly against today’s “throwaway culture” (EG 53). “Mission,” the document says, “is to denounce the economy of greed and to participate and practice the divine economy of love, sharing, and justice” (§108). Nevertheless, Catholics might also listen to Pope Francis’s commendation of business as “a vocation, and a noble vocation” (EG 203), and recognize that neither capitalism nor socialism is good or evil as such (a recognition that, I believe, is Catholic teaching). If those who participate in the market economy “see themselves challenged by a greater meaning in life,” they will truly “serve the common good by striving to increase the goods of this world and to make them more accessible to all” (EG 203). Catholics, I think, would be somewhat less ideological than the WCC document.

Finally, I want to offer a Catholic critique of the understanding of evangelization advanced by TTL. It speaks of evangelism as focusing on “explicit and intentional articulation of the gospel” (§81). The document goes on, however, to speak of evangelization as including witness, sensitivity to cultures, and interfaith dialogue (§§86, 97, 93). This is simply unclear. The Catholic perspective of basically equating evangelization (or evangelization, as we prefer to call it) and mission, and then recognizing that mission has a number of constitutive elements, is to my mind a much simpler and richer way of thinking. There is one evangelism or mission in this view, which cannot be reduced to verbal proclamation or working for justice or any other single activity. Roger Schroeder and I, for example, speak of mission as constituted by six elements: witness and proclamation; liturgy, prayer, and contemplation; justice, peace, and the integrity of creation; interreligious, secular, and ecumenical dialogue; inculturation; and reconciliation.9 I think the document could learn from such a more inclusive understanding of mission.

I might say much more. There are resonances between the perspective TTL offers on cultural sensitivity, interfaith dialogue, spirituality, liturgical life, and community and those of Catholic theology, spirituality, and missiology. Although there might be a few places in the document that would cause a Catholic to raise an eyebrow, she or he can read this document with much profit, much consolation, and much challenge. Such is certainly true for this Catholic missiologist and theologian.

Notes

1. “Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes” was prepared by the WCC’s Commission on World Mission and Evangelism and adopted by the WCC Central Committee in 2012.
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My Pilgrimage in Mission

Juan (John) Stam

A friend once joked that I was born with a Bible in my hands. If so, it was a Scofield Reference Bible that was open to the Book of Revelation. Every summer a nearby church sponsored a “Summer Pavilion,” which brought many of the greatest Bible teachers, such as Harry Ironside, Carl Armerding, John Walvoord, and Alva McClain, all traditional dispensationalists. As if by contagion, I learned from these aged saints a profound love of Scripture and a passionate delight in Bible study. But that same passion led me to discover that not all tradition is necessarily biblical. Thus began my lifelong adventure of critical biblical exegesis.

In 1945, during my last year of high school, my father took me to Costa Rica and Colombia. This was my first contact with the Latin American Biblical Seminary (SBL), around which much of my life would revolve. In Sincelejo, Colombia, I heard Kenneth Strachan give a series of lectures on the theme “The Incarnation of Jesus Christ as Model for Missions and Missionaries.” I soon forgot the lectures, but the challenge of the incarnation was lodged permanently in my mind and heart.

In studying the epistemology of St. Augustine for my term paper, I was deeply moved by Augustine’s love for God, his theology of grace, and his integral, deeply human view of knowledge as loving God with our minds, our volition, and our emotions. “The true philosopher,” he wrote, “is a lover of God.” Through Augustine, God called me to theology and ministry—and years later, in a deeply emotional experience, God called me, together with my fiancée, Doris Emanuelson, for service in Latin America.

After earning my B.A. in history (1950), I studied New Testament for two years in Wheaton’s graduate school and then spent two years at Fuller Theological Seminary. Fuller inspired me to always strive to be truly “evangelical,” neither fundamentalist, on the one hand, nor liberal (à la Schleiermacher or Fosdick), on the other. Fuller sharpened my exegetical tools, especially in the classes of George Ladd, a friend for whom I will always give thanks to God. Although some of the professors were disappointing, the good ones taught me to think evangelically and honestly, without prejudices or caricatures. Some years ago I paid tribute to them in an article, in Spanish, entitled “Ethics and Aesthetics of Theological Discourse.”

And so Doris and I arrived in Costa Rica on December 28, 1954, under the Latin America Mission. We arrived with some firm convictions that, though they have grown, have served us for these sixty years. They were, first of all, a personal commitment to Christ as Lord, shaped consistently by an evangelical theology; second, the incarnation as model and inspiration for life and mission; and third, a love for Scripture and radical seriousness in its interpretation (exegesis). With all due respect for evangelism and church planting, our own objective from the start was not so much turning Catholics into Protestants as turning fundamentalists into evangelicals.

Then came 1955 and language school. I had more than my share of difficulties with the Spanish language and committed more than my share of bloopers. One dreary afternoon I slammed the language textbook shut and told Doris I did not think God had called me to Latin America. But I learned by experience that God can use people of just one small talent, if that talent is consecrated to his service and glory.

In early 1957 I was assigned to the Latin American Biblical Seminary as professor of systematic theology, and in March Doris and I returned to San José to begin teaching. We also had the role of dorm parents in the men’s dormitory. The seminary was a ministry of the Latin America Mission, with what I would call a moderate, intelligent fundamentalism (in that epoch, the best alternative to liberal modernism). A rigid legalism forbade dating among students, and the almost total missionary domination of the seminary created considerable alienation on all sides, blocked
necessary transformation, and created frequent problems. In the mid-1950s a new generation of missionary-professors began to take these challenges very seriously.

Our group struggled long and hard, with many faculty debates and memos. By the mid-1960s the faculty had ironed out an agreement by which any students who had passing grades and were up to date on homework could date, provided they informed their dorm parents and were back home by 10 p.m. When I reported this good news to the students, I added the penalty for noncompliance: Any students dating without due approval would be punished with two weeks of “total restriction” (permitted to leave his or her room only for meals, classes, and chapel). But instead of thanking us for this supposed victory for student rights, the students, to my bewilderment, responded very angrily. The next day a student came by my office to explain the problem to me. By announcing the punishments in advance, I was threatening them and offending their dignity. If I had not threatened them, any reasonable punishments would have been better accepted. I will always be grateful for this example of what missionaries can (and should) learn from our Latin American brothers and sisters.

The issue of student discipline was complicated by the fact that all the leaders of the seminary were North Americans. Faculty meetings were in English, memos were in English, and we prayed and conversed in English. I remember that one day I had to do an errand at the U.S. consulate, and as usual I was aware that, once inside that building, I had, by international laws of extraterritoriality, technically left Costa Rica and entered the United States. When I then walked a few blocks south to the seminary and entered its wide doors, I suddenly realized that I was again stepping out of Latin America into a region of cultural extraterritoriality.

The formation of a seminary genuinely Latin American in its leadership, ethos, and thought was a dream to which a group of us were committed, but a conservative sector of the faculty felt it was too soon for nationals to take over. The most prominent candidate for seminary rector (president) was considered too young for the task, with insufficient experience to be “catapulted to power.” One sleepless night an idea occurred to me that might break the deadlock. We had a number of extremely gifted candidates who could well be assistant professors and be learning by teaching rather than just being taught. The next morning I shared the idea with sympathetic colleagues, especially Dick and Irene Foulkes, and we decided to begin by proposing the plan to two of the best candidates. The Foulkes approached Hugo Zorrilla, and I, on my next mountain hike with Víctorio Araya while we were seated together in an open field in Tapézco Peak south of San José, made him the same offer. This plan helped change the dynamics of the faculty, inaugurated a tradition of assigning student-teachers, and helped clear the path to a national rector and eventually a thoroughly Latin American cultural identity for the seminary.

Living with Revolution

During the 1960s I began making frequent trips to South America, especially Venezuela, Colombia, and Peru, countries that, unlike Costa Rica, were caught up in revolutionary turbulence. During one trip to Venezuela, the mood in Caracas, the capital, was explosive, and my talk “Christ and Marx” in the National University was interrupted when half the crowd ran out to participate in a violent encounter just outside the classroom. I later proceeded to another city where an important Bible institute had invited me to lecture on contemporary theology. Upon my arrival, the director warned me that doubts had arisen about the theme for fear that it could lead to ecumenism, so would I please tell only what was bad about each theologian, because their students were very immature. I explained that my method was to present each theologian’s thoughts as honestly as possible and then show its positive value and finally its possible errors or dangers. After one of my talks, when a professor made inexact accusations against Karl Barth (with whom I had done my doctorate in 1964) and I answered with extensive quotations from his writings, the professor replied, “If Barth really believes that, you shouldn’t say so publicly because people will believe other things he teaches.” Happily, I found the students impressively mature, more so than their professors!

A graduate of that school was in prison because he and his wife, under threats, had served breakfast to some guerrillas. When I suggested visiting him in jail, they said that would be a bad testimony. A major subject of debate was whether it was a sin for women to wear lipstick.

In a letter of February 27, 1966, I shared these disturbing experiences with José María Abrüe, a Venezuelan and recent SBL graduate and a close collaborator in our reform movement: “I ask God for courage to be faithful to the Scriptures, even if [God] leads me along new trails instead of the worn paths of orthodox tradition. I return to San José even more concerned about the seminary, convinced that the time has come for a giant step forward. On the 12th I’m to give a report to the faculty and I intend to propose changes.” Throughout this period I was usually director of the Department of Christian Thought, which covered theology and history. The position gave me a platform from which to speak on issues facing the seminar.

For some time our group of “progressive evangelicals” had been insisting on more social commitment in the seminary. Personally, God had been working in my conscience through my conviction about the incarnation, my identification with the radical evangelical theology while at Fuller Seminary, and our experience with peasants and refugees in northwest Costa Rica, all of which prepared us for this moment.

When in 1960 I inherited a course called simply Marxism, I renamed it Church and World. To analyze Fidel Castro’s recent victory in Cuba, I invited a Costa Rican evangelical who was a Marxist activist of the Communist party and then, for the fol-
During this period Richard Shaull’s book *Encounter with Revolution* and the constant accompaniment of Victorio Araya, José María Abrüe, Armando Vargas, and many other friends helped me understand these experiences and challenges. Both in Costa Rica and in other countries, I was constantly asked to speak on the topic “Christian Faith and Contemporary Latin America.” I also began to march with the workers every May Day and to participate actively in Êxodo, a movement for social justice led by Methodist bishop Federico Pagura.

**The Seminary Becomes Latin American**

In the mid-1960s these experiences came into focus in a greatly expanded vision for the seminary. On my return to San José from the trip just mentioned, I circulated a two-part memo, dated March 17, 1967, and entitled, “Whither SBL?” and “The SBL of 1970.” I predicted that the future of evangelical theological education in Latin America would be decided in the next five years and called for a “big leap toward excellence” in order to put our seminary at the academic level of the best seminaries on the continent. During the month of April I unleashed a barrage of twenty memos (sometimes two in one day) with titles such as “Año de Radiografía crítica” (Year for Critical X-rays of SBL), “SBL and Social Ethics,” “Moral Issues for the Mid-Sixties,” and “Orthodoxy in the Mid-Sixties.” My initiative was well received by my colleagues, and significant changes began to occur.

Soon new, brilliant Latin American professors were joining the faculty, and in 1969 the seminary installed its first national rector. The seminary also continued to employ graduate students as assistant professors, with faculty rank. More classes involved investigation and term papers instead of only lectures and exams. In the early 1970s, seminars, with student papers, assigned reactors, and keen debates in which all participated, became the dynamic center of the seminary. The most stimulating seminar was “The Bible and Political Systems” (1972), in part a response to the challenge of liberation theology. Another dealt precisely with that theology, and yet another, “Black Culture and Christian Faith” (1973), was co-taught by an outstanding young black novelist. The seminar “Theology of Hope” had a special impact on participants; other seminars dealt with women in biblical thought (which then became a regular course), Teilhard de Chardin, “Costa Rican Reality and our Christian Faith,” “Contemporary Catholic Theology,” “The Radical Reformation,” and “The Holy Spirit and Pentecostal Theology.”

During this period some of the theses for the Licenciatura degree were equal in quality to those of the best seminaries anywhere in the continent. Students debated the themes of each other’s investigations, and the public defense of a thesis was often a big event for all. On December 27, 1972, I wrote to Oswaldo Motessi, “The most glorious moment of the year was Chema Abrüe’s defense of his thesis. Inspired! His thesis was a gem, and his defense electrified the public. When we announced his grade of 10 for both thesis and defense, the students picked him up and carried him all over the place. Everybody was celebrating a fiesta! Then came a reception in the dining hall and celebration on into the night!”

For his thesis, Brazilian José Pereira analyzed Luis Palau’s 1972 evangelistic campaign in Costa Rica. As part of his investigation he formed Bible study groups, and soon new converts were finding Christ. His thesis was fascinating and creative, but because of some technical and stylistic defects, the jury gave him only an 8. The crowd was unhappy and shouted out, “The jury gives him an 8, but the pueblo gives him a 10”—and they celebrated as if he had won a summa!

**Resignation from the Seminary**

To a significant extent our dreams for the future of the seminary were beginning to be realized, but storm clouds kept darkening the horizon. One former graduate, invited back as a professor, turned enemy and spread false accusations throughout the continent. A deep rift divided conservative professors and our “radical evangelical” group, who were taking leadership. The former concentrated their attack on Victorio Araya, whom they suspected of universalism. The arrival of liberation theology increased the gap between those of us who in one way or another tried to learn from this theology, and others who rejected all of it and were suspicious of anyone who did not do the same.

These tensions were severe, consumed many hours, drained our energy, and led to resignations. In 1974 I was asked to draft a document entitled “Plurality and Criticism in the SBL,” which was accepted unanimously by the faculty. I argued that, by tradition and conviction (and even its name), the Seminario Bíblico was evangelical and biblical. No one in SBL, for example, would deny the bodily resurrection of Christ. Within those parameters, professors had a right to their own political-ideological options and theological perspectives. Critics must either demonstrate a violation of Scripture or Gospel (shades of Martin Luther!) or else respect the evangelical pluralism of the institution. What amazes me now is how quickly this unanimous decision was forgotten.

In the mid-1970s Hugo Assmann arrived in Costa Rica and founded DEI (Departamento Ecuménico de Investigaciones). The seminary had had some positive contacts with Hugo, and, along with three other SBL professors I joined the DEI team and published some articles in DEI volumes. In June 1978, Hugo and the team asked me to design and edit the next DEI book. I chose as subject the conflict between Yahweh as God of the exodus and the surrounding idols of oppression, and I proposed a plan for the book.

To my surprise, Hugo raised objections to my proposal, which led to a month of intense debates in our weekly team meetings. A God who acts in history, Hugo argued, would be an “interventionist,” like the imperialists. I responded that this was precisely the Gospel message and that to deny this would land us in deism. For Hugo, all worship, including Yahweh worship, tends toward idolatry; I replied that the undefinable, unpredictable, unmanageable Yahweh was the antidote to such idolatry, and I quoted Barth’s *Revelation as the Abolition of Religion* and Kierkegaard’s *Attack on Christendom.* For Hugo, God cannot be a “substitute actor” for the liberating action of the poor themselves,

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I renamed the course *Church and World*. Once again, my students turned out to be my best mentors.
to which I replied, “God acts for the poor, with the poor, and in the poor, but not instead of the poor.” For Hugo, Yahweh is the god who does nothing; the real god is the revolutionary spirit of the proletariat. All this, I said, did not sound like Latin American liberation theology but rather like European liberalism.

Soon after this debate, Hugo (who was an excellent cook) invited me for supper, along with Georges Casalis. Hugo began arguing that the church in Costa Rica was a massive irrelevance and that nobody would ever transform the church, nor would the church transform Costa Rica. If I would stop wasting time with the church, he proposed, I could publish four books a year. The following day I resigned from DEI.

Meanwhile, in the seminary major changes were occurring, very much influenced by Hugo Assmann. I tried to resist in faculty meetings, memos, and conversations but found little support. Colleagues who a few years before had endorsed the school’s historic evangelical convictions now promoted the opposite and did so not through any serious theological or ethical debate, but by a takeover of power, organized in the corridors of DEI. In early 1980 Plutarco Bonilla resigned from the seminary, and I began to consider also taking that step.

In October 1980, when a faculty colloquium considered an excellent paper by Tom Hanks entitled “The Kingdom and the Poor,” the designated “reactor” ridiculed the classic concepts of sin and grace as “the false dilemma of a God who can do everything and man who can do nothing.” Thus, “in the latest exegesis,” he said, “the plagues in Egypt are understood as popular actions.” When the conversation period began, I posed three questions: the nature of God, of salvation, and of Scripture. I waited for answers, but my questions were ignored. At the end, I said that, if I believed what my colleagues had been saying that night, I would leave the ministry. I soon presented my letter of resignation, in which I stated that I could no longer accept the seminary’s parameters of conduct and doctrine.

After all my dreams for the seminary, this result was (and is) deeply painful, but I have never doubted the decision to resign. While the seminary’s credibility in evangelical and Pentecostal circles declined to almost zero, my resignation freed me for greatly expanded ministry all over Latin America. Churches invited me as special speaker, and seminars and universities as visiting professor. I had especially close links with youth movements and university groups all over Latin America. Since I had no institutional backing, those inviting me had to pay all expenses, but the invitations kept coming in.

Ministry in Nicaragua

In 1978, during the Sandinista insurrection against Somoza, Doris and I helped form the Ecumenical Committee Pro-Refugees and worked hard to provide food, clothing, housing, jobs, and legal papers for many hundreds of Nicaraguans. We became special friends of the Christians from the Solentiname Community, founded by poet-priest Ernesto Cardenal. We also served Sandinista safe-houses, and soon I was asked to give weekly meditations for the guerrilla fighters. Our experiences in those

Notes
2. Karl Barth, La Revelación como abolición de la religión (Madrid: Marova, 1973), trans. of Church Dogmatics, 1/2 para. 17; Søren Kierkegaard, Attack upon Christendom (Boston: Beacon Press 1956).
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The Legacy of Charles W. Forman

Charles W. Forman

The most important legacy of my grandfather Charles W. Forman is the Forman Christian College, a flourishing coeducational institution with over 6,300 students in Lahore, Pakistan. Among its graduates the college has produced three presidents of Pakistan, four of its prime ministers, three defense ministers, and three Supreme Court justices. The college, however, is only the most apparent part of his legacy. Other important aspects that should be remembered can be discovered by following the story of his life.

Charles William Forman was born on March 3, 1821, the ninth of thirteen children of a prosperous farmer in Washington, Kentucky. His grandfather had been one of the first settlers of Washington, which was the first place to be named for George Washington and which had the first post office west of the Appalachian Mountains. His grandfather had left New Jersey with his family and eighty slaves when he saw that abolitionist sentiment was growing in New Jersey and had trekked across the mountains to Kentucky. Charles grew up with a vigorous youth with a strong constitution that later served him well in the rigors of the Punjab climate.

At age thirteen he lost his father and had to go to work. He managed the shipment of hemp in the form of rope from his family farm downriver to New Orleans, where his brother, George, handled its sale to exporters.

Conversion and Call to Missionary Service

Two years later Charles was introduced to the young minister in the Presbyterian church in Washington and was impressed by him. Charles’s family background had nothing of religion in it, so this introduction opened a new possibility in life. He studied the Bible and Christianity and was impressed by the way the prophecies regarding Christ had been fulfilled. Finally at the age of twenty he asked for baptism. He took baptism not as a formality but as involving the full consecration of himself to the service of Christ. His first action in his new life was to put out a notice offering instruction in reading in the church to any slaves who had written permission from their masters. On the appointed day he was dismayed to see the church completely full. Such was the faith the masters had in this young man. He had no training in speaking to such a large group, so he promptly dismissed them. He was unable to find any speaker to take over in his place, indicating the radical nature of the step he had taken. He soon decided to be trained as a minister. He spent four years at Center College in Kentucky followed by three at Princeton Seminary in New Jersey.

At the start of his time at Princeton, Charles happened to meet a youth from the Scudder family, a family who had been related to the Formans in New Jersey. Young Scudder had been raised in Sri Lanka, where his parents were missionaries, which brought missionary work to Forman’s attention. On reflection he realized that, while there were many who could preach to the lost souls in America, there were exceedingly few who would preach to them in a country like India. So he, quite logically, volunteered to the Presbyterian mission board to go to India.

Charles’s family was horrified. They were a close-knit family and were not content to let him go. Nor was it easy for him to leave them. In later years he reflected that if he ever got back to America, he would spend all his time going from house to house to feast his eyes on his family members. He found it especially hard to leave his mother, Dolly Wood, who had been the first child born in Washington and who lived from 1786 to 1872. Nevertheless, when he finished at Princeton, in 1847, he set off for India.

To Calcutta and the Punjab

It was a long, slow trip by sailing vessel, five months and one week without sight of land. But Charles had books to read and an interesting young companion, also a new Presbyterian missionary, A. A. Hodge, who after a few years returned to Princeton, where he became famous as a professor. The ship’s captain was impressed by these two young men and offered to let them preach at the weekly services. He also accorded to Forman’s request to distribute religious tracts to the crew members.

Eventually they reached Calcutta (present-day Kolkata), where young Forman was invited to stay with the famous Scottish missionary Alexander Duff. Duff was then near the peak of his influence, converting high-caste youths through English education, youths whose descendants still provide leadership for the Indian church in many parts of the country. Forman was doubtless convinced that this evangelistic effectiveness of education could be repeated in his mission, an expectation in which he learned he was sadly mistaken.

After a short stay Forman left Calcutta for the difficult five-month trip up-country to the Punjab, where the American Presbyterians had established themselves as the first missionaries. The Punjab proper at that time was ruled by the Sikh conqueror, Ranjit Singh, and the missionaries had set up an outpost at Ludhiana, just short of Sikh territory. The outpost was occupied by John Newton and his wife, Elizabeth, who warmly welcomed Forman and gave him an introduction to mission work. Forman’s first experience of preaching to large numbers of Indians was at
a mela, or religious fair, held near a spot in the hills where occasionally flames came out of the rocks, a phenomenon that local lore considered supernatural. This experience suggested to him that scientific study would undermine Hindu beliefs and made him a confirmed advocate of science. In his years of teaching he ordered scientific instruments such as telescopes, microscopes, and globes from America to use in his schools.

By 1849 the British had taken over the Punjab, and the Newtons and Forman moved to the capital, Lahore. The first British rulers of the Punjab were a remarkable group of evangelical Christians, led by the brothers Henry and John Lawrence, who looked upon their position as a trust from God to be exercised for the welfare of the people they ruled. They welcomed the American missionaries and opened opportunities to them. During their first year in Lahore the missionaries received over $2,000 in gifts from the Europeans. In January 1850 they began their first mission school, which was the first English-speaking school in the Punjab and the first north of Delhi to offer modern, Western-style education.

Solitary Labors

Because of poor health the Newtons had to leave for the United States for furlough in October 1851, a furlough that, because of their slow recovery, lasted three and a half years. Young Charles Forman, who had been in India for only three and a half years, was left alone in Lahore, with the school teaching, the preaching, their slow recovery, lasted three and a half years. Youn Charles Forman, who had been in India for only three and a half years, was left alone in Lahore, with the school teaching, the preaching, the distribution of food to the poor, and care of the poorhouse. The rented mission house was given up as unnecessary for the distribution of food to the poor, and care of the poorhouse.

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The school in Lahore prospered. It had begun with just three boys sitting under a tree, but within a year it had moved into a building and had fifty-nine pupils. European residents, impressed by the work, gave funds with which Forman purchased several properties, including the Rang Mahal (lit. “color palace”), an old nobleman’s palace in the heart of the city. This became his main school for the rest of his life. Twenty-five years later the Rang Mahal School had 445 boys, and his branch schools in Lahore had 1,192 more. The largest school sections provided instruction in English and Persian, and some provided Hindi. He even had hopes for some teaching of Gurmukhi, the sacred tongue of the Sikhs.

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Educational Success

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The classes he taught were the ones dealing with religious subjects. At one point he wrote of having a class of eighty boys studying the elements of Christianity and Bible history and, at the same time, two combined classes in Bible and evidences of Christianity. He wrote a short book attempting to show that Islam was not from God and to reply to Muslim objections to the Bible and give proof of the truth of Christianity. When he visited the branch schools, he examined the students not only in English and Persian but also more particularly in their recitation of the Christian catechism, which they memorized.

As the schools grew, Forman’s own work became largely supervisory, though he continued to teach some classes in Bible and Christian evidences. He took his supervisory work very seriously. He said that when he found capable teachers, he believed that he should treat them as friends and fellow laborers, his intercourse with them should be free and unrestrained, he should acquaint himself with their peculiarities both bad and good, he should sympathize with them in their troubles and show sincere interest in all that concerned them, and he should counsel them, encourage them, and pray for them. The teachers, he said, must feel that confidence was placed in them along with responsibility. With this philosophy he developed a body of teachers, mostly non-Christian, filled with his spirit and loyal to him, which may be his greatest achievement.

With such a staff the mission schools won a high reputation. Government officials in several nearby cities offered to transfer their government schools to Forman’s supervision, though he was only thirty-four years old. At first he accepted these offers, but after two or three years he found it too difficult to continue because of the problems in finding teachers who could be relied upon at a distance. He welcomed the establishment of govern-
The church remained small. In 1861 the native church in Lahore had only eleven members. Large additions did not come until the mass movements among outcasts in the villages near the end of the century. Forman’s attitude toward these movements was ambivalent. He was delighted, as he said, to see “simple villagers ready to receive the truth like little children without hesitation or doubt.” But he refused to regard the mission’s work among these people as its only important work, as some claimed. Conversion did not, in his view, greatly improve the converts’ way of life. Still, at the end of his days he said that if he were starting his life’s work over again, he would follow Jesus’ example and train a few earnest men and induct them into village work.

Though Forman was known for his educational work, he himself regarded preaching as primary. His favorite subjects for preaching were the character and work of Christ, the nature of true holiness, the vanity of mere outward forms, the inconsistency of immorality with true religion, and the nature of Christ’s sonship, which was not like that of human offspring. His longest preaching periods were in the winters, when he often went on preaching tours in the countryside, preaching to village people. It was taxing work, living in tents, traveling by horseback (with camels carrying the tents and baggage), and rising before dawn to make an early start. Once a camel lay down in a stream and refused to budge, soaking all the equipment. On some days he would preach six times, stopping between times only long enough to recover his voice. He liked to take with him on these tours Abdoola Athem, a native Christian, who, he said, would exert more influence by far than many foreign missionaries.

The great events of his time did not change Forman’s work significantly. In 1857, the year of the great rebellion of Indians against British rule, the Punjab remained relatively quiet, a tribute to the way men like the Lawrences had ruled it. In Lahore the European women and children were gathered for a time in a protected area. But Forman kept on, after a brief pause, with his daily preaching in the bazaar, which contributed to the sense of normalcy. Only in Ludhiana was damage done to the Presbyterian mission in the Punjab; there a passing troop of rebels destroyed all the mission buildings.

A few years later the American Civil War began. Coming from the border state of Kentucky, Forman felt the division keenly. He had long been opposed to slavery, though not to the extent of thinking that slaveholders should be put out of the church. He felt that it was a mistake to go to war to stop the secession. But since the headquarters of his mission was in New York, the war did not affect his work greatly.

Forman Christian College

The years of the American Civil War were also the years when Forman started thinking about founding a mission college. This was a big step and required careful consideration. As long as the graduates of his school could get good jobs, there was no need for a college degree. But he could see the time coming when good jobs would require a college degree. He asked the mission board in New York for permission to start a college, but after the permission was granted, he held off on action. In 1864, however, he added a college section to the Rang Mahal School, and this date is taken as the inauguration of what became Forman Christian College. In 1869 the college had to be closed because of the death of one of the principal missionary teachers. But in 1886 the mission voted to revive it. Forman was ambivalent about this step and did not vote on the matter because he was not sure that the large resources required for the college would not be better given to the village work, where so many were ready to receive the Gospel.

When the mission voted for the college, however, he threw himself into the work as its head. He secured the approval of the director of public instruction and, at Forman’s request, the government provided grants-in-aid for the college work. He gave the college its motto, which it has kept to this day: “By love, serve one another” (Gal. 5:13). The college was not named for him until after his death.

Discussion of the college has taken us past the time of Forman’s first furlough in the United States, 1867–69. This furlough was necessary because of his seriously deteriorating health. He took with him his wife and seven children. He was not idle during the furlough. He stayed in Lexington, Kentucky, not far from his old home, and worked among the newly freed slaves. The white populace of Lexington supported a general movement among Southern whites to resubjugate the former slaves. This ministry therefore subjected him to ostracism and condemnation from his fellow whites, an experience that he later said was the hardest experience of his life. His health had hardly been restored when he had to return to India because of the death of the man who had replaced him in the college. He left his four older children in America, though it was hard to find a place for them and the mission board provided only partial support; their clothing had to come from interested friends.

Back in the mission he consistently supported progressive policies. He, with Newton, championed the granting of full equality to the Indian Christian ministers who previously had been subordinated to American missionaries in the operations of the church. He believed that the Indian church should gradually replace the mission, a change that did not come until well into the twentieth century. He was an advocate for girls’ schools and female education, the importance of which he thought could not be exaggerated. He supported permission for polygamy in the church in the case of members who already had more than one wife when they were baptized. This policy was eventually approved by the Presbyterian Church in India, only to be canceled by the Presbyterian Church in America, to which India was subordinate.

The mission college continued to prosper after its reestablishment, with its students coming mainly from mission schools. The only other college in the Punjab was the government college, and competition between the two colleges was inevitable. For a time, to attract students, Forman charged only half the fees of the government college, but he also cooperated in government projects. He was invited to serve as a member of government conferences on educational policy in 1880 and 1890. He was...
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offered an honorary doctorate, which he declined, saying that he did not think honorary titles should be received by ministers of the Gospel.

**Final Years**

Margaret, his wife, died in 1878 after a long illness, which, he noted, she bore with the conviction that all was ordered in wisdom and goodness by God, and that consequently she enjoyed great peace. Two years later he took his second furlough, this time for only nine months. He left his remaining three children in the United States and returned a lonely man to Lahore—though eventually five of his children returned as lifelong missionaries in India. In 1882 he remarried, this time to Georgiana Lockhart, who came from Scotland and who was of great comfort to him for thirteen years. Three children were born to the couple.

In his later years he continued to go to the school and college at 6:30 every morning and to his preaching points, to which his wife accompanied him, in the evenings. He now drove a small carriage instead of walking through the city as he had done in the past. This was pleasant, but it deprived him of the conversations with the people of the city, which had meant so much to him and to them.

He took a final brief furlough to the United States (date not recorded) so he could see his children who were there one last time. He died in Lahore in 1894 at the age of seventy-three. His funeral was accompanied by an outpouring of grief and honor, especially from his former students, many of whom were now men of high rank. They carried his coffin and drew the hearse through the streets of the city. His grave is still recognized in Lahore, the city to which he dedicated his life.

**Appraisal**

In looking back at Forman’s work from the perspective of twenty-first-century missions, certain lessons stand out. One is certainly the value of long-term involvement in a single area. Missions today have moved more and more in the direction of short-term work. Short terms cannot begin to have the impact that a lifetime of close association with a single community can produce. And as the short terms get shorter, the expectation of any impact decreases. Many short-term programs in mission are now valued for their effects on the missionaries—a broader outlook or interest in the wider world—rather than their effects on the people served. Nothing could better justify the long-term mission.

We have to confess that one reason for the desire for shorter terms has been the complaint of national Christians that long-term missionaries become too dominating in the national church. The missionaries’ long experience puts the levers of power in their hands. But when the missionary has the outlook of Forman, always pushing for advancement of the native Christians and for the turning over of power to them, this concern hardly arises. The long term in such cases is decidedly preferable.

A lesson that would not have been evident in Forman’s times but that is of importance now is the usefulness of mission educational institutions for the advancement of the depressed Christians who came out of the mass movements. Mission education has made an enormous difference in their lives, and the higher educational institutions have been the capstone of this effort. Forman College today is a fine example of this service. Its student body includes over seven hundred Christian students, most of them from poor families. And whereas Forman was concerned that conversion made little change in the way of life of the mass-movement Christians, conversion followed by mission education, especially college education, has completely changed their lives.

A final point to note is the importance of Forman College in fostering interreligious harmony. This issue was hardly a concern in Forman’s day. But in the twenty-first century it has become very important to the whole society. Pakistan, along with many countries of the Middle East, is fraught with religious divisiveness and threats of terrorism. The college that Forman began remains an island of cooperation and mutual understanding, and its graduates spread this spirit in the whole society. Christian missions in this century are awakening to wider fields of concern than they had in the past, concern for the whole society, and for this wider concern Forman was providing valuable resources. There is much for which later centuries can thank him.

**Selected Bibliography**

**Works by Charles W. Forman**

Charles W. Forman wrote several short manuals, none available to the author, for use in local teaching and in religious discussion.

**Works about Charles W. Forman**

Forman, Henry. “A Sketch of the Life of Dr. Forman,” *The Forman Christian College Monthly* (March–April 1921): 29–42. This article by his son is the only published biography of Forman.

**Notes**

1. The information for this article came from the Forman Family Papers (Record Group no. 110) in the Yale Divinity School Archives, New Haven, Connecticut; hereafter FFP.
2. Charles W. Forman, letter to John C. Lowrie, secretary, Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, January 15, 1891, FFP.
3. The children who returned to India were John Newton, who was a well-known speaker in the United States and England as well as in India and was one of the founders of the Student Volunteer Movement; Charles William, who was a medical doctor; Henry, my father, who started the Scindia School in Gwalior, one of the most respected preparatory schools in India; and Mary and Emily, who were principals of girls’ schools in Uttar Pradesh.
The Legacy of Samuel J. Mills Jr.

David B. Raymond

The year 2012 marked the two hundredth anniversary of the origins of the U.S. foreign missionary movement. Much attention was rightly paid to Adoniram Judson, the most famous member of the original band of missionaries. Unfortunately, little has been made of the contribution of Samuel J. Mills Jr., the man most historians acknowledge as the “father of the foreign missionary work in Christian America.” Part of the reason for this oversight is that Mills, one of the original four missionary candidates who in 1810 petitioned and were accepted by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), never served as a foreign missionary. Still, no man did more than Mills to support and advance the cause of Protestant missions from the United States during the movement’s formative years.

Mills’s legacy is best summed up by the subtitle of Thomas Richards’s biography: “Missionary Pathfinder, Pioneer, and Promoter.” Mills was a pathfinder who had an innate ability to venture into new territory, perceive an unmet religious need, and devise a plan to meet that need; a pioneer who broke new ground with his ideas for a variety of voluntary associations to carry out his visions; and a promoter who could deftly elicit the support needed to implement his plans. One of the first Americans to feel the need for American churches to take part in the British-led movement to spread the Gospel to foreign lands, Mills initiated and guided the student movement that inspired Congregationalists to organize the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), was instrumental in the formation of the Foreign Mission School to educate indigenous people from abroad so that they could become ministers and missionaries in their homelands, and was a primary mover in the formation of the Presbyterians’ United Foreign Mission Society. On the domestic front, his two missionary trips to the American West drew attention to the spiritual deprivation on the frontier and motivated evangelicals to develop specific plans to provide ministerial support and Bibles to the peoples of that region. Finally, Mills’s sojourns in the South made him painfully aware of the miserable physical and spiritual condition of the slaves there, causing him to work to create a school to prepare African Americans for ministry and to join the nascent movement to end slavery in America. All of this he accomplished in a span of less than ten years. So while Mills may not have served on a mission field, his tireless work to organize and support a variety of organizations to assist missionaries in their work of preaching the Gospel, both at home and abroad, was foundational to the success of the movement.

Mills’s Early Days and Education

Samuel J. Mills Jr. was born April 21, 1783, in Torrington (now part of Torringford), Connecticut, the last of seven children of Samuel and Esther Robbins Mills. His father was a respected Congregational minister, noted revivalist, and occasional home missionary to the wilds of Vermont. His mother was a devout Christian who dedicated the life of her youngest son to religious service and worked diligently to steer him in that direction. As a youth, Mills was inspired by the lives of missionaries John Eliot and David Brainerd, and after a prolonged two-year conversion experience, he dedicated his life to missions in 1801, prepared for college at Morris Academy, and entered Williams College in the spring of 1806 to prepare for the ministry. In August of that year Mills led the famous Haystack Prayer Meeting. There, under a stack of hay during a violent thunderstorm, a group of five young men dedicated their lives to the cause of missionary work in a foreign land. In 1808 Mills attracted a group of missions-minded young men and formed the for-a-time famous Society of Brethren. Buoyed by the mantra “We can do it if we will,” interest in foreign missions began to spread across the campus. After graduation, Mills and the Brethren moved on to Andover Theological Seminary for their theological training. There they formed the Society of Inquiry on the Subject of Mission to plan and promote the cause of foreign missions. Out of this society would emerge the original band that became the first American missionaries sent by the ABCFM. Though not as well-known today as it was a century ago, the group that formed around Mills and called themselves the Society of Brethren were the impetus for the creation of the first U.S. foreign missionary organization and an inspiration to the early foreign missionary movement in general.

Crucial to understanding Mills’s contribution to missions is his New Divinity theology. First encountering this theology through the preaching of his father, Mills was thoroughly indoctrinated through his study at Williams College, a bastion of New Divinity theology. Sometimes referred to as “Hopkinsianism” for its founder, Samuel Hopkins, the New Divinity theology was a modified version of Calvinism known for its emphasis on “disinterested benevolence”: a devotion to God that demanded willingness to be damned to hell if it would lead to the greater glory of God. Such selfless dedication helps to explain the frenetic pattern of service undertaken by Mills during his brief life and suggests an answer to the mystery of why the man who set in motion the American foreign missionary movement never served as a foreign missionary himself.

American Foreign Missionary Movement Origins

American foreign missions began in the summer of 1810, when Mills, James Richards, and Luther Rice (all members of the Breth-
ren), along with fellow seminarians Samuel Nott, Samuel Newell, and Adoniram Judson, joined together to petition the General Association of Congregational Churches to fund their plan for an American missionary presence in Asia. After soliciting the advice of the Reverends Samuel Spring and Samuel Worcester and Professor Moses Stuart of Andover Theological Seminary, Rice and Richards, who had another year of study left, were omitted to increase the chances that the General Association would shoulder the financial burden. In late June the remaining four men made a formal request for support at a meeting of the General Association, which led to the formation of the ABCFM. Within two weeks of the General Association’s commitment to the young seminarians, Mills was replaced by Gordon Hall as the fourth missionary. The official record of the ABCFM is silent on the matter, but a number of theories have been advanced to explain this mysterious transaction. Some claim Mills was in poor health, others note that he had not completed his course of study at Andover, while still others claim the Brethren decided that he could better serve the cause as a promoter and recruiter. While all such explanations seem plausible, a better explanation rests with willingness on Mills’s part, in line with the New Divinity theology by which he had been formed in college and seminary, to do whatever was needed to advance the cause of foreign missions. We may surmise that Mills, recognizing that his friend Gordon Hall was better prepared and qualified to serve in the first missionary contingent, selflessly gave up his appointment for the greater glory of God.

Nor was this the only time Mills put the needs of missions ahead of his own desires. After the first contingent of missionaries was sent, a second was planned but then was delayed because of the outbreak of the War of 1812. During the war the ABCFM selected and trained the next group, which included Mills. When peace came in 1815, the board was ready to dispatch the second party, but once again Mills was removed from the list at the last minute. This time he clearly had asked to be relieved of his appointment so as to assume the work of Edward Warren, who had come down with an illness and was advised not to undertake a planned arduous journey to the American West. As it turned out, Mills’s sacrifice turned his life in another direction, for his talents were drawn off into the movement to form a national Bible society, and away from his goal of becoming a missionary.

Mills also was instrumental in the formation of a number of other foreign missions organizations. The Sandwich Islands Mission and the Foreign Mission School of the ABCFM owe their origin to Mills and his friendship with Henry Obookiah. A native of the Sandwich Islands, Obookiah had fled the islands after his family was killed during an intertribal quarrel. Arriving in Connecticut, he determined to get theological training so that he could return to his people to preach the Gospel. Mills met Obookiah during a visit Mills made to Yale in 1809. Inspired by the young Hawaiian, Mills lobbied for the creation of a school to educate young men like Obookiah. The result was the Foreign Mission School at Cornwall, Connecticut. Although neither Mills nor Obookiah lived to see it, the work of Mills and the inspiring story of Obookiah eventually led to the formation of the Sandwich Islands Mission. Mills was also a prime mover in the formation of the United Foreign Missionary Society. After his tours of the West, he moved about the Middle states urging other denominations to take up the cause of foreign missions. He was most influential in Presbyterian circles, helping to devise the plan, and lobbying countless hours, for the formation of the United Foreign Missionary Society, which became a reality in 1818.

Home Missions and Related Endeavors

The foreign missionary movement was part of a much broader reform movement that swept the nation in the first half of the nineteenth century. For evangelicals, the primary focus in the early stages of the antebellum reform movement was salvation of the lost, both here and abroad. The primary means of evangelization came through the foreign and home missionary societies. Supplementing these missionary organizations was a cadre of voluntary associations that supported the work of evangelism by providing Bibles to instruct the new converts in the ways of faith, tracts to supplement preaching, Sunday Schools to convert and train the young, and education societies to underwrite the cost of ministerial training for pious but indigent young men who aspired to the ministry. As important as Mills was to the foreign missionary movement, he was just as valuable to the formation of national societies dedicated to home missions and the distribution of Bibles.

After graduating from Andover Theological Seminary in 1812, Mills undertook two missionary tours (1812–13 and 1814–15) to the American West and South. On his first missionary tour, sponsored by the Massachusetts Missionary Society and the Connecticut Missionary Society, Mills and his traveling partner, Rev. John F. Schermerhorn, did some preaching and a lot of reconnoitering to assess the spiritual condition and needs of the inhabitants of the West. Beginning in New England, the two men made their way through New York and Pennsylvania on to Ohio, then down through Kentucky, Tennessee, and on to the port of New Orleans. From there, they made their way across the South and headed north through the Carolinas and Virginia to New England, thus completing a grand tour of much of the United States as it then existed. Everywhere they went they found a dearth of Bibles, ministers, and churches; a lack of respect for the Sabbath; and a general disregard among the inhabitants of the West for the condition of their souls. What existed in abundance was proflanity, gambling, drinking, and fighting. Upon his return to the East, Mills published a report of his travels and began soliciting local missionary and Bible societies to raise funds to send men and Bibles to the West to remedy this dishathering situation. Through these pleas he gained the backing of the Massachusetts Missionary Society, the Philadelphia Missionary Society, and the Philadelphia Bible Society for the purchase of 5,000 French Bibles, hundreds of English Bibles, and 15,000 tracts, as well as the resources to underwrite the cost of a second journey.

His second trip followed much the same path as the first, with the addition of a stop in St. Louis. This time Mills and his partner, Rev. Daniel Smith, came bearing Bibles and tracts to distribute among the spiritually destitute. They also preached the Gospel and organized Bible societies in the communities they visited. As a result of Mills and Smith’s reconnaissance, the churches in the East learned that most of the citizens of the West still did not have access to ministers, churches, or Bibles. Upon his return in 1815 Mills focused on the need for a national Bible society.

In 1814 Elias Boudinot had tried, with scant success, to unite the local and state Bible societies into a unified whole that could better coordinate the publication and distribution of Bibles. But of the nearly one hundred Bible societies polled, only twenty were willing to participate in the creation of a larger organization. Boudinot received the boost he needed when Mills published the report of his second missionary journey. Characterizing the West and its religious life as the “valley of the shadow of death,” Mills was able to persuade the New Jersey, New York, and Philadelphia Bible societies to band together to form a national organization to
meet the dire need for Bibles in the frontier regions of the United States. As a result of his appeals, the American Bible Society was formed in January 1816.  

Although he never lived to see it come to fruition, the work of Mills and his associates proved foundational for the formation of a national home missionary society that would serve the needs of people in frontier regions. Prior to his trip the churches of New England and New York had formed local domestic missionary societies, but these focused on the needs of the frontier regions of their own states and not the unsettled territories beyond their borders. The reports of Mills and his associates describing the dismal spiritual condition of the inhabitants of the West led to an awakening in the churches of the East that ultimately led in 1826 to the formation of the American Home Missionary Society.

Both of his missionary tours to the West included a trip through the South, bringing Mills into contact with the institution of slavery and the spiritual plight of African Americans. Finding working to found the School for Educating Colored Men so as to prepare African American ministers to meet the spiritual needs of slaves in America and to serve as missionaries to Africa. Mills also was instrumental in the formation of the American Colonization Society (ACS), the first national organization dedicated to ending slavery. The ACS planned to eliminate slavery gradually by purchasing slaves and sending them back to Africa. Mills was chosen by the society to go to Africa to scout out a tract of land that would serve as the new homeland for newly freed slaves. This mission proved to be his last. On the return voyage, he became ill and died, but not before he had completed the task of identifying a homeland for the ACS to which it could send recently freed American slaves.

Conclusion

Despite his work for a variety of causes, Mills never lost his desire to become a foreign missionary. From 1815 until his untimely death in 1818, he continued to sign his correspondence...
“missionary brother” and had to be cajoled by Gordon Hall into keeping up his recruitment efforts.

With characteristic self-denial, Mills never complained about his disappointment until his fateful final trip to Africa, when he unburdened himself to his traveling mate, Ebenezer Burgess. With great emotion, Mills confessed to Burgess that he still longed to settle in some remote village, preaching the Gospel to those who did not know it. As Burgess wrote, “He was probably disappointed that he was not approved and sent out as missionary with his best friends, Hall and Newell. He once alluded to it, but said that it was now the height of his ambition to be the pastor of any little church in the outskirts of our country, that he might feed a few of the sheep and the lambs of Christ’s flock.” It seems unfortunate that the visionary and inspiration for this great work was denied the realization of his dream to serve as an American foreign missionary. However, if one views Mills as a man who lived by the New Divinity ideal of “disinterested benevolence,” willingly sacrificing his personal ambition to do the needed work for the advancement of the kingdom of God, the self-sacrificing contours of his life make sense.

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Notes


13. For Mills’s second missionary journey, see Richards, Samuel J. Mills, 127–47. Mills was the lead author of the second, 64-page report; see Samuel J. Mills and Daniel Smith, Report of a Missionary Tour through That Part of the United States Which Lies West of the Allegany Mountains; Performed under the Direction of the Massachusetts Missionary Society, by Samuel J. Mills and Daniel Smith (Andover, Mass.: Flagg & Gould, 1815).


15. Foster, Errand of Mercy, 183–84. Foster argues that Mills’s report provided the “larger objective” for the formation of such a society.


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At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Catholic Church modified its global mission efforts by focusing on indigenous church leadership. Coming decades before the demise of colonialism, this shift brought about a new awareness of the importance of culture in the life of faith. The Second Vatican Council ratified and deepened this approach, which understood every human culture as open to faith in Christ.

A Century of Catholic Mission is a skillfully assembled volume of essays that offers contextual analysis of the mission activity of the Catholic Church during the twentieth century, illuminating this period in which a Western church with foreign missions redefined itself as a global communion. Editor Stephen Bevans gathered an extensive list of international scholars to weigh in, and their essays display a diversity of conceptions of the missionary and missiological tasks. For Francis Anekwe Oborji, missiology today must focus on the consequences of the church’s meeting with the cultures of Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania (133–34). Maria Clara Luchetti Bingemer takes a more expansive view; for her, plantatio ecclesiae missiology, which calls for the establishment of the church in new contexts, gave way in the twentieth century to service to God’s reign (187–95). Robert Schreiter, in turn, returns the focus to the church and sees in the work of reconciliation a necessary and a more modest goal for mission activity (234–38).

Most of the essays take into account the teachings of Vatican II, and readers can easily select specific topics of interest to pursue from the council. For those interested in a comprehensive view of Catholic missions and missiology, the book as a whole will reward careful reading, even if, understandably, some repetition of viewpoints on Vatican II will be encountered. Those interested in the development of Catholic teaching on mission should go directly to the three excellent survey chapters—by James Kroeger, Stephen Bevans, and Roger Schroeder—covering respectively the period 1910–59, Vatican II, and from the conclusion of the council to the present.

The first six chapters provide a geographic survey of the history of Roman Catholic mission outreach during the period 1910–2010, with the stronger of these chapters exploring the relationship of developments in church life (especially the impact of Vatican II) to the church’s mission activity. For example, while tracking the history of mission engagement in Africa through the demise of colonialism, Oborji uses mission statistics to assess the maturity and quality of church life on the continent. This presentation includes a list of religious orders founded in Africa, a significant but hard-to-find piece of data (17). The strongest geographic chapters (Martin Üffing on Europe, Paulo Suess on Latin America, and Angelyn Dries on North America) offer an annotated summary of the church’s growth and mission activities on each continent during the period.

The volume explores many aspects of Catholic mission, including migration and mission, by Gioacchino Campese, and an appreciation of the ecumenical interdependency among twentieth-century mission theorists, offered by Jeffrey Gros. Two innovative chapters focus on the importance of cross-cultural mission for pedagogy and preparation for ministry: Jim and Therese D’Orsa on Catholic schools, and Claude Marie Barbour and Eleanor Dodge on mission as accompaniment. Both chapters draw on the experience of programs that have had a degree of success. Other chapters cover missionary movements, women, the Bible, theology, witness and proclamation, service and contemplation, ecology, interreligious dialogue, inculturation, and spirituality. The work contains a splendid twenty-four-page bibliography.

—Robert A. Hurteau

Robert A. Hurteau, director of the Center for Religion and Spirituality, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, California, is author of A Worldwide Heart: The Life of Maryknoll Father John J. Condinsde (Orbis, 2013).
constrained. International bodies and Western countries are not guiltless here, Abu-Lughod avers.

Finally, human rights advocates themselves come from particular contexts. Abu-Lughod traces the shifting scene of women’s rights advocates in Egypt from state socialism in the 1950s and 1960s to neoliberalism, to international bodies, to corporate donors, to Islamic organizations. The business of humanitarianism may be lucrative, she notes.

But real women remain complicated. “Rather than clicking on a website to donate $10, or flying to distant lands to bring school supplies to girls, and certainly before calling in military troops, we should take time to listen” (202).

—Miriam Adeney

Miriam Adeney teaches applied anthropology in the School of Theology at Seattle Pacific University and is the author of Daughters of Islam: Building Bridges with Muslim Women (IVP Books, 2002).


A Missional Orthodoxy: Theology and Ministry in a Post-Christian Context.


Two recent books published under the imprint of IVP Academic address key factors in missional practice and missional theology. The first, Recovering the Full Mission of God, can serve well as a textbook for mission strategy, for it helps readers see in the Bible how God’s people are called to fulfill their God-given mission. In the book’s first two chapters, Flemming illustrates how Israel was called to live out its missional life not only by being a holy people of blessing but also by actively proclaiming God’s power to the nations around, especially through their missional prayer and worship. In the following four chapters, Flemming demonstrates the “seamless integration” of being, doing, and telling found in Jesus’ mission, which the individual Evangelists present in common, even as they contextualize Jesus’ mission for their specific audiences. Though he acknowledges that we “cannot afford to confuse our mission with Jesus’ singular role in God’s saving purpose” (82), Flemming argues that there should be continuity between our mission and that of Jesus. Then he examines the Pauline epistles, 1 Peter, and Revelation, challenging us to weave together the being, doing, and telling aspects of mission as we partake in God’s mission, anticipating the ultimate triumph of God’s mission when all nations come and worship the living God.

In particular, I appreciate Flemming’s highlighting of missional suffering, the value of which has somewhat been overlooked. We must remember that our mission is from the margins, from points of weakness, and remember also the beauty and power of Jesus’ suffering. Though we should not idealize human suffering and sacrifice to the extent of overlooking our humanness and thus fail to balance the demands of suffering and sacrifice with the needs for support and nurture, we should appreciate that our mission participates in the “suffering mission of the suffering God” (222).

The second volume, A Missional Orthodoxy, is by Gary Tyra, a professor of...
biblical and practical theology. The author skillfully responds to and critiques the false antitheses that hinder one from embracing a missionally orthodox understanding of the Bible, God, human beings, salvation, the church, and final things. With a purpose of doing theology and ministry that is “faithful to both the biblical text and the missional task” (11), Tyra warns not to fall into the temptation of overreaction and overcorrection; instead, he challenges all three groups to avoid competing with one another but to be united in their commitment to forging a missional orthodoxy. In his conclusion, Tyra argues for a Christ-centered orthodoxy that enables a theologically authentic encounter with Christ. Such an encounter in turn leads to humble participation in God’s mission guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of mission.

I agree with Tyra that a biblically informed theology can only be missional and that we are to present the Gospel in culturally sensitive ways. Any missional theology should therefore help God’s people to contextualize the Gospel so that those hearing it may experience the reign of God and be able to embody it within their own context. At the same time, as Tyra clearly indicates, the Gospel expressed authentically in a given context should also transform that context. Moreover, in today’s post-Christian and yet postsecular culture, it truly is critical for evangelicals to embrace a “pneumatological realism” and to help those who hunger for God to encounter the Holy Spirit as they interact with the Word.

—Eun Ah Cho

Eun Ah Cho is assistant professor of intercultural studies, Asian Center of Theological Studies and Mission / Asia United Theological University, Seoul, Korea. From 2000 to 2005 she served with her family as a full-time missionary in Kazakhstan.

The World’s Religions in Figures: An Introduction to International Religious Demography.


“Where do they get these numbers?” This was a recurring question during my years as editor of the International Bulletin of Missionary Research in response to the “Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission.” Arguably the most widely cited IBMR feature since its first appearance in 1983, the year after David Barrett published his groundbreaking World Christian Encyclopedia (Oxford Univ. Press), the numbers—rounded to the nearest million or thousand—raised eyebrows and skepticism in readers. Although answers to this question are available in the massive two-volume second edition of the World Christian Encyclopedia (2001), few readers have ready access to the tome, and even if they do, explanations of the sources and methods underlying the figures are scattered and not always easy to locate. This book solves that problem, resoundingly.

The four chapters in part 1 survey 1910–2010 global religious populations, regional religious populations, and religious diversity. They then project religious population growth from 2010 to 2050. Part 2 provides a detailed explanation of the data and methods used by the World Christian Database (launched in 2003) and its offspring, the World Religion Database (formally inaugurated in 2008), in five substantial chapters. How do the scholars behind the numbers define religion? Just what is religious demography, and how does it relate to other kinds of demographics? What major sources and collections of data are utilized in generating the religious numbers? How are data analyzed, and how are discrepancies reconciled? And how are dynamic factors such as conversion, migration, and mortality factored into the numbers? Answers to such questions are provided in the five chapters of this section.


The book’s usefulness is enhanced by a fourteen-page glossary of terms (346–59) and a detailed subject index. As one might expect, illustrations abound: 78 tables and 23 figures clarify the book’s content. If skeptics of religious numbers will study this book, they will discover that Todd Johnson and his World Religion Database conferees have moved beyond days of yore when numbers were based on guesses or even face-saving lies. It is a pity, though not surprising, that the volume is so costly. But any library, research center, or scholar either using or trying to explain religious numbers will agree that this book is worth every penny.

—Jonathan J. Bonk

Jonathan J. Bonk, an IBMR senior contributing editor, is executive director emeritus of the Overseas Ministries Study Center and director of the Dictionary of African Christian Biography, at Boston University.

Understanding the Qur’anic Miracle Stories in the Modern Age.


In this book Isra Yazicioglu, assistant professor of theology and religious studies at St. Joseph’s University, Philadelphia, examines how various thinkers have grappled with stories about prophetic miracles. She seeks to understand what their approaches to miracles reveal about their attitude toward the apparent tension between reason and revelation, and about the relevance of Scripture in real life. Yazicioglu discusses how, in dealing with miraculous events described in the Qur’an (and the Bible), some thinkers have chosen reason over revelation and opted for a metaphorical reading of these stories; others have preferred to understand miracles literally, arguing that God’s omnipotence overrides the laws of nature; and still others have seen the two as coexisting and complementing each other.

Part 1 of the book showcases the argument for a literal interpretation of miracle stories made by the famous Muslim theologian al-Ghazali (d. 1111), who maintained that they uphold the contingency of the natural order, urging us to view them as a divine gift. The author then lays out the critique of al-Ghazali offered by Muslim philosopher Ibn Rushd (d. 1198), who argued instead for the primacy of causality in nature as a demonstration of God’s wisdom.

Part 2 discusses the attitude toward miracles found in the thought of two Western thinkers, David Hume (d. 1776) and Charles Peirce (d. 1914). Yazicioglu points out the contradiction between Hume’s idea that natural order can be breached and his contention that miracle stories should be rejected based on past
Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible. 2nd ed.


Christians at the Border helps the majority culture and Hispanics think about and respond to the subject of immigration, particularly that of undocumented Hispanics, as biblically informed Christians. This edition updates readers on sociol-egal data on immigration and expands on the biblical foundations for how Christians should relate to immigrants, refugees, sojourners, and strangers—those in exile. As the son of a Guatemalan mother and an American father who grew up in a bicultural and bilingual household, Carroll stands between the Hispanic culture and the U.S. majority culture. Since Carroll is also a biblical scholar and the immigration spokesperson for the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, he is certainly qualified to speak on this issue.

The book argues that Christians must take a biblical stand in the national debate about undocumented immigration. Everyone, including undocumented Hispanic migrants, is made in God’s image and is therefore valuable. Hospitality and openness to foreigners is a Christian virtue. The Christian church of the majority culture should treat the “least of these” as Jesus did, with hospitality and kindness. Although undocumented immigration is “illegal,” Christians should be guided by a higher set of laws as citizens of God’s kingdom.

Some readers may criticize the book for focusing just on Hispanic immigration and addressing only the majority culture and Hispanics, ignoring all those who fall outside of those two categories. In response, Carroll would likely say that his argument applies for all believers, no matter their nationality, legal status, or ethnicity. All Christians should be biblically informed on the issue of immigration and emulate Jesus, Who embraced and showed compassion to “the other.”

—Rebecca Y. Kim

Rebecca Y. Kim is associate professor of sociology at Pepperdine University, Malibu, California. She is the author of God’s New Whiz Kids: Second-Generation Korean American Evangelicals on Campus (NYU Press, 2006) and The Spirit Moves West: Korean Missionaries in America (Oxford Univ. Press, forthcoming).

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Lost Enlightenment: Central Asia's Golden Age from the Arab Conquest to Tamerlane.


Over the past two decades, world historians have challenged Eurocentric notions of progress by drawing attention to earlier periods when non-European societies flourished in manufacturing and trade. These works tend to omit any extensive discussion of scientific achievements, which appear to remain part of an exceptional story of European modernity. Lost Enlightenment describes in painstaking detail a culture of scientific inquiry that Central Asians had nurtured many centuries before Europe’s Age of Reason. From 750 to 1150, Central Asian society stood “at the forefront of intellectual life and culture globally” (521). The author’s vivid accounts of the scientific advances made by men such as Abu Rayhan al-Biruni (973–1048) and Ibn Sina (980–1037), along with many others, correct not only our presentist perception of Afghan society as economically backward and Talibanized but also our tendency to limit achievements of Islamic societies to those centered in the Arab world, for instance, in medieval Baghdad. The main personalities presented in Frederick Starr’s work are non-Arab scientists (mostly of Iranian or Turkic stock) who happened to write in Arabic, the lingua franca of both cultural and intellectual interchange throughout the Islamic world (16). Their achievements were remarkably interdisciplinary, crossing the terrain of what we now call astronomy, philosophy, mathematics, physics, and medicine.

Starr devotes considerable space to addressing the “why” and “how” questions associated with Central Asia’s enlightenment and decline. Intercultural contacts generated by trade, religious pluralism, state backing, and the habit of conserving past knowledge all catalyzed innovation. As for the decline, Starr treads more cautiously. Whereas medieval Central Asians struck a healthy balance between openness to the outside world and a vibrant local society, later Islamic empires seem to have lost that balance and were more focused on aesthetic than scientific achievement (523). The book is remarkably well researched and well written. It will make a valuable resource for those interested in the history of science, Central Asian history, and medieval cross-cultural encounters.

—Chandra Mallampalli

Chandra Mallampalli is professor of history, Westmont College, Santa Barbara, California. His books include Christians and Public Life in Colonial South India (RoutledgeCurzon, 2004) and Race, Religion, and Law in Colonial India (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2011).

Embracing Epistemic Humility: Confronting Triumphalism in Three Abrahamic Religions.


The Torah, the Gospel, and the Quran: Three Books, Two Cities, One Tale.


Lifetimes of eclectic experiences have enabled both authors to challenge long-held exclusive theological opinions. Donald Borchert, professor emeritus of philosophy at Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, encourages his readers to recognize the need to embrace a humility that counters the tendency toward arrogance and triumphalism, which only antagonize people of other faiths. In effect, much of his work revolves around the question of how finite human beings can make definitive statements about the nature and ways of an infinite God. This book is a clearly written introduction to issues from the philosophy of religion, but it is done in such a way as to encourage an understanding that we must revise our view of the “other,” seeing others not as competitors but rather as colleagues in the search for the better world that is God’s and thus affirming the need for witness to faith, not denying it.

Anton Wessels, professor emeritus of religion at the Free University in Amsterdam, takes us along the same road, suggesting that Jews, Christians, and Muslims must read their Scriptures together and not against each other. To do so is not simply to engage in the comparison of texts, but to see how together they may influence our common life in our own time. Like Borchert, he questions the overconfidence and pride that emerge out of some interpretations of Scripture. Wessels takes up the theme of the two city types that dominate texts in the Scriptures. In one city, injustice and corruption dominate; in the second, God rules. Throughout the book runs a critical prophetic tale that moves on to the One City on a Hill, whose inhabitants may be descended from Abraham, though that relationship may not in itself make them believers; rather, “only those who believe are Abraham’s descendants” (54). Both books speak to our age and time and deserve wide readership.

—John Parry

John Parry, erstwhile presbyter of the Church of Bangladesh, now serves as a minister of the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom. Until his recent retirement he taught world faiths and world church studies at the Partnership for Theological Education, in Manchester, England.

The J. H. Bavinck Reader.


The J. H. Bavinck Reader introduces a generation of non-Dutch speakers to Johan Herman Bavinck, a missionary statesman whose writings continue to shape the debates of present-day Reformed missions thinking.

The book is divided into a substantial introduction plus three sections. The introduction (1–92) consists of an extensive overview of Bavinck’s life by his biographer, Paul Visser, outlining his distinguished career as a missionary in Java and teacher and theologian in Kampen and Amsterdam.
The three sections provide selections from Bavinck’s writings. The first section deals with the uniqueness of the Christian faith in relation to other faiths, outlining Bavinck’s respectful but profoundly biblical understanding of the nature of the Christian proclamation. The second and longest section deals with the domain of religious consciousness, with a careful tracing of its decline in the Western world. The third section contains the result of Bavinck’s study and interpretation of mysticism and religious experience in the Javanese context.

John Bolt, James Bratt, and Paul Visser have judiciously selected material that displays Bavinck’s commitment to biblical thought allied to careful scholarship. These qualities shape the profound insight that he brings to Reformed missiology. His contribution to ongoing debates concerning the uniqueness of the Christian message in a pluralistic world and his investigation into the universal nature of religious consciousness explored in the light of general revelation display the continued value of this brilliant and passionate missionary thinker.

In the skillful translation provided by James Yong, Bavinck is shown to be a missionary theologian of the stature of Hendrik Kraemer, one to whom we should listen carefully. Readers will benefit greatly from this welcome volume in the theology of mission.

—Robert M. Norris

Robert M. Norris is senior pastor of Fourth Presbyterian Church, Bethesda, Maryland.


Kelly and Michèle O’Donnell have made significant contributions to the mission movement through their publications on member care for missionaries. Beginning with their joint volume Helping Missionaries Grow (1988), followed by Kelly’s Missionary Care (1992) and Doing Member Care Well (2002), among other publications, they continue to benefit all who work in cross-cultural contexts. Crossing Sectors for Serving Humanity is the second of a projected three-volume series under the title Global Member Care, all published by William Carey Library. The first was The Pearls and Perils of Good Practice (2011); the third volume, Good Practice for/from All Peoples, is in preparation.

Crossing Sectors for Serving Humanity seeks to encourage willingness to learn from other “sectors,” as well as to serve those who work in other types of cross-cultural humanitarian service. The introduction states, “The goal is to encourage us all to ‘broaden our experiential boundaries’: to take advantage of the wealth of opportunities for connecting and contributing to various international sectors on behalf of the diversity of remarkable people who serve in mission/aid as well as on behalf of humanity itself” (xix).

Having served as consulting psychologists to a variety of organizations, the O’Donnells have broad experience in the four sectors the book addresses. Their premise is that the humanitarian, human health, and human resource sec-
tors are to be fruitful sources of learning for those who serve in the fourth sector: mission/aid. To this end they have compiled thirty-five articles presenting key lessons from current research and policy development. Each article is followed with sources for further study; the Kindle version provides Internet links to the resources listed.

The articles draw on many authors and a wide array of expertise, including persons serving with the United Nations and the World Health Organization, World Vision, and Management Sciences for Health. The material will be of great benefit to persons planning to venture into a sector new to them, and the book could serve well as a textbook for both graduate and undergraduate courses. Many will find in it both a challenge and a resource: a challenge to consider serving outside of one’s comfort zone, and a resource for lifelong learning.

—John S. Burch

John S. Burch serves as pastor to missionaries with Mission to the World, Laurencetowne, Georgia. He and his wife, Sue, served in Australia for thirteen years and currently provide member care for workers in Asia.

Van dorpsjongen tot wereldburger (From village boy to world citizen).
4 vols.

By Jan A. B. Jongeneel. Utrecht: Stichting de Zending van de Protestantse Kerk in Nederland, in collaboration with the Univ. of Utrecht, 2013. Paperback €5 each; €16 for the four-volume set.

These four small monographs (total 211 pages) in Dutch document the career of the eminent missiologist Jan A. B. Jongeneel, who is honorary professor emeritus of missiology at Utrecht University, where he taught for twenty-one years and supervised forty-one Th.D. candidates, following his missionary service in Indonesia.

The first volume begins with a very brief autobiographical sketch of his life and work, followed by a curriculum vitae of his many professional involvements in sequence from his student days until 2012, plus a listing of his publishing activities during each period of his career.

Volume 2 gives an overview of the archive containing hundreds of his personal documents that “are placed in 154 files. In turn these files are stored in 24 archive boxes (precisely 3 meters)” (15), at Utrecht University.

Volume 3 is an exhaustive bibliography (57 pages) of everything he has ever produced—both published and unpublished—in several languages, including even his endorsements on the back cover of books.

Volume 4 was prepared by Jongeneel’s family without his knowledge to include in the series. It contains many photographs of him throughout his career, including two of him at work in his apartment in New Haven, Connecticut, at the Overseas Ministries Study Center, in 1996 and 2001. The pictures add a nice personal touch to the series.

It is quite remarkable that Jongeneel was able to recall, preserve, and organize so many documents, letters, travel reports,
Western Daughters in Eastern Lands: British Missionary Women in Asia.


Rosemary Seton’s book provides a broad overview of the history of British women missionaries in mainland China, India, and Africa between the beginning of the nineteenth century and the mid-twentieth century. The author first explores the women missionaries’ background, motivation, selection, training, and preparation, and then looks at their lives on the mission field. Besides their educational and social backgrounds, other important factors to be considered were the aspiring women missionaries’ physical and mental health, age, and family circumstances.

The Protestant women missionaries who came to Asia faced many difficulties. More important, “The need for more female workers was made known but their deployment was controversial. The presence of single women on the mission field was considered problematic by many until changing mission strategies in the 1870s and 1880s required their being sent out in larger numbers” (23). In a chapter titled “The Structure and Organization of Women’s Missionary Work,” the author highlights the gendered nature of conflict on the mission field. On the one hand, trained single women missionaries helped to relieve the wives of male missionaries from both domestic and vocational roles. On the other hand, many married women missionaries felt “redundant to the missionary enterprise,” and when “differences arose between their husbands and single women, wives invariably took their husbands’ side rather than that of the new-comers, often to the surprise of the latter who had expected gender loyalty” (101).

The introduction of Western education and medical training as well as evangelism by British women missionaries had a revolutionary influence on local women. Seton provides historical case studies from a variety of denominational backgrounds, interdenominational groups such as the China Inland Mission, and the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission.

Seton is familiar with the archives and special collections at the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London. Along the way she introduces valuable archival materials such as a wide range of missionary society archives, private manuscript collections, memoirs, letters, diaries, and biographies that enrich the interest of the book.

—Agnes Suk-man Pang

Agnes Suk-man Pang is a lecturer in the Department of General Education, School of Humanities, Hang Seng Management College, Hong Kong. Her recent research centers on Protestant higher education and medical women missionaries in modern China.

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—Dr. Miriam Adeney, anthropologist, missiologist, and author of Kingdom Without Borders: The Untold Story of Global Christianity (2009)

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INVITE A FRIEND TO SUBSCRIBE AND JOIN US ON FACEBOOK.


This book is the author’s Ph.D. dissertation, written at the Free University in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. It gives a complex answer to the simple question of why Christianity has not yet succeeded in Japan, examining various factors—worldview, theological, missiological, societal, and political. First, Mohammad Hassan Oliai reviews the history of mission in Japan from the early Catholic efforts, followed by a long period of persecution of Christians and then reentry by Protestant missionaries. Next, the author walks through the above-mentioned factors to paint a picture of the Japanese people as being attracted to Christianity as the irresistible force of modernity, but ultimately fearful of it as intrinsically foreign and threatening to their way of life.

Of all these factors, Oliai considers “the worldview factors as well as the political ones most relevant” (216). The Japanese sense of wa, which values harmony of the corporate body above all, stands in sharp conflict with the individualism of the worldview carried by Christians from the West. The colonial ambitions of the West that lie behind its Christian mission have made Japanese resistance even firmer. In fact, Japan politicized its indigenous Shinto religion “in response to a perceived threat from triumphal Western Christianity” (105), resulting in the deadly clash with the West and demise of its own imperial ambitions.

This book is a useful resource for introducing the complex case of Japan in concise form. Any study that attempts to explain Japan, however, must beware of falling into Japanese exceptionalism as a rationalization for its rejection of the Gospel. The author tends to lay the blame mostly on the Western missionaries, but Japan’s guilt in both political and spiritual senses should not be neglected. Also, as Christian mission is being increasingly carried out by non-Western missionaries in Japan and elsewhere, perhaps new answers and hopes will soon begin emerging.

—Sung-Sup Kim

Sung-Sup Kim is assistant professor of theology at Japan Mission Theological Seminary in Tokyo, Japan. He grew up in Japan as a child of Korean missionaries and is currently serving as a pastor of mission at Yohan Tokyo Christian Church.

Orthodox Perspectives on Mission.


The missionary tradition and missionary theology of the Orthodox Church, unknown in Western circles fifty years ago because of historical circumstances and a lack of scholarly study in the field, have been better represented in ecumenical circles from the 1960s onward. Especially through participation in the World Council of Churches, the family of Orthodox Churches (Eastern and Oriental) has had the opportunity to come together to reflect upon and present their understanding of missiology, its relationship with ecclesiology, and its overall connection to ecumenism, both within the Orthodox family and in relation to the larger Christian community.

Orthodox Perspectives on Mission represents the latest piece of this ongoing reflection and development. What makes this volume special, however, is that in its first half the book collects previously published works—considered classics in the field of missiology, ecclesiology, and ecumenism—from some of the most respected theologians and missiologists in the Orthodox world’s recent past and present. This “Orthodox Heritage” section is then combined with the most recent reflections and presentations on these themes arising from the 2010 Edinburgh Conference, along with the 2013 Busan WCC General Assembly.

Petros Vassiliadis, who himself supplies two contributions to the volume, is a worthy editor of this book because of his intimate involvement in this facet of the Orthodox movement over the past decades. He has served as a commissioner for the WCC’s Commission on World Mission and Evangelism and is a professor of New Testament and interfaith dialogue at Aristotle University in Thessaloniki.

For those not familiar with the unique missiological tradition of the Orthodox Church, as well as for those who want to expand and enrich their own understanding of witnessing to our Christian faith to our modern, pluralistic world, this volume will be valuable.

—Luke A. Veronis

Luke A. Veronis, director of the Missions Institute of Orthodox Christianity, Brookline, Massachusetts, served as a missionary in Albania and East Africa for twelve years.

Christianity in a Nutshell.


A mark of maturity is the ability to synthesize a lifetime of reflection with clarity. Avoiding theological and philosophi- cal language, Leonardo Boff in 119 pages poetically and prophetically articulates the essence of Christianity and his sixty books. In sync with modern science, he places God’s “divine dynamism” (9) in creation and liberation in the context of billions of years of the “entire evolutionary process” (118) in which everything is connected.

Chapter 1, “Christianity and Mystery,” develops the foundational assumption: “All is Mystery.” God-Mystery desires to be known, self-communicates, and attracts humankind to know it and respond in “wonder and reverence” (5). Boff explores a new insight, “God is Mystery to us and to Godself.” Thereby, “God’s self-knowing never ends.” Its “entire and full, and at the same time ever open to new fullness” (6). This thread of “newness” and “openness” continues until the “end” with “the new heaven and the new earth . . . culmination of all things in the reign of the Trinity” (119).

For Boff the essence of Christianity is not in doctrines, dogmas, church, or rituals but in communion with the divine persons of the Triune God, who “always act in communion” (22), and with others. The loving actions of Father, Son (human and divine), and Holy Spirit are expounded with creative spiritual insights. The reign of God was the “great dream” that consumed Jesus. The Lord’s Prayer encapsulates the core message of God’s reign: relationship with “Our Father/Mother” and provision of “our bread”—human needs. In the last chapter Boff criticizes the church’s option for power and its neglect of the centrality of the Trinity and of the fact that Jesus
was a “poor and humble Nazarene” (96) and “Suffering Servant and Persecuted Prophet” (60, 97).

This book will inspire secular seekers of spirituality and mature scholars eager to integrate a life of reflection with profound simplicity.

—Sherron K. George

Sherron K. George is a retired Presbyterian Church (USA) regional liaison for South America and former professor of mission and evangelism at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Austin, Texas.

“Frontier,” and “Contextualization” are each the focus of a chapter. Following naturally from the focus on context, the next five chapters (16–20) deal with culture in mission strategy, with an introduction to cultural research and consideration of people-group profiles, communication, receptivity, and need. The final seven chapters (21–27) serve as a practical guide for missions, from start (visioning) to finish (evaluation); they nicely round out this book on mission strategy with sensible advice.

Nearly every chapter contains a sidebar outlining an important topic with questions for personal reflection or group discussion in the classroom and beyond. Not as prevalent but equally valuable are the case studies spread throughout. Overall, this volume is a must-read not only for missionaries and mission strategists but also for church pastors and seminarians.

—Steven S. H. Chang

Steven S. H. Chang is professor of New Testament, Torch Trinity Graduate University, Seoul, Korea.

Developing a Strategy for Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Cultural Introduction.


Developing a Strategy for Missions happily fills a gap in resources for thinking about mission planning and is accessible to missionaries, pastors, and students. Produced by a mission professor and a church pastor (both with field experience), the book serves as a “biblical, historical, and cultural introduction” that admirably covers the broad scope of missionary strategy from definitions to biblical and historical examples to contemporary models and needs to implementation and practical concerns.

The first three chapters consider issues surrounding strategy as an appropriate concept in mission planning, including definitions, crafting of strategies, and addressing objections. The next two chapters delve into the biblical perspective on mission strategy and the missiological principles that arise from biblical foundations. Chapters 6–15 review a wide range of strategic models from mission history, beginning with the apostle Paul and the early church. Strategies from history under the headings “Roman Catholic,” “Pioneer Protestant,” “Faith Missions,” “The American Frontier,” “The Indigenous Mission,” “The Church Growth Movement,” and “The Indigenous Missionary” are examined.

Chapter 16, “People-Group Profiles,” considers the needs and opportunities of people groups throughout the world. Strategies are proposed for reaching and involving these groups. The next five chapters (16–20) deal with cultural research and communication, with an introduction to cultural research and consideration of people-group profiles, communication, receptivity, and need. The final seven chapters (21–27) serve as a practical guide for missions, from start (visioning) to finish (evaluation); they nicely round out this book on mission strategy with sensible advice.

Many of today’s foremost missiologists and mission thinkers appear both in the IBMR and as lecturers at OMSC.

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The essays collected in this volume are based on a workshop held in 2010 in Münster, Germany. One of the key words in understanding the book is the term “politics” in the subtitle, though this is defined rather widely in the introduction as “activities pertaining to the acquisition or exercising of power or status of one group or individual over another group or individual through either formal or informal means” (9).

The book’s twelve chapters, plus an introduction, have a broad geographic focus mainly outside the Anglo-Saxon area. Contributions from scholars working in Germany, Poland, Norway, United States, United Kingdom, and New Zealand deal with missionary work from or to Germany, Sweden, Canada, New Zealand, Poland, China, New Guinea, East Africa, and Fiji.

The topics dealt with in the book include children’s missionary periodicals, metropolitan editorial control of missionary contributions, the apparent silence of the subaltern voice, missionary attitudes toward Islam and Judaism, mission and empire, the justification for medical missions, and the use of common tropes such as “the biblical mandate,” “light and darkness,” “barbarism versus civilization,” and “conversion.” With one or two exceptions, such as Albert Wu’s chapter comparing the periodicals of the Berlin Missionary Society and those of the Society of the Divine Word with regard to China (79–96), the chapters deal solely with Protestant missions.

In the final chapter Hanna Acke attempts both to undertake a study of missionary periodicals as a distinct genre (based partly on the work of Tzvetan Todorov) and to sum up some of the common themes of the book. Two points stand out: genres function as “horizons of expectation” for readers as well as “models of writing” for authors (225). In other words, periodicals—missionary or otherwise—tend to conform to certain patterns of layout, use of illustrations, thematic content, ideology, and so forth. This context, in turn, leads readers to expect a certain approach to the topics under discussion.

As is to be expected in such a volume, most chapters are based on the detailed current research of the authors and tend to be narrow in focus, so that with the exception of the introduction and the final summary chapter, there tends to be little commonality among the contributions. Nevertheless, the detailed research that has gone into almost all of the articles makes this a worthwhile study for all with an interest in missionary periodicals. And it may introduce readers to particular contexts and academic approaches with which they may not have been previously acquainted.

—T. Jack Thompson

T. Jack Thompson is an honorary fellow of the University of Edinburgh, where, before his retirement, he was director of the Centre for the Study of World Christianity.

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