Mission as Invasion?

To invade, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is “to enter in a hostile manner, or with armed force; to make an inroad or hostile incursion into.” Evoking as it does the destructive chaos and terror of war, this definition can hardly be applied to the well-intended short-term foreign mission forays of an estimated 1.5 million Christians from the United States each year. Convinced that they must love not only in word but also in deed, and that followers of Jesus are indeed their brother’s or sister’s keeper, these men, women, and idealistic young people represent all that is best in a faith that advocates loving one’s neighbor as oneself, being generous to the poor, and caring for those bereft of family. Theirs is a faith, furthermore, that insists that passivity in the face of need will not do. As the Bible puts it, “Anyone, then, who knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, commits sin” (James 4:17).

But Karla Ann Koll in her article raises troubling questions about the gap between the worthy intentions and the sometimes detrimental outcomes of these short-term ventures, drawing an unflattering analogy to wolves coming to the aid of lambs. She alludes to the ethical ambiguities implicit in the asymmetric access to power and resources that characterizes these relationships.

And it is here that invasion’s broader connotations are worth pondering. Invasion can refer to a harmful incursion, intrusion, or encroachment of any kind, from malignant cells to morally

Continued next page
The term "invasion" refers to the introduction of nonindigenous plants or animals that in time have an adverse and even fatal effect within their new habitats. Invasion can apply to the violation of another person’s territory, rights, liberties, body, or property. Each of the five human senses—sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch—and, one might add, emotion, is susceptible to invasions of various kinds. And invasion can apply to Christian missions.

Edward Cleary’s observation that “grassroots Catholics [in Puerto Rico] viewed the coming of Americans as a disaster, much like the destructive hurricanes that struck the island just before the U.S. invasion” should remind us that our interventions in the life of another people, another church, another country—no matter how well intentioned—can have debilitating or even disastrous side effects. William Bivin notes that Queen Isabella’s sixteenth-century encomienda system, ostensibly intended to further the spiritual education of Indians, in fact reduced them to servitude and changed their status to one of perpetual inferiority, subhumans capable only of receiving charity, but with nothing linguistically or socially to contribute to the larger social or ecclesiastical good. However well intentioned, church and mission practices have served, in Bivin’s words, to “eviscerate indigenous peoples’ self-esteem and marginalize their accomplishments.”

Robert Priest, whose groundbreaking research is summarized in this issue, assesses the expanding role of short-term foreign missionaries as an expression of American Christian concern for the world. Megachurch congregations, eager to do good and to do it quickly and efficiently, bypass traditional mission agencies, oblivious of the painful lessons learned from decades of missionary work and deep familiarity with indigenous peoples. They cannot waste years or even months learning another language, becoming comfortable in another culture, and identifying more than superficially with another people. The tedious, time-consuming business of incarnation—Jesus was a three-mile-an-hour Palestinian Jew—is not an option. They have no time to be truly converted themselves.

Human invaders over time have proven themselves adept at justifying their actions by appealing to nobility of motive, expectation of ultimate good, or sacred duty. Retrospectively, when an invasion’s disastrous effects on an incumbent population have resulted in social reorganization favoring the invaders and marginalizing the original incumbents, a careful selection of memories is garnished and polished to legitimate and even celebrate the process. Such is human history. But should, or can, the church not do better than this?

I conclude with a note on the iconic cruciform statue of Christ on the front page of this issue—in its cross-like form a symbol associated with the suffering of the one who died to take away the sins of the world. Since then, the cross has been wielded by invaders—from violently aggressive to naively intrusive—as warrant for their actions. This massive art deco statue of Christ the Redeemer, which has loomed over Rio de Janeiro since 1931 from the top of Corcovado Mountain, is one of the most recognizable “Official New Seven Wonders of the World.” But viewed against the backdrop of the powerful invaders who—often in the name of Christ—have re-created the continent in their image, it is a deeply ironic testimony to the decidedly un-Christlike objectives, means, and outcomes of centuries of “Christian” invaders. The Father, whose will is to be done on earth, and the Son, who promised that the meek would inherit the earth, seem—for now—to have been disregarded by powerful interests bent on having their way.

With the advantage of hindsight, it is clear that not just indigenous peoples but especially their invaders need to be converted.

—Jonathan J. Bonk
In the Absence of Missionaries: Lay Preachers Who Preserved Catholicism

Edward L. Cleary

Shortage of Catholic clergy has become a major issue for the Catholic Church in the United States and Europe. No end to the crisis is in sight, with few candidates to either the diocesan or the religious priesthood. While not commonly recognized, Catholicism without priests has already been faced in Latin America in modern history. What happened when there were no priests serves as the theme of a larger research project that is underway.¹ Here we consider a vivid example of what notably occurred in Puerto Rico.

At the opening of the twentieth century, untrained and barely literate laymen and laywomen—all of them very young—rose up to become lay preachers. Their history is well known to small groups of Puerto Rico’s intellectual elite but almost completely ignored by others. Nonetheless, the Hermanos Cheos (lit. Brothers Joes) still exist on the island and are planning an evangelizing crusade throughout Puerto Rico in 2012. The Hermanos also created small pockets of influence in the United States from Allentown, Pennsylvania, to Chicago.

Origin and Modus Vivendi

Hermanos Cheos came about because an abrupt change in government in Puerto Rico brought a great vacuum to the Catholic Church, which was already struggling to offer adequate pastoral care. When the United States declared war on Spain and its army invaded Puerto Rico in 1898, large numbers of priests began leaving the island. They were, for the most part, Spanish missioners lived had no space for holding prayer meetings or preaching. By 1913, eleven years after their foundation, the Cheos had thirty chapels. These chapels were not an option because of the tropic sun or frequent rain at certain seasons of the year. The small shacks in which small farm families in the remote areas of the island that were situated in the central mountainous interior. In his arduous journeys he met a kindred soul in José Rodríguez Medina and then two other laypersons, a man and a woman, who also assumed the role of preacher-evangelists (a term not then used by Catholics). When they gathered together for organizational purposes in 1903, they understood the need for a more formal organization and elected Morales as president for life, with the duties of selecting and overseeing the preparation of new candidates. Through the years, the group acted collegially, sharing talents and responsibilities, but the two dominant men, Morales and Rodríguez, exercised the main leadership of the group. Since both had been named José, the group became known as the Hermanos Cheos (Cheo is a slang form of Joe).

Grassroots Catholics viewed the coming of Americans as a disaster, much like the destructive hurricanes that struck the island just before the U.S. invasion. Additional laypersons took up preaching to keep Catholics within a shepherdless fold. Some of these lay preachers did not join the Hermanos but operated on their own. Those who did join were subjected to a lengthy trial period, and some were later expelled by José Morales, presumably for failing to accept an assignment to a particular chapel or region.

In virtually all cases the Hermanos Cheos did their preaching among the poor and illiterate in isolated areas, using forms of popular religion that were the basis of peasant religiosity. Popular religion as practiced in Puerto Rico at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century was especially centered in recitation of the rosary.²

The rosary was thus part of neighborhood or village life, and the heads of households invited neighbors, friends, and families to join in at times such as funerals. These informal get-togethers were ready-made for the Hermanos Cheos, who would join in the reunions and at the end of the recitation of the rosary would ask for permission to speak. They then preached so effectively that they acquired a wide reputation for being holy persons or wise persons. They were frequently invited back for another evening or to another house in a chain of invitations.

From these informal beginnings the Hermanos moved toward enlisting widespread help of ordinary Catholics in the construction of chapels to be used as preaching points in places that had no parish churches. Since most of the Hermanos and Hermanas were married, they settled their families close to the chapels, farmed nearby land to help support themselves, and preached at the chapel or in nearby locations. By 1913, eleven years after their foundation, the Cheos had thirty chapels. These chapels provided large covered spaces, since preaching in the open air was not an option because of the tropic sun or frequent rain at certain seasons of the year. The small shacks in which small farmers lived had no space for holding prayer meetings or preaching sessions. The only large dwellings were on the few haciendas owned by major landowners. The hacendados were not always friendly to the Cheos and could not be counted on to volunteer their plantation-style houses for Cheos’ preaching.

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From the beginning, the Hermanos, who were thought of as otherworldly itinerant mystics, members of a messianic movement, were in fact highly practical builders of key structures for anchoring the practice of faith in the countryside. The chapels were much more than shelters from the torrid sun or rain. They became centers for basic catechesis and preaching among the increased following the Brothers had created. With so few priests available, the Hermanos hoped to draw priests at least once a year to celebrate Mass at the chapels on the feast of the patron saint of the chapel. Priests were impressed with the Cheos’ work of attracting persons who were not able to go to distant urban parishes. The patronal feast thus became an occasion for celebrating Mass and administering the sacraments.

The basic weakness of the parish as administered by many priests was the presumption that parishioners would come to them, rather than the minister’s going to where the people resided. The yearly visit of parish priests to the countryside for patronal feasts offered only very occasional pastoral attention. Chapels, then, increased the reach of parishes. Most of all, the chapels were gathering places of small communities. One of the typical patterns for the pastoral care of community members was the assignment of a Hermano(a) as resident preacher at a particular chapel. (Some preachers were assigned only to preach in a particular place, while other ranged widely, though maintaining their home near a particular chapel.)

Typically, this chapel assignment meant obtaining a plot of land near the chapel to build a house for the preacher and family and for them to farm the small plot. Proximity to the chapel also indicated integration of the preacher (and family) within the life of the community. Their house and the farm were usually similar to those of the neighbors: wooden shacks with thatched roofs and enough crops and fruit trees for subsistence. The preacher and family lived like the others, among them, dependent on the same fate of crops and weather. Their preaching was thus essential because when the baptized gather for worship, they are church—not the whole church, but a cell within the living body of the church. The group members believed that the biblical promise of “where two or more are gathered in my name, there I will be” was fulfilled for them.

While the Hermanos Cheos staffed these rural chapels, they also devoted half or more of their time to itinerant preaching, attempting to reach the unchurched and to instruct (evangelize) the religiously untutored or indifferent. This was arduous for the Hermanos and highly taxing for their spouses and families, from whom they were absent many weeks of the year. They lived and continued to lead spare lives into old age.

**Economics of Religion**

The cooperative effort of many jíbaros to build and to support the chapels and their ministers was simultaneously teaching them the economics of modern religion. Throughout the long history of Portuguese and Spanish Latin America, the state and the wealthy supported the church and its ministries. In many ways, the Cheos helped change the attitudes of a major sector of Puerto Rican people about economic support for the church, at least in the central and southern regions. Decades after the foundation of the Hermanos, Bishop James McManus of Ponce would tell his priests that they would be dying of hunger if it had not been for the Hermanos Cheos, who taught the faithful to contribute alms to the church.

Latin Americans had been notoriously ungenerous in giving to the Catholic Church. Noted Brazilian sociologist J. Reginaldo Prandi, writing about Brazilians but applicable to Latin America generally, said, “the Brazilian tradition, Catholics never thought themselves responsible for providing the financing of religion. No one paid a tithe or any systematic contribution.” He said Brazilians grew accustomed to the state’s providing churches as part of the central city. Churches were always open, places where one went to meet friends, to watch others, and to be seen. Brazilians expected rich people to build chapels and put their names on them. In a word, any Catholic could pass his entire life without giving a cent to the church.6

The unshakable grip that this tradition has in Latin countries can be seen even in modernized countries, such as France. French individuals give eight times less to philanthropy than Americans or Canadians. Charles Truehart, writing in the *International Herald Tribune*, said, “the people’s historic faith in the state to take care of the dispossessed (and every one else) has made the French far less inclined than their neighbors . . . to take care of matters of charity and philanthropy into their own hands.”7

This dependent attitude has been the curse of the Latin American church. It has not fully recovered from this colonial, state-and-elite provisionist attitude. Until recently, Latin American Catholics, by and large, have not been generous in steady weekly support of their parishes and church enterprises. Many Latin Americans were interviewed by the author in Peruvian and Bolivian parishes during the late 1950s and early 1960s (before Vatican II). When asked if they could make steady contributions during the offertory of Sunday worship, they invariably responded, “No es nuestra costumbre” (It is not our custom).8

The Hermanos Cheos brought to their followers a primitive Christian generosity similar to the early days of Christianity. from a shared environment of the grassroots. There was a community of life among neighbors and a community of belief. It was unusual in the Catholic Church that the Word of God was preached from such a deep bond of shared lives within a living lay community, although the situation was not unknown in earlier church history.9

One can see in the small chapels and their communities the precursors of a great innovation of the Latin American Catholic Church in the twentieth century: the Base Christian Community. Variations of the same innovation include small church communities throughout the world and home churches in Cuba.) Small groups came together on a regular basis to pray and to hear the Word of God preached to them, typically followed by shared reflection or questions and answers. The high point of their calendar was the celebration of the Mass and the administration of the other sacraments by a visiting priest. But their getting together constituted them as church. The gathering together, and not merely worshiping as solitary persons, was...
Spontaneous Combustion

What was most striking about the Cheos as lay preachers was the spontaneous quality of their vocations. They decided on their own that some kind of reaction was needed to head off the Protestant threat and to fill in for the preaching of the missing priests. No one asked them to come forward, and no patron granted them a living subsidy. The Cheos were not pseudo-clergy. They were still very much laity. At first, these preachers engaged in their missions as single persons, but most of them married, remaining members of the missionary group. The two José who were the cofounders were notably dedicated to their wives. Generally speaking, the Hermanos were married persons. With one exception during the first eighty years, the presidents of the group, all elected from within the group, were married men.9 The election of a single person in the 1960s was considered a failed experiment.

One of the historical milestones of the congregation was the marriage of a Cheo and a Chea. Hermano Pedro Laboy married Hermana María Lembury in 1910 and became the second president of the congregation when José Morales died in 1939. It is noteworthy that of the seven children from this marriage, the first son, Ernestino, became a priest. Furthermore, Father Laboy later became spiritual director of the Cheos.

Hermano Pedro Laboy’s career path was typical at the time: he joined in the lay mission work after viewing the work of the Cheos. He trailed along as an apprentice with José Rodríguez and Hermana Geña on their missionary trips through the mountains. When Laboy asked about joining the brotherhood, Rodríguez consulted with José Morales. In 1907 both agreed that Rodríguez would act as master teacher and mentor to Laboy. At first Laboy was entrusted with teaching simple catechism lessons. In 1908 he was allowed to preach on his own at a chapel with which he was entrusted. José Rodríguez continued, largely from a distance, to monitor the ministry of Laboy, who was not yet fully approved by the Cheos. The approval process involved interviews and frequent observation by the main jefe, José Morales. He was thereafter authorized by Morales to preach in any place on the island.

From 1902 this folk religious movement spread its influence over most of the southern and central parts of the island and toward the east and the sugar plantations. The movement was a response from the grassroots to the institutional crisis of the church.

Relations with the Institutional Church

The few priests serving Puerto Rico in the early twentieth century were mostly located at some distance from the rural areas that the Brothers and a few Sisters covered in their itinerant preaching journeys. What the priests in this first period knew of Hermanos Cheos was largely by word of mouth. One set of these reports was highly favorable. The Brothers, people said, were always ready to submit to obedience and frequented the sacraments. They were, he said, “true Catholics, who were always ready to submit to obedience and ‘frequented the sacraments.” He considered their moral conduct “laudable” and exemplary in the sense that they contributed to the moral uplift of the peasants. They contributed to lessening of concubinage, and their influence kept Protestants and spiritists from taking hold in the barrios. Opposition to the Cheos, he wrote, occurred because of their uncultured peasant language and lack of trained theological discourse.12

At the invitation of José Morales, the Spanish Capuchins furnished the first spiritual director for the Hermanos, Fray Angel

Gradual development of a shrine center at Jayuya led to a closer relationship with the institutional church.

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de Lieres. For some time he based his preaching at the Brothers’ central pilgrimage chapel at Jayuya. Despite Fray Angel’s good intentions, however, other pastoral obligations kept him from offering consistent spiritual direction.

In 1919 Fray Estanislao, as superior of the Capuchins who were working pastorally with the Brothers at Jayuya, was asked by the bishop about the legal status of the Brothers in the church. He responded that he did not believe their joining the Franciscan Third Order would be best but recommended they be granted canonical status as a lay movement in the church that would be called the Congregación de San Juan Evangelista.

At the time the Puerto Rican Church was reorganizing itself. The departing Spanish bishop and clergy would have known the history of relations of the Brothers to the church. But the newly arriving North American bishops and priests knew little of the origins of the Brothers, which delayed a decision about the Hermanos.

As a result of the Puerto Rican Church’s reorganization, Ponce became a new diocese in 1924. The first three bishops of the diocese were gringos (North American born and bred), who held office for thirty-nine years, from 1924 to 1963. This shift of cultural leadership could have brought drastic changes for relations with the Hermanos but instead brought consolidation of the Brothers within the church. In 1927 Edwin Byrne, the North American bishop, canonically established the Brothers as the Roman Catholic Apostolic Association of St. John the Evangelist and assigned a priest as spiritual director. Byrne was succeeded by two mainland bishops and then by Puerto Ricans who were promoted to be the residential bishops of Ponce, beginning in 1964. Throughout the changes the institutional church in Ponce continued to support the presence and activity of the Brothers.

Conclusion: Heritage of the Hermanos Cheos

The energies unleashed by this movement continue in the twenty-first century. More than a hundred years after their founding, the Hermanos Cheos are still small in number (fewer than 200 members) but zealous for preaching. As ministry preparation for new members, the Hermanos have added three years of studies focusing on biblical and theological subjects to the earlier required interviews, apprenticeship, observation, and practicum.

The Hermanos have made contributions to religious culture on the island in two special ways: by encouraging laypersons to make regular retreats and by conducting a lengthy Crusade of Evangelization, reaching 90 percent of the parishes of the country in 1996–2000. Influenced by the Hermanos many Puerto Rican Catholics acquired the habit of making spiritual retreats on a regular basis. Retreat houses have sprouted up at various locations on the island, most notably at Aguas Buenas, a place that is internationally known to Catholic Charismatics, and at Casa Manresana. Redemptorist and Jesuit priests act as directors of both centers, but lay preachers, peer-ministers, and family-life counselors are integral members of the retreat centers. In sum, laypersons now conduct themselves within the church as active partners in ways not common before 1902. As precursors to later revitalization movements, such as the Cursillos and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, the Hermanos Cheos led the way to a new age for the Puerto Rican laity.

By 1933 the Hermanos Cheos had forty-four chapels in rural areas and had brought together thousands of peasants to renew their faith, abandon concubinage, assume religious practices within their daily lives, and attend Mass. Protestant historian Samuel Silva Gotay believes their evangelizing zeal in the mountains matched that of the Protestant preachers, keeping these regions Catholic after the invasion of 1898. “We are faced,” he wrote, “with a vast rural movement of poor laypersons, the majority of whom were illiterate, who took into their own hands the preaching of the Gospel with the intent of facilitating the conversion and the moral reconstruction of open countryside and urban poor neighborhoods of Puerto Rico, especially those places where a priest never or very seldom visited.”

The Hermanos plan a second crusade of evangelization for the second decade of the twenty-first century. Moving from place to place, carrying the basic message of Christianity, made them restless missionaries, never content with past efforts.

Notes

1. A group of Latin American historians is cooperating in a joint project concerning Catholicism without priests, with the author as coordinator. A book is under contract with the University of Scranton Press.
3. The Benedictine abbeys at various periods in their history were closely tied to agrarian communities.
6. Ibid.
9. The first unmarried person elected president was Carmelo Vásquez Vásquez, who was elected in 1963 and reelected for another three-year term. A year after finishing in that office, he married. Father Santaella wrote that thereafter “the experiment with celibate brothers [as president] was terminated,” without giving further explanation. Esteban Santaella, Historia de los Hermanos Cheos, 2d ed. (Rincón, P.R.: MB Publishers of Puerto Rico, 2002), p. 327.
10. El Ideal Católico, August 4, 1906.
12. Ibid., pp. 180–84.
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Over the last seventy years Bible translation agencies have engaged in translating the New Testament into the hundreds of indigenous languages of Latin America. That immense task is now nearing completion. Yet translation is only part of the task; a potentially larger challenge awaits, namely, encouraging the growing churches in these language groups to accept and use the Scripture translations that have been so painstakingly accomplished. Development of a contextualized Christianity appropriate to the myriad of cultures in Central and South America—essential if vibrant and mature indigenous churches are to grow within those cultures—is crucially tied to acceptance and use of Scripture translations in the people’s mother tongues. Despite this fact, the majority-culture Spanish-speaking churches and denominations in the region operate, through the practices and assumptions engrained in their mission work among the minority language groups, in a way that clearly hinders the development of theologically contextualized indigenous churches.1

By way of illustration, in one Latin American country where I have worked extensively as a Bible translation consultant, four major Spanish-speaking Protestant denominations that are led by nationals (that is, members of the politically, socially, and economically dominant group of European ancestry, as opposed to indigenes or expatriates) and the Roman Catholic Church work in a minority language group of 250,000 speakers. Together the Spanish-speaking groups oversee more than three hundred indigenous churches. They carry out their mission work entirely in Spanish. Before and during the translation project I spent hundreds of hours meeting with the leadership of these groups to build relationships and to invite their participation in the translation project, seeking to encourage them to promote use of the resultant translation. The translation was completed five years ago, yet only a handful of pastors in these denominations are using it. When the New Testament, with permission from denominational leaders, was distributed to the pastors of one of the denominations, an indigenous pastor excitedly announced to the others that this was just what they needed, for now they would be better able to communicate the Gospel within their churches. He was quickly silenced by the denomination’s missionary, who reminded him that they were not free to do whatever they wanted but were under her authority.

By contrast, another denomination in this language group—one led completely by indigenous people—does use the new translation extensively. While the denomination’s leaders recognize the importance of Spanish, they are committed to promoting use of their mother tongue in the church. It was their vision that led to undertaking the translation project, and today 60 to 70 percent of the denomination’s pastors use the mother-tongue translation in their daily lives and in the life of the church.

Why the difference? The question is worth asking, because the growing hegemony of Spanish-speaking churches over indigenous churches is producing an identity crisis on the part of many indigenous believers in Latin America. Naive assertion of entitlement to dominate culturally and spiritually on the part of national or Latino leaders seriously affects the willingness of indigenous language speakers to accept and use mother-tongue Scriptures, something that is crucial for the development of a contextualized faith.2 If mission agencies and national churches in Latin America continue to ignore this truth, how will Jesus find a home among the indigenous churches? There is a very real risk that the mother-tongue Scriptures will be set aside for existing Spanish translations. Then, as Daniel Shaw and Charles Van Engen comment, lacking “local logic and reason generated from the receptors’ worldview, theology will make no sense to them, and the people will correctly question their need to pay any attention.”3 Just as tragically, the Christianity indigenous peoples do practice will likely be no more than a foreigner’s religion instead of being a home-grown, vital, and relationship-based faith.

Present-day interaction between Protestant mission agencies, Latino-led national denominations (most with origins in the United States), and the indigenous churches they nurture and govern has its roots in history. Several factors need to be examined. First, the Spanish invasion and colonization of the Americas led to a pervasive worldview-level belief that the “Indio” is an inferior being.4 This belief crucially influences relationships between Latinos and indigenous peoples to this day, including those between Spanish churches and indigenous churches. Second, the North American Protestant missionaries who have worked among Spanish speakers and indigenous peoples brought with them their Enlightenment-informed theologies. While these theologies answer, for the most part, questions raised by the majority Latino cultures, they do not address most of the religious and spiritual issues that confront indigenous cultures. Third, a fusion of the first two factors has led to the practice, common among the governing denominations, of engaging the indigenous believers and churches overwhelmingly in Spanish and to the belief that the indigenous churches have little need for a contextualized theology in their own language using mother-tongue Scriptures.

The Influence of History

When the Spaniards disembarked in the Americas, the Gospel and the sword arrived together as instruments of the state, of Christendom. Sanneh’s definition of Christendom as “the medieval imperial phase of Christianity when the church became a domain of the state and Christian profession a matter of political enforcement” accurately describes Spanish colonial America.5 When Aztec, Mayan, and Incan temples were pulled down, the Spaniards built churches on top of them so as to demonstrate the Christian God’s power over the indigenous gods. So as to free the Indians from their lives of pagan idolatry, the Gospel was forced on the original inhabitants of the Americas, an “offer” rarely

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In 1503, before defeat of the major empires in the Americas was complete, Queen Isabella of Spain established the encomienda system. The stated purpose of the encomienda was to further the spiritual education of the Indians. This religious reeducation required that the indigenous peoples be brought together in concentrated numbers so that they could be evangelized and taught. What developed was a system of slavery and indentured servitude, supported by both church and state, that reduced millions of the inhabitants of the Americas to lives of utter misery, but that brought huge profits to the colonizers. Though several noted Dominican and Franciscan missionaries raised strong voices in dissent against this practice, from the second half of the sixteenth century onward, the Inquisition required that the indigenous peoples be brought together in concentrated numbers so that they could be evangelized and taught.

From these roots arose the current mind-set regarding indigenous peoples. Using Paul Hiebert’s model, we could say that the Spaniards’ worldview was radically challenged by their encounter with the native inhabitants of the Americas. In response to the questions that the very existence of these new peoples and cultures posed, the Spaniards developed theories to explain what they were observing. These theories interacted with their long-held belief systems, and eventually new worldview-level assumptions developed regarding the non-European inhabitants of the Americas. Today these assumptions continue to form the lens through which indigenous peoples are viewed throughout Latin America.

These assumptions find expression in questions such as one that a highly educated man from a country with a high percentage of indigenous citizens recently asked a friend of mine: “Do Indians have souls?” It is common to hear comments among all social classes of Latin Americans that Indians are lazy and ungrateful. Their cognitive abilities and leadership capabilities are frequently doubted. A large percentage of Latin Americans do not believe that indigenous peoples speak fully developed languages; in their view, the indígenes speak only dialectos, a pejorative term implying that their languages have no grammar. As dialectos they lack the prestige of true languages such as Spanish, which, it is proudly maintained, does have a grammar and a dictionary.

As I was writing these words, a newspaper article arrived on my desk that clearly illustrates this prejudicial attitude:

“La Carga de los Indígenas”
En México se hablan 364 lenguas o dialectos indígenas y hay burócratas preocupados porque están en peligro de extinción. Pues qué bueno, que se extingan, porque no nos sirven de nada. Mejor que esos millones de indígenas aprendan el español, que es el idioma de México. Es más preocupante que no hablen español. Por eso están marginados, en la pobreza, en la incultura y en la enfermedad. Enséñenles español y que esas 364 lenguas indígenas se conserven en las bibliotecas y museos. Nada más. Por eso estamos como estamos, aunque deberíamos de estar peor.

Prejudicial beliefs grounded in this worldview pervade all levels of most national-led denominations and churches in Latin America and crucially inform the inclination of their leadership to believe that evangelism, discipleship, and training among the indigenous populations should be done in Spanish and not in the vernacular. These worldview-level beliefs also shape how national-level Latino missionaries approach their ministries and relationships with indigenous churches and indigenous leadership. Similar beliefs profoundly color the opinions of Latino missionaries about the value of the mother-tongue Scripture translations and about whether such translations should be used or promoted among the indigenous churches with which they work.

This heritage from the Spanish colonial era communicates to Latin America’s indigenous peoples that they are profoundly inferior to Latinos. The result is cultural and personal identity crises leading indigenous peoples to reject their own cultures and languages. One cannot be rejected without rejecting the other. John Pobee has spoken of the

“North Atlantic captivity of the church” in Africa. I believe we are correct in speaking of a Hispanic captivity of the indigenous church in Latin America.

Enlightenment-Based Theologies
When Protestant missionaries arrived in Latin America in the 1800s, they brought their theologies from Europe and North America with them. Unlike the theology inherited from medieval Roman Catholicism that came with the Spanish conquistadores, the theologies of the Protestant missionaries were influenced by the Enlightenment. One Enlightenment principle that profoundly influenced not just the theology of the missionaries but, more crucially, their worldview was the separation of the natural world from the realm of the supernatural. The post-Enlightenment European world was no longer suffused with the spiritual. The world of naiads and dryads, witches and curses had been consigned to what Hiebert terms “the excluded middle.”

For Hiebert the excluded middle consists of the supernatural

Ngäbe men of western Panama reading the Ngäbere New Testament

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realms that permeate the world that indigenous peoples inhabit. Their primal religions and folk beliefs explain almost all natural phenomena, good and bad, in terms of the supernatural: spirits (this-worldly and other-worldly), ancestors, dreams, the evil eye, magic, witchcraft, and the mountain gods, to name but a few. When missionaries labeled these beliefs and their associated practices as superstition and taught that they should be abandoned, the indigenous peoples simply went underground with them. To this day the beliefs and practices remain underground. Indigenous peoples refused to discuss them around missionaries for fear of being ridiculed, criticized, or told that their dreams were simply being ridiculed, criticized, or told that their dreams were simply their sleeping minds’ attempt to organize and contend with the events of their lives. Such dismissive explanations did not, and do not, hold water with indigenous peoples, because their folk beliefs provide ancient and proven explanations for the vicissitudes of life that include such forces.

The missionaries also taught their Enlightenment-based theologies to the Spanish-speaking Latin Americans. As Hiebert notes, “Missionaries sought to transmit their theologies unchanged to the national church leaders. The relationship was that of parent to child. National leaders were expected to learn the missionary’s theology by rote.”

The missionaries’ worldview and Enlightenment-based theologies were in fact a fairly good fit for, or at least useful to, the Spanish-speaking, majority-culture Latin American Christians. Since the widely held Hispanic worldview says that indigenous peoples are ignorant and unlearned, the Latino population readily accepted the missionaries’ explanation that indigenous folk beliefs were nothing more than superstitions. Such explanations simply confirmed their prior beliefs regarding indigenous peoples.

**Current Issues**

In many countries throughout Latin America today, Hispanic-governed national denominational churches are increasingly at the forefront of mission work among the indigenous groups. Many indigenous churches, in turn, are members of these denominations. For indigenous church leaders, however, this apparently positive step is complicating the process of contextualizing the Gospel, since the national leadership they work under has inherited the prejudicial beliefs about indigenous peoples that developed during Spanish conquest, and since it has embraced Enlightenment-based theologies. These two factors lead the national leaders to view acceptance and use of vernacular Bibles and contextualization of the Gospel by indigenous church leaders as questionable projects.

Since, according to the Latin American worldview, indigenous languages are simply dialectos, most national-level church leaders ignore them. The vast majority of the national-church-led mission work is done in Spanish, which is honored as a full-fledged language. In Latin America, lacking support from their denominational leadership, local missionaries and expatriate missionaries alike rarely learn the local vernacular languages. On the one hand, the Bible translation most often used in evangelism is a very formal Spanish version that is particularly difficult for many indigenous readers to understand. On the other hand, the absence of contextualization and of the development of a form of Christianity appropriate to the indigenous cultures—which most naturally goes hand in hand with the use of vernacular Scriptures—imperils the vitality of the Gospel. The logic is irresistible. As Sanneh observes, “Translation is primarily a matter of language, but it is not only that, for language itself is a living expression of the culture. . . . Language is not just the ‘soul’ of a people, as if it belongs to some sort of elite gnostic circle. Language is also the garment that gives shape, decorum and vitality to conscious life, enabling us to appreciate the visible texture of life in its subtle, intricate variety and possibility.”

When national Spanish-speaking leadership does not consider the vernacular languages to be valid religious languages and does not promote vernacular Scripture translations as valid for church use, indigenous believers are not inclined to voice their disagreement. Centuries of Hispanic hegemony have taught them that there is little point in doing so.

Many indigenous Christians in Latin America believe that Spanish has the status of a revealed language. Such misapprehensions were fostered when Catholic and Protestant missionaries disdained to take the time and effort to learn indigenous languages, insisting instead on the preeminence of Spanish as the language for religious instruction. Now the national churches are reinforcing this inherited inequity, ignoring the biblical pattern that Christianity is inherently translatable into languages and cultures other than Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek.

Ignorance within the church regarding vernacular languages is reinforced by the antipathy the Spanish-speaking majority population often expresses against local indigenous languages and cultures, and indigenous believers come under immense pressure to abandon the vernacular so as to raise their social status. In consequence, many indigenous Christians do not view their languages as suitable for use within the Christian religious realm; they do, however, continue to use their languages in most other areas of life, including in the domain of folk beliefs.

Many of the materials that national churches in the region use in teaching and discipleship work among indigenous churches are adapted or even simply translated from English into Spanish. In this way the Enlightenment-based theologies pervasive within the Anglo-American setting become the standard fare both for instruction in seminaries attended by indigenous believers and for teaching in local indigenous churches. In consequence, the folk beliefs of the indigenous primal religions are excluded from meaningful theological discourse in the language familiar to indigenous believers and from discussion within the indigenous churches—that is, from the very venues where discussion of them should be central. Indigenous pastors who attend Hispanic-led seminaries are effectively barred from exploring how the Bible interacts with, confronts, and answers questions raised by their worldview and belief system, by their fears, and by their vision of the good life.

Insistence upon using Spanish in the religious domain also helps to ensure that the majority culture’s Spanish-speaking leadership and its missionaries maintain control over indigenous churches. If the vernacular were used, they would not understand what was being said!

Fear of syncretism has often been cited as a reason for rejecting the use of the vernacular. The indigenous cultures and practices have, since the days of the conquistadores, been seen as pagan, idolatrous, and lacking in redemptive value. From the beginning, the early Spanish missionaries and later the Protestant missionaries professed to find little if any evidence of
God present in the indigenous cultures. Indigenous Christians were taught, and still are, that they need to reject their cultures. National and expatriate missionaries alike lump many nonreligious practices together by labeling them as sinful. As a result, since (as they are taught) there is no trace of God in their cultures and their languages are deficient and unacceptable for use in church, indigenous Christians are left to wonder who they are and who they should be.

Missionaries in Panama, for example, carefully sought to excise the vernacular word for soul or spirit from an indigenous Christian vocabulary because the same word is used locally to describe spirits the people see. The missionaries apparently forgot that in English and Spanish, the word “spirit” is used for the Holy Spirit, for angels, and for demons. In place of the indigenous word they substituted the word that means “wind.” After all, in Greek the word for “spirit” also means “wind.” Apparently for the missionaries, Greek usage validated their attempts to redraw the indigenous cognitive category for “wind.” It is hard to imagine where such “indigenous” theologizing might lead!

Comparisons with Africa

When the situation of the indigenous churches in Latin America is compared with that of the church in Africa, interesting correspondences emerge. As with Latin America, Africa experienced colonial rule and domination by countries from the North. Though theologies brought by the earliest missionaries differed, both regions were presented with imported theologies built upon alien conceptual categories. In the case of Latin America the theology brought by the early Spanish missionaries was rooted in the Middle Ages; the theologies that the later Protestant missionaries carried with them to both Africa and Latin America were strongly influenced by the Enlightenment. By the very process of colonization itself, the indigenous inhabitants of both continents were demoted to the bottom of the scale of social and religious esteem. According to Timothy Tennent, “African religion was regarded as no more than a pagan array of witch doctors, fetishism, and superstition. In the nineteenth century, the ‘Great Chain of Being’ placed the peoples of Africa at the very bottom—ethnically, culturally, and religiously.”

The history of Protestant missions in Latin America is much briefer than in Africa, but the approach Protestant missionaries followed toward the indigenous cultures on the two continents was similar. What Tennent writes concerning the African experience with European missions could have been written about indigenous experience in Latin America: “Christ was presented to Africa as a foreign stranger in complete discontinuity with its own past. For an African to become a Christian was to step into a world of spiritual amnesia whereby everything in the African past was to be jettisoned to make way for their newly found faith in Christ, which was firmly hinged to a European worldview. Andrew Wals has described the resulting situation as ‘the crisis of African identity,’ whereby Africans live in a state of spiritual schizophrenia, not knowing how to be truly Christian and of African identity, whereby Africans live in a state of spiritual schizophrenia, not knowing how to be truly Christian and of African identity.’

After all, in Greek the word for “spirit” also means “wind.” Apparently for the missionaries, Greek usage validated their attempts to redraw the indigenous cognitive category for “wind.” It is hard to imagine where such “indigenous” theologizing might lead!

Although many similarities exist between the missionary movements to Africa and those to Latin America, important differences between the two stand out. Most significantly, preceding the movement from Spanish possession to independence in the early to mid-1800s, the Latin American colonies were heavily populated by Europeans (mainly Spanish) who intermarried with the indigenous populations in large numbers. Following independence these colonialists and their descendents remained in the new countries and continued to be dominant culturally, politically, socially, linguistically, and numerically. During Spanish colonial rule the indigenous population was excluded from significant participation in political, educational, and social life, a pattern that continued following independence.

Africa, for the most part, did not experience a comparable influx of European colonists. When independence was granted to the African colonies, the majority of colonists left, and in most countries Africans dominated the social, political, and linguistic scene. During the colonial period missionaries established schools and encouraged Africans to pursue formal, albeit European, education. Africans continued to pursue formal education following independence, and today many African Christians hold master’s degrees and doctorates. African Christian scholars are equipped to explore ways the Gospel might be contextualized in their own cultures. A space has been created where African scholars, pastors, and lay believers can openly question the role and influence of European missions in their history. They are positioned to reflect on what was helpful and what was not, and they are actively pursuing biblical and theological studies (e.g., Christology viewed from within the African context).

In contrast, in Latin America few indigenous Christians hold advanced degrees in any field, let alone in theology or biblical studies. When indigenous Christians do achieve advanced degrees, they usually leave their cultures behind, often concealing their indigenous roots and identity so as better to fit into the majority Hispanic culture.

To sum up, my main argument to this point has been that development of culturally appropriate expressions of Christianity among the minority-language groups of Latin America is critically tied to use of the Scriptures in vernacular translations. Such contextualization of the Gospel, as crucial as it is for the life of a robust indigenous Christianity, is jeopardized because of deep-seated prejudice against indigenous peoples, bequeathed by the Spanish, that inclines current national leadership to view indigenous peoples’ cultures and languages as having little of redeeming value to offer to God. These beliefs and attitudes, operating in combination with the Enlightenment-based theologies introduced by Northern missionaries and the preferential status accorded to Spanish, serve to eviscerate indigenous peoples’ self-esteem and marginalize their accomplishments. The theology taught to indigenous believers is not framed in the cognitive categories familiar to them and makes little reference to their religious world. As a result, the Gospel remains largely foreign; indigenous Christians in Latin America are left searching for their identity, torn between two worlds; and the use of mother-tongue translations of the Scriptures is jeopardized when their languages and cultures are trivialized.

A Way Forward

The current state of affairs is clearly not desirable. When Scripture affirms of God that “from one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live” (Acts 17:26 NIV), Paul is announcing that God has been active in all cultures everywhere. This affirmation, coupled with the principle of the translatability of Christianity, means that the church in Latin America needs to take the indigenous cultures and their languages seriously. The national church needs to take the lead in helping the indigenous churches to develop vernacular Scripture-based theologies that make sense to them and that they...
can comfortably use in their cultures. Even though the larger national cultures belittle and sideline the indigenous cultures, the church cannot follow suit.

It may be possible to draw guidance from the work of Andrew Walls for how the national-led churches might proceed. Specifically, Walls identifies three stages in the process of conversion of Hellenistic thought by the early church that suggest a way forward. During the first stage the Hellenistic church experienced what he calls the missionary stage, typified and led by Paul as he began to adapt Jewish vocabulary and forms to Hellenistic categories and vocabulary. This step is essential. While a great deal of evangelism and church planting has been done in Latin America among the indigenous peoples, the dominant Spanish-speaking churches must come to grips with the fact that they are presenting the Gospel to the indigenous communities in much the same fashion as North American and European missionaries presented it to them, “unchanged and by rote.” Furthermore, the leadership of national denominations, seminaries, and congregations involved in training and outreach in minority-language communities must critically examine their programs, asking whether the theology they present and the teaching from the Scriptures they offer have been transposed into the vocabulary and cognitive categories of the indigenous churches with which they are affiliated.

Walls terms the second stage in the conversion process the convert stage. The salient marker of this stage is that of identity, and Justin Martyr is its representative. Kwame Bediako notes that, in this stage, “Justin . . . is convinced that Christ can inhabit that [Hellenistic] world and work to transform it.” Indigenous Christians throughout Latin America struggle daily with the question of their identity. The dominant Hispanic culture tells them that it alone is the route to success and that their cultures and languages are dead ends. Unfortunately, the Latin American churches reinforce this cultural oppression by not valuing and promoting the vernacular. Spanish-speaking church workers and expatriate missionaries must become convinced and must labor to convince indigenous Christians that Christ truly seeks to inhabit and transform their culture and worldview. As Walls notes, “Conversion . . . means to turn what is already there in a new direction. It is not a matter of substituting something new for something old—that is proselytizing, a method that the early church could have adopted but deliberately chose to jettison. Nor is conversion a matter of adding something new to something old, as a supplement or in synthesis. Rather, Christian conversion involves redirecting what is already there, turning it in the direction of Christ.”

This theological stance, and how it is worked out in mission, has been largely absent from the preaching of the Gospel among the indigenous peoples of Latin America from the inception of missionary work there through to the present. Those involved in mission among indigenous peoples in Latin America have been insufficiently attentive to the theological implications of Revelation 7:9. There we see, standing in front of the throne of God and before the Lamb, “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language” (NIV). The Gospel must be communicated in ways that recognize—and embrace—the fact that conversion to Christianity does not require indigenous peoples to change their cultural identity or language. Rather, Christ seeks a “home” in their culture and language so that Christianity comes to have the flavor of the culture’s hearth and familiar speech.

The third and final stage in the conversion process Walls calls the refugation stage, typified by Origen. This stage can be achieved only by a later generation, following after the convert stage, that “had grown up in the Christian faith and yet was reconciled to its pre-Christian inheritance and was not afraid of either.”

The burning question for many Christians who speak a minority language in the Americas is whether the Jesus preached to them by Western missionaries can ever be “at home” in their native culture. Will they have to surrender their identity and culture to follow a Hispanic or Latino Jesus? In other words, does the conversion demanded by the Gospel include changing their native culture? Will they have to surrender their identity and culture to follow a Hispanic or Latino Jesus? In other words, does the conversion demanded by the Gospel include changing their cultural identity? Must they live in a “split-level” Christianity? Or will vernacular translations of the Scriptures open the door for Jesus to enter fully into their cultures? My hope is the latter. From the standpoint of indigenous Christianity, the alternative to translation is bleak. As Walls perceptively notes, “Christian faith must go on being translated, must continuously enter into vernacular culture and interact with it, or it withers and fades.”

Notes
1. I would like to thank Charles Mortensen for reviewing this article and for his very helpful suggestions.
7. Ibid., p. 20.
15. Ibid.
20. Ibid., p. 149.
Religious Conversion in the Americas: Meanings, Measures, and Methods

Timothy J. Steigenga

Religious pluralism has fundamentally altered the social and religious landscape of Latin America and the Caribbean. From Mexico to Chile, millions of Latin Americans have abandoned their traditional Catholic upbringing to embrace new and different religious beliefs and practices. Evangelical Protestants represent approximately 15 percent of the population in the region today. Indigenous and Afro-diasporan religions have also experienced rapid growth. At the same time, significant changes within traditional religious categories have accelerated. Large numbers of Catholics have joined charismatic congregations, while sectors of classic Pentecostal and mainstream Protestant congregations have converted to “health and wealth” neo-Pentecostalism.

Religious conversion is the primary motor driving this larger process of religious change. While the macro-level factors that set the context for religious conversion (changes within the Catholic Church, increased Protestant missionary activity, and changes in state policies on religious freedom) have been studied considerably, far less attention has been paid to questions of exactly which people convert and under what circumstances, how social scientists understand and interpret conversion, and how conversion impacts individual and collective beliefs and actions. This essay seeks to provide some guidelines for the study of conversion gleaned from theoretical and empirical treatments of the subject in the context of Latin America.

Within the social science literature on conversion, there is a general consensus that conversion involves a process of radical personal change in beliefs, values, and, to some degree, change in personal identity and worldview.1 However, questions about how to measure these changes, which level of analysis to utilize, and the role of personal agency versus external contextual factors remain matters of significant dispute and debate.2 Brining Latin American scholarship and empirical case studies into dialogue with this existing literature helps to establish a set of guidelines for studying conversion that can direct further scholarship and put to rest some of the widely held misconceptions about conversion in the Americas. In particular, I argue that (1) religious conversion must be understood as a process and continuum rather than a single discrete event, (2) conversion is a multiply-determined phenomenon that demands a complex theoretical model and a multifaceted research methodology, and (3) researchers would be well served by reevaluating the categories and concepts we utilize for measuring the political and social effects of religious conversion.

Conversion as Process and Continuum

The study of conversion in Latin America has given rise to multiple and diverse challenges to the “Pauline paradigm” of conversion: the sudden, dramatic, and all-encompassing view that characterized many early studies. A number of authors focusing on Brazil have argued that such traditional (and generally North American) conceptions of conversion do not apply to the Latin American religious field.3 Patricia Birman uses the concept of “passages” between religious groups rather than sudden and dramatic conversion.4 According to Birman, as neo-Pentecostal churches move closer to secular norms, their parishioners are able to relax the tensions between the sacred and the secular enough to make conversion a less radical and complete event. Furthermore, some authors argue that Latin American culture is sufficiently syncretic that transit between religious groups is a natural and nondramatic occurrence for many converts.5 Taken together, these insights force us to take a closer look at what we mean by conversion in the Latin American context. If conversion is not always characterized by a dramatic change in religious beliefs and values, how can we define and utilize the concept in comparative study?

Henri Gooren brings us part of the way to resolving this dilemma by positing that conversion should be understood as a continuum rather than a single event.6 Conceiving of conversion as a continuum allows us to pinpoint passages, multiple affiliations, or even apostasy as levels within this continuum. In other words, we can adopt what Gooren calls a “conversion careers” approach—that is, looking at levels of conversion, as well as the movement in these levels over time. Understanding the conversion career allows us to differentiate between different stages of conversion and disaffiliation in a coherent and comparative fashion. In particular, Gooren provides us with five categories—preaffiliation, affiliation, conversion, confession, and disaffiliation—for following the trajectories of individuals over time.7 While various authors have provided more complex schemas, Gooren’s synthesis establishes a functional model for following and comparing different stages of conversion.

Theories of Conversion in Latin American

Five primary approaches characterize the theoretical literature on conversion in Latin America: attending to historical supply-side and push factors, developing economistic models of religious consumers responding to religious markets, focusing on religious preferences, foregrounding networks, and privileging instrumental action and context. A brief discussion and evaluation of these approaches will provide background for a methodological

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Historical supply-side and push factors. The historical supply-side approach to religious change in Latin America takes both internal and external factors into account. Internally, the difficulties faced by the Catholic Church in the recent past (shortages of priests and tensions between lay workers, priests, and the hierarchy) are seen as push factors influencing people to convert, primarily to Protestantism. Externally, the history of missionaries in Latin America sheds some light on the supply-side of the equation. First, in the 1950s and 1960s Asia was closed to missionaries. This factor, along with the “battle with Communism,” diverted American missionaries to Latin America in large numbers. North American

There may be a correlation between upward social mobility and conversion in Latin America, but the question of directionality remains open.

Protestant missions presented themselves as a response to the Communist threat. Second, divisions began to form between local church leaders and their North American counterparts. Many local leaders broke from their mother churches, in the process abandoning many of the cultural barriers that North American missionaries had constructed around Protestantism. These new churches quickly became popular as local charismatic leaders made their services more culturally relevant and preached in the native languages of their congregations. Third, new strains of Protestantism and Catholicism began to grow in Latin America. Charismatic Pentecostals began to preach a millennial message, stressing the gifts of the Holy Spirit (such as speaking in tongues), faith healing, and personal testimony. Similar elements of religious belief and practice characterized the growth of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

Because of the large influx of American missionaries and their connections to right-wing organizations in the United States, the notion that conversion was externally imposed in Latin America was prevalent in the early literature about the issue. This perspective argued that North American missionaries were trying to demobilize people who might instead embrace the more radical liberation theology. These accusations were fueled by well-documented links between missionary organizations, right-wing evangelicals in the United States, and the U.S. government.

Reducing conversion to an entirely external imposition, however, ignores the popular and indigenous nature of the movement, denies the agency of individual converts, and questions the validity of individuals’ religious experiences. Today most Protestant and charismatic Catholic congregations in Latin America are run by Latin Americans, lending further evidence to the critiques of early reductionist accounts of evangelical conversion.

Religious markets and religious economy. A second broad approach to understanding religious change focuses on the macro-level of religious markets. Proponents of this approach look at religion as a market, potential converts as consumers, and the Catholic Church as a “lazy monopoly” in Latin America. Anthony Gill has been the main proponent of this approach, utilizing it to explain Pentecostal growth and to predict the actions of the state and the Catholic Church as a result of market forces. Andrew Chesnut has extended and altered the market approach to explain the recent growth, not only of Pentecostalism, but also of Afro-diasporan religions and the charismatic renewal in the Catholic Church.

The religious-market approach has not been well received by many scholars in the field of religious studies because, in its most extreme forms, it reduces religious institutions to utility-maximizing firms, and converts to consumers. If the “inelastic religious demand” assumption of strict market approaches is relaxed, however, the model can be useful for understanding how local context interacts with religious supply to increase the attractiveness of new religions to potential converts. In other words, it is logical to assume that demand for religious goods is higher in some areas than in others, which opens the possibility for an evaluation of both sides of the market (supply and demand), of new areas of product specialization and marketing strategies by religious institutions, and of the religious preferences of individuals. Thus, market analyses can provide important insights about conversion without ignoring the agency of individuals or reducing religious institutions to purely “soul maximizing” firms.

Conversion as religious preference. A third approach to explain conversion focuses primarily on demand and individual religious preferences. In this approach, the spiritual, supernatural, experiential, and doctrinal elements of the growing religions in Latin America are seen as the primary factors attracting converts. The assumption is that the religions that are growing most rapidly are those for which Latin Americans have the greatest natural affinity. Harvey Cox argues that Pentecostal Protestantism is essentially a “restorationist” religious movement in that it helps people to restore “elemental spirituality” in the form of “primal speech” (speaking in tongues), “primal piety” (healings, trances, and other forms of religious expression), and “primal hope” (in the utopian and millennial eschatology of Pentecostalism). Daniel Míguez takes a more subtle approach, arguing that the motivation for conversion is “defined by people’s needs to find answers to transcendental questions and what they feel are appropriate ways to relate to sacred beings and forces.” According to Míguez, the primary change that comes with conversion is religious rather than cultural, economic, or political.

The idea that the growing religions in Latin America are experienced more intensely than traditional Catholicism is fundamental to this approach. Central to arguments based on the religious features of conversion is the notion that the complete “religious experience” is more intense within Pentecostal, charismatic Catholic, Afro-Brazilian, or indigenous religious communities than in traditional Catholic and Protestant churches. Conversion, then, is explained in part as a preference for the religious and experiential features of Pentecostalism or other religious options.

Some versions of these arguments have drawn criticism for either reifying cultural primitivism or ignoring critical differences in local culture. In other words, the pneumatic elements of Pentecostalism may hold very different meanings for indigenous Pentecostals in Chiapas and black Brazilians in the slums of Rio de Janeiro. The fact that Pentecostalism is growing in both places requires a deeper explanation than a broad generalization about cultural affinity. Disaggregating questions of how many people convert from specifically who converts requires that we bring social networks into the analysis.
Networks and conversion. Network theory can help us to understand better the connections between religious supply and demand. For example, religious demand may be very high within a particular community, especially when traditional survival strategies and other support networks begin to fail. In such a community Base Ecclesial Communities (BECs), Pentecostal churches, and charismatic Catholic groups may all gain converts. Which “meaning network” each convert is a part of will influence which group he or she will join. As David Smilde argues, meaning networks are key for understanding who is likely to convert (e.g., if you live away from your family in a house with an evangelical, you are more likely to convert to an evangelical church). In other words, network theory allows us to take the market approach to the micro-level, making it a complementary, rather than a competing, explanation for religious change. Such an approach reintroduces the interaction between agents (individuals making religious choices) and context (networks and contextual push-and-pull factors) in a manner that avoids causal reductionism in either direction.\(^{18}\)

Based on his research in Venezuela, David Smilde argues that the personal problems that Pentecostalism helps converts to address are widespread among Venezuela’s popular sectors and thus do not provide a sufficient explanation for conversion. Smilde found instead that networks played an important part. People who were living away from their families or with an evangelical were more likely to convert than those who were not. The presence of nearby Catholic family members acted as a deterrent to conversion, but individuals who moved away from their families were more likely to have the freedom to innovate. Smilde also points out that some people actively construct the network positions that eventually lead to their conversion.\(^ {19}\)

In other words, instrumental action on the part of individuals leads them toward or away from conversion.

**Instrumental action and context.** We come now to a final category of explanations for religious conversion: the broad focus on the interactions between agents and context. Some of the most influential works on conversion in Latin America assert that conversion represents an adaptive response to varying external structures and processes. A relatively large number of authors subscribe to some version of the “anomie” thesis, in which the drastic changes associated with modernization (e.g., urbanization, changing land-tenure patterns, and the loss of traditional community) cause a sense of moral uncertainty and a loss of security in terms of relationships and norms of behavior. People then may turn to Pentecostalism (or other religious options) as a way to adopt capitalist values\(^{20}\) or as a comforting replication of old norms and values.\(^{21}\) Some authors from the preparation for capitalism school claim that conversion opens “social spaces” for people who have been dislocated and who associate conversion with development and the promotion of democracy.\(^ {22}\) For example, Amy Sherman argues that Guatemalan converts experience changes equivalent to Weber’s “Protestant ethic,” which “predispose them to capitalist development.”\(^ {23}\) Authors from the replication school focus on the otherworldly and millenialist elements of Pentecostal Protestantism and hold a dimmer view of the potential for individual conversions to produce large-scale social change.

While there may be a correlation between upward social mobility and conversion in the context of Latin America, the question of directionality remains open. Virginia Garrard-Burnett addresses this issue, arguing that upward social mobility may be more myth than reality among immigrant converts to neo-Pentecostalism in Houston.\(^ {24}\) According to Garrard-Burnett, while conversion does not necessarily lead to upward social mobility among converts, it can indeed provide them with a set of beliefs, networks, and sense of community that help them to successfully navigate the difficulties of immigrant life in the Houston community. It is precisely this sort of nuanced and pragmatic treatment of conversion that points us toward a potential methodological synthesis.

### Toward a Methodological Synthesis

Taken together, the theoretical perspectives summarized here suggest that researchers should beware of reifying the instrumental nature of conversion as a path to resolving life crises. Conversion is not the only avenue explored by people in crisis in Latin America. The pathologies of poverty are much more widespread than conversion. Conceiving of conversion as a process allows us to follow the trajectory of individuals over time; it also serves as a cautionary factor, keeping us from becoming overly deterministic about the variables contributing to conversion. While social conformity, networks, and crises may all condition conversion, these are not the sole determining factors. Purely instrumental approaches, however, may give too much credit to the convert’s “other” preferences (financial gain, personal safety, crisis management, or changes in gender relations). That which appears instrumental or purely preference-based to the outside observer may actually have multiple contextual and network determinants that are not immediately evident. One way for researchers to tease out these different levels of analysis is to take a more critical approach to the role of conversion narratives and discourse in the study of conversion.

Conversion is defined, in part, by the new discourse repeated in the conversion narrative. Pitting past against present and future, good against evil, old against new is part of adopting a new religious identity—not only adopting it, but actively reshaping and reembracing it in the retelling. The conversion narrative can thus make conversion appear purely tactical, precisely because the discourse is framed in terms of what was wrong and bad about the past. Conversion almost always has “practical” explanations: fighting addiction, bottoming out, facing a medical crisis, or other “pathologies of poverty.” A common factor among conversionist religious groups is that converts must learn to interpret these factors in a manner consistent with the group’s norms and discursive style.\(^ {25}\)

This is not to say that conversion narratives should be discounted as disingenuous or programmed. Rather, researchers must pay attention to the convert’s stage in their conversion career, always remaining cognizant of the fact that narratives are socially constructed and retrospectively reinterpreted over time. In other words, conversion accounts may tell us more about current identities, beliefs, and orientations than they do about the past.

Maria Carozzi’s study of converts to an Afro-diasporan religious group in Argentina provides an excellent illustration.
By speaking with practitioners and analyzing their discourse at various stages of initiation into the group, Carozzi sheds light on the fact that converts are as much “chosen” by religious authorities as they are “choosers” in their conversion process. Only those who appear to have certain affinities and dedication are invited into the inner circle of the group.26

At the same time, an analysis of conversion narratives demonstrates an ongoing process of continuity and rupture with the former life for converts. Patricia Birman argues that, in the case of Brazilian neo-Pentecostals, the spiritual forces of previous religious practices remain very much alive in the worldviews and narratives of converts, despite the fact that they are now demonitized within the neo-Pentecostal dualist ontology. In other words, narratives allow converts to keep a place for their former beliefs and spirits in their daily discourse.

These studies provide us with practical methodological lessons for studying conversion. Tracking and measuring religious changes requires a methodology that can capture the multiplicity of causal factors and gradations of conversion. Qualitative interviews and survey data must be complemented with participant observation in order to capture the conversion career of any individual. Nonconverts must be interviewed as well. Without this control group we may be missing half of the story. Overlooking this group has led some researchers to overpredict the causal nature of precipitant events (drug use, stress, and other emotional/psychological crises) in the conversion process.28

Researchers should also approach conversion narratives carefully because, although they are an empirical indicator of conversion, they are socially constructed and influenced by the discourse of the new group to which the convert has affiliated. If the conversion narrative is not considered carefully, we may lose sight of the fundamental tension in conversion discourses between the processes of choosing (individual agency) and of being chosen (either by religious authorities or directly by a deity or spirit).

Conversion is a process that does not necessarily proceed in a linear fashion.

Political and Economic Effects of Conversion

The debate over the impact of conversion in Latin America has been framed largely in terms of democracy, development, resistance, and accommodation. The results of studies asking questions within that framework have varied widely and have led to inconclusive results, primarily because the wrong questions are being asked. Religious conversion is a personal and religious decision that takes place over time. While individual decisions may add up to a larger process of religious change, the most important political effects of such changes in Latin America have to do with the manner in which new religiously held values enter the public sphere, inform public discourse, and combine to resolve or exacerbate local cultural, social, or familial tensions. These political effects, however, do not fall neatly into categories of democratic/authoritarian, left/right, or resistance/accommodation.

Five primary guidelines can assist us in untangling the complicated political and economic impact of conversion in Latin America. First, we must disaggregate and specifically define the religious variables we posit as having political effects. As I have argued elsewhere, the act of conversion or belonging to a given religious affiliation is simply not a good predictor of political attitudes and activities.29 We are much better served by focusing on the specific religious beliefs and practices associated with the religious groups experiencing rapid growth in the region, and how those beliefs and practices interact with specific local and national contexts. For example, strong tendencies toward millennialism and charismaticism (among both Protestants and Catholics) are associated with political quietism in closed and authoritarian political contexts. At the same time, the same set of religious beliefs and practices can have a positive impact on voting frequency if political participation is encouraged as both a right and a duty for citizens.30

Second, sweeping generalizations connecting religious change to claims about democracy and development should be viewed with suspicion. In a region where multiple powerful factors militate against significant progress on either of these fronts, we can hardly expect a series of individual religious choices to add up to a coherent, direct, and sweeping force for economic or political change. As Jeffrey Rubin argued recently, we may better understand the effects of social and religious movements in Latin America if we investigate the manner in which they introduce alternative rationalities, discourses, and narratives into public spaces, rather than forcing our “square peg” research subject into the “round hole” of classic sociological, anthropological, and political categories.31

David Smilde provides us with one such nuanced approach in his study of evangelical political participation in Venezuela. Smilde argues that evangelical “publics” in Venezuela are purposely constructed relational contexts that extend network ties and introduce a “moralized” discourse into the public sphere.32 The same could be argued for television and radio evangelism throughout the region. This discourse and political responses to it (such as Hugo Chavez’s adoption of evangelical images and phrases) constitute a rich field for further study. This sort of political participation does not fall neatly into the bounds of traditional political categories, but it remains important and demands careful analysis.

Third, much of the political impact of religious change can be understood only through a lens that includes both the global and the local. Pentecostalism is a globalized religious movement that interacts with local religious beliefs and practices while simultaneously demonizing them. Many Pentecostal (and neo-Pentecostal) churches have international headquarters and business plans, but the staff members of most Pentecostal churches are locals, with social, political, and economic concerns that reflect those of their local community.33 Thus, although Pentecostalism tends to “look the same” across the variant communities in which it has made significant inroads in Latin America, the political and social effects of Pentecostal growth interact with local contexts to produce very different political effects. The same is true among the “pentecostalized” Catholics in charismatic churches throughout the region.

Fourth, upward social mobility certainly plays some role in conversion, but whether it is an empirical or merely a perceptual reality remains unclear. Certain arguments that posit an upward swing in “development” on a national scale because of religious conversions should be discounted. At the same time, the stories of individuals and communities who have experienced upward social mobility along with conversion merit careful empirical analysis. As Virginia Garrard-Burnett argues, conversion may not
Global Awakening
Mark Shaw

“Mark Shaw’s bold thesis . . . opens edifying vistas for Christian believers of all sorts who have become aware of momentous shifts in the nature of Christianity around the world, but who have needed a solid theological guide for understanding what is taking place. Along with Michael McClymond’s Encyclopedia of Religious Revivals in America, this book is the most impressive study of worldwide Christian revival to have appeared in a very long time.”

—Mark Noll, University of Notre Dame
make the convert financially rich, but it can provide a wealth of “spiritual capital” in the form of beliefs, networks, self-meanings, and affirmation that assist people in navigating the difficulties of everyday life.34

Finally, conversion must be compared between the various religious groups in Latin America instead of focusing exclusively on the Catholic-to-Protestant shift. Widening the scope of the study of conversion makes the conversion picture more accurate. This wider scope facilitates our ability to trace people’s movement in their conversion careers and compare variables involved in the process of entering and leaving different religious groups. While the growth of other religious groups in Latin America is commonly assumed to come at the expense of the Catholic Church, the reality is that Catholicism has also experienced a major internal revival during the same time period. Catholicism has certainly lost shares as a self-reported percentage of the population throughout the region, but many experts argue that the Catholic Church, though leaner, is more vibrant and healthier than ever before.35

Conclusion

Throughout this essay, I argue for a definition of conversion that is more fluid than static. Conversion is a process that takes place over time; interacts with institutional religion, networks, and cultural contexts; and does not necessarily proceed in a linear or chronological fashion. I argue for a reconceptualization not only of conversion but also of the methods used in research and subjects studied as its effects. Evaluating the scholarship on religious change in Latin America can help us to avoid the pitfalls of overgeneralization, understand the multiple lines of causality involved in conversion, and utilize methods that better capture the complexity of the process of religious change in the region. One can hope that such an approach will help to inform future scholarship and lead to more refined and specific claims about the process and impact of religious conversion in general.

Notes

5. See Frigerio, “Analyzing Conversion.”
7. Ibid., pp. 53–54.
28. See Snow and Machalek, “Sociology of Conversion,” for examples of this research.
30. Ibid., p. 145.
Evangelization, Visual Technologies, and Indigenous Responses: The South American Missionary Society in the Paraguayan Chaco

Alejandro Martínez

At the end of the 1880s the British South American Missionary Society (hereafter SAMS) established its first missionary station in the Paraguayan Chaco, on the shore opposite the city of Villa Concepción, on the Chaco bank of the Paraguay River. After a somewhat difficult beginning, these missionaries started moving west, entering the territory inhabited by the Enxet, an indigenous people usually referred to as the Lengua or Lengua-Maskoy, who inhabit an area bounded to the east by the Paraguay River, to the south and north by the Rio Montelindo and Ríacho San Carlos, and stretching 200 kilometers to the west. The Anglican Church, the successor to SAMS, is still active in the Paraguayan Chaco, and its area of influence there is known as the Anglican Zone. Nowadays the Enxet are employed in small and large ranch communities, although hunting, gathering, and fishing are still important for their subsistence and they obtain some cash from the sale of skins and wild honey. Before 1980 the only area specifically reserved for the Indians was the 14.4 square miles (3,739 hectares) of the SAMS mission station of Makthlawaiya, although in recent years the Anglican Church of Paraguay has been instrumental in purchasing land for Indian settlement.

The Anglican missionaries, as was customary in missionary societies at the end of the nineteenth century, carefully documented their activities in the Chaco by means of letters, reports, drawings, maps, photographs, and other graphic forms, many of them published in the society’s monthly magazine. The images published by SAMS—except for some lithographs and lantern slides made of works of pictorial art—came from photographic images and were also used for lectures and services held by this society in the British Isles. Most of these photographs represented the natural environment of the Chaco, the indigenous peoples who inhabited it, and the development of the missionary stations. As is commonly noted, the photographs included in the missionary literature were meant to elicit support, both financial and broadly political. Propaganda, though, was not the only purpose missionaries had in using visual images. Together with the subscriptions to the South American Missionary Magazine, the society offered for sale photographic albums and postcards portraying the Indians and the life and development of the mission. Moreover, during the magic-lantern lectures held by SAMS, a contribution to the missionary cause was requested. In addition, since the first years of the society’s activity in Paraguay, visual images and devices, mainly the magic lantern, occupied a key place both in propagating the Gospel and as a particularly effective vehicle for the spread of Western ideology and culture.

Scholars have commonly emphasized the role of visual media, especially photographs, in missionary proselytization and mission society publicity. Similarly, my analysis of the use of visual technologies by the Anglican missionaries who served in the Paraguayan Chaco at the end of the nineteenth century aims at demonstrating how SAMS missionaries made use of visual technologies for evangelization purposes, particularly emphasizing the responses of the Enxet to the images that the missionaries put before their eyes. It is hoped that this approach can help clarify the relationships established between missionaries and indigenous peoples within the process of evangelization in the Paraguayan Chaco.

Evangelization and Visual Resources

In September 1888 missionary superintendent Adolfo Henriksen and his two assistants, B. O. Bartlett and J. C. Robins, began the construction of the first SAMS missionary station in Paraguay. The place chosen for building this station was a little inlet called Ríacho Fernández, thirty miles north of Villa Concepción on the Chaco bank of the Paraguay River. During the first years, among other obstacles, they found it difficult to attract the Enxet to the mission. This situation made establishing successful communication with them a major concern for the missionaries. The Enxet language was quite unknown at that time, and the missionaries had no access to written information about it. In a letter dated March 2, 1889, Henriksen attached a list of seventy words of “our Indian language” and asked whether any linguistic student could “give me a hint, or find any similarity with other languages or dialects of the South American aborigines.” In such a context, the missionaries did not hesitate to call for additional resources beyond those locally available, such as modern audio and visual technologies, to see whether these could enable them to overcome the obstacles to communication posed by people possessing a totally different language, culture, and religion. Henriksen commented about the response of the Enxet to the new technologies, “Often during their midday rest they come to the front of the tent, and we show them pictures, and give them a tune on the
Ariston,10 which has become their great favourite. We have even heard them whistle one or two bars of some of the hymn tunes. We are also hopeful of learning their language by this way of intercourse, and have already got hold of several words.”11

After only one year of hard work, Henriksen died of pleurisy on September 23, 1889. He was replaced by Wilfrid Barbrooke Grubb,12 who worked virtually alone for some years. Grubb changed both the direction of the missionary effort (away from the river and toward the indigenous settlements lying to the west) and the methodology of work. Trying to adapt themselves both to the seasonal movements of the Enxet and to the harsh Chaco environment, the missionaries’ response was to build a series of mission buildings—like links in a chain—from the Paraguay River westward into the Chaco. Thus, slowly but steadily, the SAMS missionaries continued advancing to the inner Chaco. In those years they were the only white people who traveled through that territory unarmed and alone.13

Despite this progress, there was still much to do in a spiritual sense. The missionaries devoted a lot of time to translation and to linguistic training, but still they struggled to bridge the social and relational distances between themselves and the Enxet. Again, pictures were found to be valuable tools for evangelization of the Enxet, as we can read in the following report written by Richard Hunt toward the end of 1894:

Advancement has been made with the language, but it has been slow, hard work, for the people are slow to grasp ideas, and at times not too willing to communicate;14 so that they have had to be taken when in the humour. Translation has begun in texts, the Lord’s Prayer, the Commandments, Scripture stories, and a few chapters in the “Peep o’ Day.”15 So far they are all imperfect, for I cannot get them to understand that I want them to put my rough work into proper grammatical form. If I could only get them to repeat it to me as they repeat it to one another I should be able to get on quicker, but if they can put a sentence in Lengua, Spanish, and English they will do so, and a fine mess it is when produced. Scripture pictures, either plain or coloured, would be a great help, as they enable one to introduce a subject where it would otherwise be difficult.16

After the last sentence, a footnote by the magazine editor informed readers that the requested images had already been sent to Paraguay. From this moment onward, references to the use of images for evangelization purposes appear frequently, mainly emphasizing their value in attracting the attention of indigenous audiences. According to missionary testimonies the Enxet liked to look at illustrated religious books and would listen carefully to the explanations offered to them. “Some nights it was very wet and miserable in the toldo [a native dwelling],”17 and the whole crowd of them would gather into our room. . . . It afforded an opportunity of exhibiting some pictures and explaining to them the general narrative of the representation. They listened with great attention to Mr. Grubb’s short explanation and brief application of such pictures of the Prodigal Son, Good Samaritan, Raising of Widow’s Son, Philippian Jailor, &c. Pictures of all kind they are delighted to gaze at. They will turn over the leaves of old picture books repeatedly.”18

By the mid-1890s these “old picture books” had been set aside in favor of the magic lantern, which had made its appearance on the mission field. This device is the antecedent of the modern slide projector. Its basic principle—the transmission of light across an image and onto a screen—was developed toward the middle of the seventeenth century, and its invention is attributed to the Jesuit Athanasius Kircher.19 Since then, and for more than two centuries—up to the emergence of the cinema toward the turn of the twentieth century—the magic lantern was one of the most popular devices used in mass entertainment.

Back in England at the beginning of the 1890s, the proponents of abstinence from alcoholic beverages and other initiatives of social reform began to capitalize on the potential of conferences featuring magic lanterns to attract large audiences.20 Just like English Protestant missionaries then serving in Australia, so the missionaries of SAMS “readily adopted any means that might help them reach their audience, making liberal use of the lantern and photography to further their aims, to entertain and educate, and to illustrate the advantages of Western civilisation and Christianity.”21

The first use of the magic lantern in the Paraguayan Chaco evangelization was vividly recorded by Richard Hunt:

It was at this time [1895] that Grubb took out a lantern and slides. It was a great event, and marked a new stage in teaching.

Hitherto instruction had been given by means of pictures shown to little groups of people. Short informal religious services had been held in the house or near the village. Now came the novelty of the lantern; the young folks were curious and expectant, while the older people were dubious and fearful. On the first occasion the sheet was nicely stretched, the lantern in position, and the audience squatting on the ground in front waiting for something to happen. When the first picture appeared on the screen, they were startled and promptly covered their faces to avoid of the impending calamity, for as they put it, “They were afraid of the little devil that lived in the black box and jumped out to the white blanket.”

The pictures were exhibited frequently, so that the people could get accustomed to them. In this simple way the Bible stories were told to visitors.22

Indigenous Response to Magic Lantern Services

By 1898 the magic lantern was regularly used in the Sunday service. Meanwhile, the missionaries were asking SAMS for a
new magic lantern and more slides to project. The Anglican missionaries quickly acknowledged the benefit of employing this visual technology in their evangelism, and they saw how helpful it was in communicating with the Enxet. The magic lantern allowed SAMS missionaries to focus the Enxets’ attention during the description of the biblical pictures and helped—as they themselves recognized—both in “forming ideas” and in “remembering the lessons.” Hartrick has noted that pictorial representations of the Scripture undoubtedly contributed to the success of these missions and attests to the widespread use of this technology by Protestant clergy.

A century ago magic lantern shows were widely used by English mission agencies, both in their overseas work and in lectures held at home. For the Protestant missionaries, the rhetoric of salvation was easily combined with the image of a lamp projecting light in the darkness: the light of the truth of the Gospel, and the light of reason and European civilization on the seemingly complete darkness of “paganism” and “superstition.” SAMS missionaries frequently referred to their own work in the

![Image](South American Missionary Magazine 29 (March 1895): 53)

Chaco in those terms. For example, J. C. Robins wrote, “I look forward, in faith, to the time when from among these people, who are now sitting in nature’s darkness, many shall come forth and be the living monuments of God’s power to uplift the heathen and bring them forth into the glorious light of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The kind of images missionaries projected differed according to their audience, whether the missionaries were trying to catch the attention of English men and women or whether they were using them with an indigenous audience. When the missionaries came back home, they held conferences on the work of the mission, seeking to gain support from philanthropists as well as to obtain political support for their projects. In these conferences most of the projections were slides made from photographs that were very different from those published in the missionary magazine. Among these we can distinguish three major categories: one intended to depict the Chaco landscape and nature; a second group portraying the Enxet people, showing their material culture and their “manners and customs”; and a final set intended to demonstrate the spiritual improvements achieved by the mission (photographs of baptisms, communions, marriages, etc.), along with evidence of progress made in terms of civilization (photographs of buildings, bridges, roads, and other

mission construction projects). This third group includes several images aimed at showing the missionaries’ effort to “civilize” the Enxet by introducing them to various productive activities or “industrial work.”

The slides used in the lectures and religious services for the Enxet were, almost exclusively, reproductions of works of European artists representing several passages of the Holy Scriptures. Though the Enxet did not have a tradition of watching this kind of image, their attitude was not naive, for they could look at the pictures with a certain degree of criticism, as described by Richard Hunt:

On the one hand, according to the missionaries, the Enxet were sunk in “superstition” and “witchcraft,” believing that “demons” lived in the lantern. On the other, as this quotation reveals, they could look skeptically at the biblical lectures, distrusting the veracity of the images that, for example, represented Christ’s resurrection. For the projected images to support the missionaries’ preaching, the pictures had to be selected carefully, taking into account the ability of the indigenous eye to notice conflicting details. That is, the Enxet were not simply passive recipients of the images but were active participants. The success of the slide projections was in no way guaranteed in advance but depended to a great extent on the trust the Enxet had or did not have in them.

Final Considerations

Although the use of visual technologies was guided by the interests and expectations of SAMS missionaries and developed in what could be called an asymmetric power relationship between missionaries and Indians, we can see that more was involved than simple imposition of Anglican interests and passive Enxet reception. Here we do well to note the words of Ana Teruel, who has written about the Franciscan missionaries who were active in the Argentine Chaco during the nineteenth century. The relationship between these Roman Catholic missionaries and the Indians who were part of the mission settlements they established was complex and unsettled, despite the clearly subordinate position of the Indians because of their having been conquered. The Indians did not constitute a malleable mass, subject to the will of the missionaries, a fact that turned the mission field into an area of “negotiation,” “interaction,” or “conversation.”

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, we observe a period of great development of visual technologies, which was basically the development of photography in all its forms and possibilities. The magic lantern, one of the most popular of these visual tools, was adopted into missionary practice almost unquestioningly by Protestant missionaries seeking to spread Christianity and the principles of Western civilization to every corner of the world, including the Paraguayan Chaco. As
we have seen, these visual resources could be extremely effective in holding the attention of indigenous audiences, thus serving as communication tools of great use for purposes of evangelism. However, objections made by the Enxet to what they were viewing allow us to identify ways they exercised an active role in the whole process of evangelization.10

Notes
1. SAMS was founded in 1844 as the Patagonian Missionary Society, changing its name in 1864. In 1995 it became the South American Mission Society. On February 1, 2010, it merged with the Church Missionary Society.
2. At the end of the nineteenth century the Enxet subsisted from their hunting, gathering, and fishing. They lived in flexible groups that normally varied in size between twenty and seventy people, near permanent or semipermanent water sources. These groups moved about the Chaco territory, depending on the variable availability of subsistence resources. See Stephen Kidd, “Land, Politics, and Benevolent Shamanism: The Enxet Indians in a Democratic Para-
3. Since “Lengua” is understood by the Indians as a pejorative term that “symbolises their loss of dignity and worth and is contrasted with their aspiration to once more become Enxet, to be recognised as fully human” (ibid., p. 52), I refer to them as Enxet.
4. Ibid., pp. 44, 54, 53.
5. The South American Missionary Magazine (hereafter SAMM), which began publication in 1867, was the main source of information for this article. For several years, especially during the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, this magazine published long excerpts from missionaries’ accounts and letters, which are a rich source of information. An excellent source of information about SAMS and much else is the Library of the South American Missionary Society, Great Britain (SAMS GB), located in the Medlock Room, Handsworth Parish Centre, Handsworth Road, Sheffield, U.K. It holds a large number of nineteenth-century works, including general descriptions of the countries, travelers’ accounts, and missionaries’ diaries. There is a small collection of works in Amerindian languages, mostly translations of parts of the Bible or the New Testament, and dictionaries in these languages, mainly compiled by missionaries. The geographic coverage reflects the areas in which SAMS has been active: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay. There are also photographic materials, minute books, diaries, and a full set of the society’s magazine from its beginning in 1867. (In 1963 the name of the magazine became Sent; in 1975 it changed to Share.)
6. A 1902 announcement reads as follows: “The second series of South American Mission Scenes is now in the press. It contains about seventy photographs illustrating the people, buildings, and surroundings of our stations in South America. . . . The price of either the first or the second series is sixpence.” In the same magazine “a packet of Twenty-five Picture Post Cards of South American Mission Scenes, all different” was also offered (SAMM 36 [1902]: 32).
10. Henriksen probably refers here to the Ariston Organette, a cheap, hand-turned reed organ first introduced in Germany in 1876 that played interchangeable perforated cardboard discs. By 1890 the Ariston Company boasted that over 200,000 of these instruments and millions of record-discs had been distributed around the world. See Patrick Feaster, “Framing the Mechanical Voice: Generic Conventions of Early Phonograph Recording,” Folklore Forum 32, nos. 1–2 (2001): 60.
11. SAMM 22 (1888): 270.
12. Grubb was an active missionary in the Paraguayan, Argentinean, and Bolivian Chaco from 1890 to 1921. For more information, see Richard Hunt, The Livingstone of South America (London: Seely Service, 1933).
13. On May 1, 1892, the Paraguayan government named Grubb “Com-
isario General del Chaco y Pacificador de los Indios (justice of the peace, or magistrate, for the Chaco, and conciliator of the Indian tribes).” See Wilfrid Barbrooke Grubb, Among the Indians of the Para-
14. The peoples’ unwillingness to teach the missionaries their language may be understood as a barrier the people erected due to their suspicion of the missionaries, something the missionaries had to overcome before they could make any friendly advance. We must bear in mind that these missionaries were newly arrived in the Chaco and that the Indians may well not have considered them to be much different from other whites coming into their territory. Henry Grubb has stated, “As a rule the white man has come among the Indians as an exploiter, a conqueror, or a member of a dominant race, so it is little wonder that [the Indians] avoid any contact with the white visitor” (The Land Between the Rivers [London: United Society for Christian Literature, 1965], p. 14).
15. This phrase probably refers to The Peep of Day, a book written by Favel Lee Mortimer (1802–78) in 1836. According to Mortimer, this book was meant for the “many mothers at the present time who are seeking to bring their children to Christ” (The Peep of Day; or, A series of the earliest religious instruction the infant mind is capable of receiving [New York: Taylor & Co., 1845], p. ix).
17. “‘Toldo’ is the Spanish word for indigenous dwelling. The Enxet toldo was a lightweight wood structure open through its entire length, and usually at the sides as well, having a low roof of interlaced twigs. One of these houses will accommodate from forty to sixty people.” Seymour Hawtrey, “The Lengua Indians of the Paraguayan Chaco,” Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland 31 (1901): 284.
18. Ibid., p. 52. I could find no further references to the use of illustrated books in this magazine; a further analysis of the available sources may shed some light in this matter.
23. SAMM 34 (1900): 11.
26. SAMM 23 (1889): 175.
27. Lantern services were held in the Chaco at least till the end of the 1920s in the monthly informal Sunday afternoon services, in which lantern slides and objects were used to illustrate and “bring more variety” (SAMM 62 [1928]: 34).
30. I wish to thank Cora Willkie (secretary of the Anglican Cathedral of San Juan de Batista, Buenos Aires) and Robert Luce (resources officer, SAMS GB) for their assistance in gathering information for this article. I am also grateful to Paul Jenkins for helpful comments and suggestions.
Guatemalan Catholics and Mayas: The Future of Dialogue

Michael K. Duffey

It hardly bears commenting that the first evangelization of the native peoples of the Americas was unfortunate in many respects. The abuse of forced conversion is reflected in Pedro de Alvarado’s assault on the Mam Mayas in the highlands of Guatemala in 1525. Alvarado issued a stock Spanish ultimatum: “Let it be known that our coming is beneficial because we bring tidings of the true God and Christian Religion . . . so that you might become Christians peacefully, of your own free will; but should you refuse the peace we offer, then the death and destruction that will follow will be entirely of your own account.”

The Mams refused, and death and destruction did follow, as it had for the Mixtecs, the Zapotecs, the Tzotzil Mayans of southern Mexico, and the neighboring Guatemalan kingdom of the K’iche’ Mayas (the Guatemalan department in which they live is often Latinized as “Quiché”). Within a decade and a half, Spanish expeditions subdued most of the other Mayan strongholds in the Guatemalan highlands.

Coerced conversion had mixed results. Carmack, Gasco, and Gossen describe Christianity as an addition to, rather than a replacement of, Mayan religious beliefs. While many were baptized and attended religious services, Mayas understood Christianity in terms compatible with their own cultures. “Over time, new prayers, new images, new songs, new penances, and new festivals were adopted whereas many of the old practices were abandoned. But there was never a sudden and total substitution of a new faith for an old.”

Gustavo Gutiérrez laments the tragic Christian-Mayan religious encounter through centuries of conquest. Unlike Paul’s approach to the Greco-Roman world that was “attentive to the religious values to be found outside Christianity,” sixteenth-century Spanish missionaries regarded the peoples of the Americas as belonging to a “socially and culturally inferior world.”

The Modern Catholic Church and the Mayas

In the mid-twentieth century the Guatemalan Catholic Church was still intent on the Mayas’ adherence to Eurocentric Catholicism. A program called Catholic Action was introduced to re-evangelize the Mayas. The small number of foreign priests who served the indigenous communities enlisted hundreds of Mayan lay catechists to conduct Bible studies and sacramental preparation. The second Vatican Council (1962-65) challenged the church to reconsider its own mission in postcolonial regions of widespread impoverishment and political repression. The meeting of the Latin American Catholic bishops at Medellín, Colombia (1968), and the World Synod of Catholic Bishops (1971) called on the Catholic Church to overcome the systemic injustices deepening the poverty throughout Latin America. Recognition of the right of peoples to dignity and freedom was dawning throughout Latin America. Pope Paul VI’s apostolic exhortation Evangelization in the Modern World affirmed that “above all the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness.”

Evangelization, he wrote, is most effective when Christians “show their capacity for understanding and acceptance, their sharing of life and destiny with other people, their solidarity with the efforts of all for whatever is noble and good.” Furthermore, “The Church . . . has the duty to proclaim liberation to millions of human beings as well as of assisting the birth of this liberation, giving witness to it, of ensuring that it is complete. This is not foreign to evangelization.”

The church’s promotion of lay leadership was producing social and economic awareness among the impoverished Mayas. Lay leadership became a source of grassroots projects for economic, health, and social improvements among Mayas. Cooperatives were formed and supplemental income projects undertaken with the aim of ending the debilitating annual migration of Mayas from the highlands to coastal areas, where they worked for low wages in unhealthy conditions harvesting cotton, sugarcane, and other export crops.

By the late 1970s indigenous highland communities found themselves in the middle of Guatemala’s civil war. Thousands of Mayas, along with priests, pastoral workers, and catechists, were massacred. In 1980 Bishop Juan Gerardi suspended operations of the Diocese of Quiché after several hundred church workers were murdered and several attempts were made on his own life. With the exception of a single foreign missionary, no church leadership was present in the diocese for two years. In 1983 the church began the task of accompanying returning survivors and assisting in their resettlement amid continuing sporadic military assaults. That year Pope John Paul II made the first of his three visits to Guatemala. Addressing an indigenous audience, he said: “The Church . . . knows the social discrimination you suffer, the injustices that you bear, the serious difficulties you have in defending your lands and your rights, the frequent lack of respect for your customs and traditions. . . . The Church wants to stay close to you and to raise her voice in condemnation when your dignity as human beings and children of God is violated.”

In the early 1990s the Guatemalan bishops demonstrated substantial support for Mayan renewal. In 1992 Guatemalan Bishop Gerardo Flores described the task facing the church: “If Puebla [the 1979 meeting of the Latin American Bishops’ Conference] saw the face of Christ in the Indian, then Santo Domingo [the 1992 meeting] will usher in a period when people can think beyond the disfigured face to embrace a fully rounded and robust new actor with a great contribution to make to all humankind.”

In 1992 the Guatemalan bishops issued a pastoral letter entitled “500 años sembrando el Evangelio” (Five Hundred Years Sowing the Gospel). The letter allowed the Catholic Mayas to recount their own tragic history. They spoke of “the violation, abduction, prostitution, and robbing of our mother earth” and of her defilement for economic profit, violating “the life of God and life of his children.” Banished from the land, forced to work as slave laborers or for slave wages, “we indigenous have lived, thus, without a mother.” For five hundred years outsiders have used every means—including religion—to intrude upon, weaken, and divide the indigenous communities.” The ongoing theft of indigenous lands by powerful economic elites is, they contend, at the root of today’s indigenous crisis, since it is the land that

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nurtures both people and culture. The intruders had no concern for the “common good, justice, and growth” of the indigenous peoples but regarded them as “negotiable products, commodities of capital and profit.” Sons were taken away to become plantation laborers or soldiers, and daughters were pressed into domestic service. Destruction of families and communities resulted from poverty, violence, forced emigration, and religious proselytizing.

The bishops affirmed Mayan values and expressed the desire to begin intercultural dialogue. They pledged to promote an “authentic evangelization”—one that has not yet taken root—that does not divide communities, and that does not fail to recognize the sense of God and power of the spirit” already present in the culture and “beating in the heart of the Mayas.” They affirmed that the incarnation reveals the “closeness of God the Father and Mother, and the reign of life, justice, freedom, peace, and love in the world of the indigenous of this continent.” Jesus is God’s prophet who defends the dignity and life of the little ones, is servant and friend of the poor and oppressed, and is initiator of reconciliation and unity. The church must be a “mother to the impoverished Mayas, promoter of their cultural values, and defender of their rights.” The church must commit itself to “the urgent and radical changes that God demands in his world,” joining the Mayas “to work together to promote peace and inaugurate the reign of justice, life, liberty, and love.” After five centuries of Eurocentric Catholicism, the Guatemalan Catholic Church seemed poised to accept the challenge of entering five centuries of Eurocentric Catholicism, the Guatemalan Catholic Church seemed poised to accept the challenge of entering

Mayan Renaissance and Catholic Response

Despite centuries of efforts by missionaries to uproot Mayan religious beliefs and practices, the Mayan cosmological vision continues to provide the center of Mayan life. A history of resistance to cultural oblivion flowered in the 1990s with a Mayan cultural renaissance. While the Catholic Church has acknowledged its past sins against the indigenous peoples of the Americas, the question is whether real interreligious dialogue is yet occurring. The Mayan cosmovision has met with resistance from conservative clergy and bishops. Rigoberto Perez, a Guatemalan priest who has worked for two decades with K’iche’ and Ixil Mayas, notes that some bishops are distrustful of Mayan initiatives and want to control the outcome. Perez reports that “some clergy fear [the Mayan cosmovision], and others don’t understand it.” While the Catholic Church has supported the renewal of Mayan cultural rights, its willingness to embrace the religious worldview and practices of the indigenous is less clear. K’iche’ Mayan Wuqub’ Iq’, originally a Catholic priest who now identifies himself solely as a Mayan priest, notes that the bishops at first supported inculturation but gradually became uneasy with the approach of the small group of European and Mayan Catholic priests exploring inculturation. At present, Bruce Calder writes that the future of Catholic-Mayan relations is “a work in progress” in which “the Maya are now capable of creating their own agenda and of operating on their own . . . [having] a voice in a society in which they have been marginalized for almost five hundred years.”

What will be the future relationship between the Catholic Church and the Mayas? Virginia Garrard-Burnett describes three different Mayan responses to Christianity. The first response, of which Wuqub’ Iq’ is representative, seeks to return to an older Mayan culture shorn of Christianity. Garrard-Burnett observes: “For some Mayan activists, the conflation of cultural rights and religion demanded an outright repudiation of Christianity. . . . [The Peace Accords] opened a social space for Mayan spiritual leaders to break off their ties with Christianity and return to an autochthonous spirituality they believed retained its pre-Christian essence.” These activists seek to “decolonize” Christian narratives and “reposition them in a Mayan cosmovision” in order “to invert and reinterpret the power relations and identity issues implicit in the Christian project . . . [so that] Mayas are not subordinated to Ladino interests.” They complain that the Catholic Church has yet to engage in a dialogue among equals. Some have left the Catholic Church to return to their indigenous roots. Wuqub’ Iq’ observes that, although the Guatemalan Catholic Church has championed the cultural rights of the Mayas, its support of Mayan religious views and ritual practices is less clear. Wuqub’ Iq’ charges that “dialogue” from the Christian side has always been a strategy to Christianize the Maya, to understand them in order “to ensure that [indigenous culture] draws closer to the fundamental principles of the Christian faith.”

The second response Garrard-Burnett describes is that of inculturationists seeking a “Mayanized theology” that would “fully universalize Christianity by consciously framing Christian beliefs within the conceptual structures . . . of Mayan cosmovision.” Presbyterian Kaq’ chikel theologian Antonio Otzoy writes: “At Puebla [the 1979 bishops’ meeting] we indigenous peoples were recognized by the Latin American bishops as the suffering face of Christ in the Americas. We were deprived of our lands, ignored and pushed aside in the juridical and political reordering of colonial society. . . . What today’s bishops fail to recognize is that the practices of the conquest continue today: we are being robbed of our unique identity. We are asked to desist from being ourselves.” Otzoy is giving voice to centuries of injustice still not remedied. He calls for space in which the Mayas can develop and fully express themselves, “in their music and art, spirituality and family relations, and oneness with nature.” Garrard-Burnett characterizes a genuine “inculturation theology” as a dialogue that seeks to “incorporate [Mayan] spiritual values as much as possible into a Christian scheme, but [that] also demands a reexamination of fundamental Christian images, symbols, and archetypes through the lens of traditional Mayan cosmovision(s)” in order to “identify points of potential conjuncture” between European and indigenous systems of organizing all realities that make up the world.

The third and oldest response was for Mayas both to participate in their own rituals and to maintain Christian identity, blending religious cultures. Sixteenth-century missionaries unable to directly instruct the faithful in myriad villages installed a medieval institution called *confradias*, a brotherhood of elders tasked with directing the veneration of village patron saints and organizing fiestas on saints’ feast days. *Confradias* combined veneration of the saints with Mayan veneration of spirits and ancestors. *Confradias* also held political authority and

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maintained an indigenous social structure. By the mid-1950s, however, the confradias had lost religious and political power to Catholic Action catechists. Catholic charismatics also appeared about the same time. Confradias, catechists, and charismatics, however, have not succeeded in “Mayanizing” Christian theology.

Mayan Beliefs

In 2001 K’iche’ Mayan priests published the Pixab’ (“Code of Conduct”), which presents the traditional religious, moral, and juridical teachings of the K’iche’ Mayas—a departure from the historical secrecy with which Mayas were forced to guard their beliefs and rituals. The publication of the Pixab’ is an opportunity for interfaith conversation. Below is a brief summary of its main themes.

One God. The Pixab’ asserts that the early missionaries’ accusations of polytheism conditioned Mayas not to speak of the “diverse, multidimensional, and multirepresentational” ways in which God interacts with the creation. Hunab Ku’ (hunab = “unique”; Ku’ = “God”) is the only God, the Creator-Former and Life-Giver. The most common title for Hunab Ku’ is “Heart of Heaven, Heart of Earth.” The notion is foreign that Hunab Ku’ “govern[s] the world from above, not as a horizontal divinity in which many elements participate and in which cosmic energy plays an important role.”

The world. God is the beating heart that enlivens everything. The natural world is not divine, but in it the divine will is actively manifested. The cosmos and the earth are God’s preeminent revelations. As the Pixab’ describes the creation, “Everything created is alive and has purpose. Everything that exists has an energy that sustains it. . . . Nothing exists by chance. Nothing is dead, everything is alive. From this arises the conception of the sacredness of the world.”

Respect for the earth. The Pixab’ affirms that “nature does not belong to the human being; rather, the human being belongs to the earth” and that “life doesn’t belong to the human being, but to ‘Heart of Heaven, Heart of Earth,’ to the Ancestors, and to nature itself.” Human beings must understand their relationships rightly by showing “profound appreciation and respect for things because of their usefulness in life.” It asks, “Could any human being exist without air, water, fire/light, the earth?”

All of life is to be organized in gratitude for the harmony of the created order. Giving thanks is the central means by which harmony is maintained. Mayas are taught to give thanks for the rain, sunlight, land, the sowing and the harvest, health, and harmonious community.

The human vocation. The day of the Mayan calendar on which persons are born determines how they will serve the community through the aptitudes they receive. Vocations are exercised on behalf of the community and maintain the world’s harmony. The sense of self is first of all communally and historically embedded. The Pixab’ describes the various vocations associated with the days of the Mayan calendar: for example, leaders, healers, interpreters of the law, midwives, philosophers, and spiritual guides. The Pixab’ notes that at birth every person receives a nawal (“spirit” or “soul”) to assist in actualizing the particular purpose for which he or she is born into the community. Nawals are described as “companion spirits” of “Heart of Heaven, Heart of Earth” who help to guide the lives of human beings. The nawal is one’s true and immortal being. Mayas do not reveal their nawals for fear that they might be stolen.

The ancestors. For the Mayas, the boundaries separating the spiritual and material worlds, and the living and the ancestors, are porous: “When the ancestors depart this life, they remain close at hand, in the mountains, rivers, clouds. We are surrounded by the spirits and will be welcomed into the spirit realm at death. At death we return to the hills, valleys, and mountains. We will dwell in space and time. We will travel in the wind and be in the rain, the fog, and the clouds.”

Ancestors have important contributions to make to the living. For example, they help to determine the vocation given to each person. Carlos Berganza notes that the reevangelization efforts of Catholic Action discouraged belief in the spiritual role of the ancestors, in effect attempting to break the connection between the living and the spirit realm. He describes a meeting between Mayan Catholic priests and Mayan priests in which the latter expressed “resentment about the damage done to their culture by outsiders by the attempts to steal the soul of Indians by cutting the connection to ancestors.”

Cosmic harmony. Garrard-Burnett summarizes the “three central elements of Mayan spirituality” as peace with the deity, peace with the natural world, and peace with other people. All natural elements “are part of a harmonious whole.” All “are connected, interdependent, communicating with one another, and affecting one another. So arises the need to learn to live together in community, both in the community of spirits and the social community.”

For Mayas, restoring broken human harmony is essential. The Pixab’ describes the process of repairing the damage that transgressions inflict on the community: “In life and especially in the resolution of conflict, a principle of forgiveness is observed.
among the Elders. It consists in granting forgiveness to someone who has committed some crime, but only when he shows a change of attitude or behavior and agrees to make restitution for the damage done by the violation of a norm. 23

While these teachings are only a summary of the *Pixab*, they represent essential aspects of Mayan theology and cosmovision. Resources like the *Pixab* are essential to religious dialogue.

### Interfaith Dialogue and Inculturation?

Questions remain regarding the Catholic Church’s future dialogue with the Mayas. Is the intent to engage in interreligious dialogue, or is it merely to inculturate Christian ways in Mayan cultural forms? I would argue that Christian and Mayan religious beliefs diverge because they are undergirded by differing cosmologies. For example, is *Hunab Ku* to be understood as a personal God experienced as love? Is Jesus Christ the consummate source of knowledge of God? Is divine revelation also mediated through Mayan spiritual guides? Are they comparable to the biblical prophets? What is the relationship between free will and the determination of vocation by the day of the calendar on which one is born? What sort of mastery ought humans to have over the earth? These are questions for religious dialogue.

Interfaith dialogue clarifies differences and similarities between different cosmologies. Dialogue opens the way for shared values, making interfaith projects possible that meet the common challenges of human communities. When both the Mayan cosmology and Christian beliefs are sympathetically received, dialogue is possible. In this spirit Christians can proceed to inculturation—how best to express Christian beliefs in Mayan terms. Guillermo Cook expresses the interfaith task from the Christian side as “simply to make the biblical text available . . . [and] to open it to learn, in this case from the peoples of Abia Yala [Central America], how to read ‘the book of life’—the book of Creation.” 24 The process goes both ways, of course, meaning that if Mayan beliefs are accepted, the conversation becomes how best to express Mayan beliefs in Ladino Christian terms.

A visual image of religious dialogue might be that of a bridge. The moorings at each end are the cosmologies and religious beliefs held by each group. The span is built from each side by study and dialogue. When the bridge is completed (although it requires continual renovation), the bridge builders are able to cross over, understanding each other’s worldviews sympathetically, and be moved to incorporate one another’s wisdom into their own worldviews. Then the conversation can turn to inculturation—how to worship and live in a way that is satisfactory to both.

### Notes

1. W. George Lovell, *Conquest and Survival in Colonial Guatemala: A Historical Geography of the Cuchumatanes Highlands*, 1500–1821, 3d ed. (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s Univ. Press, 2005), pp. 61–62. The quotation comes from a document known as the *Requerimiento*, prepared by Spanish jurists to be proclaimed by the conquistadores before employing violent means to subdue indigenous peoples in the Americas. The *Requerimiento*, which required the latter to recognize the authority of the church, the pope, and the monarch, absolved conquistadores of guilt if the indigenous peoples refused to comply. It should be noted that Spanish conquest of other Mayan groups in Yucatán and Petén did not happen for another 175 years.


4. Jean-Marie Hyacinthe Quenum, S.J., a theologian of inculturation who works in an African context, argues that inculturation is not the juxtaposition of two religious worldviews but a “new creation that does justice to both indigenous culture and Christian faith.” 25 The bridge itself has the possibility of becoming a “new creation” transcending both traditions.

A prerequisite for bridging is always freedom—a far cry from the spirit of the early missionaries, who were ready to use force in trying to convert the Mayas. Christopher Chiappari argues that an important form of Mayan liberation is the religious freedom through which “the bridge to the other culture will become stronger and broader, favoring coexistence and complementarity over competition and conversion.” 26

But animosity and alienation among some Mayan intellectuals remain, reflecting the inadequacy of interreligious dialogue to date. Wuqub’ Iq’ is surely correct that “in a dialogue both sides must take part as equals” and that there must be “mutual respect, not predetermined outcomes, and freedom of choice for all.” 27 Dialogue has been problematic in the past. But the future will tell whether genuine interfaith dialogue can, in Garrard-Burnett’s words, “incorporate [Mayan] spiritual values as much as possible into a Christian scheme,” while at the same time “demand[ing] a reexamination of fundamental Christian images, symbols, and archetypes through the lens of traditional Mayan cosmovision(s).” 28

In 1999 Bishop Julio Cabrera of K’iche’ asserted that the Mayan cosmovision enriches the Catholic Church. He acknowledged the wisdom and viability of Mayan cultures, noting the values of harmony and equilibrium in the Mayan cosmovision, which manifest a deep respect for the Creator, for mother earth, and for all human beings. Cabrera recognized the Mayas’ care for land and nature, their strong sense of community and family, their respect for elders and ancestors, and their preservation of customs and traditions. He laid out a pastoral plan intended to bridge cultures by committing the church to supporting Mayan communities “in conserving, renewing, and enlivening their cultural identity” and continuing the process of becoming an “autochthonous church”—that is, a church springing from the Mayan culture itself. 29 Cabrera is one of several Guatemalan bishops who have expressed a desire for a new dialogue, one I would characterize as interreligious dialogue that may move to a dialogue about inculturation.

The question remains: will conversation bring Mayan religious revelation and Christian revelation to contribute to a more profound level of understanding—a “new creation”—that fosters greater respect, justice, and peace for all Guatemalans?
Each year hundreds of Christians join the vast force of cross-cultural missionaries flung around the globe. To Timbuktu and Beyond serves as a practical, step-by-step guide for those getting ready to go into missions. It begins with the basic question of knowing and confirming your calling, working through the various steps of preparation, training and logistics, and carrying you through your first few months on the field. Each chapter has a series of tasks for you to prayerfully complete. Missions is the most fulfilling career path you could possibly embark on—not to mention an incredible adventure! What you do before you go will have a significant impact on your future success.

It has been documented that Western missionaries serving outside their countries still comprise the majority of world missions workers, but the growth rate of majority world missionaries far outpaces that of the West. In recent years, while Western missionary forces are shrinking in numbers and possibly in influence, missions from the majority world have proliferated, bringing amazing progress and some challenges. Missions from the Majority World represents the thinking of 14 majority world mission scholars and 10 Westerners with lengthy experience in the missionary enterprise. The book shows the progress and challenges of missions from the majority world and illustrates this by case studies from Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Christian mission in Asia and most of the non-Western world must seriously consider the importance of family networks. Far too long the strategy of a “one-by-one” approach has stifled the spread of the Gospel, and injured social relationships that might lead to conversation, conversion and social transformation. With this concern in mind, SEANET is proud to present another volume in its series, addressing critical missiological issues relevant to mission in Buddhist, Asian and other contexts.

A small group of college students met in 1806 to discuss the spiritual condition of the Asian nations. A storm arose and they took shelter in a haystack. From this “Haystack Prayer Meeting” came the resolve to take the Gospel to those who had not heard. This resulted in the first evangelical mission organization to transcend denominational affiliations in the U.S. and to represent the epitome of the missionary enterprise at large. This first release of our new WCL Dissertation Series presents these pioneering efforts on the theme of indigenization among unreached peoples.

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Sixty Years of International Mission Research: Unchanged Commitment, Updated Delivery

The International Bulletin of Missionary Research began exactly sixty years ago as a humble thirteen-page mimeographed report entitled “Report on Protestant Mission (in China),” drawn from a Shanghai publication and published for the benefit of “the member boards of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America.” The number of subscribers in 1950 is not mentioned, but the publication frequency and subscription price were “ten to sixteen times a year at $1.00 per calendar year.” Though we do not know how many subscribers there were in 1950, a handwritten note in our files indicates that 475 copies were made of the issue for January 15, 1951.

The IBMR began in New York City as the Occasional Bulletin from the Missionary Research Library, edited by R. Pierce Beaver, who, after retirement from the University of Chicago Divinity School, became director of the Overseas Ministries Study Center (1973–76). Since the first issue, on March 13, the page size (8.5 x 11 inches) has remained the same, but almost everything else about the publication has changed.

To reflect the change of venue from the Missionary Research Library to OMSC, then located in Ventnor, New Jersey, the journal was renamed the Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research in 1977, receiving its present title in 1981.

The subscription price grew with the times to $6 a year in 1977, rising by 1998 to $21. Also in 1998, we recorded the largest number of subscribers: 6,566, for the January issue. In July 2002 the number of subscribers fell below 6,000 for the first time since 1994.

As the journal begins its seventh decade this month, its commitment to mission research remains unchanged, but the methods employed to fulfill that commitment could not have been envisioned in 1950. The IBMR is now normally a fifty-six-page quarterly journal, with the page count recently mushrooming to sixty-four pages. The cost for this publication is currently $23 per year, including postage worldwide, though to fewer subscribers each year. As demand wanes for print publications of all kinds, desire is burgeoning for publication via an evolving array of electronic delivery platforms.

We are happy to note increasing attention worldwide to missiology in all its facets. To better meet this growing demand, the IBMR turned a corner conceptually in 2010, becoming also an online journal—freely and immediately accessible to anyone with access to the Internet—at www.internationalbulletin.org/register. So now it is possible to receive this well-respected journal for even less than the “$1.00 per calendar year” of sixty years ago!

—Daniel J. Nicholas
Managing Editor
Taking Wolves Among Lambs: Some Thoughts on Training for Short-Term Mission Facilitation

Karla Ann Koll

The short-term mission trip phenomenon has undoubtedly reshaped the way many churches in the United States both participate in international mission and understand mission today. Robert Priest and his colleagues at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, extrapolating from previous estimates and data collected by Robert Wuthnow, estimate that over 1.5 million Christians from the United States travel abroad on short-term mission trips each year. A whole industry has developed to service groups who understand that their faith in Christ is calling them to visit another part of the world. For example, www.shorttermmissions.com offers over 1,500 trips, varying in length from one to three weeks, from more than one hundred organizations.

Just as did the modern missionary movement of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this new form of missionary involvement by churches in the United States emerges in a particular economic and political context. It expresses in a graphic way the asymmetry in access to power and resources between most Christians in North America and our sisters and brothers in many other places. Put simply, many people in the United States, though certainly not all, can afford to get on a plane and travel to another part of the world. They carry passports that allow them access to most countries, often without a visa. Though U.S. dollars do not go as far as they did earlier, they are still welcome hard currency. The effects of the short-term mission movement are being felt on the ground in communities throughout the Third World, as the material aid and economic resources brought by short-term mission groups to local churches and communities are deepening and broadening dependency.

The phenomenon of short-term mission trips has become the focus of scholarly research, as shown by the conference held in October of 2005 at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS) under the leadership of Robert Priest; the conference papers were subsequently published in the October 2006 issue of Missiology. A second conference was held at Trinity in the summer of 2009. Researchers are exploring the impact of mission trips both on those who travel and on the host communities. Proponents of short-term mission usually lift up the twin goals of transforming the lives and faith understanding of those who travel, as well as benefiting the receiving community, though they may differ on which of these goals is or should be more important. Now empirical evidence is confirming the suspicions of many practitioners that short-term mission trips often fall far short on both counts.

Whatever we might think of short-term trips as a way to participate in mission, it is clear that such experiences have become part of, if not the primary focus of, international mission involvement by many U.S. churches. Yet, as Priest and his colleagues at TEDS noted, seminaries have ignored the short-term mission phenomenon. Many seminaries, spurred by grants focused on the globalization of theological education, have offered travel courses that allow students to explore briefly the theological and pastoral issues present in another cultural context, but thus far seminaries have been slow to train future pastors and Christian educators in the process of facilitating short-term mission trips. Missiologists as well as practical theologians need to be involved as seminaries begin to take seriously the practice of short-term mission trips within the lives of congregations.

Looking Back

Mission historians have the particular task of locating the phenomenon of short-term mission trips within the broader history of mission in recent decades. The massive number of groups traveling tends to obscure the continuities between short-term mission trips and previous mission involvement of churches in the United States. The accepted wisdom seems to be that local churches began to send out short-term mission teams in large numbers about two decades ago while denominational mission officials, at least in conciliar Protestant circles, were looking the other way. I would like to nuance this received genealogy of short-term mission trips. In the 1980s many denominational programs were actively organizing people from the pews to travel to different parts of the world for the express purpose of listening to others. Much of this organized travel was to places experiencing political turmoil in which U.S. foreign policy was implicated in some way. I am most familiar with the efforts of my own denomination, the Presbyterian Church (USA), in Central America, the area of the world in which I have spent my adult life in mission service. Illustrative of these types of programs for promoting faithful travel was the Gift of New Eyes program, started by the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) in 1981. The goal of traveling to another part of the world, according to this program, was conversion, the possibility of “seeing old things in new confirmations of meaning,” as Christians from the United States were challenged by the perceptions of Christians living in other contexts.

In Central America several organizations who were partnered in mission with the two denominations that became the Presbyterian Church (USA) in 1983 took on the task of receiving and working with the visiting groups. The Presbyterian Church (USA) deployed mission personnel to each of these mission partner institutions to aid them in their work with the visiting groups. In addition to denominational programs, several faith-based organizations were formed to promote such travel experiences. Examples include the Cuernavaca Center for Intercultural Dialogue on Development (CCIDD), Global Awareness Through Experience (GATE), and the Plosheshare Institute. The Center for Global Education of Augsburg College, an institution affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, also offered travel study opportunities for church groups and others starting in 1982.

These travel programs emerged in a particular historical context and in response to criticism of previous forms of mission engagement. In the late 1960s, at the same time church leaders in Guatemala City, Guatemala.

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different parts of the world began to call for a moratorium on the sending of missionaries from the North Atlantic countries, the Roman Catholic philosopher Ivan Illich, founder of the Inter-cultural Documentation Center (CIDOC) in Cuernavaca, Mexico, repeatedly admonished North Americans, including missionaries, to stop coming to Latin America to do good. Instead, Illich contended, North Americans should use their wealth and power to come to Latin America to learn. The programs described above were part of an emerging educational model that came to be known as Traveling for Transformation. In this model, educators and church leaders attempted to apply the pedagogical insights of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1921–97) to the task of educating North American Christians who journeyed to other parts of the world to interact with and learn from the poor.

The model of education proposed by Freire, developed through teaching adults to read in northeast Brazil and refined over decades of educational experiences in Latin America and elsewhere, is dialogical. The oppressed, men and women lacking material resources and denied social power, enter into the process as subjects, capable of naming the reality they are experiencing. Through dialogue, these subjects unveil the social structures and power relationships in which they live and together construct critical knowledge that leads to transformative action.

Travel seminars inspired by Freire provide opportunities for visitors to hear from the poor themselves. Through critical reflection on what they hear and experience, participants move toward critical knowledge, an understanding of the causes of the inequity and suffering they have seen and experienced during their visit. Critical knowledge then leads to action undertaken to address the causes of social injustice. For visitors, some of these actions might be working to change particular aspects of U.S. foreign policy. It might also include joining together with the community or groups visited in their efforts to improve their lives. Though not all participants in these travel seminars labeled what they were doing as mission, they did understand that they went to another context primarily to listen.

Though denominational programs encouraging travel to Central America did not continue very long beyond 1990, groups from PC(USA) churches kept coming to the region. The mission partner organizations of the PC(USA) named above did continue to receive visiting groups, though they found themselves receiving more and more groups whose primary focus was building something rather than learning from their hosts. Even groups that previously came to listen and learn became infected with what Paul Jeffrey dubbed the “edifice complex.” Many insights of Freire’s educational model were lost along the way.

Recovering Freire

As seminars and mission organizations seek to train leadership for short-term mission, Freire’s understanding of educational process can provide insights for the design and implementation of mission experiences that can be transformational for both those who travel and the receiving community. In a Freire-inspired educational model, the role of facilitator is key. She or he is involved in the process not as an expert but as a co-learner who takes responsibility for enabling the process of dialogue and critical reflection that opens the way for transformation. Effective short-term mission trip facilitation requires concrete skills in guiding critical reflection and enabling cross-cultural dialogue.

Through critical reflection, trip participants connect their experiences in a new place with their faith in God. This reflection should begin with a group before they travel, as trip participants draw on information about the place to be visited and the sources of their faith to build an interpretive framework in which to locate what they experience during the trip. As Kevin Birth points out in his description of the response of community members in Trinidad to the visits of short-term mission teams, visitors enter into a complex web of social relationships that trained anthropologists might spend years studying and never understand completely. There is no way that short-term visitors can be adequately prepared to capture all the interactions of social and religious factors in a particular location, but some prior knowledge of the context can make it less likely that visitors will misinterpret what they see and experience.

The process of critical reflection begun before travel is even more crucial during the trip. The cognitive dissonance produced by the new experiences can be named and examined. Guided and intentional reflection processes that address both the cognitive and the affective aspects of the experiences help participants continue to reformulate their interpretive frameworks. Critical reflection on the experience should not end when the group gets on the plane to return home. Ongoing reflection can help participants integrate their new experiences into their daily lives and the life of the congregation in ways that can lead to transforming action. Experiences in a new cultural setting often produce insights that do not mesh with a participant’s previous understanding of the world and of his or her faith. Once the group returns home and what made sense briefly in the liminal space created by the travel experience no longer seems true, the temptation is very great to revert to the previous interpretive framework, either by dismissing what was experienced or by compartmentalizing it as a memory of a spiritually moving experience unrelated to daily life.

Critical reflection can help leaders and participants recognize and name the power dynamics at work in the mission encounter. The lists of dos and don’ts to guide the behavior of trip participants should be grounded in an analysis of these power dynamics. For example, why shouldn’t trip participants pass out candy to the children that they encounter? Giving candy to children makes them into objects of our giving. But it also objectifies the group members in the eyes of the host community, converting visitors into not only promoters of tooth decay but also ones from whom such gifts are expected. Such apparently innocent, well-intentioned behavior not only guarantees that the group will be mobbed by children wherever they go, but it also inhibits the formation of relationships.

The goal of critical reflection is awareness. For Freire, awareness is not simply an understanding of geopolitical and economic forces at work in the world. Awareness also means being able to locate oneself and the community of which one is a part within these global dynamics. This is especially necessary for the citizens of the nation whose per capita consumption rates far outstrip those of any other nation on earth. Freire says, “Awareness of the world and awareness of myself make me not only a being in the world, but one with the world and with others. It makes me a being capable of intervening in the world and not only of adapting to it.” Awareness opens the way for transformation.

Wolves and Lambs in Today’s World

In addition to Freire’s insights, I have found Eric Law’s work on developing leadership for a multicultural community very helpful as I have begun to think about the training that would be important for those engaged in leading short-term mission trips. Law draws on research by Geert Hofstede to explore the differences in perception of personal power among different cultures. Those of
us who belong to the dominant white (European ancestry, middle and upper class) culture in the United States come from what Hofstede defines as a “low power distance culture,” in which most people perceive themselves to have a high degree of personal power to effect change. In such societies, the majority of people believe that inequality should be minimized. These are the folks that Law calls wolves. At the other end of the spectrum are the societies that Hofstede labels “high power distance cultures,” in which people expect or accept a high degree of social inequality. Only those at the top of the social hierarchy are perceived as having power, and their exercise of authority is seldom challenged. The majority of people in such societies consider themselves to be powerless; thus Law uses the analogy of lambs for these people. These ways of interacting have been socialized into each one of us. They guide both our perceptions and our actions. Most of the places that church groups from the United States are likely to go on a short-term mission trip are characterized by high degrees of social inequality where most people understand themselves to have little power to effect change.11

Yet the reality is even more complex. Many visiting church groups connect with those folks I call the local wolves. These are people—in my experience, usually men—who have learned, when they are around North Americans, to use personal power the way that their visitors do. They may be local pastors or development workers or denominational officials. Sometimes they speak English. The North American visitors feel comfortable around these local leaders because they recognize their way of relating. These are the people with whom visiting groups tend to bond. Yet when these local leaders in turn relate to those of their own culture, they occupy a position of social power, so their decisions are accepted. Indeed, the ability to relate to visiting groups and attract the resources they bring with them further consolidates the power of the local wolves. When these local leaders speak in the name of their community, visitors believe they are hearing what the local community has decided they would like to do, when many times they are actually following the dictates of a particular leader.

Law reminds us that the biblical vision of the peaceable kingdom, the transformed reality toward which we as Christians are striving, has the wolf and the lamb dwelling together, living at peace with one another. In order for this to happen, both have to act in ways that are unnatural. The wolves continue to be wolves, but they cease to be predatory. The lambs are still lambs, but they are no longer preyed upon as they begin to exercise their own power. Attention to interpersonal power dynamics can help a visiting group discern whether their presence in a community is actually empowering people beyond the one or two leaders who are their primary contacts.

The Wolves Descend

Good facilitation permits dialogue between hosts and visitors in a way that enables all involved to gain new insights into the world in which we all live, as well as into Christian faith. Let me share one example.

In November 2006 I was drafted to serve as a translator for a day for a group from a mid-sized church in a Midwestern state whose project was to install a water filtration system in a community near the Pacific coast of Guatemala. These particular filtration systems are marketed to churches in the United States by a ministry associated with one of the middle governing bodies of the PC(USA). While most of the visiting group worked around the well behind the church, several of the women, armed with the educational material provided by the ministry and their good intentions, proceeded to tell the women from the community who had gathered in the sanctuary all about the benefits of clean water. I was reminded of Freire’s description of the banking model of education, in which the educators project absolute ignorance on the students in order to transfer knowledge to them.12 The visiting women did not seem to think they needed to find out what the women from the community already knew. But even if the visitors had wanted to learn what their hosts knew about water and its uses, they had no tools for doing so because the ministry had not provided them with any training in cross-cultural communication and/or education.

Popular education inspired by Freire starts with allowing people to name the reality they are living. In this instance, though I had been recruited only to serve as a translator for the day, I asked permission of both groups of women to serve as facilitator for their interaction. We began again and asked each of the Guatemalan women to share where they obtained their water for use in their homes and whether or not they treated the water they used for drinking and cooking in some way. What emerged from the dialogue was a complex picture. Most of the Guatemalan women understood that they should be using purified water for drinking and food preparation, but some were not doing so. They lacked money to buy firewood or propane to boil water. Newcomers, relocated to the area by the government after Hurricane Stan, were taking the water piped from a nearby natural spring before it reached the area where these women lived. The women believed the well at the church was going to help, but the problem of transporting the water to their homes remained, as well as the problem of paying what the church would need to charge for the water in order to pay for the electricity to run the pump and the filter system. It became clear to the visitors that access to clean water is a complex social and economic problem, only some aspects of which would be addressed by the technical solution of a water filtration system installed at the church.

The visiting women also came prepared to teach a Bible study on Genesis 1, highlighting the importance of water in God’s creation. Again the women visitors, following the teaching material they had from the ministry, knew what they wanted to transmit to the Guatemalan women. To facilitate the Bible study, I used the process inspired by Freire, which was popularized in base ecclesial communities and circles of Bible study throughout Latin America. In this approach, the people, not the leader, are the subjects of the interpretive process. The group constructs new knowledge of the text through dialogue.13 We read through the text, inviting all of the group to comment. At first, many of the Guatemalan women, especially those who did not know how to read, were hesitant to speak; but by the end, everyone had spoken. As we read through the passage, I was able to offer insights from biblical studies, such as the ancient worldview that there was water both below the earth and above the sky. The most interesting part of the discussion came when we read verse 14, when God sets the lights in the sky “to be for signs and for seasons.” One of the Guatemalan women began to speak of how her Mayan ancestors watched the stars carefully in order to

Many visiting church groups connect with those folks I call the local wolves.
to know what would happen and to know what to do, such as when to plant and when to harvest. One of the women from Missouri then talked about how her grandmother would watch the sky, predicting changes in the weather by observing the clouds. As the dialogue unfolded, the women present constructed new knowledge of the text together.

At the end of this mission trip, the community was left with a water project that they cannot maintain themselves without parts being brought into the country on a regular basis. But the women of the community were left with something more. They had been listened to. As Kurt Ver Beek points out, by listening to the poor, visitors can “affirm their value, their God-given dignity and their knowledge.”

When short-term encounters are facilitated well, both those who travel and those who receive visitors find their understanding of faith transformed.

Mission in Short-Term Mission

There is, of course, a deeper question that needs to be asked about short-term mission trips. What understanding of mission undergirds these short-term mission experiences? Many of the guidebooks available in abundance in Christian bookstores do not even ask this question but simply assume that these short-term trips are mission. I suspect that as long as mission is defined by the act of going, the task undertaken, or the target population, it will be impossible for the groups who travel to understand listening as a vital part of what they are called to do in that new place. For example, Roger Peterson, Gordon Aeschliman, and R. Wayne Sneed define Christian mission as “sending active Gospel messengers into another culture.”

Thus, by definition, local Christians whom traveling groups might encounter are not engaged in mission. Though Peterson and his colleagues do speak of the need for cross-cultural training, they reject the idea that either spiritual formation or cross-cultural learning should be the primary goal of short-term mission. On the one hand, they caution against visitors using the host culture for their own ends, an important warning for those who would lead a group into another cultural setting. On the other hand, they insist that in order for the experience to be called a “mission trip,” the short-term visitors must do something for someone. But is not the drive to do something for someone else also often a sign of cultural imperialism?

In early 2008 I gave a presentation on the current political and religious situation in Guatemala to an adult Sunday school class in a church that has been making short-term mission trips to Guatemala for fifteen years. At the end of my presentation, the man who leads the groups to Guatemala said, “I don’t need to know anything about the political situation there. I just want to help those poor people.” After numerous trips, the Guatemalans to whom this church relates are still for him “those poor people.”

I was reminded of the distinction that Freire makes between “false charity” and “true generosity.” Freire notes that those with power, in order to be able to continue to express their generosity, have to perpetuate the sources of injustice, fostering a generosity that is nourished by despair and poverty. “True generosity,” writes Freire, “consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity. False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the ‘rejects of life,’ to extend their trembling hands. True generosity lies in striving so that these hands—whether of individuals or entire peoples—need to be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working, transform the world.”

Surely we who dare to call ourselves by Christ’s name, who have been sent by God into the world through Christ, are called to work to transform the world. For the reign of God has not yet come, and the world is not as it should be. God’s mission, wholly present in Jesus Christ, is the redemption of all of creation. The call to mission is the invitation to participate in God’s liberating and redeeming action, together with all who are called by Christ. The sisters and brothers we encounter on a short-term mission trip can help break our conformity to this age, that we might experience the renewal of our minds and live together with them toward God’s new creation (Rom. 12:2). But only if we are able to listen to them.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this article was presented at the Richmond Forum on Mission and Missiology, February 25, 2008, Richmond, Virginia.


6. A case study of this model as employed by the Plowshares Institute can be found in Alice Frazer Evans, Robert A. Evans, and William Bean Kennedy, Pedagogies for the Non-poor (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987), pp. 162–85.


Robert Wuthnow, a leading sociologist of religion, points out that while “the demographic center of Christianity is shifting to the global South, the organizational and material resources of global Christianity remain heavily concentrated” in North America and its churches. He argues that missiologists have not sufficiently appreciated the expanding role of American congregations, and especially of American megachurches, in shaping global Christianity.1

Megachurches and their pastors are forging influential new patterns of North American congregational involvement in global mission. Their influence on mission patterns often surpasses the influence of denominational leaders, mission executives, or leading missiologists. And yet neither in missiological scholarship nor in the emerging new research on megachurches do we find a systematic treatment of megachurch involvement in global mission. This article addresses this lacuna.

The Research

Late in 2007 a 113-item survey on congregational involvement in global mission was sent to the person in charge of missions at 1,230 megachurches—that is, churches reported as averaging 2,000 or more in weekend worship.3 Of this initial mailing, 12 surveys were returned as undeliverable. With additional follow-up,4 547 surveys were returned, for a response rate of 45 percent.5 However, only 405 surveys reported that their church had an average weekend attendance of 2,000 or more. And since this is the commonly accepted definition of a megachurch, we used only the data drawn from these 405 surveys for the purposes of this article.6

The Churches We Surveyed

These churches had an average (mean) weekend worship attendance of 4,312 and a median attendance of 3,100. Table 1 shows the size distribution.

Nearly half of these churches (47 percent) were from the South, with 24 percent from the West, and only 5 percent from the Northeast. Nearly a quarter of these churches (23 percent) reported a level of diversity where no single race or ethnicity represented more than 70 percent of total attenders. Of the other three-quarters of the churches, 4.5 percent were predominantly African American, less than 1 percent predominantly Hispanic, 0 percent predominantly Asian, and 72 percent predominantly non-Hispanic white. In all, 37 percent were nondenominational, with 20 percent Southern Baptist, 6 percent Assemblies of God, 5 percent United Methodist, 2 percent each for Calvary Chapel, ELCA, and Four Square Gospel, and so on. In terms of age, 59 percent were founded before 1971, with 14 percent founded after 1990. The average 2007 total reported expenditure per church was $6,869,118.

Commitment to Global Mission

Perhaps the survey’s simplest measure of commitment to global mission was the answer to the question, “What is the approximate dollar amount of all your church’s expenditures in support of ministries and needs outside the United States in 2007?” The average (mean) amount was $690,900, which comes to just over 10 percent of total annual expenditures. But as table 2 shows, there was wide variability in the percentage of annual expenditures given in support of global missions.7 Only 349 (out of 405) respondents answered both the question about total annual church expenditures and the question about total expenditures for ministry abroad. Since the percentages in this table were calculated based on the answers to both questions, we are able to report results only from these 349 surveys.

Over a third of megachurches direct 5 percent or less of their total expenditures toward ministry abroad, with another third directing 6–10 percent abroad, and a final third directing more than 10 percent toward ministry abroad.

Support for Career Missionaries

An alternative and traditional way to consider congregational mission commitment involves asking “How many long-term missionaries serving outside the USA does your church support financially?” Table 3 provides the data on the response to this question.

The median number of career missionaries supported was 16, and the mean 31.9 Regarding the highest amount of annual support given to any single missionary or missionary family, the median was $12,000 and the mean $18,123. Many of these churches are committed to supporting career missionaries, with 61 percent of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing that “Western career missionaries are strategically important at...
this time, and should be generously supported." Of course this means that 39 percent either disagreed or only mildly agreed with this statement.

Forty-five percent agreed that "Our church is reluctant to support long-term missionaries who are not members of our church." Those agreeing with this statement provide support to fewer long-term missionaries but do not support them at appreciably higher levels.

Financial support for career missionaries now competes against newer priorities, with support for career missionaries a shrinking proportion of total expenditures. In the survey, respondents were asked to numerically compare changes at their church in the last five years in five areas, with the answer "large increase" coded as +1, "unchanged" or "slight increase" coded as 0, and "decrease" coded as -1. On each of five areas, more churches claimed a "large increase" than their answers in a positive direction. In short, for these growing churches the large increase in expenditures for ministry abroad does not support them and contrasts with the top destinations for U.S. tourists and American churches (with a mean of 49; mission-trip destinations for African-American churches were also more likely to feature countries in Africa or with significant African-diaspora populations, such as Trinidad or Brazil). Fully 94 percent of megachurch high school youth programs organize short-term mission trips abroad for their youth, with 78 percent doing so one or more times per year.

Robert Wuthnow estimates that nearly a third of all U.S. missions funding is currently channeled in support of short-term missions. With an annual megachurch average of 159 short-term mission participants traveling abroad, expending an average of $1,400 per traveler, this comes to 32 percent of the total reported megachurch annual expenditures directed abroad, seemingly confirming Wuthnow’s estimate.

Prior research has shown that the majority of mission trips abroad are for less than two weeks and that most short-term missionaries travel in groups ranging from a small handful up to a couple hundred or more. Our megachurch survey asked which destination country received the most short-term missionaries from their church in 2007 (see table 5). If one lists in order the top ten country destinations for megachurch short-term missions and contrasts this with the top destinations for U.S. tourists and

| Table 3. Number of supported long-term missionaries |
|---------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Number of long-term missionaries | Churches no. | % |
| >100 | 18 | 4.7 |
| 61–100 | 28 | 7.3 |
| 41–60 | 36 | 9.4 |
| 21–40 | 76 | 19.7 |
| 11–20 | 84 | 21.8 |
| 6–10 | 58 | 15.1 |
| 3–5 | 34 | 8.8 |
| 1–2 | 28 | 7.3 |
| 0 | 23 | 6.0 |
| TOTAL | 385 | 100.0 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean increase</th>
<th>In</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.388</td>
<td>average weekly attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.463</td>
<td>total annual church income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.455</td>
<td>total financial expenditures for all outside the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.496</td>
<td>number of church members going on short-term mission trips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.127</td>
<td>number of long-term missionaries supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strong increases in average attendance and total church income were matched by a strong increase in total financial expenditures for all ministries outside the United States and a strong increase in the number of church members going on short-term mission (STM) trips abroad. By contrast, the reported increase in the number of career missionaries supported was low, especially given the well-known tendency of survey respondents to skew their answers in a positive direction. In short, for these growing churches the large increase in expenditures for ministry abroad was not channeled into a corresponding increase in support of career missionaries. Such a congregational softening of support for full-time missionaries is possibly one factor in the recent decline in the total number of Protestant full-time missionaries from the United States.

**Short-Term Missionaries**

In 2007 megachurches sent a median of 100 and a mean of 159 people abroad on short-term mission trips organized and sponsored by the church. The number of people traveling on a **domestic** mission trip of two days or more organized and sponsored by their church was lower, with a median of 70 per church. Table 4 provides the distribution of STM participants who traveled abroad on short-term mission trips per church.

Roughly 3.7 percent of those in a megachurch on a given weekend traveled abroad on a short-term mission trip in 2007. The number of international mission trips taken did not differ appreciably between evangelical and mainline churches, but was somewhat lower for African American churches (with a mean of 49; mission-trip destinations for African-American churches were also more likely to feature countries in Africa or with significant African-diaspora populations, such as Trinidad or Brazil).

| Table 4. Number of short-term missionaries who traveled abroad in 2007 |
|---------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Number of short-term missionaries | Churches no. | % |
| >500 | 16 | 4.1 |
| 301–500 | 18 | 4.6 |
| 201–300 | 47 | 12.1 |
| 151–200 | 47 | 12.1 |
| 101–150 | 62 | 15.9 |
| 51–100 | 111 | 28.5 |
| 21–50 | 61 | 15.7 |
| 1–20 | 25 | 6.4 |
| 0 | 2 | 0.5 |
| TOTAL | 389 | 100.0 |

**Table 5. Top destinations of three groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Megachurch mission trips</th>
<th>U.S. touristsa</th>
<th>U.S. students studying abroadb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Rep.</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Bahamas</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tourism prioritizes Europe and countries with beach resorts more than does short-term missions. Study abroad is markedly Eurocentric; STM is not. The only top-ten STM destination that is also a top-ten destination for tourism or for study abroad is Mexico, doubtless because of its size and nearness to the United States. That is, the divergence in destinations would suggest that motivations for short-term missions diverge from motivations for tourism or study abroad.

One clear focus of STM is on regions that are markedly less well off materially. The accompanying list shows the breakdown overall in megachurch STM destinations and hints at another key distinctive of STM.

Megachurch STM trips are primarily going to the countries that Philip Jenkins identifies as new centers of global Christianity.16 The country with the highest number of megachurch visitors per capita is Guatemala, a country that the Pew Foundation reports has a population that is 60 percent Charismatic or Pentecostal Christian.17 Similarly, top STM destinations in Africa feature heavily Christian countries like Uganda, South Africa, or Kenya—not Chad, Mauritania, or Niger. If we examine these STM country destinations in terms of the typology used by David Barrett and Todd Johnson in distinguishing World A (least evangelized countries), World B (the somewhat evangelized countries), and World C (countries that are most Christian),18 we discover that 6 percent of megachurches focus STM on countries in World A, 12 percent in World B, and fully 82 percent in the third of the world comprising World C. That is, short-term mission teams are not primarily going into spaces where there are no Christians but are channeling most of their efforts into regions where Christianity is numerically strong. Short-term mission trips involve collaboration with local Christians (and missionaries) in partnership projects designed to strengthen local churches and their witness.

While STM trips frequently combine multiple activities, the following in order of frequency from highest to lowest were the average reported annual number of short-term mission projects per church featuring the following activities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of trips</th>
<th>Activity on which participants focused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>building, construction, repair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>evangelism, church planting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>VBS, children’s ministries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>medical, health care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>relief and development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>orphans, orphanages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.72</td>
<td>vision trip, prayer walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.72</td>
<td>music, worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.66</td>
<td>education: teaching English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.55</td>
<td>education: other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.53</td>
<td>sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.49</td>
<td>art, drama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.21</td>
<td>environmental or justice issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the second item on the list is evangelism and/or church planting, the evidence suggests that this is usually done in partnership with local Christians. All of the other activities on the list would seem to involve strengthening and supplementing the witness of local churches, rather than serving as independent efforts to evangelize in regions with minimal Christian presence.

Rather than megachurch STM teams going from spaces where there is Christianity to spaces where there is not, megachurch STM teams are going from places where Christianity is present and has comparative material wealth and going to spaces where Christianity is present in the midst of relative material constraint. Only 4 percent of megachurches listed a country for their largest STM destination that the International Monetary Fund identifies as an “advanced economy,” with 96 percent identifying their primary STM destinations as ones that the IMF lists as “emerging and developing economies.”

To summarize, STM destinations are affected by how near the country is (Mexico is the number one STM destination for 74 megachurches), whether there is a tourism infrastructure (for travel, accommodations, safety) enabling these brief trips, the extent to which there is a Christian presence at the destination site, and the extent to which there is a marked economic difference in the destination. That is, it would appear that megachurch STM is largely a paradigm of partnership, connecting Christians in resource-rich regions of the world with Christians in regions of poverty in joint projects of witness and service.

The following list, based on per capita funding expenditures of a 2005 STM church construction team to Peru, illustrates the funding structure of international STM trips.

The majority of the financial resources—in this case, 81 percent—went toward transportation, food, accommodations, and sightseeing for the North American travelers, with the remaining 19 percent directly contributing to a benefit for the partnering church. Measured purely in terms of resource transfer, 81 percent of overhead would appear excessive. But each STM traveler also donated free labor, in this instance 50 hours. In attempting to calculate the value of STM labor, Robert Wuthnow has used a source which suggests that each STM volunteer hour is worth just over $20,19 which in this case would mean that each STM participant contributed $1,000 of labor-value to the host church. The result would be that the host church received a total value of $1,285 per STM participant. This 2005 team of 33 STM participants, however, included 32 individuals with no experience in construction. Furthermore, were the Peruvian church to contract local professional laborers for the same task, they would pay $1 per hour, not $20 per hour. Seen in this light fifty hours of labor in Peru supplies only a value of $50, not $1,000. Thus each STM participant on the team, funded with $1,500, contributed labor worth $50 locally as well as contributing an additional $285 in cash toward construction costs—an amount in the local economy worth 285 hours of labor. This gift of a $335 value per participant is more than the average monthly salary in Lima. Multiplied by 33, it equaled a significant total value ($11,055) given to the Peruvian partner church. The total figure is equivalent to three times the average annual salary in Lima and is deeply appreciated by the Peruvian partners.
While the above funding pattern is common, some megachurch STM teams provide no financial or material resources to their partners. Others facilitate resource transfers worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. Further research on these patterns is needed.

Other important contributions made by STM teams may be less easy to evaluate financially. For example, when white American Christians, in the name of Christ, engaged in lowly manual labor serving Trinidadian black brothers and sisters, this had a powerful impact on those who were historically stigmatized by race, with a value far beyond the actual manual labor itself. Or when indigenous Christians are stigmatized, marginalized, and faced by many closed doors, they often find that partnership with a visiting megachurch STM group opens doors and elevates the visibility and respect given to their ministries—again, a value that cannot be quantified. Similarly, high-status STM groups may provide influential assistance in helping vulnerable populations lobby successfully for social justice. Only recently has research begun to identify the variety of ways in which STM teams make strategic on-field contributions.

Finally, it is worth keeping in mind that North American churches also look for benefits to their own members through STM. Some youth leaders and mission pastors bluntly say that even if STM is of limited value to recipient communities it is nonetheless worthwhile because of positive benefits to the sending congregation or youth program. For example, in Youthworker magazine Scott Meier explains that the “real reason” for STM is to benefit the STM participant spiritually. Paul Borthwick acknowledges the limited value of most STM to recipients and states, “The number one purpose of a short-term mission trip is to change the lives of those who participate,” that is, the short-termers. When asked, mission pastors are able to provide a long list of positive benefits of an active STM program for the sending church. This is good but does raise a potential caution. While older models of mission involved more purely altruistic mission expenditures not designed to serve the sending church, STM as a paradigm of mission channels mission funding in ways that serve the interests of the North American sending church as well as (sometimes more than) the interests of those being served.

**Church-to-Church Partnerships**

In the conclusion of his research report entitled “Emergent Patterns of Congregational Life and Leadership in the Developing World,” Donald Miller ends with what he calls an immodest proposal “that every church in the United States should create a relationship with a church in the developing world.” Indeed, such church-to-church partnerships are already widespread. In our own survey, 94 percent of megachurch mission leaders agreed that American churches should work to establish partnership relations with congregations in other countries. Fully 85 percent reported that their congregation currently has one or more church-to-church partnerships with congregations abroad. (See table 6.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Concern with</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>missions to “the unreached”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.99</td>
<td>church planting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>evangelizing the Muslim world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>theological education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>medical missions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>local Spanish ministries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>poverty relief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>resourcing underresourced churches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>more career missionaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>Bible translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>racial reconciliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>AIDS in Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>social justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>global sex trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>Christian publishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>interreligious dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>environmental concerns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These partnerships often entail resource-sharing, with 58 percent of megachurches reporting that “resourcing underresourced churches in other countries” is a priority for them. Almost all megachurches (86 percent) disagreed with the old indigeneity principle that “American Christians should not share material resources with indigenous ministries since this creates dependency.”

Megachurches directly support a median of five national Christian workers in other countries, with an average (mean) maximum support of $8,650 per worker per year. It appears likely that some of these national Christian workers are supported in the context of these church-to-church partnerships. Furthermore, 48 percent of all megachurches, and 78 percent of African American megachurches, act as their “own sending agency for some or all of the missionaries” whom they support. A significant minority of megachurches (24 percent) will not support long-term missionaries unless they agree to host short-term mission teams from their church. It appears that a significant number of long-term missionaries are supported within the context of partnership ministries initiated and planned by the supporting U.S. megachurch. Megachurch mission pastors in churches with church-to-church partnerships report higher numbers of mission trips that they themselves have been on. Also, the higher the number of mission trips mission pastors have traveled on, the more national Christian workers their church supports. That is, there appears to be a widespread pattern of church-to-church partnerships, supervised or monitored by highly mobile megachurch mission pastors, enabled by field missionaries and national Christian leaders, funded from the U.S. congregational base, linked through short-term mission trips, and carried out as an extension of the U.S. megachurch and its vision for ministry.

**Prioritized Concerns**

Each survey respondent was asked to reflect on “the organized activity of your church, its teaching and preaching, its financial expenditures, and the personal commitments of its pastoral staff” and to evaluate the extent to which each of the following was a “prioritized concern of your church,” using a Likert scale from 1 (low priority) to 6 (high priority). The following list shows, in order, the prioritized mission concerns of U.S. megachurches.
Church planting and evangelizing “the unreached” are said to be the highest values, with evangelizing the Muslim world a close third. If we ask about total financial expenditures abroad and the country receiving the most megachurch expenditures, only 12 percent prioritize countries in World A, the least Christian regions, while 35 percent prioritize World B, the somewhat evangelized, and 53 percent prioritize World C, the most evangelized countries of the world. The fact that short-term mission teams are even more exclusively focused on countries with a strong Christian presence (while still reporting that a primary activity of the STM team is evangelism/ church planting) would seem to indicate that many churches are simply thinking of all non-Christians as “unreached”—and that any project with an evangelism or witness focus is framed as prioritizing “the unreached,” even though missiologically it might be better understood as a partnership activity. On the one hand, the fact that most megachurches see Bible translation as a relatively low priority would also suggest that most of these churches are not orienting their mission commitments to the least Christian portions of the world. On the other hand, 7 percent of megachurches name a primarily Muslim country as receiving their largest total expenditures. So there is a significant minority of megachurches focused on ministry in the least Christian portions of the world.

Factor analysis showed there was a tendency for churches to have clusters of priorities that correlated highly with each other. One such cluster included social justice, racial reconciliation, the global sex trade, environmental concerns, interreligious dialogue, and poverty. These items form a measure we can name “mission as social engagement.” A second cluster includes missions to “the unreached,” evangelizing the Muslim world, and Bible translation; we may label this cluster “mission as gospel communication.”

These two factors are independent of each other statistically, with megachurches varying in terms of whether they score high on one or the other, both, or neither. Megachurches with higher numbers of ethnic minorities as attenders and on their pastoral staff scored significantly higher on “mission as social engagement” but did not score significantly lower on “mission as gospel communication.” Megachurches that scored higher on “mission as social engagement” were more supportive of church-to-church partnerships abroad and were less concerned that sharing resources might create dependency; while those scoring high on “mission as gospel communication” tended to be less supportive of such partnerships and more concerned that sharing resources would create dependency. Older churches—that is, longer established churches—scored higher on “mission as gospel communication,” while younger churches, founded more recently, scored slightly higher on “mission as social engagement,” although not at a statistically significant level.

A high score on “mission as gospel communication” correlates positively with a commitment to supporting more career missionaries, with frequency of mission conferences, with e-mail circulation of missionary prayer needs, with an interest in “partnering with mission agencies responsive to our concerns,” and with a belief that “mission agencies are in a better position than our congregation to wisely supervise field missionaries.” By contrast, none of these is correlated positively at a statistically significant level with “mission as social engagement.” And indeed “mission as social engagement” is negatively correlated with belief that “mission agencies are in a better position than our congregation to wisely supervise field missionaries.”

In short, megachurch “mission as social engagement” does not appear to have a close connection with the career missionary enterprise.

### The Role of Mission Pastors

Megachurches have large full-time ministerial staffs, as seen in Table 7. (This table does not include office support staff or maintenance staff.) In some ways megachurches are structurally less like small single-pastor congregations than they are like seminaries with multiple faculty. And indeed their full-time ministerial staffs are, on average, larger than the faculties of ATS-accredited seminaries.

And just as a seminary may have one or more faculty members devoted to missions, so many megachurches have someone on pastoral staff designated as the missions pastor.

In our survey directed to the person in charge of missions at each congregation, 4 percent of respondents self-identified as the senior pastor, 6 percent as a lay leader, 17 percent as “other,” and fully 73 percent as mission pastor. That is, roughly three-quarters of megachurches have a full-time person on the pastoral staff focused on global mission.

Mission pastors have had extensive experience with short-term missions, having taken an average (mean) of 25 mission trips abroad, and with only 1 percent reporting that they have never traveled abroad on a short-term mission trip. By contrast, 38 percent of mission pastors report that they have served in the past as a full-time missionary (29 percent for two years or more; 9 percent for less than two years). Most mission pastors report either that they do not speak a second language at all (26 percent) or “not well” (46 percent), with only 18 percent saying they speak a second language “very well” and another 10 percent saying they speak another language “well.” That is, fewer than a third of mission pastors appear to be functionally bilingual. Perhaps not surprisingly, bilingualism is strongly correlated with having served as a full-time missionary.

Eleven percent of mission pastors report that they have never taken an academic course in missions or missiology, with 67 percent indicating they have taken one or more courses with a mission focus, and 22 percent reporting that they have a degree with a missions focus. Not surprisingly, those who have served as full-time missionaries are also more likely to have studied missiology. Mission pastors who have served as full-time missionaries are more likely to serve in churches that regularly schedule mission conferences, that give career missionaries a platform to speak, that are committed to evangelizing the Muslim world, that support higher numbers of long-term missionaries, and that provide more financial support for long-term missionaries. By contrast, mission pastors who have participated in the highest numbers of short-term mission trips are more likely to strongly affirm the statement: “God’s instrument of mission is the local church, not mission agencies.” They are also more likely to serve in churches that have a higher number of church-to-church partnerships abroad, that support higher numbers of national Christian workers abroad, and that give more money in support of ministry abroad.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number on staff</th>
<th>Churches no.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt;35</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26–35</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16–25</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7–15</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>400</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

Megachurches are at the forefront of shifts in the social organization of missions, with the locus of agency and decision making shifting back toward the sending congregation and its leadership. A number of issues can naturally be raised:

Responsiveness to new social realities. American congregations are responding to new social realities to which older mission agencies sometimes fail to appropriately adjust, and much of this ministry is responsive to brothers and sisters in Christ serving under circumstances of greater material and social constraint.

Issues of stewardship. While missions giving was historically the portion of giving that was altruistic, that had no direct benefit to the givers or giving church, missions giving now is increasingly directed toward the dual goals of (1) meeting the needs of the givers and the sending church and also (2) serving others abroad. In part this means that any sort of ministry that the American congregation as an organizational form is unsuited to fulfill (such as Bible translation) is less likely now to receive strong support. The question must continue to be raised: Whose needs are being met through these new patterns of stewardship?

Issues of paternalism and power. American congregations channel enormous amounts of material resources into global mission, sometimes in ways that make the control of money, rather than wisdom and contextual understanding, the primary determinant of decision making and power.

Issues of wisdom. When the locus of decision making and power moves away from the field to the North American congregation and its leadership, there are deep questions of whether contextual wisdom will underpin the patterns being forged for stewardship and global ministry.

New patterns of partnership. Mission in the contemporary world is most effectively carried out through partnerships. Partnerships of the right sort between mission agencies, mission training institutions, mission pastors, indigenous ministries, and U.S. megachurches can fruitfully bring wisdom and resources and energy together in a way that furthers God’s missionary purposes in the world today.

The role of the mission pastor. In the world of global missions, the mission pastor is a new and absolutely strategic person to missions. Each megachurch mission pastor plays a central role in influencing how much more than $690,000 per year will be spent abroad on global mission. Mission pastors serve as gatekeepers to those who seek support. They educate their churches and cast the vision for mission, providing leadership of an enterprise increasingly being directed from the North American congregational base.

The need for missiology to connect with and inform this new leadership. Most mission pastors are currently not well-trained missiologically. At the same time missiologists have not done their research and writing with mission pastors or youth pastors in mind, and missiology programs have not been organized to be responsive to and helpful for the person with a mission pastor or youth pastor job description. Changes in missiological focus and in manner of communication are urgently needed so that mission pastors will find missiology to be helpful and responsive to the realities they live with and the job description they fulfill.

Notes

2. Such as Scott Thumma and Dave Travis, Beyond Megachurch Myths: What We Can Learn from America’s Largest Churches (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2007).
4. After the initial mailing (November 26, 2007) and a postcard reminder (December 10), a second and third mailing (on January 21 and February 28, 2008) were sent to nonrespondents.
5. Based on the 1,218 that are presumed to have reached their destinations.
6. Funding for this research was provided by a grant from the Carl F. H. Henry Center for Theological Understanding (HCTU) at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and by Avant Ministries, although views expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and are not intended to express the views of Avant Ministries or the HCTU. We also wish to thank all those who helped with the initial address list, with phoning or using Internet information to identify persons in charge of missions, and with mailing the surveys: Andrew Anane-Asane, Rochelle Cathcart, Valentine Hayibor, Blaine Lee, Timothy Niasulu, Andrew Pflederer, David Priest, Shelly Priest, and Jason Tan.
7. “Predominantly” is here defined as including more than 70 percent of the average number of attenders.
8. Since churches vary in whether missions expenditures are or are not part of the formal budget, our survey asked about actual expenditures, not about budget. Note that in tables 2, 3, 4, and 6 the percentages do not total 100 due to rounding.
9. A number of denominational churches indicated that, in addition to the number of missionaries they directly supported and reported on in the survey, they also supported their denomination’s missionary program. Others answered this question by filling in the total number of missionaries supported by their denomination, usually with a note of explanation. In all such cases we did not count this number. It is possible that a small handful of the higher numbers reported actually refer to denominational counts rather than to missionary units directly supported by the church. Therefore the median of 16 may be a more reliable indicator than the mean of 31.
10. A mean of 25, compared with a mean of 36 who disagree, t(373) = 1.98, p = .004.
15. For statistics on this, see Priest and Priest, “They See Everything,” pp. 59–60.
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— Doctoral student How-Chuang Chua came to Trinity after four years of church planting work as a missionary in Japan.

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The Latin American Doctoral Program in Theology

The Latin American Doctoral Program in Theology (LADPT) was created by Latin Americans in response to the need for graduate-level theological studies to be offered in Latin America, by Latin Americans, in the languages of Latin America, for the church in Latin America. Its mission is to offer contextual theological education at the Ph.D. level by means of a creative methodology in order to equip the leaders of the church.

A conversation in 2000 between Pablo Deiros from Argentina and Charles Van Engen who grew up in Chiapas, Mexico, led to the founding that year of the Latin American Christian Ministries (LACM) with the purpose of providing “teaching and church leadership mentoring skills, programs, and resources for Christian ministries and pastors in Latin America.”

The vision was refined through discussion with Enrique Guang in Quito, Ecuador, in September 2000 at the Fourth Consultation of the Latin American Congress of Evangelization (CLADE IV). Guang, founding president of the Evangelical University of the Americas (UNELA) in Costa Rica, stressed the need to gain government accreditation as a Ph.D. program.

In March 2001 thirty-six Latin American Protestant professors from twelve countries, representing twenty-three denominations, mission agencies, and theological education institutions, met in Miami, Florida. As they prayed, dialogued, and dreamed, the vision of a continent-wide advanced theological education program took further shape.

Academically linked with UNELA, LADPT is the first Protestant multisite Ph.D.-level study program to be accredited at the university level by a Latin American government. Known in Latin America as PRODOLA (www.prodola.org), LADPT is designed to wed face-to-face classroom experiences with on-location and in-ministry research. This fits with the requirement of the government of Costa Rica that all Ph.D.-level study programs include an empirical, field-based research component in addition to library-based research. Doctoral candidates in LADPT are actively involved in designing, shaping, modifying, and guiding their own study programs.

Launched in Brazil in 2004 with twenty-one students from fourteen countries and eighteen denominations, by January 2010 LADPT had ninety-five students, of whom thirteen are women, from seventeen Latin American countries plus Angola, Canada, Great Britain, Korea, Spain, and the United States. The students represent seventy-one ecclesial and mission entities. LADPT’s first student to complete all requirements, including the dissertation defense, will graduate in mid-2010.

Accredited by the Costa Rican government in May 2007, LADPT was accepted in June 2008 as an unaccredited affiliate member of the U.S. and Canadian Association of Theological Schools. The core faculty of sixteen is augmented by twenty member of the U.S. and Canadian Association of Theological Schools.


—Charles E. Van Engen

Charles E. Van Engen, Arthur F. Glasser Professor of Biblical Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, serves as Director of the Doctoral Program in Theology (PRODOLA), Evangelical University of the Americas, San José, Costa Rica.
The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910: Challenges for Church and Theology in the Twenty-first Century

Peter C. Phan

What follows is neither a detailed review of Brian Stanley’s *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* nor a full assessment of the legacy of the same conference. Rather, highlighting some of the more notable achievements of Stanley’s book and taking a cue from it, I discuss some of the issues debated at the Edinburgh conference that in my judgment continue to present enormous challenges to Christian mission and theology, especially in Asia, a hundred years later.

The centenary of the World Missionary Conference has spawned a plethora of research and commemorative celebrations in both church and academy. Among historical studies, Stanley’s volume unquestionably stands out as preeminent, with its comprehensive scope, painstaking scholarship, and elegant style. Without burdensome details, it offers a rich and fascinating account of the origins, preparations, and proceedings of the conference, which was held June 14–23, 1910, in the Assembly Hall of the United Free Church of Scotland on the Mound, Edinburgh (chaps. 2 and 4). The narrative unveils the behind-the-scenes ecclesiastical maneuvering by the conference’s secretary, Joseph H. Oldham, in his effort to secure the participation of the Church of England, thereby lending a measure of ecumenicity to the conference (chap. 3). It also foregrounds the superb managerial skills of the conference chairman, John R. Mott, in his successful effort to win the delegates’ approval for the establishment of the Continuation Committee (chap. 10). In Stanley’s hands the conference participants come alive, brimming with boundless optimism, infectious enthusiasm, and deep spirituality, confident that they were making history as they laid the foundations for the imminent conversion of the heathen world by means of Christian mission. In addition to being a treasure trove of fascinating historical information, Stanley’s book also deftly blends historical scholarship with wide theological knowledge to offer an astute theological interpretation of the Protestant missionary movement. In so doing, he paints an enlightening panorama of the nineteenth-century Protestant missiology that undergirded Protestant mission at its apex.

The stated aim of the World Missionary Conference was, in W. H. Findlay’s words, “to be a Grand Council for the Advancement of Missionary Science” (p. 4). The conference’s intent was thus deeply, albeit not exclusively, theological, or more precisely, missiological. This theology of mission was elaborated in the conference plenary discussions of the written reports of the eight commissions—that would be unbearably tedious. Instead Stanley has wisely decided not to write a commentary on each of the commissions—that would be unbearably tedious. Instead he focuses on some of the most challenging issues raised by the questionnaire responses and the eight commission reports. These include the building up of the churches in mission fields (chap. 6), mission education (chap. 7), the relationship between Christian mission and non-Christian religions (chap. 8), relations between Western missionaries and colonial governments (chap. 9), and missionary cooperation (chap. 10). Stanley concludes his book with a discussion of the legacy of Edinburgh 1910 and its impact on subsequent missionary practice, especially through the work of its Continuation Committee, in seven areas: the geographic division of the world into Christian and non-Christian, the concept of race and culture, the pursuit of church union, the role of women in mission, missionary study and training, cooperation among mission organizations, and ecumenical unity (chap. 11).

All of these seven themes have of course received extensive attention since the World Missionary Conference. Even after a century of lively debate, however, a consensus on any of these issues has yet to emerge. Indeed, controversies and sharp theological differences seem to be the order of the day, perhaps much more so now than in the days of the Edinburgh conference, often within the same church. Such is, for example, the case with the Roman Catholic Church after the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), whose Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith under Cardinal Josef Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, has frequently censured theologians whose writings appear to question the necessity of mission and the role of Christ and the church in the work of salvation.

For those with missiological interests, three issues discussed by the World Missionary Conference and highlighted by Stanley are of great significance, namely, the indigenization of Christianity, interreligious dialogue, and the emergence of the world church. Each member of this trinity of missiological issues has been the object of book-length treatment by a large number of theologians of various ecclesial traditions. My very brief reflections here, using Stanley’s splendid work as a springboard, intend to offer further considerations on these three themes, especially from the perspective of the Asian Catholic churches and theology.

With regard to the indigenization of Christianity, two chapters of Stanley’s book are particularly helpful: chapter 5, on the contribution of the Asian official delegates (18 out of 1,215), and chapter 6, on the “Three-Self Movement.” Stanley deserves our deep gratitude for having lifted up the “Voice of the ‘Younger’ Churches” (p. 91) by echoing loudly Cheng Jingyi’s call for a united, nondenominational church in China; the demand of the four Japanese delegates (Harada Tasuku, Honda Yoitsu, Ibuka Kajinosuke, and Chiba Yudgoro) for a truly indigenized Christianity in Japan; Yun Ch’iho’s insistence on the duty of Korean Christians to contribute to national reform and independence in their country; and Vedanayagam Samuel Azariah’s urging for genuine friendship and equality between foreign missionaries and native Christians.

These different voices, which together caused a great stir at Edinburgh, formed a powerful chorus pressing for what is referred to in Roman Catholic circles as “inculturation.” In the mind of the Asian delegates, especially Cheng Jingyi, one way to achieve the indigenization of Christianity in Asia, which was strongly endorsed by the Edinburgh conference, would be...
implementing the Three-Self Movement first advocated by Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson, namely, a movement urging that mission churches be self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating. Today, a fourth “self” has been added, that is, self-theologizing, which was also supported by the Edinburgh conference, in an attempt to elaborate what Robert E. Speer, American Presbyterian mission leader and an eminent conference delegate, called in the then prevalent racist language “the contribution by the great Asian races to our apprehension of that revelation of God in Christ” (p. 130). The fact that, ironically and tragically, the Three-Self Movement was imposed by and placed under the control of the Communist party of the People’s Republic of China in 1951, with severe deleterious consequences for both the Protestant churches and the Roman Catholic Church, does not invalidate it as an ecclesiological principle or diminish its usefulness and urgency as a missionary method for Asian Christianity today.

Asian Catholic bishops and theologians since the early 1970s, after the founding of the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC), have repeatedly urged that Christian mission in Asia be carried out in the mode of dialogue, and indeed in a triple dialogue: dialogue with the Asian poor (liberation), dialogue with the Asian cultures (inculturation), and dialogue with the Asian religions (interreligious dialogue). Concerning inculturation, it is vigorously stressed that it must be carried out in all dimensions of Christian life, from worship and liturgy to personal prayer, popular devotions, spirituality, ethics, church organization, and theology. Nothing in the church must be left untouched by this process of inculturation so that Christianity can truly become not only in Asia but also of Asia.

One distinctive feature of Asia is that its cultures cannot be separated from its religions and vice versa. This brings us to the second issue mentioned above, namely, interreligious dialogue. The Edinburgh conference already took this task into serious consideration, though it did not use the expression “interreligious dialogue” for it. The depth of its interest in the theme is well demonstrated by its plan, albeit reluctantly canceled in 1911, to publish in its entirety all 187 responses to the questionnaire of the conference’s Commission IV (The Missionary Message in Relation to Non-Christian Religions). The report of Commission IV planned for November 8–10, 2010, in Leuven (Louvain), Belgium, by the Documentation and Research Centre for Religion, Culture, and Society (KADOC) of the Catholic University of Leuven. Leuven University Press plans to publish proceedings of the conference, which will be conducted in English and French. For details visit http://kadoc.kuleuven.be/pdf/stu/cfp_congo2010_en.pdf.

In January 2010 the Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois, posted a collection of letters from Jim Elliot, one of five missionary men killed on January 8, 1956, by the Waorani of Ecuador. The letters from Elliot and his wife, Elisabeth, include some in Elliot’s own handwriting (www.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/docs/Eliotletters/01.htm). Elisabeth subsequently wrote three books about the mission work and its consequences, including Through Gates of Splendor (1957), and edited The Journals of Jim Elliot (1978). The 30 letters, spanning the years 1953–59, were addressed to Williams Community Church, Williams, Oregon. Last year the church donated the letters to the archives, which posts a new missionary story on its Web site each month.

Other academic archives available online include a collection of some one hundred letters written by missionary doctor and African explorer David Livingstone (www.livingstoneonline.ucl.ac.uk); a guide to the collection of the English Presbyterian Mission, including records of the Foreign Missions Committee and the Women’s Missionary Association of the Presbyterian Church of England from 1847 to the 1970s (www.soas.ac.uk/library/subjects/archives/news/file55128.pdf); a new Smithsonian Institution Collections Search Center (http://collections.si.edu), including mission-related photos; and a four-volume digitized collection of brief missionary biographies written by John A. Vinton and compiled in 1869 (www.congregationallibrary.org/resources/vinton).

The Yale World Fellows Program seeks applications from midcareer emerging leaders who have distinguished themselves within their own professions, regions, countries, or at an international level. Successful applicants “uniformly possess the extraordinary qualities of mind and character that

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**Noteworthy**

**Announcing**

*Evangelical Interfaith Dialogue* (www.evangelicalinterfaith.com), a quarterly journal and Web site, published its inaugural issue in January 2010. It featured the article “Missional Principles and Guidelines for Interfaith Dialogue,” by missiologist Douglas McConnell, dean of the School of Intercultural Studies, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California. The journal aims to “create space for Evangelical scholars and practitioners to dialogue about the dynamics, challenges, practices and theology surrounding interfaith work, while remaining faithful to the gospel of Jesus and His mission for His Church.”

The Missiology Department of Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski University (UKSW), Warsaw, Poland, is publishing the online *UKSW Missiology Bulletin* (www.misjologia.uksw.edu.pl) to promote its mission symposia and related activities and to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the department’s founding within the earlier Academy of Catholic Theology. UKSW offers mission studies that lead to undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral degrees.


An international conference will be held September 23–25, 2010, at the German Historical Institute London (www.gihil.ac.uk) to discuss the theme “Commercial Agriculture in Africa as an Alternative to the Slave Trade.” Conveners are Robin Law, University of Liverpool and University of Stirling; Suzanne Schwarz, Liverpool Hope University; and Silke Strickrodt, GHIL. Some of the papers presented will be published. For details, contact Schwarz (schwars@hope.ac.uk) or Strickrodt (strickrodt@ghil.ac.uk).

“Religion, Colonization, and Decolonization in Congo, 1885–1960” will be the theme of an international conference at Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois, posted a collection of letters from Jim Elliot, one of five missionary men killed on January 8, 1956, by the Waorani of Ecuador. The letters from Elliot and his wife, Elisabeth, include some in Elliot’s own handwriting (www.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/docs/Eliotletters/01.htm). Elisabeth subsequently wrote three books about the mission work and its consequences, including Through Gates of Splendor (1957), and edited The Journals of Jim Elliot (1978). The 30 letters, spanning the years 1953–59, were addressed to Williams Community Church, Williams, Oregon. Last year the church donated the letters to the archives, which posts a new missionary story on its Web site each month.

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**The Yale World Fellows Program** seeks applications from midcareer emerging leaders who have distinguished themselves within their own professions, regions, countries, or at an international level. Successful applicants “uniformly possess the extraordinary qualities of mind and character that
was widely hailed at Edinburgh as a great, perhaps the greatest, theological achievement of the conference, which partially accounts for the fact that of all the eight commissions, Commission IV has subsequently received the most extensive and detailed scholarly commentary (pp. 205–8).

Stanley’s chapter 8, which discusses Commission IV’s workings and reports as well as the questionnaire responses, is theologically enlightening, and anyone wishing to learn about the major trends of nineteenth-century Protestant theology of religion can do no better than perusing it with care. What emerges from this account is that the then dominant Anglo-American fulfillment theology of religion—that non-Christian religions are a preparatio evangelica—was by no means monolithic and unchallenged, even though it formed the leitmotif of the committee’s questionnaire and report. This fact is evident in the ambiguity of the commission’s chairman, David Cairns, whose fulfillment theology of religion in the mold of John N. Farquhar and Thomas E. Slater was modified under the influence of the formidable critic of such theology, Alfred George Hogg (pp. 222–27).

Despite the stark differences in their theology of religion, the members of Commission IV and the questionnaire respondents were unanimous in commending an attitude of openness and humility toward non-Christian religions. This was indeed surprising and admirable, given the ecclesial and theological context of the time. Nevertheless, in light of recent developments in the theology of religion, several theological positions of the commission, despite their admirable inclusiveness, have become seriously problematic. First, their evolutionary scheme, coupled with their racial theory of culture—with “animism” of Africa at the bottom and Hinduism in India at the top of the scale because of the stages of their respective cultural developments—is historically naive and ethically repugnant. Second, no less problematic is the unanimous affirmation, by both proponents and opponents of the fulfillment theology of religion at Edinburgh, of the universality and uniqueness of Christ as savior and the absolute superiority of Christianity over other religions, all of which are destined to be superseded by Christianity. By contrast, recently several Asian Catholic theologians, notably Michael Amaladoss and Aloysius Pieris, have elaborated a theology of religion without such supersessionist Christology and ecclesiology. While main-

strong leadership requires,” according to the program’s Web site, www.yale.edu/worldfellows. Yale World Fellows are selected from a wide range of fields and disciplines including government, business, nongovernmental organizations, religion, the military, media, and the arts.

Personalia

Appointed. Raag Rolfsen, 47, director of Areopagos Foundation, a nonprofit foundation that focuses on religious and theological studies and works to “strengthen the dialogue between the established church and the multi-religious context to which it belongs.” A theologian and former Church of Norway pastor, Rolfsen was a department manager in the Corps of Military Chaplains of the Church of Norway. Areopagos (www.areopagos.org) will continue its commitment in Asia and develop further its work in Norway and Denmark. Rolfsen replaces acting director Knud Jorgensen.


Died. Tracey K. Jones, Jr., 92, United Methodist missionary and ecumenical statesman, December 16, 2009, in Sarasota, Florida. Jones spent his boyhood in Canton, China, where his father was a YMCA missionary executive. He served as a Methodist missionary (1945–55), first in Nanking, where he witnessed the Communist takeover, and then as a pastor in Singapore. In 1955 he joined the staff of the U.S. Methodist Board of Missions and became the head of the agency’s World Division. With the merger of the Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren churches in 1968, Jones served as general secretary of the General Board of Global Ministries (1968–80). As vice-president of the National Council of Churches, he led delegations of nationally known church leaders to Vietnam (1968) and to the Middle East (1980). His 1963 book Our Mission Today: The Beginning of a New Age sold 300,000 copies. After his retirement he served as a professor at Drew Theological Seminary, Madison, New Jersey.

Died. Harold E. Kurtz, 85, Presbyterian pastor and mission leader, December 18, 2009. A native of Oregon, Kurtz and his family served as Presbyterian missionaries in southwestern Ethiopia, volunteering for a remote mission station near Maji. They served in Ethiopia for twenty-two years, developing respect for the country and their Ethiopian friends and coworkers. A preacher, counselor, and storyteller, Kurtz also flew a mission airplane and, after the 1974 coup d’etat, led the mission during a time of increasing political violence before departing Ethiopia in 1977. From 1989 to 2000 Kurtz served as the first executive director of the Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship (www.pff.net).
taining the Christian distinctive claims about Christ and the church, this theology of religion fully recognizes the revelatory and salvific significance and role of other religions. 5

Finally, with the emergence of the world church, the Edinburgh conference’s geographic division of the world into Christian and non-Christian areas (the former comprising Europe and North America and the latter mainly India and East Asia), respecting the latter as the special sphere of Christian mission, along with its neglect of Africa, Latin America, and Oceania, has become detrimental to Christian mission. For one thing, the allegedly Christian world has shown itself to be not very Christian after all. For another, the emergence of the world church has introduced a radically new perspective on Christian mission. As Stanley puts it well, “The Christian religion has become radically de-centered, with disparate geographical loci and multiple cultural incarnations. . . Christianity is no longer primarily a religion of the western world or of the northern hemisphere” (pp. 16–17). While India and China, which are fast becoming economic and military superpowers, still remain a great concern for Christian mission, it would be myopic to concentrate on them almost exclusively, as the World Missionary Conference did.

Furthermore, it is no longer theologically acceptable to view Christian mission as a unidirectional enterprise, from the Christian West to the heathen East. On the contrary, Christian mission must become truly global, from North to South, from West to East, and vice versa. As the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences have repeatedly insisted, the Asian churches are not churches to be missioned to but are missionary at their core. This missionary task must be carried out with the triple dialogue of liberation, inculturation, and interfaith encounter as its primary modus operandi, as mentioned above.

As we celebrate the centenary of the World Missionary Conference, we express our deep gratitude to the Christian “cloud of witnesses” who brought it forth at Edinburgh. No less grateful are we to its premier historian, Brian Stanley, for bringing all the urgent issues of Christian mission to the forefront of contemporary theological reflection. May the tribe of those fostering the legacy of Edinburgh 1910 multiply and prosper!

Notes

3. For an extensive treatment of these themes, readers are kindly referred to my trilogy, published by Orbis Books: Christianity with an Asian Face (2003), In Our Own Tongues (2004), and Being Religious Interreligiously (2004).
4. For a collection of the FABC’s documents, as well as those of its various organizations, see the four-volume work For All the Peoples of Asia, ed. Gaudencio B. Rosales, C. G. Árêvalo, and Franz-Josef Eilers (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1992–2007).
5. Two recent works on Asian theology are recommended: Christian Theology in Asia, ed. Sebastian C. H. Kim (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2008), and Teologia in Asia, ed. Michael Amaladoss and Rosino Gibellini (Brescia: Queriniana, 2006).

My Pilgrimage in Mission

David Harley

When war broke out in 1939, my father, an ordained Anglican, was serving as a vicar in the East End of London. Fearing for the safety of his family, he evacuated my mother and two brothers to Buckinghamshire, where I was born in 1941. Two years later he moved to a parish in Bristol.

The vicarage where we lived had a large garden with a tennis court and croquet lawn. I remember, aged seven, going out to this lawn on a moonlit night in December. As I gazed at the stars, I thought how great God must be if he had created such a universe. I could think of no better way of spending my life than serving such a God, so I knelt down on the grass and committed my life to him.

About the same time I was wondering what job I would do when I grew up. I thought it would be exciting to become a fireman or a policeman, but I finally decided to follow my father’s example and be ordained. I promptly announced to my parents and brothers that I was going to become the archbishop of Canterbury! They laughed and looked at me with the kind of disdain that Joseph’s family showed to him. Unperturbed, I built a simple chapel in our garden and invited my brothers to come and hear me preach. They refused to come, but a number of chickens came out of curiosity, so I had some sort of congregation. Sadly, their numbers were diminished as one by one they provided meals for the family, and I learned the painful lesson that your church does not grow if you eat your congregation!

Hudson Taylor and the Cambridge Seven

At the age of nineteen I had completed my schooling and was preparing to go to university. I had six months to spare and decided to teach in a small boarding school. When I discovered that two of the staff met on a regular basis to pray for the boys, I asked if I could join them. I was not used to extempore prayer, but I was deeply impressed by the vitality of their faith and the depth of their concern for the children at the school. One of them lent me The Calvary Road and We Would See Jesus, by Roy Hession, who had personal experience of the East African revival. His books gave me a clearer understanding of what Christ had achieved on the cross and what it meant to be his disciple.
During that summer I was invited to an international conference organized by Youth for Christ in Bristol. I had never attended such a noisy gathering of Christians. There was much loud singing, hand clapping, and even a trombone solo. I found this all rather strange, but I was struck by the way the speakers talked about their relationship with God. This left me confused, for I was used to more formal and liturgical expressions of Christianity rather than this noisy evangelical celebration. I was unfamiliar with their pattern of worship but attracted by the way they spoke of Jesus as Savior and Lord.

The next day I was invited to be a junior officer at a Christian camp organized for young teenagers. The aim of the camp was to provide the youngsters with a great holiday in the beautiful Somerset countryside and to give them a series of talks explaining what it meant to be a Christian. As I listened to those talks, I realized that I did trust in Christ as my Savior and Lord. I did not make any decision but rather felt that a decision had been made for me. As C. S. Lewis put it, I felt I had been decided upon. It was not a denial of my Anglican upbringing but rather its endorsement. It clarified my thinking and gave me a strong desire to find out as much as I could about the Christian faith while I was at university.

My three years at Cambridge made a huge impact on my life. I read classics and then theology. I was impressed by the scholarship and humility of Charles Moule, Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity, who always required his class of students, usually numbering around two hundred, to stand for prayer before he began his lecture. I was equally impressed by the number of deeply committed Christian men and women I met at the university. I was privileged to listen to some of the ablest biblical expositors in the country and inherited from them a deep love of the Scriptures. I learned a great deal about prayer from attending the daily prayer meeting organized by the Christian Union in the hall named after Henry Martyn, the famous missionary to India.

I began to read missionary biographies and was particularly struck by the life of Hudson Taylor and the story of the seven Cambridge graduates who went out to China to serve under his leadership. I became concerned for the plight of Christians in China and gathered a group of students to pray regularly for that country. I felt an increasing conviction that God was calling me to serve him as a missionary but realized there was no way to the preacher after the service but found him to be extremely discouraging. He told me in no uncertain terms that I lacked the necessary qualifications.

I was somewhat dismayed by his comments but not totally put off. I determined to gain the qualifications and experience he mentioned. I finished my degree, qualified as a teacher, attended an Anglican theological college, and after being ordained in St. Paul’s Cathedral in London, proceeded to work as an associate pastor in North London.

In the same year, 1966, I married Rosemary. She had studied theology at the University of Bristol, and we met while doing a postgraduate course to train as teachers. From the age of thirteen when she became a Christian she felt God calling her to missionary service. She always imagined herself sitting, like Mary Slessor, under a palm tree teaching African children. Before we married she spent two years teaching religious education in a grammar school. Her experience together with her natural gifts as a teacher proved to be a huge asset while we were serving in the London church.

As our three years in London drew to a close, we began to pray for direction about our future ministry. Should we serve the Jewish people or go to Africa? The preacher who had talked of ministry among the Jewish people when I was a student was no more encouraging now than he had been nine years before. Even though I was now qualified, he said the society had no money to send out new workers. He suggested a job for my wife but did not know what to do with me! Our dilemma was finally resolved when we were invited to work among Jewish people living in Africa, the Falasha Jews of Ethiopia. It seemed to us that God had provided a perfect resolution to our conflicting interests.

The Falashas of Ethiopia

Ethiopia is a fascinating country, and the Ethiopian church is one of the oldest churches in Africa, dating back to the fourth century. The emperor required our mission to work closely with the Orthodox Church, and all Falashas who wished to convert to Christianity had to be baptized by an Orthodox priest. The Falashas, or House of Israel, as they prefer to call themselves, suffered considerable discrimination, and the schools and clinics we provided went some way toward improving their situation.

Before leaving for Ethiopia in 1970 we had been able to do a year’s cross-cultural preparation at a missionary training school in the United Kingdom called All Nations Christian College. This helped us to anticipate some of the challenges we would face as missionaries in Ethiopia. It prepared us for the inevitable shock that comes from living in a totally different environment and the inevitable suspicion that meets white people from a former colonial power working in Africa. Lectures on methodology based on Roland Allen’s classic Missionary Methods: St Paul’s or Ours? warned us of the dangers of imposing our patterns of worship and insisting on our style of leadership. A course on tropical medicine made us aware of the practical precautions we needed to take, while courses on carpentry and car maintenance equipped us to live more effectively in a remote area of Ethiopia.

He told me in no uncertain terms that I lacked the necessary qualifications.

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all, courses on culture helped us to lose some of our feelings of national superiority and taught us to view other cultures with respect and appreciation.

All this made it easier to cope with life and ministry in Africa, yet there were still hard lessons we needed to learn. First of all, we learned the need for missionaries to be flexible. We had our own fixed ideas of what we would like to do in Ethiopia, which was to teach in a Bible school. We never fulfilled that ambition, but instead we did the very things we vowed we never would do. We taught English, math, and even Ethiopian history, first in a mission school and then in a high school run by the Ethiopian church. We administered sponsorship funds that were sent to individual children, and we had to supervise the running of a home that was founded for two hundred children orphaned during the terrible famines of 1973–74. We were able to teach
In religious dialogue there must be mutual respect and humility; also there must be honesty and openness where all parties are free to share what they believe.

her and there was real concern as to whether or not the dog was rabid. We had to decide whether to make her endure a series of twelve injections in her stomach or trust that the dog was not rabid. On both occasions she recovered, but they were stressful times when we learned more about trusting God.

After Emperor Haile Selassie was deposed by a Marxist coup in 1974 and opportunities to serve were decreasing, we were asked to return to the United Kingdom. When Rosemary and I reflected on our time in Ethiopia, we realized we had learned more from the hard times we had faced than from the easy times we had enjoyed. We were also greatly blessed by our relationships with Ethiopian Christians and learned much from their zeal and commitment to Christ.

The Gospel and the Jewish People

Back in the United Kingdom we spent three more years working with the Church’s Ministry Among the Jews. Much of our time was spent helping Christians in their understanding and appreciation of Jewish people. We also had the privilege of meeting many Jewish people who had come to faith in Jesus, or Yeshu’a, as their Messiah through the witness of Christian neighbors or fellow students. We saw the beginnings of small Messianic congregations, as Jewish followers of Christ sought to work out their own identity and patterns of worship.

Subsequently we were involved in the formation of the Lausanne Committee for Jewish Evangelism. We inevitably became engaged in the debate about whether it was appropriate for Christians to seek to share their faith with the Jewish people, particularly in the light of the horrendous treatment of Jews by Christians down the centuries. I believe that in any form of religious dialogue there must be mutual respect and humility, and a willingness to learn from one another. But I also believe that there must be honesty and openness, where all parties are free to share what they believe. My Jewish brothers and sisters must be free to share with me what is important to them, while I must be free to share with them what is important to me. My life has been enriched by my interaction and friendship with many Jewish people. I wish to continue to learn from them and to express my sorrow for what has happened to them over the years, but I also wish to share with them what I believe about Jesus. If Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, he is the Messiah of all. If he is the Son of God and the Savior of the world, then he is Savior of Jew and Gentile alike.

Holistic Missionary Training

From 1978 to 1985 we worked as lecturers on the faculty of All Nations Christian College, and from 1985 to 1993 I served as principal. The college was formed out of three separate colleges strongly influenced by the Keswick movement and founded at the beginning of the twentieth century for the training of missionaries. David Morris was the architect of the merger of these colleges and served as the first principal of the united institution. His vision was to develop a model of training missionaries relevant for service in a postcolonial era. He was determined to train men and women together, something previously unheard of in the United Kingdom, and to tailor the course to the specific needs of each individual missionary candidate. He wanted the training to be practical, relevant, and holistic. The program he developed represented a radical departure from previous training programs but was quickly embraced by mission agencies. Within a short time the college was oversubscribed and gained wide recognition as one of the leading missionary training centers in Europe.

Rosemary and I felt very much at home in the ethos of the college. All the students were committed to working in cross-cultural mission either at home or overseas. While the majority of them were from the United Kingdom, a large number came from Europe and other parts of the world. Some outstanding students and visiting lecturers from Asia and Africa returned to their own countries to set up mission agencies or develop training programs of their own. They were in the forefront of the rapid growth of the missionary movement which has occurred in the Majority World during the last few decades. Rosemary wrote a research project on African and Asian women missionaries as models for the next generation, while I completed a doctoral dissertation on patterns of missionary training that were developing in the Majority World.

Our awareness of developments in the global missionary movement led us eventually to leave All Nations. We were increasingly conscious of the growing contribution to world mission being provided by the churches of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. We were also being invited to different parts of the world to share what we had learned about effective missionary training. So for three years we traveled around the world as training consultants with the World Evangelical Fellowship, visiting many of the new missionary training centers springing up all over Africa, Asia, and Latin America. This meant sharing our mistakes as well as patterns of training that had worked well.

In 1996 we moved to Singapore, serving as dean and lecturer at the Discipleship Training Centre for three years. We then taught for a short while at Trinity Theological College, where I helped to establish the Centre for the Study of Christianity in Asia. This center, the vision of Hwa Yung, now Methodist bishop of West Malaysia, and John Chew, now Anglican Archbishop of Southeast Asia, was dedicated to understanding and completing the missionary task of the Asian church.

Hudson Taylor and OMF

In 2001, quite unexpectedly, the general director of OMF International (formerly the China Inland Mission) invited me to consider the possibility of becoming his successor. I was hesitant to assume another heavy administrative burden but was assured...
that the mission wanted a leader with mission experience who would provide pastoral care and encourage members of the fellowship to think through their mission strategy from a theological perspective.

I was somewhat overawed at the prospect of leading the mission founded by Hudson Taylor. I remembered how his story had inspired me as a university student and how my initial area of missionary interest was China and the Far East. During my induction as general director I was very moved to be handed the original Bible in which Hudson Taylor had recorded the moment when he decided to found the China Inland Mission. Above Job 18, which presumably had been his reading for that day, he had written the words: “Prayed for 24 willing, skillful labourers for China, Brighton, June 25/1865.”

During the five years we served with OMF International, from 2001 to 2006, we were thrilled to witness the growth of the church in several countries in East Asia, countries like Cambodia, Mongolia, the Philippines, and Singapore. The rate of growth among mainland Chinese has been as remarkable as their economic development. It was also encouraging to see Asian Christians’ growing commitment to world mission. In the years since we left All Nations Christian College, the number of missionaries from South Korea has increased from 2,000 to over 15,000. Countries like Indonesia, the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Singapore, including the territories of Hong Kong, have also committed increasing resources to the missionary task. Even in countries such as Thailand and Cambodia, where the church is still small, the missionary vision is growing.

One of my most moving experiences was to attend the funeral service of a young Filipino, Reuel, who had served as a missionary with Serve Philippines, a daughter mission of OMF International. He was only twenty-seven years old, and his wife, Teresa, was just twenty-four. They had a two-year-old daughter named Rejoice. For four years they had lived and worked in a small town in Mindanao, in southern Philippines, seeking to demonstrate the love of God through their presence and their lives. Some people threatened to harm them, and at one point they discussed with their team leaders whether they should leave the town and go to a safer environment. As they prayed, they became convinced they should stay where they were. A few months later Reuel was shot in the head as he leaned over his motorbike in the street. His murderer, a masked gunman, stretched out his body in the form of a cross, as if to mock the faith that Reuel sought to represent. That was how Teresa found her husband’s body.

Ten days later his funeral was held in a small Gospel chapel on the mountainside. Rain was pouring down as Reuel’s father, a Pentecostal pastor, led the service. Teresa spoke through her tears of her love and admiration for her husband. A woman in the congregation was holding their daughter near the coffin of her father.’”Where is your daddy?” she asked the little girl, and in reply Rejoice pointed her finger not toward the coffin but toward the sky. “He is with Jesus,” she said. It is that level of commitment and faith that characterizes so much of the Asian missionary movement.

OMF International has over 1,300 missionaries today, but an increasing proportion of those, like Reuel and Teresa, come from Asia or from Asian communities in the West. They represent 35 percent of the mission force, a percentage that is rising each year. More Asian Christians are assuming leadership roles in OMF; on my retirement I was delighted to be succeeded by Patrick Fung, a Chinese medical doctor from Hong Kong.

Mission in Christ’s Way

Since our retirement I have had more time to reflect on the nature of the missionary task and the challenge of appropriate contextualization. As an evangelical Anglican I have often struggled with the tensions that exist between evangelical and conciliar perspectives on mission. These tensions came into sharp focus for me in two conferences held in 1989. The Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, held in San Antonio, Texas, took as its theme “Mission in Christ’s Way.” The conference focused on the model of Jesus Christ as the suffering servant and argued that those who share the Gospel must do so in the same way that Christ did. The greatest difficulty within the conference, however, was defining who Christ is. Yet without clarity and certainty about the person of Christ, there seems little point in discussing the mission of his church.

The Lausanne Conference, organized in Manila in the same year under the theme “Proclaim Christ Until He Comes,” focused more on strategies for reaching the unreached than on models of servanthood. The conference summoned the whole church to take the whole Gospel to the whole world, but failed to address sufficiently the manner in which the church is to share that Gospel with the world. This seems to me to reflect the weakness of much evangelical missionary endeavor. It often lacks the Christ-like humility emphasized at San Antonio and is in danger of taking evangelistic strategies conceived in the West and imposing them on the Majority World in a new form of cultural imperialism.

Even when we can combine doctrinal clarity with Christ-like humility, we still face the challenge of how to contextualize the Gospel in ways that are appropriate and meaningful but that remain faithful to the biblical message. In recent years I have been impressed by Dean Flemming’s book Contextualization in the New Testament: Patterns for Theology and Mission (InterVarsity Press, 2005) for the way it combines biblical scholarship with missiological and cultural application. He rightly points out the adaptability and cultural sensitivity of the early Christians as they sought to communicate the Gospel effectively in their generation. He challenges us to be much more creative in the language we use to express the Gospel and to follow Paul’s example of being contextual without becoming changeable, audience sensitive without being audience driven.

Rosemary and I continue to reflect on these issues and are involved in speaking and teaching about mission both in the United Kingdom and further afield. Though we are retired we hope we have been re-tyred for a few more years of useful service. We have taught courses on contextualization at Asian seminaries and have been engaged in seminars on preaching under the auspices of the Langham Partnership. When we teach in Asia, we exhort Asian Christians to come and help with the re-evangelization of Europe. When we return to the West, we encourage Christians to learn from their brothers and sisters in the Majority World, to emulate their evangelistic zeal, their prayerfulness, their patterns of prayer and worship, and their willingness to suffer for the sake of the Gospel.

Effective missionary training meant sharing our mistakes as well.
Thirty Books That Most Influenced My Understanding of Christian Mission

Samuel Escobar

I could make a distinction in my selection between the books that shaped my practice of mission during the twenty-six years I worked with the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES), some of them inspirational, expressing a deep spirituality; and the books that shaped my missiological reflection, especially after I started to teach mission courses in the United States. I should state that I never followed a formal theological course, and thus reading was decisive. I did not always follow a proper academic path, and I was not confined by any evangelical canon. However, my work on the staff of IFES in the evangelization of university students and the training of leaders for the student movements required a constant formation, for which the older British and American InterVarsity movements provided courses, conferences, lectures, and a constant stream of good literature.

For me, motivation for mission came from two sources. One was missionary stories; the other was inspirational books that today could be placed under the heading of spirituality. I was probably twelve years old, living in my hometown of Arequipa, in southern Peru, when I received as a Sunday school prize a book by Juan C. Vareto, Héroes y mártires de la obra misionera (Heroes and martyrs of missionary work), 6th ed. (Buenos Aires: Junta Bautista de Publicaciones, 1958). Vareto was an Argentine Baptist who wrote good mission history in a popular and inspirational style. I often returned to this book. Before going to college I was also deeply moved by the biography of Japanese writer, pastor, and politician Toyohiko Kagawa, from whose missionary immersion among the poor in the Shinkawa slum of Kobe came his poems Songs from the Slums (London: SCM Press, 1935). At some points its Spanish translation, Cantos de los barrios bajos (Mexico City: Casa Unida de Publicaciones, 1953), became devotional reading for me. I also got an early grasp of some aspects of mission in several books I read in Spanish by E. Stanley Jones, especially The Christ of the Indian Road (New York: Abingdon, 1925).

Authors of the books I read promoting evangelization and mission, which were formative of my practice as IFES student worker, were convinced that there is a firm and strong biblical basis for mission. I would include here John Stott, Basic Christianity (London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1958), which I recall devouring in 1959 on a bumpy bus ride between Quito, Ecuador, and Ipiales, Colombia. Here I would also place Leslie T. Lyall, A World to Win (London: Inter-Varsity Press; Overseas Missionary Fellowship, 1972).

In evangelical literature I found excellent work about the New Testament, and especially about the apostle Paul as a missionary. Most helpful for an outline of Christian apologetics in the early church was F. F. Bruce, The Apostolic Defence of the Gospel (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1961). Later, I found especially helpful his book Paul: Apostle of the Free Spirit (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1977), some chapters of which I heard from Bruce lecturing at Regent College in Vancouver. A refreshing and almost exhilarating experience was reading Roland Allen, The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church, in its Spanish version, La expansión espontánea de iglesia (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1960), which took me to his other books. Those of us who admired Michael Green as an evangelist in the IFES circles were especially pleased when he published Evangelism in the Early Church (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1970), a valuable mixture of evangelistic enthusiasm and New Testament scholarship. I have benefited greatly by the creative missiological approach to the Epistle to the Romans used in Paul Minear, The Obedience of Faith (London: SCM Press, 1971). It provides a key missiological perspective for a document that is usually read as if it were only a theological essay.

The other formative influence came from books about Jesus’ way of discipling his apostles. I realized that several short volumes by colleagues such as Hawaiian Ada Lum and Indian P. T. Chandapilla had benefited from the classic volume by A. B. Bruce, The Training of the Twelve (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1971, reproduced from the 4th ed., New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1894). The wealth of hermeneutical and homiletical keys in this book is enriching in many ways.

During my active missionary work, however, no evangelical book articulated the biblical basis for mission, encompassing the whole Bible systematically, the way Catholic scholars Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmuller did in their book The Biblical Foundations for Mission (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1983). In recent years this has changed, as evangelicals such as Chris Wright and Vinoth Ramachandra have worked intensively in this area.

For decades, the standard work in Spanish about the history of missions has been Justo González, Historia de las misiones (Buenos Aires: Methopress, 1970). The updated edition, coauthored with Carlos Cardoza Orlandi, is Historia general de las misiones (Barcelona: CLIE, 2008), which I understand will soon appear in English. Their point of view incorporates the reflection on history that González has expounded in his more recent books. Before I started to regularly use Kenneth Scott Latourette’s seven-volume classic, A History of the Expansion of Christianity (New York: Harper, 1937–45), I became acquainted with this great Baptist historian through his book Desafío a los protestantes (Challenge to Protestants) (Buenos Aires: La Aurora, 1957), which is the text of his 1956 Carnahan Lectures at the Union Seminary of Buenos Aires. History was also important in a book that Latin American Protestants consider a classic example of the interpretation of Christianity in the Iberian Peninsula and in Latin America: John A. Mackay, The Other Spanish Christ (New York: Macmillan, 1932). For me, its Spanish version, El otro Cristo español (Mexico City: CUP, 1952), became a model of missiological reflection, as Mackay applied to his subject historical understanding, theological foundations, and social analysis, all motivated by a deep sense of missionary vocation. Through my work with IFES I became familiar with the American missionary enterprise, but it was an edited volume by Joel A. Carpenter and Wilbert B. Shenk, Earthen Vessels: America,
can Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880–1980 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), that first brought a proper historical approach for understanding this important movement. Andrew Walls’s contribution to that symposium, which was my first acquaintance with him, became a model for me of missiological reflection; I have treasured his books.


As I traveled all over Latin America, I could see the socially transforming power of spiritual experience, especially among Pentecostals. This growing awareness connected with my study and reflection about the beginnings of the Methodist movement and the relationship between spiritual revival, mission, and social transformation. Early in college days I had gained an overview and a contextual interpretation of Methodism through Mexican Bible scholar and historian Gonzalo Baez Camargo, especially in his Genio y espíritu del metodismo wesleyano (Genius and spirit of Wesleyan Methodism) (Mexico City: CUP, 1962). Later, I was impacted significantly by John Wesley Bready, England Before and After Wesley (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938). This subject was explored from an ecclesiological perspective by Howard A. Snyder in several books, especially The Radical Wesleyan Patterns for Church Renewal (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1980). More recently, a masterpiece along these lines that I have commented on extensively and used as a textbook is David Martin, Tongues of Fire (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), a sociological analysis of the growth of Pentecostalism in Latin America, using the early growth of Methodism in England and the United States as a comparative key. This awareness of the social conditioning of missionary work, as well as of the social dynamism of spiritual experience, helped me understand both the challenge and the limitations of liberation theologies.

Along a similar line, I found anthropology applied to the understanding and practice of mission useful both in itself and as a corrective of triumphalistic attitudes. I benefited especially from Eugene A. Nida, Message and Mission (New York: Harper & Row, 1966; rev. ed., Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1990), and Jacob Loewen, Culture and Human Values (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1975), some chapters of which I first read in periodicals. This anthropological approach has to do with mission practice critically observed by outsiders. Along the same lines, I must confess that I was deeply impacted by the honest, candid self-exposure in Elisabeth Elliot’s novel No Graven Image (New York: Harper & Row, 1966). I appreciated also the tone of Eric S. Fife and Arthur F. Glasser, Missions in Crisis (Chicago: InterVarsity Press, 1961)—it was self-critical without losing the missionary vision. I have noted, with appreciation, this kind of evangelical self-criticism in several of the Urbana Missionary Conventions I have attended since 1970.

I could say that I was initiated in theological reflection by a book that has a strong missional component: John A. MacKay, A Preface to Christian Theology (New York: Macmillan, 1943), which I read and studied in its Spanish version, Prefacio a la teología cristiana (Mexico City: CUP, 1945). This book is not only a brilliant exposition of theological truth but also a call to action, to “leave the balcony and take the road,” ending with a chapter that outlines the mission of the church. MacKay also introduced me to the thought of the Dane Søren Kierkegaard, Russian Nikolai Berdiaev, and Spanish Miguel de Unamuno and their passionate criticism of nominal religiosity. I found a similar kind of theologizing from a missional perspective in the books of Lesslie Newbigin, especially A Faith for This One World (London: SCM Press, 1961), Honest Religion for Secular Man (London: SCM Press, 1966), and The Open Secret (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978; rev. ed., 1995). I found specially significant that Newbigin’s Household of God (London: SCM Press, 1953) showed a perceptive grasp of the theological significance of Pentecostalism for our understanding of the church and its mission at a time when, in WCC circles, Pentecostals were still considered a sect. I should also mention at this point Emil Brunner, The Misunderstanding of the Church (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953).

Though our IFES leaders were critical of the notion of mission as presence, which was predominant in ecumenical circles during the early 1960s, I was impacted by the fresh, courageous, and challenging thought of Jacques Ellul, The Presence of the Kingdom (New York: Seabury Press, 1967), which I found resonated with my Latin American experience. For the same reason I came to appreciate a long and friendly relationship with Anabaptist theologian John Howard Yoder, whose book The Politics of Jesus (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972) was a milestone for me.

Some books influenced me in the process of their making. I read them first as articles or heard their contents in conferences, lectures, and discussions with the authors, and only later found them published in book form. In several cases I have returned frequently to the published book, and I have also used it as a textbook for my courses. Such is the case with John Stott, Christian Mission in the Modern World (London: Falcon Books, 1975), in which he deals with key words about mission in the missiological debates of the 1970s. The same happens with René Padilla, Mission Between the Times (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), and with Orlando Costas, Christ Outside the Gate (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1982). I would place here also the proceedings of the Berlin Congress on Evangelism, which I was privileged to attend in 1966: Carl F. H. Henry and W. Stanley Mooneyham, eds., One Race, One Gospel, One Task (2 vols.; Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1967). Here we can find the biblical expositions by John Stott on the Great Commission, especially his exposition of John 20:21 in which Jesus commissions us, but also provides a model: his own way of doing mission. That, in my opinion, was the basis for a decisive shift in evangelical missiology.

Liberation theologians have had very good press in theological circles in North America. But there is a strong evangelical missionary action that does not follow the aims or proposals of liberation theologies. As I live now in Spain, where one can experience the disintegration of Christendom, books I would like to see published are missiological reflections from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, following the insights and methodologies of Lesslie Newbigin, Andrew Walls, John Howard Yoder, and Jacques Ellul. Realities such as globalization, migration, and the “clash of civilizations” require a global dialogue. Missionary movements from the Southern Hemisphere need to develop a self-critical missiological reflection that will interpret their experience with the help, but not the constraint, of the rich reflection that has taken place in recent decades.
The Hand and the Road: The Life and Times of John A. Mackay.


The grandson of John A. Mackay (1889–1983) has written a significant biography of his grandfather. He has set the story within the historical context in which Mackay lived out his life on three continents and within two cultures: the Anglo-Saxon and the Hispanic.

The author has tapped into family archives and made good use of two extensive bibliographies. The portrait of Mackay has been sketched in broad-brush strokes before by several writers, but this biography presents a much fuller picture of the man and his times. The title “The Hand and the Road” was chosen by Mackay himself for the autobiography that he never found the leisure to write. As an adolescent in the Scottish Highlands, caught up in the warmth of Scottish evangelicism, Mackay felt a longing hand on his shoulder that guided him down a road of faithful service. The author has also given us extensive excerpts from the devotional diaries of Mackay as a secondary school and college student, which document his intellectual and spiritual formation.

The biography is divided into specific periods of his life in Scotland, Latin America, and the United States. The author provides an amazing amount of detail. Mackay traveled to Madrid to learn Spanish at the age of twenty-five. He was determined “to get the Scottishness out of me!” He not only learned to speak the language impeccably and embraced a new culture, but he did so to such a degree that he is lovingly remembered by Latin Americans as “el escocés con alma latina” (that Scot with a Latin soul).

The author might have given more attention to certain definitive influences on Mackay’s life, such as the impact of Miguel de Unamuno on the young missionary’s “dialogue between religion and culture.” Don Miguel agreed with Mackay that Jesus had the answers but reminded him that he must first listen to hear the message without the ordinary trappings of a religious service. Mackay made to modern missions. One of the stand that Mackay took on the theological orientation.

Certain parts of this biography deepen our understanding of some unique theological and missiological contributions Mackay made to modern missions. One of the stand that Mackay took on the controversial Laymen’s Inquiry, a project in the 1930s that addressed the question “How are we to interpret and conduct mission work in the coming generation?”

Two liberal thinkers, Ernest Hocking and Pearl Buck, supported the report of the “fact finders” who inspected missions in India, Burma, China, and Japan. They felt that the day of foreign missions was over. Mackay, then a member of the staff of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, replied that these evaluations were based on ignorance of theological developments, an inadequate understanding of Christianity, and a superficial interpretation of missionary objectives.

During his long tenure as president of Princeton Theological Seminary (1936–59), Mackay experienced many challenges. The author does a good job of describing the many advances made during his administration. It would be of interest, however, to know more of the administrative problems Mackay faced beyond that of giving the seminary a fresh theological orientation.

Mackay weathered a great deal of criticism because of his challenge to Cardinal Spellman about certain aspects of Roman Catholic “clericalism,” which Mackay was convinced were designed to undercut the constitutional guarantees of the separation of church and state. Also, his enthusiastic support of the Friends of Spain committee, which he chaired, brought him a great deal of criticism, since it was reported that the Spanish Loyalists were infiltrated with Communists. Yet Mackay never wavered in his support of the new Spanish republic.

This biography should stand the test of time. The author has painted an abiding portrait of his grandfather, one of the spiritual giants of the missionary and ecumenical movements of the twentieth century.

——John H. Sinclair

Pathways in Christian Music Communication: The Case of the Senufo of Côte d’Ivoire.


Roberta R. King, associate professor of communication and ethnomusicology at Fuller Seminary, Pasadena, California, has for many years been at the forefront of research on ethnomusicology, and Pathways in Christian Music Communication illustrates why. Weaving together relevant material from communication theory, missiology, ethnohistory, and musicology, King ushers us into the faith and witness of Senufo Christians in Côte d’Ivoire and provides us with the template on how to generate, compile, and analyze indigenous songs sprouting up not only in West

Book Reviews

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Africa but everywhere throughout the global South.

Inspired by the Senufo concept of kolo— the path or direction people choose to follow in life— King organizes her material around, first, her own story (“My Personal Path”), followed by an introduction to music communication theory (“Pathways to Music Communication Research”), the specific ethnic group featured in her study (“The Senufo and Their Life-Paths”), the role of music in faith-sharing (“Musical Paths to Christian Communication”), and, finally, song text analysis (“A Path to Worldview Discovery”).

King’s study is of particular importance to missiologists because the focus of her research is precisely to explore the question of whether “the use of culturally appropriate songs makes a significant difference in effective communication of the Gospel and, if so, ‘how’ and ‘why’?” (p. 8). Seeker-driven churches in North America are quite accustomed to this inquiry, but the literature on musically contextualized ministries in other global settings is rather sparse or nonexistent.

The power of music to communicate the Good News is demonstrated persuasively here. One of King’s Senufo respondents is even quoted as claiming that certain songs are “so effective that . . . when they are sung, ‘it is useless to preach’” (p. 185). That statement alone should tickle the ears of mission students and scholars and convince them that acquaintance with this study is a requirement.

—James R. Krabill

James R. Krabill is Senior Executive for Global Ministries of the Mennonite Mission Network, the denominational mission agency of the Mennonite Church USA.


In this well-researched account of the missionary innovation of Wolaitta evangelists, E. Paul Balisky describes an astonishingly successful frontier-crossing mission undertaken in Africa, by Africans, in the middle decades of the twentieth century.

This book focuses on how a very young church became the foremost vehicle of social, cultural, and religious change in southern Ethiopia. The Wolaitta church had only forty-eight members when in 1937 its founders—a group of Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) personnel who had worked in the country for ten years—were

Fifteen Outstanding Books of 2009 for Mission Studies

In consultation with fifty distinguished scholars from around the world, the editors of the International Bulletin of Missionary Research have selected fifteen books published in 2009 for special recognition of their contribution to the advancement of scholarship in studies of the Christian mission and world Christianity.

Adeney, Frances, and Terry Muck.

Christianity Encountering World Religions: The Practice of Mission in the Twenty-first Century.


Bays, Daniel H., and Ellen Widmer.


Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press. $65; paperback $24.95.

Bivans, Stephen B.

An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective.


Breitenbach, Esther.

Empire and Scottish Society: The Impact of Foreign Missions at Home, c. 1790 to c. 1914.

Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press. £60.

Eshete, Tibebe.

The Evangelical Movement in Ethiopia: Resistance and Resilience.

Waco, Tex.: Baylor Univ. Press. $54.95.

Johnson, Todd, and Kenneth Ross.

Atlas of Global Christianity.

Edinburgh: Univ. of Edinburgh Press. £120.


Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now.


Nagy, Dorottya.

Migration and Theology: The Case of Chinese Christian Communities in Hungary and Romania in the Globalisation-Context.


Noll, Mark A.


Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press. $25.

Robert, Dana L.


Stanley, Brian.


Tiedemann, R. G.


Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe. $128.95.

Whiteman, Darrell, and Gerald H. Anderson, eds.

World Mission in the Wesleyan Spirit.


Withnall, Robert.


Berkeley: Univ. of California Press. $26.95 / £18.95.

Young, Richard Fox, ed.

India and the Indianess of Christianity: Essays on Understanding—Historical, Theological, and Bibliographical—in Honor of Robert Eric Frykenberg.


April 2010
World Mission in the Wesleyan Spirit.


Continuing the impressive American Society of Missiology Series, this volume is edited by prominent missiological leaders within the Wesleyan family—Darrell Whiteman and Gerald Anderson. This collection of thirty-one essays by mission scholars of the worldwide Methodist and Wesleyan families commemorates the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of The Mission Society as an alternative mission-sending organization to the United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries. Against this backdrop, the volume manages to explore the notion of a Wesleyan spirit in world mission without politicizing or polarizing the diversity of mission expressions within the tradition.

The book is divided into five sections that document various methodological angles for examining this Wesleyan missional impulse: in biblical, theological, historical, cultural, and strategic motifs. A seminal chapter by Andrew F. Walls analyzes the context in which John Wesley wrote his sermon “The General Spread of the Gospel,” which pushes us beyond the usual historical bromides about Wesley’s missional thinking. Walls also provides a fascinating glimpse into the overlooked missional theology of Charles Wesley’s hymnody. This chapter effectively anchors the often slippery concept of what a “Wesleyan spirit” in world mission means. In fact, moving this chapter closer to the front of the book would have cast even more precision on the contributions of other chapters. Nevertheless, the offerings here are rich from their multiple methodologies.

Key Wesleyan missional distinctives are explored across each of the methodological sections. These include how patterns of Wesleyan scriptural interpretation inform mission action, with emphasis on conversion and practical holiness; how the theological concept of prevenient grace motivates mission and provides an advantageous rationale for contextualization; the contours of a Methodist missional ecclesiology and the promotion of lay involvement in world mission; the search for a Wesleyan creative synthesis of evangelism and social transformation; an emphasis on the restoration of the image of God in small groups, which connect personal sanctification with the ultimate healing of a new creation; and Wesleyan resources for engaging cultural diversity and dialogue with the world’s religions.

This volume holds promise for sharpening our understanding of the Wesleyan tradition when viewed in its global vitality. Equally promising is the theological diversity of Wesleyan missiological scholarship assembled. Most of these scholars write across evangelical and conciliar divides and have worked together for years on research, training, and policy for the two mission agencies of American Methodism. The authors make a strong case that Wesleyan missiology in the early twenty-first century is considerably more united than the mission of American United Methodism.

—W. Harrison Daniel

W. Harrison Daniel is Associate Professor in the Practice of History and Mission, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia. He served as a missionary/theological educator with the General Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Church, in Liberia and Eastern Europe.


The second edition of Christianity in China will be a very helpful tool for researchers. It contains all of the features of the first edition (1989, ed. Archie R. Crouch et al.),
plus additional information based on the “rapid development of the internet and other resource search possibilities” (p. xxxvi). It is particularly commendable that the guide includes information relating to missions in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Macao, which makes this resource for study of Christianity in China more complete.

This new guide is particularly useful for Chinese scholars. First, although Chinese scholars have made great progress in studies of the history of Christianity, the majority of the research has been limited to Christianity and the modernization of China. Little has been done in the study of Christian missionary societies and the missionaries themselves. The detailed information in this guide on Protestants and Catholics in China will encourage scholars to explore many new topics.

Second, as Westerners talk about “discovering history in China,” so Chinese committed to studying the missionary movement in China need to discover its history from the West. The indexes in this work (pp. 661–797) will be helpful in locating materials on specific Christian workers, denominations, and movements. Such information will allow researchers to delve deeply into the life and thinking of the missionaries and their organizations.

Third, the timing of publication of this guide is very appropriate, as more and more Chinese scholars are focusing on the history of Christianity in China. This guide, along with others (p. xxxvi), provides a wealth of information and signals the beginning of a new stage in the study of Christianity in China.

—Feiya Tao

Feiya Tao is Professor of Christianity in Modern China in the Department of History at Shanghai University, Shanghai, China.

Expecting Pears from an Elm Tree: Franciscan Missions on the Chiriguano Frontier in the Heart of South America, 1830–1949.


In this study Langer offers a detailed, meticulously researched examination of the Franciscan missions to the Chiriguano in the frontier region of southeastern Bolivia during the republican period, 1830–1949. The work is divided into nine chapters. The first places the Chiriguano within the context of the regional and national transformations that were taking place in Bolivia in the first half of the nineteenth century. Cattle ranchers were encroaching on Indian land, threatening the Indians’ independence and agricultural way of life. Consequently, Chiriguano chiefs requested missions, not because they desired conversion, but because they felt that missions would protect them from the interlopers. Indeed, Langer notes that before the last few decades of the missions’ existence, few Indians converted, and those who did usually regressed to their former way of life once they left the missions.

In the next several chapters, Langer discusses what both the missionaries and the Chiriguano hoped to gain from mission life and how both sides perpetually negotiated with each other to achieve their goals. The friars did not always have the upper hand in these negotiations. Often was largely influenced by the church-state conflict in Italy.

This fresh, comprehensive text fills a need for an up-to-date theology of mission. The authors, who are leading mission experts, discuss biblical theology of mission, provide historical overviews of the development of various viewpoints, and address current theological issues in global mission from an evangelical perspective. They offer creative approaches to answering some of the most pressing questions in theology of mission and missionary practice today.

“Evangelicals need a single, comprehensive guide to the mind-boggling world of the theology of Christian mission. Craig Ott, Stephen Strauss, and Timothy Tennent have met that need in this reliable and carefully written educational resource.”—J. Nelson Jennings, Covenant Theological Seminary

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the Indians, who could leave the missions to find work in the sugarcane fields of neighboring Argentina, used migration as a trump card to obtain concessions from the missionaries. The friars also had to contend with anticlerical national governments, just as they had done in Europe, and the Indians knew how to take advantage of this in their power relationship with the Franciscans.

The Chaco War between Bolivia and Paraguay (1932–35) spelled the beginning of the end for the missions. Soldiers ransacked the missions and left their infrastructure in shambles. Indians were forced to flee, and most never returned. In the 1940s the government began dismantling the missions, and by the middle of the century they were a thing of the past. Langer’s book is a valuable study that will undoubtedly serve as a model for other historians of Latin American missions in the republican era.

—Edward T. Brett

Edward T. Brett is Professor of History and Political Science at La Roche College, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Without Buddha I Could Not Be a Christian.


Standing on the edges between two religions, can you see into both better than when you stick close to the center of either one? The answer is more likely a “yes” than a “no” or a “maybe.” That is why I prefer for theologians who talk about the religions to be literate at least in one besides Christianity. In this respect, Knitter stands out. Not the type who is offended by the un-Barthian notion that religious similarities might have theological significance, he discloses in Without Buddha I Could Not Be a Christian his “love affair” with Buddhism and tells us that he now has a Tibetan name, Lotus Healer (Urgyen Menla).

Does this kind of conversion entail apostasy? Knitter thinks not, and until the penultimate page where the admission is made, he talks as if having Buddhism as an interlocutor simply adds stereoscopic depth to his Christian faith. Knitter anticipates the charge of infidelity with the dubious defense that “at the end of the day, I go home to Jesus” (p. 215). Conceptually, one wonders how “double-belonging” really works.

Does not one have to have a primary symbol system to do the heavy lifting? Would not the dissonance otherwise become unbearable?

Knitter’s profession of faithfulness might sound more convincing if the Christianity he talks about did not look so theologically unattractive. For a person who enjoyed the best of Catholic educations (at the feet of Karl Rahner), it seems a shame that the stale Catholicism of his Chicago youth still constrains his vision of its possibilities. In contrast, Buddhism seems to him as fresh as the morning dew. Though Knitter’s Buddhism is utterly ahistorical and quintessentially American, I actually find it reassuring that I cannot recognize it as Theravada or Mahayana or Vajrayana. This tells me that, metabolically, he continues to process “Buddhism” as a Christian, cognitively if not affectively.

—Richard Fox Young

Richard Fox Young holds the Timby Chair in the History of Religions at Princeton Theological Seminary.

Awakening the Hermit Kingdom:
Pioneer American Women Missionaries in Korea.


History has tended to focus on great and so-called important events usually staged by men, in the form of grand narrative, from which the experience of women has been excluded. Awakening the Hermit Kingdom, however, offers a new way to compose mission narratives—through detailed research in materials filled with
the “ordinary” matters of life, without many “special” events. Ahn insists that what mattered most during the pioneering stage of Korean mission was not necessarily the content of the message but, rather, the way it was presented in ordinary experience, such as in the missionary home. Ahn argues that, in spite of the invisibility of women missionaries because of the sociocultural background at the turn of the century, it was an invisibility through which the American women missionaries subversively created a real space for communication with Korean women at the margin. The stories of early American women missionaries became stories of human struggle for opportunity and dignity shared with Korean women. Through their sense of solidarity, the women missionaries structured a kind of relationship with Korean women that provided opportunities for themselves as well as for the native women. Their communication within this domain of invisibility laid the foundation of Christianity in Korea.

*Awakening the Hermit Kingdom* offers a new way of surveying the terrain of the Korean mission field, connecting dots that once escaped notice or were considered insignificant in the early missionary work in Korea. The line of sight from the margin that Ahn presents brings a fresh perspective to the terrain of the mission field, allowing us to rediscover the early American women missionaries and native women as major contributors to mission. This book challenges the hegemonic tendency of writing history as “grand narrative.” It does so by repositioning and reconstructing mission history as composed of many small narratives, particularly those of women missionaries, weaving them together in a subversive way, allowing us to hear a new mission narrative.

—Samuel Y. Pang

*Samuel Y. Pang is Associate Professor of Intercultural Theology and World Christianity in the College of Theology and the United Graduate School of Theology at Yonsei University, Seoul, Korea.*

### American Missionaries, Christian Oyatoi, and Japan, 1859–73.


Hamish Ion may well be the greatest living authority on the history of Protestant missions to Japan. His fourth book on the subject is *American Missionaries, Christian Oyatoi* [foreigners employed by the Japanese government], *and Japan, 1859–73*. In this compendious volume, Ion chronicles the activities of the first American missionaries to Japan, focusing on the period between their arrival and the decision of the Japanese government to remove edicts against Christianity from public view. It was a time of tremendous change for the Japanese, and Ion shows how the appearance of missionaries coincided with the downfall of the shogun, the empowerment of the emperor, and the forcible opening up of Japan to outside influences. To make sense of this upheaval, many Japanese (especially young men from the aristocratic samurai class) sought answers from missionaries, who, in Ion’s words, provided a wide array of Western learning: “A smorgasbord, a veritable Viking’s feast, of different ideas and knowledge was being offered up by missionaries and from which the Japanese freely picked, selecting those they considered the most delectable and valuable” (p. xiii).

Christianity was a prime missionary
offering, and a few Japanese embraced it. But as Ion demonstrates, the deck was stacked against Christianity in Japan from the start, largely because the Japanese government was hostile to it. To appease Western powers, the government stopped overtly persecuting Christians in 1873. But Christianity remained illegal in Japan until 1889, and even beyond that date the Japanese were officially encouraged to follow Shinto, the indigenous religion that deified the emperor.

Despite the obstacles that faced them, the first American missionaries to Japan labored mightily to spread their religion, and Ion does a masterful job of telling their story. Although his prose can be very repetitive, Ion did an extraordinary amount of research, accessing archival materials in English and Japanese, and he provides readers with a wonderfully nuanced account of the American Protestant missionary movement in late Tokugawa/early Meiji Japan. He emphasizes the importance of missionary wives and women missionaries, and he pays a great deal of attention to Japanese notables (including students who studied in America), Christian converts, and anti-Christian philosophers.

—Clifford Putney

Clifford Putney is Assistant Professor in the History Department at Bentley University, Waltham, Massachusetts.

Jesus Christ in World History: His Presence and Representation in Cyclical and Linear Settings.


The title captures the essence of this very ambitious book, which deals with the reception of Jesus Christ throughout history. The sheer volume of material considered is impressive, reminding the reader of the influence of Jesus Christ in so many areas of society worldwide.

Jan Jongeneel, working both in Utrecht (Netherlands) and at Yale (New Haven, Connecticut) on this project, as a continuation of his Ph.D. studies, completed in 1971, aims at describing, analyzing, and interpreting Jesus’ presence in world history, with emphasis on how the human community has responded and represented him throughout the centuries. Not only are Christian perspectives considered, but interaction with non-Christian religions, worldviews, and ideologies also receives attention in light of the various responses to Jesus. Even misinterpretations are discussed.

The difference in the ways people look at time and history proved to be of central importance. There is the repetitive, cyclical way of looking at history, over against the linear perspective, which moves toward an ultimate goal. The point of view one takes has a profound influence on one’s understanding of Jesus, a point that is thoroughly developed in this book. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam favor the latter perspective.

This book is highly informative, but the reader should be aware that any study treating all of history, including all religious perspectives, is bound to be selective, discussing certain issues from a particular point of view and missing some important perspectives, even though an effort is made to focus on main issues.

—Jan G. van der Watt

Jan G. van der Watt is Professor and Head of the Department of Exegesis of the New Testament and Source Texts of Christianity, Radboud University Nijmegen, Nijmegen, Netherlands.

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ISBN 978-0-8028-6392-8 • 295 pages • paperback • $45.00


This important study is an attempt to establish a theological, ecclesiological, and ethical foundation for the church in China based on the heritage of the European Reformation. Making use of Max Weber’s theory of ideal types, the author offers an in-depth study of the ethics and ecclesiology of Martin Luther, John Calvin, Karl Barth, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. His concern is to demonstrate how these theologians can provide the ecclesiological framework and ethical perspective that the fast-growing churches of China need in order to establish themselves and contribute to society.

Aiming Wang is the vice president and dean of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary. This study is the published version of his 2008 doctoral dissertation in systematic theology and ethics at the University of Basel. Wang offers an impressive survey of Reformation thought, which is the core of his book. Ethics is essential for ecclesiology and has an important contribution to make for the liturgy, order, and discipline that the church in China needs. For Wang it is the Continental reformers, not more recent contextual theologians, who are “the main part and resource of the universal church for Christianity in China” (p. 59).

Confucian ethics can be the mediator for the Reformation heritage in China. Wang contends that Calvinist ethics “is exactly the same as the Li [propriety] to the Church in the understanding of Confucianism” (p. 549). Wang seems to be suggesting that Calvinist ethics and Li are identical, an idea that would be problematic to many Calvinists and Confucianists. In his discussion and analysis of the social context of China, however, Wang bases his arguments almost exclusively on Western interpretations, or on Chinese scholars writing in English. Many of the historical sources he relies on are dated, and he does not make significant use of the Chinese-language works on Christianity and cultural analysis that have appeared over the last three decades. This is unfortunate, for Aiming Wang is a creative theological voice who has also published widely in Chinese theological journals.

This significant work of scholarship will be of interest to all who are concerned for church development in China and the possible contribution of European theology to that process.

—Philip L. Wickeri

Philip L. Wickeri teaches at Ming Hua Theological College of the Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui (Anglican Church) and serves as Advisor to the Archbishop on Theological and Historical Studies.

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In his latest book, Fuller professor Jehu J. Hanciles evaluates the interconnection between globalization, migrations, and religious expansion, and examines how non-Western movements and initiatives have the potential to transform Western society and Christianity.
Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now.


The centenary of the 1910 World Missionary Conference has sparked any number of efforts around the world to commemorate and learn from that crucial milestone in the history of Protestant missions and the modern ecumenical movement. This book represents the fruit of one such study process, organized by the Scottish Towards 2010 Council. Between 2002 and 2007, conferences were held in Edinburgh under the auspices of the council, at which a series of invited lecturers reflected on the major themes addressed by each of the eight commissions that deliberated in 1910. The result is an outstanding collection of essays (revised after their initial delivery), which not only consider what happened at Edinburgh a century ago but also probe deeply into the subsequent legacy of the World Missionary Conference.

In their introduction and conclusion the editors emphasize the foundational role of Edinburgh with respect to twentieth-century patterns of missionary cooperation, the development of national churches outside the West, and the pursuit of Christian unity. Several of the essays complement this angle of approach by highlighting the anticipatory character of the event. Examples include Samuel Kobia on partnership, Andrew Walls on the impending rise of non-Western Christianity, and Guli Francis-Dehqani’s careful analysis of shifting interfaith attitudes just then beginning to show at Edinburgh. Some lecturers chose to examine the shortcomings of the World Missionary Conference. Thus, Teresa Okure and Ogbu Kalu draw attention to the regrettable neglect of African perspectives at the conference, while Tinyiko Maluleke takes the commissioners to task for not challenging the European colonial order then shaping the environment of world missions so decisively. Several of the presenters used their time to supply part of what they thought was missing at Edinburgh, including Kosuke Koyama on the need to build up the human community, Cecil Robeck on the past century of Pentecostal missions, and the liberative potential of missionary education explored by M. P. Joseph.

This is a nicely balanced set of contributors, whose diverse backgrounds (both geographic and denominational), wide-ranging theological perspectives, and different experiences in mission add breadth and depth to the collection as a whole.

—Stanley H. Skreslet

Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda.


Christianity and Genocide is a major study of the complex connections between religion and genocide in Rwanda in 1994. Rwanda is an overwhelmingly Christian country, with a strong Catholic majority and a significant Protestant minority. Religion was not an identifier of difference in Rwanda: Hutu and Tutsi were equally Christian, and all the churches had members from both groups. The genocide had as little to do with a Catholic majority persecuting a Protestant minority as with Christians scapegoating a non-Christian minority. Nevertheless, Christianity was profoundly implicated in the genocide. In Longman’s words, the churches, all the churches, helped to “make participation in the killing morally acceptable” (p. 306). Christians became génocidaires, not because they were insufficiently Christian, but because the Christianity to which they adhered was itself deeply flawed.

The explanation for this defect goes back to the earliest days of missionary activity and colonialism, specifically the essentializing of Tutsi-Hutu distinctiveness based on racial stereotyping. In the 1950s the Catholic Church abandoned its support for Tutsi minority hegemony and threw its weight behind the Hutu majority. Unfortunately, in independent Rwanda this merely reversed the stereotypes and left the Tutsi as a vulnerable and discriminated minority. A fatal weakness of
the churches was their close identification with the ruling group, whether colonialist before 1962 or Hutu authoritarian rule afterward. Moreover, the churches increasingly became major distributors of economic resources, a patrimonialism that made them a major site for elite competition and self-enrichment in the name, but at the expense, of the poor. This combination of ethnic essentializing, patrimonialism, and subservience to the state proved a lethal cocktail. At the same time, the churches also have a radical tradition of partisanship for the poor, which at times undercut the establishment orientation and offered an alternative vision. But this minority tradition has never been able to assert itself effectively in the face of elite hegemony.

The second half of the book is a detailed study of two Presbyterian parishes, showing how these two orientations asserted themselves in different ways in the two locations, affecting differentially the extent and character of the genocide, but without preventing the slaughter in either place. Longman rightly wishes to show how the ethnic fault-lines, which are often presented as impenetrable distinctions, are, in reality, fluid and flexible. The ethnic chauvinism of the genocide was a lethal political creation. It was not based on fixed racial identities (not least because of the extensive intermarriage between the groups). Some participated in genocide through ethnic fear, but criminality, greed, and obedience to authority were also important factors.

Longman’s book is a major contribution to historical and sociological studies of the genocide and the role of religion. While not itself theological in any strict sense, the complexity and nuance of Longman’s book provide essential resources for theological reflection on inhumanity and Christian responsibility in Rwanda. It clearly demonstrates the inadequacy of responses that try to exculpate the church from involvement (“it was the work of individuals who did not truly represent the church”) but also shows the inadequacy of simply blaming religion, as if that in itself was an explanation of why things happened as they did. I highly recommend this well-researched, deeply committed book. Its critical and constructive analysis is highly relevant for evaluating the contemporary role of the churches in Rwanda and, indeed, far beyond Rwanda.

—Kevin Ward

Kevin Ward is Senior Lecturer in African Religious Studies in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Leeds, Leeds, U.K. He is working on a book about the history of evangelical Anglicans in Rwanda, Burundi, and southern Uganda and about the influence of the East African Revival movement, which sprang from their work.


This is the second research report about sorcery published by the Melanesian Institute, a research and teaching arm of the Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran, and United churches. The issue is clear: sorcery is still prevalent in Papua New Guinea and even appears to be resurgent. Sorcery is thus an unsolved problem for the church. Folk beliefs in malicious spirits, evil causes, and malevolent practitioners run deep on all

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continents, but accusations and violent reprisals seem to stand out in Melanesia. The modern church tends to deny the reality of the spirit world and offer instead the explanation of “natural” causes. The church thus fails to minister to people where they hurt—in the face of misfortune, sickness, and death. As Gibbs and Wailoni say: “Death is still the most unevangelised dimension of life in Melanesia” (p. 81).

Franco Zocca provides the introduction and articles about sorcery among the Simbu and the Central Mekeo, and on Goodenough Island. Zocca seems to believe that education will replace these “non-scientific and clearly dangerous beliefs” (p. 9). Philip Gibbs and Josepha Junnie Wailoni reveal that two worldviews may “co-exist conceptually” (p. 57) when people need to explain and influence local and personal events.

Jack Urame describes a case of early mission success in opposing sorcery, followed by a resurgence with borrowed beliefs replacing ones that were lost. Paul Petrus describes the demise of institutionalized sorcery among the Roro but also documents continued fear of sorcery invigorated by the arrival of new practices that anyone can perform.

Finally, William Longgar describes indigenous categories and distinguishes between good and evil purposes for traditional practices. The revival of sorcery is attributed to the uncertainty resulting from increased migration, land loss, and hard economic times.

The mixture of Western and indigenous researchers contributes to the authenticity of the research and presents the reader with a variety of viewpoints.

—Michael A. Rynkiewich

Michael A. Rynkiewich is Professor of Anthropology at Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky. He was a faculty member at the Melanesian Institute, 1997–2002.


Confucius once stated that when a worker wants to produce a great work, he must first sharpen his tools. R. G. Tiedemann’s recent book is one of those “sharpened tools,” and researchers will find it useful in better understanding the history of Christianity in China.

To date, this reference guide joins ranks with only a few reputable resource materials in its field. The only other book of a similar nature is Jin-dai wai-guo zai-hua wen-hua ji-gou zong-lu (A handbook to foreign cultural institutions in modern China, 1992), edited by Beijing

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Soichi Watanabe, whose art was hailed by Christianity Today as “The Good News in Oil and Acrylic,” is a member of the Asian Christian Art Association and a native of Japan. His paintings have been displayed in numerous solo exhibitions, including “Prayer for Peace” at the Ein Karem Gallery, Tokyo, in 2006, and “The Prodigal Son Returns” at Yale University Institute of Sacred Music, in 2009. For the Least of These: The Art of Soichi Watanabe (available May 1) is a colorful 96-page rendition of his evocative creativity.

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University professor Gu Wei-dong. Despite its value, this work is considered incomplete, since it covers only the years from 1840 to 1949.

Tiedemann’s reference guide includes all known Protestant societies and Catholic communities, covering the time from “Matteo Ricci’s arrival in China and the beginning of meaningful archival collections through the end of the missionary era” (p. xi). It is thus one of the most comprehensive tools for Christian missiology in China.

Most sourcebooks can be tedious or pedantic in nature, but not so this one. It is not only user-friendly but also contains a reservoir of new items and insights for even the most learned in the field. For example, Tiedemann has sections addressing two subjects of particular interest to missiological scholars: Chinese missionary societies and religious communities of women. For each missionary society or religious community in the guide, Tiedemann gives specific Chinese terms, pertinent literature and archival information, contact addresses, and more.

Certain obstacles arise in any attempt at comprehensive missiological research on China. For one, Chinese and English institutional names and the names of mission fields change over time and can easily become confusing, a fact that has led to some minor inaccuracies in the guide. Yet Tiedemann’s work shows remarkable completeness, with just a few omissions of what one would call quasi-missionary institutions, such as the China Endeavour House, International Institute of China, and Nurses Association of China. These are only slight flaws, however, in what the Chinese would call a “white jade.”

As a prominent scholar on Christianity in China who has invested three decades of extensive research and three years of intensive preparation on the subject, Tiedemann has prepared a fine work that deserves a prominent place in all major libraries, as well as on the desks of serious researchers.

—Xu Yihua

Xu Yihua, Professor of Religious Studies, Center for American Studies, Fudan University, Shanghai, is the author of Essays on the History of Protestant Theological Education in China (in Chinese, 2006).


Robert Aboagye-Mensah served as the general secretary to the Christian Council of Ghana from 1998 to 2003 and then as the presiding bishop of the Methodist Church Ghana from 2003 to 2009. In his editorial introduction to Christianity, Mission, and Ecumenism in Ghana, J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu gives a brief biography of Aboagye-Mensah, highlighting his commitment to the Christian faith and the breadth of his Christian ministry in service to “the world church as a theological educator, pastor and ecumenist” (p. 1).

The book is a collection of sixteen essays written by prominent Christian Ghanaian leaders, most of them clergy based in Ghana, many of whom have served the world church in an ecumenical manner. The essays cover topics that reflect Aboagye-Mensah’s ministry in mission (the use of Ghanaian languages in music, biblical studies, and Bible translation), ecu-
menism, theological education, comparative religion, governance and democracy, and pastoral care (covering issues such as healing, Pentecostalism and prosperity theology, emerging feminism in Africa, and HIV/AIDS). Although previously published, three essays justify their incorporation within this volume as they provide African perspectives on the biblical narrative, as well as on the theology of evil spirits and witches.

The book is divided into four parts: “Church, Mission, and Contextualization”; “Bible Mission and Ministry”; “Church Education and Society”; and “Church, Mission, and Pastoral Care.” Each part contains four essays, although some essays could easily have fit into other parts. Some evident inaccuracies could have been overcome by more judicious editing. While there is only a selected bibliography, these limitations do not detract unduly from the main purpose of the book. The essays not only honor Robert Aboagye-Mensah but also present an important contribution to the documentation of major issues in African Christianity. It is a very readable collection relevant to the church, as well as theological institutions.

—Allison M. Howell

Building a Better Bridge: Muslims, Christians, and the Common Good.


Perhaps no other subject requires such serious academic attention in our contemporary world as interreligious relations—in particular, relations among the three Abrahamic religious traditions.

Building a Better Bridge is a collection of essays compiled from the fourth in the Building Bridges series of international Christian-Muslim seminars, held in May 2005 in Sarajevo, Bosnia, and Herzegovina. The conference was convened by the archbishop of Canterbury and jointly hosted by an interreligious body consisting of Mustafa Ceric, the Rais al-Ulama of the Muslim community of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Metropolitan Nikolaj of the Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Dabar-Bosnia, and Cardinal Vinko Puljic, the Roman Catholic archbishop of Sarajevo. Arising from a bitter ten-year conflict in which Serbian Orthodox, Croatian Catholics, and Bosnian Muslims were pitted against one another, the seminar brought together Christians and Muslims to discuss how both religious traditions can foster community building and service, and can work toward the common good. In the Bosnian context, the theme of the seminar was a timely one. This monograph makes it clear that people of faith must find common ground, or what some scholars have identified as “the common enemy approach,” in interreligious engagement.

This book represents a concerted effort by Christians and Muslims to understand each other’s positions on ethical, theological, and cultural issues through respectful dialogue. It is also an example of how Christians and Muslims can come together to discuss ways people from both religious traditions can help to alleviate human suffering, promote the common good, and bring community-oriented issues and services to the fore.

The Gift of Responsibility is a critical study of the responsibility of people of the Abrahamic faiths to their traditions, to one another, and to the modern world. In this well-written book, Lewis Mudge lays out the essential steps for developing what he calls “the next ecumenism,” which will open new opportunities for Christian theologians in the twenty-first century. Mudge argues that followers of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam must seek to overcome their long history of mistrust and join hands to fight the deleterious economic and political forces that threaten to destroy our new global village. Such a daunting task requires that good relations develop among religions. Mudge advocates moral hospitality and covenantal humanitarianism as practical steps for creating justice, peace, and wholeness in the world.

These two books clearly complement each other. In a world replete with interreligious violence, anger, and terror, they represent a beacon of hope for developing new strategies for reconciliation and peacemaking.

—Akintunde E. Akinade
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How to Develop Mission and Church Archives.
Ms. Martha Lund Smalley, special collections librarian at Yale Divinity School Library, New Haven, Connecticut, helps missionaries and church leaders identify, organize, and preserve essential records.

September 20–24
The Internet and Mission: Getting Started.
Mr. Wilson Thomas, Wilson Thomas Systems, Bedford, New Hampshire, and Dr. Dwight P. Baker, OMSC associate director, in a hands-on workshop show how to get the most out of the World Wide Web for mission research.

September 27–October 1
Doing Oral History: Helping Christians Tell Their Own Story.
Dr. Jean-Paul Wiest, director of the Jesuit Beijing Center, Beijing, China, and Ms. Michèle Sigg, Dictionary of African Christian Biography project manager, share skills and techniques for documenting mission and church history.

October 11–15
Nurturing and Educating Transcultural Kids.
Ms. Janet Blomberg and Ms. Elizabeth Stephens of Interaction International help you help your children meet the challenges they face as third culture persons.

October 18–22
Culture, Interpersonal Conflict, and Christian Mission.
Dr. Duane Elmer, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, helps Christian workers strengthen interpersonal skills and resolve conflicts among colleagues, including host country people.

November 8–12
Ethics and Mission in an Era of Globalization.
Dr. Peter Kuzmić, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Massachusetts, and Evangelical Theological Seminary, Osijek, Croatia, from firsthand experience lead participants in reflection on ethical challenges facing mission today.

November 15–19
The Church on Six Continents: Many Strands in One Tapestry II.
Dr. Andrew F. Walls, honorary professor, University of Edinburgh, and former director of the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World, presents OMSC’s sixth Distinguished Mission Lectureship series—five lectures with discussions.

November 29–December 3
Leadership, Fund-raising, and Donor Development for Missions.
Mr. Rob Martin, First Fruit Institute, Newport Beach, California, outlines steps for building the support base, including foundation funding, for mission.

December 6–10
Russian Church-State Relations: Challenges and Opportunities for Mission.
Dr. John W. McNeill, Providence College, Otterburne, Manitoba, and a senior mission scholar in residence at OMSC, examines points of tension and cooperation between church and state over the sweep of Russian history.

January 3–7, 2011
Missionaries in the Movies.
Dr. Dwight P. Baker, OMSC’s associate director, draws upon both video clips and full-length feature films to lead seminar participants in an examination of the way missionaries have been represented on film over the past century.

January 10–14
Kingdom Without Borders: Christianity as a World Religion.
Dr. Miriam Adeney, Seattle Pacific University, helps participants to gain both a larger understanding of what God is doing today and a more intimate picture of God’s people around the world.

January 17–21
Culture, Values, and Worldview: Anthropology for Mission Practice.
Dr. Darrell L. Whiteman, The Mission Society, shows how one’s worldview and theology of culture affect cross-cultural mission.

January 24–28
The City in Mission.
Dr. Dale Irvin, New York Theological Seminary, considers the city in the mission of God.

Full information—including content descriptions, seminar cosponsors, costs, directions, photographs, and a registration form—may be found online.

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Freeman, Charles.
*A New History of Early Christianity.*

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*From Orality to Orality: A New Paradigm for Contextual Translation of the Bible.*

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