Missions and the Liberation of Theology

There is no indication that those credited with penning the Jewish and then the Christian Holy Writ—political leaders, priests, chroniclers, poets, prophets, sages, amateur historians, and apostles—imagined that they were contributing to a body of writing that would one day be incorporated into a single volume universally known as The Bible. Nor could they have known that religious and political leaders of a later era—of whom Constantine may serve as a convenient representative—would engage in a prolonged, factious, and at times ethically unseemly effort to determine which writings should be allowed between the covers of this sacred book, and which ones should be excluded. As unsavory to modern sensibilities as was the process itself—to say nothing of the carnal motives and methods of its principals—the result was the book that we Christians now honor in word, if less frequently in deed: The Holy Bible.

Typical of Christian reverence for their sacred scriptures is the declaration found in the Catechism of the Episcopal Church: “Q. Why do we call the Holy Scriptures the Word of God? A. We call them the Word of God because God inspired their human authors and because God still speaks to us through the Bible” (Book of Common Prayer [1979], p. 853). While there is no consensus across the Christian world on what is meant by “inspired,” a majority of believers would probably assent to the Christian Reformed Church’s affirmation that “the Bible is the authoritative Word of God. It contains all that people in any age need to know for their salvation. We call the Bible God’s Word, believing that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, God speaks to us through this book” (www.crcna.org/pages/beliefs.cfm).

If Constantine can be credited for his substantial role in giving
Continued next page
us our Bible, equally notable is his role in providing a remarkably broad setting for the use of this Bible. From the ecclesiastical scraps of exasperatingly fragmented Christian sects, he in effect forged a single church body that could function in the vast expanse of territory bordered by Britain and Spain in the west, Armenia and Mesopotamia in the east, Hungary and Romania in the north, and northern Africa and Egypt in the south. Depending upon one’s perspective, this was contextualization at either its best or its worst—perhaps both. As Paul Stephenson observes, “It is because of Constantine’s actions that we have begun to speak of the Church, still rather incongruously” (Constantine: Unconquered Roman Emperor, Christian Victor [2010], p. 277). The resulting “unified” church became the willing instrument of a violent slave state.

The gestations of both the Holy Scriptures and the imperially sanctioned Christian church were arduous and pitifully human processes. Ever since then, the challenge of deducing from the Bible’s disparate parts a cohesive, sensible, and replicable guide to thought and practice has been the task of utterly human enterprise is the world’s most extensive and longest sustained comments in his article in this issue, “The Christian missionary mission can theology be liberated from its otherwise inevitable cultural bondage. 

Even though the Bible in its original languages and cultural settings is difficult enough to comprehend and correctly apply, conveying its message across the spectra of time, cultures, and languages is as necessary as it is daunting. Just as God through Christ could be seen, known, and understood by Jesus’ contemporaries, whether or not they believed in him, so the Good News through the translated words of the Bible and the observed lives of missionaries takes on flesh and dwells among peoples in real time, space, and language.

But missionaries, such as the two featured in our Legacies, are not merely passive channels of inherited theologies. Since the days of St. Paul they have lived, sometimes uncomfortably, on the theological frontiers, searching the Scriptures for insight into questions and issues unanticipated by either themselves or their inherited theologies. Stuart Foster, who has been a part of the Mozambique Bible Society’s Lomwe whole-Bible translation project for twenty-four years, argues that Old Testament covenant missiology, in its “bold use of pagan customs to communicate about God,” is integral to the long, complex process of conversion. Fraught with risk, yes; but the risk is necessary and, in any case, as unavoidable for missionaries as it was for Jesus himself—if outcomes that Daniel Shaw here calls “beyond contextualization” are to be realized.

Over the centuries individuals and communities have turned to the Bible for both ultimate meaning and everyday direction. This process is both easier and more difficult than can be imagined. Theology—the hard work of making contextually relevant sense of what the Bible teaches about God’s interest in how we human beings live out our lives in his world, and why this matters—is central to the missionary task. But only through mission can theology be liberated from its otherwise inevitable cultural bondage.

—Jonathan J. Bonk

Mission is ministry in the dimension of difference. This definition of mission assists reflection in a number of ways. It makes explicit the distinctive character of mission that is implicit but unacknowledged in many discussions of mission that focus on particular theological or practical emphases. By articulating an empirical category—difference—rather than theological content, the definition provides a relatively neutral criterion of analysis and comparison in the practice of churches and in mission thought. Yet the criterion of difference has substantial biblical warrant and theological import. Furthermore, the definition provides a measure for assessing and comparing mission emphases across a range of religions.

The proposed definition distinguishes mission as a particular kind of ministry and thereby clarifies a common confusion of these two concepts. It is a simple formulation, rather than complex and esoteric. Members of Christian churches readily understand it, for it focuses a commonplace impression about mission, namely, that it concerns engagement with the other. It provides a marker for types of ministry in local and global settings alike, for it applies equally to work around the corner and to work across the world. It applies equally to churches based on all continents in distinguishing their mission work, whether in Caracas or Cameroun, Cambodia or California. In highlighting difference as the marker, it connects missiology with postmodern discourse in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Difference Implicit in Mission Thought

The term “difference” in this essay has ordinary meanings: a state of unlikeness, a point of dissimilarity, or a distinguishing characteristic. This commonsense understanding has empirical referents, yet difference is itself relative in two senses: it subsists in the relation between phenomena, and it depends on observers’ perception and assessment of distinctions in that relation. This relativity alerts us to the inherent subjectivity of judgments about difference, for ability to perceive distinctions, especially social differences in the world addressed by mission, is shaped, limited, and extended profoundly by personal experience and social formation. Moreover, understandings of identity may depend on prior perceptions of difference: we may not know ourselves until we know the other as well. This epistemological dynamic resonates with the postmodern philosophical intuition that difference may also be ontologically prior to identity.

Historically, it is ironic at this juncture to suggest difference as a clarifying criterion of Christian mission, for much mission thought and practice in the Global North from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries was premised on the view that mission, itself a new concept as applied to the church’s work rather than simply to the life of the Trinity, had everything and only to do with those in cultural groups different from one’s own. From the North Atlantic standpoint, “mission” designated ministry with people groups in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania, where the principal tasks were thought to be Gospel proclamation, church planting, infrastructure development, and, most ambitiously, the formation of religious cultures envisioned by the churches’ emissaries to be Christian rather than pagan or heathen. The emissaries were designated as missionaries, a term understood to apply to persons who ventured beyond their home societies to initiate, continue, or extend the church’s work in societies other than their own. Missionaries were people who engaged difference in the name of Christ.

Many mission societies were premised on the understanding that mission concerned Christian work in other places in the world. “Domestic” and “home” appeared in the names of some mission societies and boards for work within a church’s national borders, but this still referred to outreach among groups beyond a church’s historic constituency, such as, in the case of the United States, frontier settlers, African slaves, and Native Americans. Whether at home or abroad, mission addressed the not-us, the different, the other. The common plural term “missions” designated both such missionary-sending groups and the multiple institutions they established on frontiers at home or in other parts of the world. Thus the dimension of difference was constitutive in the understanding of what mission was.

After the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, a high-water mark in missionary confidence, a number of factors broadened missional understanding in the twentieth century, the century of self-criticism in the mission of Global North churches. The barbarity of World War I and the genocide perpetrated by the Nazis during World War II prompted European and U.S. Christians to realize that their own cultures were sources of evil as well as good and that there might be good to be discovered in other cultures that had different roots. Long-standing distinctions between the civilized and the uncivilized were undermined as gifts were both received and conferred across frontiers of societal difference. Links between Christian mission and the colonial expansion of Europe and the United States undercut the positive connotation of mission’s reaching over boundaries of cultural, ethnic, and geographic difference. Increased world exposure accelerated a theological trend toward considering that differing religions were valid disclosures of the divine, which undermined positive assessments of Christian mission’s concern with conversion. Transformation of “the missions” in the Two-Thirds World into indigenous churches—self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-theologizing—brought those Christian communities into peer relationships with Global North churches. Here liturgical, musical, theological, and even ethical differences were phenomena to be explored and celebrated, rather than obstacles to be overcome and suppressed.

The new environment for mission thought prompted significant shifts in the understanding of difference. Missiology’s grounding became theocentric rather than ecclesiocentric. The churches’ mixed record helped to push mission reflection back
The vast missiological literature on inculturation is premised on encounters with difference.

Gustavo Gutiérrez’s theology of liberation and its elaboration by many in Latin America, Asia, and Africa; reconciliation and its implications for ethnic and political conflict; and the Millennium Development Goals as a practical urgency in the twenty-first century. All these emphases have been articulated as grounded in the nature and action of God and therefore framing the church’s work in the world. The church’s mission—what it is sent by God to be and do in the world—is seen as comprehended by such emphases and therefore encompassing the church’s work both at home and abroad, both within itself and beyond itself.

The phenomena of human difference tend to be back-grounded in such comprehensive characterizations of mission. For Euro-American mission activists, this has served to assuage widespread unease and guilt about the ignorance, insensitivity, and arrogance with which the Euro-American mission movement sometimes responded to the cultural and religious differences it encountered in other parts of the world. For mission activists in the Two-Thirds World, comprehensive themes mark a theological coming of age that transcends wounds that could otherwise be fixating. Asubtext implicit in comprehensive reinterpretations of mission has been: “We need to get beyond us-them thinking. And we certainly need to get beyond mission as concerned with the exotic. God’s mission is to all of us, to all human groups equally, and to the planet. All of us need God’s mission.” Some particular comprehensive emphasis—such as development, evangelization, interfaith dialogue, or liberation—is often seen as the mission priority for all human groups equally, and particular human differences are considered a minor theme in such a mandate. Moreover, human difference is relativized in a polycentric world, for in itself every human group is equally different from every other. Tying mission to the experience of human difference can seem a vestige of the rightly discredited worldview in which Euro-American peoples saw themselves as the standard human beings and others as the different ones who needed to see how they should conform to the standard.

The advance of secularism in the West has prompted a simi-lar leveling of historic assignments of difference in the area of evangelization, especially as Christian profession receded radically in Europe. The missionally important difference between Christian and non-Christian remains, but historic associations have been scrambled when Christian commitment in many African countries far exceeds that of many European countries, signaling that the geography of mission as understood historically in the Euro-American tradition has been relativized. “We in the West shouldn’t be evangelizing the rest of the world,” goes an emerging European and North American refrain, “Instead, we need them to send missionaries to us!” Indeed, not only are traditionally missionary-receiving parts of the world recognized as potentially missionary-sending, but some have actually become so, with Korea, India, and Nigeria leading the way. Shifts toward mutuality in mission have evoked nuanced approaches to human difference, as the progression of Anglican mission slogans illustrates: “mutual responsibility and interdependence in the body of Christ” (1963), “partnership in mission” (1971), and “companionship in mission” (1999), this last similar to the accompaniment promoted by Lutherans and Roman Catholics.

In all these conceptualizations of mission, however, the fact of human difference—religious, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, social, and so on—is an irreducible premise, even if particular formulations do not highlight it. Missio Dei theology, for instance, is premised on the self-projection of God into the temporal and material, a dimension of difference, that culminates in the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. Witness is premised on Gospel testimony in word and deed to a world that is different in needing such proclamation. Mission as Christian presence proposes a way of encountering and living with difference that may diverge from other modes of mission, but it is no less premised on the fact of difference. Evangelization assumes differences in religious profession. Liberation addresses differences in the distribution of power, and reconciliation responds to differences that have provoked alienation and enmity. Current emphases on mutuality in partnership and companionship propose that difference be explored and embraced in community rather than accentuated by competition and effaced by domination.

Differene is a premise in the thought of recent and current mission theologians, among whom a few instances must suffice. Stephen Neill’s history of Christian expansion is framed as the story of how a local faith became a universal religion through crossing cultural and national boundaries of difference. David Bosch’s distillation that mission is the participation of Christians in the liberating mission of Jesus is based on biblical analysis of Jesus’ mission as one of crossing boundaries, a model premised on difference. Anthony Gittins’ postulation of the missionary as a stranger is based on difference as the missionary’s fundamental environment. The kingdom-centered missiology of the Missional Church Project for North America is centered on evangelism and church nurture in a cultural context understood as essentially different from the reign of God. Andrew Kirk defines mission more loosely in terms of God’s purposes in the world, a view premised on the difference between church and world. Carlos Cardoza-Orlandi defines mission generally as “the participation of the people of God in God’s action in the world” but clarifies that God’s missionary activity is beyond the church’s institutional limits, outward to areas different from its own. In its focus on the “frontiers” of secularization, pluralization, and globalization, David Smith’s Mission After Christendom is premised on phenomena of difference. Francis Oborji understands mission straightforwardly as evangelization and church-planting where the Gospel has not been heard or accepted and thus assumes a quite traditional understanding of difference.

The now vast missiological literature on inculturation, which includes historical, theological, and anthropological approaches,
is premised on encounters with difference: peoples’ interactions with Gospel proclamation and the many differences encountered between missionaries and receiving peoples. Numerous models for those encounters have been proposed, such as adaptation, indigenization, and contextualization; local theology, as developed by Robert Schreiter; translatability, as developed by Andrew Walls, Kwame Bediako, and Lamin Sanneh; and appropriation and transformation, as developed by the present author. All these assume an encounter with difference. Appropriately, formation programs for missionaries preparing to serve cross-culturally tend to focus chiefly on how missionaries should perceive, understand, adjust, and respond to linguistic, economic, political, racial, and cultural differences in their places of service.

In sum, difference is an explicit condition in many mission concepts, theologies, and programs, and in others it is an implicit and integral premise. Difference is foundational.

Grounding in Comprehensive Definitions

The concept of mission as ministry in the dimension of difference is grounded in more comprehensive definitions of religious mission and Christian mission. The concept of religious mission is important for comparative interreligious missiology, and it may be defined as the spiritual vision and the practical means through which communities project their religious faith and work, and through which they invite the participation and adherence of others. Sociological rather than theological, this formulation describes human social behavior directed toward presenting religious faith to communities wider than the originating religious community and thereby to the other and the different. An environment and criterion of difference is implicit in the verb “project” and explicit in the concluding phrase “of others,” that is, those not part of the missional community. This definition may apply equally to the Hindu Ramakrishna Mission, the Woking Muslim Mission in England, the Guru Ram Das Sikh Mission of America, the Brampton Buddhist Mission Centre in Ontario, and any particular Christian outreach.

Building on the pan-religious definition, Christian mission may be defined as the activity of sending and being sent, by God and by communities, across significant boundaries of human social experience to bear witness in word and deed to God’s action in Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. The claim embedded in the phrase “across significant boundaries of human social experience” is that mission involves crossing boundaries that are significant by virtue of being sociologically identifiable. The boundaries are religious, cultural, linguistic, racial, ethnic, sexual, economic, political, national, educational, professional, and geographic—any one of these, any combination of these, and others as well, so long as they are major and socially identifiable. The inherent relativity and subjectivity of assessments of difference and identity mean that they are always fluid and that they should not be reified in rigid and static categories. Yet their provisional and powerful validity at any particular point of time is verified by the fact that the great oppressions within the human community are grounded precisely in such differences, readily evident in racial discrimination, gender violence, sexual slavery, tribal warfare, ethnic cleansing, interreligious conflict, and, as ever, war between nations. The definition asserts that Christians and our communities are engaged distinctively in mission when we are reaching out beyond who and where we are to encounter and form community with people and communities who are different from ourselves. Ministry to and with the other who is different—that is the hallmark of Christian mission.

Implications of the Difference Definition

In light of the comprehensive definition of Christian mission, the short definition—mission is ministry in the dimension of difference—achieves its full effect, for it asserts a single distinctive rather than multiple criteria, and it does so in simple nontheological language that sharpens the point. It is a functional definition that specifies mission’s nature as a type of religious activity. It invites theological definitions of mission to be articulated, suggesting simply that they be consistent with the criterion of difference.

The phrase “dimension of difference” invites reflection on difference as a category of human experience. It prompts the hearer to reflect not only on specific differences but also on difference as an existential and social experience and on questions of perspective and identity that it raises. How do I experience and define my social location and the group or groups of which I understand myself to be a member? What assumptions about identity operate in our experience? What particular privileges and disabilities do we experience in our group, relative to other groups? How do our concepts of difference relate to our concepts of commonality with other human groups? What anxieties and fears do my social group and I experience as we engage the prospect of encounters with people who are different from us in major ways? What joys and discoveries do we anticipate as we engage such difference? The concept of the dimension of difference invites historical, sociological, and philosophical reflection on difference within one’s society and on the world stage.

The definition affirms the common impression that mission concerns initiatives and activities of religious communities beyond their own boundaries, defined by membership and particular characteristics the membership may have. For example, one Christian asking another about his or her congregation may be told how fulfilling the worship is, that the Sunday school has good teachers but a mediocre curriculum, and that adult formation forums are excellent but poorly attended. If the inquirer then asks, “And does the church have a mission program?” or “Is your church mission-minded?” the listener is likely to understand immediately what is being asked: Does your congregation reach out beyond itself to others? Is the church involved in the life of the wider community in the town or city? Does the parish have connections in other countries and cultures? The term “mission,” in sum, is widely understood by church members to refer to the church’s engagement with the other who is different from whatever characterizes the social group of the church itself. Thus “outreach” is the most commonly used synonym for mission, and “reaching out” is the verbal phrase most commonly used to signify mission activity.

There is also a common negative association of mission with difference that the proposed definition engages straightforwardly. The most prevalent critiques of Christian mission concern ways that missionaries responded to the religious and cultural differences they encountered in other societies. It is commonly thought that missionaries condemned wholesale the different religions...
they encountered in the Two-Thirds World and in North America, and that they insisted that the peoples they found become Christian and adopt the missionaries’ own particular Christian brands. It is likewise commonly thought that missionaries condemned wholesale the different cultures they encountered and insisted that the peoples they found adopt the missionaries’ languages and ethics, styles of dressing, eating, housekeeping, and the like. The charges are often inaccurately universalized to include all missionaries in all times and places, but their substantial truth in many instances has prompted the missionary movement to critique itself thoroughly along these lines, especially since 1900. The point here is that differences among human groups and how to approach them are the issues at stake. Rather than shifting mission’s definition to another criterion in order to evade critique, the proposed definition accepts the encounter with difference as the pivotal criterion of mission, with an agenda to discuss how the different is encountered and what the response to it should be.

Several current uses of the term “mission” cause confusion about the common linkage of mission with difference. Mission-of-God theology has associated mission with the full breadth of God’s action in the world, which is useful in summing up God’s intent in interacting with humanity. More problematically, the full breadth of action to which God calls the church and the human community is said to derive from the mission of God. God’s action is summarized under one theme—reconciliation, for instance—and then everything to which God calls the church is subsumed under that theme, all worship, education, nurture, and proclamation. But is there truly no missional difference between a man’s prayer breakfast and prayers the evangelism team offers in door-to-door visitation? Between Sunday worship in the sanctuary and a liturgy offered at the local psychiatric hospital? Between the youth group’s weekly meetings and its summer trip to paint houses of the elderly in Appalachia? Between Sunday school in the church and a parishioner spending three years teaching former combatants in a postwar setting in Africa?

It is the criterion of difference that marks the cutting edge of

**Noteworthy**

**Announcing**

The American Society of Missiology–Eastern Fellowship (ASM–EF) will hold its annual meeting November 4–7, 2010, in conjunction with 2010boston, an international mission conference sponsored by the Boston Theological Institute, with the theme “The Changing Contours of World Mission and Christianity” (details online at www.2010boston.org). Daniel Jeyaraj, professor of world Christianity and director of the Andrew F. Walls Centre for the Study of African and Asian Christianity, Liverpool Hope University, will address the topic “Theological Education and Missions” at the ASM–EF luncheon, November 5, at Boston University’s Marsh Chapel. Participants attending 2010boston will interact with mission leaders, including keynote speakers Brian Stanley, professor of world Christianity and director of the Centre for the Study of World Christianity, University of Edinburgh; Dana L. Robert, professor of world Christianity and history of mission and codirector of the Center for Global Christianity and Mission, Boston University School of Theology; and Jeyaraj; these three speakers are IBMR contributing editors.

The Evangelical Theological Society (ETS, www.etsjets.org) annual conference, November 17–19, 2010, in Atlanta, Georgia, will include a world Christianity consultation. Presenters will be Timothy Tennent, Asbury Theological Seminary, on India; Raymond Tallman, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, on the Arab–Muslim world; Edward Smither, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, on Brazil; and Robert Yarbrough, Covenant Theological Seminary, on Africa. Allen Yeh, assistant professor of history and theology, Biola University, chairs the consultation’s steering committee.

The Centre for Mission Studies at Union Biblical Seminary, Pune, India, will hold a mission consultation January 12–14, 2011. Under the theme “Witnessing to Christ in Diverse Contexts,” the conference will examine the varying understandings evident in historic and modern uses of the concept of witness and related terms such as “evangelism” and “mission.” Contact conference organizer Frampton Fox at frfox@eroam.net for details.

The fifth International Munich-Freising Conference on the History of Christianity in the Non-Western World, to be held February 18–20, 2011, will consider the theme “Phases of Globalization in the History of Christianity.” Presenters will evaluate the transcontinental networks of the East Syrian–Nestorian Church of the East (thirteenth and fourteenth centuries), the Jesuits (seventeenth century), the German Pietists (eighteenth century), and the Protestant missionary movement and the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, with special attention to “the beginnings of networking between indigenous Christian elites in Asia and Africa,” according to a conference announcement. Papers will be read in German and English. For further information, go to www.kg1.evtheol.uni-muenchen.de/veranstaltungen/symposien.

The 2011 annual meeting of the American Society of Missiology will be held June 17–19 at Techny Towers, Techny, Illinois, with the theme “Mission Spirituality in Global Perspective,” announced ASM president Robert Gallagher, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois. Society members are invited to propose papers for presentation during multitrack parallel sessions. Topics of volunteered papers are not restricted to the overall conference theme. Proposals for papers are due before February 1 to the ASM first vice-president Roger Schroeder, S.V.D., rschroeder@ctu.edu. For details, visit www.asmweb.org/news.htm. The Association of Professors of Mission (www.asmweb.org/apm) will hold its annual meeting in conjunction with ASM at the same location.

The International Fellowship of Mission as Transformation (INFEMIT) held a Consultation on the topic “Mission as Transformation,” March 5–8, 2010, at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (OCMS). Twenty-eight delegates from Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe, and the United States reflected on INFEMIT’s thirty-five-year history and addressed current challenges facing holistic mission. Those present focused especially on links with regional bodies, including the Latin American Theological Fellowship, Partnership in Mission–Asia, the European Fellowship of Mission Theologians, and the African Theological Fellowship. A networking team chaired by Ruth Padilla DeBorst, general secretary of the Latin American Theological Fellowship, San José, Costa Rica, was formed with representatives from Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe, the
mission and sustains the challenge always implicit in mission. Christians are well aware that their community life is fulfilling for members as networks of relationship develop among those who pray, worship, eat, and study together in a congregation. Christians are equally aware that their community life is intended to strengthen them to reach beyond their community in mission to others. A self-critique in many congregations is that their prayer, worship, education, and fellowship are flourishing but that, because the community is not reaching beyond itself to encounter others, it is becoming complacent and self-absorbed. Here the congregation is identifying a failure to cross the boundaries of difference that are peculiar to mission and intuiting that vitality arises from ministering “outside their comfort zone.” A less common self-critique is that a congregation is so engaged in outreach, in difference-engaging mission, that it is neglecting its mutually supportive community life, with the result that members are fatigued and jaded. In fact, community and mission are symbiotic: community without mission dies out, and mission without community burns out. The distinction between community and mission is clear, and it is grounded in the criterion of difference.

A related dynamic is the aspiration that many North American church institutions express that they become more diverse, a term used to connote racial diversity especially, but also cultural, national, linguistic, and economic diversity. This aspiration expresses an intuition that fulfilling the mission of the congregation, denomination, school, or seminary involves engaging difference and drawing in people different from the existing majority group. If the congregation or school is monochrome—whether white, black, Asian, or Hispanic—there is a nagging sense of a neglected mission frontier. Conviction that the whole people of God should include all available local ethnicities prompts conversation about outreach to the groups not represented. Conversely, a congregation that includes an ethnic, international, and linguistic rainbow often exults in the fulfillment of its mission because it has succeeded in crossing boundaries of difference and drawing in a diverse range of people. Again, people realize intuitively that

Caribbean, the Middle East, and the South Pacific, as well as from OCMS. Al Tizon, associate professor of evangelism and holistic ministry, Palmer Theological Seminary, Wynnewood, Pennsylvania, represents the United States as dialogue partner.

Redcliffe College Centre for Mission Training, Gloucester, U.K., announced two new master of arts degree programs: an M.A. in Bible and Mission, and an M.A. in European Mission and Intercultural Christianity. Both programs are validated by the University of Gloucestershire and were slated to commence in September 2010. Redcliffe also offers M.A. degree programs in Global Issues in Contemporary Mission, Asian Studies in Intercultural Contexts, and Global Leadership in Intercultural Contexts. For more information, go online to www.redcliffe.org/mabibleandmission and www.redcliffe.org/maeurope.

Personalia
Appointed. Stephen J. Fichter, S.J., interim executive director of the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA, cara.georgetown.edu), Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. After twelve years with CARA, including seven as executive director, Mary E. Bendyna, R.S.M., stepped down in June 2010. During her time at CARA Bendyna was the principal investigator for dozens of studies on ministry, education, faith formation, priesthood, and religious life, including major studies for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the National Catholic Educational Association, and the Religious Brothers Conference. She is coauthor of Best Practices in Catholic Pastoral and Finance Councils (2010). A sociologist and CARA’s research associate, Fichter will serve in the interim post while a search for an executive director is conducted.

Died. John A. Bollier, 82, divinity librarian and association director, June 27, 2010. Bollier’s career, which combined ministry with scholarship, began at California State University, Northridge, where he was a reference librarian and bibliographer. In 1973 he was employed by Yale Divinity Library, New Haven, Connecticut, where he was assistant divinity librarian and also served two terms as acting divinity librarian and a year as acting head of the bibliography department of Yale’s Sterling Library. Bollier’s bibliographic instruction at Yale produced a book, The Literature of Theology: A Guide for Students and Pastors (1979). As a board member of the American Theological Library Association, he played a key role in the reorganization discussions that led to a merger in 1992 of all ATLA-related boards into a single board of directors. After retirement from Yale in 1991, Bollier became director of development for ATLA. Also active as a pastor, he served congregations of the United Church of Christ during much of his career.

Died. Frank L. Cooley, 89, Presbyterian missionary scholar, author, March 3, 2010, in Clayton, Georgia. As an ordained Methodist minister, Cooley served the YMCA in China (1946–51) and was a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) mission co-worker in Indonesia for thirty-three years (1952–85). Fluent in Mandarin and Indonesian, he was considered to be the foremost Protestant historian of Christianity in Indonesia. His 1962 Ph.D. dissertation at Yale University, “Altar and Throne in Central Moluccan Societies,” was translated and published in Indonesia, where it is still used as a primary textbook. His other books in English included Indonesina Church and Society (1968) and The Growing Seed: The Christian Church in Indonesia (1982). The October 1977 issue of this journal (then known as the Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research), devoted to the theme “Focus on Indonesia,” featured exclusively Cooley’s thirty-two-page article, with statistical charts, maps, and artwork.

Died. Moishe Rosen, 78, Jewish-born Baptist minister, missiologist, author, and founder of Jews for Jesus, May 19, 2010, in San Francisco, of prostate cancer. After graduating from Bible college and deciding to be a missionary to the Jews, Rosen was ordained as a Conservative Baptist minister in 1957 and founded what became known as Jews for Jesus (www.jewsforjesus.org) in 1969. In 1973 he left the employment of the American Board of Missions to the Jews (now called Chosen People Ministries) to incorporate the separate mission. He stepped down as executive director in 1996 and continued as a staff missionary and board member until his death. He is coauthor with his wife of Christ in the Passover: Why Is This Night Different? (1977, 2006). Among the books recounting the Jews for Jesus story is Not Ashamed: The Story of Jews for Jesus (1999), by Ruth Tucker, an IBMR contributing editor.
difference is the cutting edge of mission and that it is integral to the community’s health and fullness.

The distinction between community and mission relates to the distinction between ministry and mission. One result of refracting God’s comprehensive mission into the existing spectrum of the church’s activities is that the phrase “the church’s mission and ministry” appears often in church leaders’ sermons and publications, with no differentiating explanation of the two terms. Everything is comprehended in mission, but ministry still seems relevant, so the two are thrown together as a convenient catch-all, lest anything be left out. Often latent in such usage is the notion that mission is the full range of God’s vision, whereas ministry is the operationalization of God’s mission through the church’s work: worship, education, proclamation, justice, and so on. What God is up to is mission, and what we do in participating in God’s mission is ministry. This terminology, however, short-changes ministry, for it disregards deep traditions of biblical, historical, and theological reflection on ministry, as well as the churches’ contemporary discourse about ministry. It also tends not to be implemented in practice. Churches continue to highlight as mission outreach such initiatives as baskets for the needy at Christmas or a collection for famine victims, and they continue to designate as missionaries their members who minister in other cultures.

It is more useful to encompass within ministry the full range of service to which God calls the church. Ministry thus includes both the work that builds up the community within itself and the work that extends the community’s initiative beyond itself. It is this latter kind of ministry, ministry in the dimension of difference, that is the community’s mission work. Likewise, particular kinds of ministry are found in both the work of the community within itself and in the difference-engaging work that is mission, whether these be prayer, worship, proclamation, education, health care, elder care, or administration. A church is on mission when it is ministering in any of these ways beyond itself, with people and communities that are different from its own. Visiting parishioners in homes and hospitals is inreach, whereas visiting inmates of the local prison is outreach. A church member’s work as a physician at the local hospital is her ministry, but when she joins a parish group in offering a two-week clinic in Haiti, she is on a mission. And a few ministries—evangelization, church-planting, and justice work—are intrinsically and always missional in their import and impact.

Yet another confusing contemporary use of the term “mission” is found in the mission-statement exercise that corporations, service organizations, and government agencies undertake and that has now become common in congregations and church judicatories as they seek to focus on what God is calling them to be and do in their contexts. Microsoft Corporation, for instance, says its mission is to “create seamless experiences that combine the magic of software with the power of Internet across a world of devices.” The perhaps over-caffeinated mission statement of Starbucks Coffee is “to inspire and nurture the human spirit—one person, one cup, and one neighborhood at a time.” The word “mission” as used about such statements is synonymous with the word “purpose,” and the formulations could just as well be termed “purpose statements.”

This blurring of purpose and mission characterizes some churches’ adoption of the mission-statement exercise. For instance, St. Mary’s Episcopal Church in Laguna Beach, California, articulates its mission statement as follows: “to be open to God’s love and guidance, to embrace all in the name of Jesus Christ, to be free to use God’s gifts for the daily expression of our faith, to work in the power of the Holy Spirit.” With such fusing of the concepts of purpose, mission, and sometimes vision as well, it is natural for the term “mission” to become vague and diffuse as well as comprehensive.

Some church mission statements, by contrast, are clear in distinguishing purpose, ministry, and mission. Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California, says: “Its purpose is to lead people to Jesus and membership in his family, teach them to worship the Lord and magnify his name, develop them to Christ-like maturity, and equip them for ministry in the church and a mission in the world.”

Here one of the largest congregations in the United States states not its mission but its purpose, not surprising for a church led by Rick Warren, author of two popular “purpose-driven” books. Within its purpose statement, once the missional activity of making disciples is articulated, the congregation’s community life is elaborated as the environment that prepares them for ministry, which is termed as set “in the church,” and for mission, which is set “in the world.” Such conceptualization accords well with defining mission as ministry in the dimension of difference. The definition, in turn, grounds the particular use of “mission” in this purpose statement, for “in the world” is an environment different from the church community itself.

In contrast to comprehensive uses of the term “mission” in mission statements, its practical uses in secular discourse are premised clearly on encounters with difference. “Space mission” came into common usage because astronauts were being sent to explore the radically different environment of outer space. A “diplomatic mission” involves sending a nation’s representative to negotiate with a different nation, or it denotes the permanent quarters used by such representatives in a foreign country. “Trade missions” involve sending representatives to other countries to discuss international trade. A “military mission” involves sending armed forces into combat against those of a different nation or nonstate entity. In all these uses, encounter with difference is what prompts use of the term “mission,” a premise consistent with the understanding of religious and Christian mission suggested here.

The definition affirms the now-commonplace relativizing of the geography of Christian mission. A frequent critique of preoccupation with “overseas mission” or “foreign mission” is the observation, “Well, mission is not only over there but here in our backyard too.” This is true, so long as the criterion of difference is fulfilled. A congregation may be very missional while never venturing beyond the county line, because it is reaching out to, say, the unevangelized and unchurched, or an immigrant group, or victims of an apartment building fire, or a particular addiction group. In practice, however, missional congregations tend to reach out both locally and globally, because they find that mission in one context stimulates mission elsewhere, and multiple and diverse mission experiences inform and enhance each other. The difference criterion applies to both the local and the global, and it privileges neither.
Similarly, the difference definition applies to the work of churches based in all contexts, among all cultures and ethnic groups, in all parts of the world. It is the criterion of reaching across boundaries into difference that marks the specifically missional work of churches. Thus the definition does not smuggle in assumptions from any particular part of the world, nor from any particular geographic directionality—except outward. The ecumenical Friends Missionary Prayer Band, for instance, calls its work mission because it sends missionaries, currently more than 1,000, from its base in Tamil Nadu in South India to evangelize and plant churches in North India, where its personnel must learn languages very different from their own and make cultural adjustments similar to those encountered across national borders in western Europe. The Church Mission Society of Nigeria sends missionaries to evangelize in northern Nigeria and in countries such as Mauritania, contexts that are different in both religion and culture. Korean church groups now have almost 13,000 missionaries on all continents, the vanguard of the growing Majority and culture. Sending persons into the pagan world is not in view, but the witness of the faithful servant is conceptualized as lifted up so that it radiates out to the nations, those who are other and different.

Jonah was sent into an environment of difference, Nineveh, a major Assyrian city where Jonah expected that Yahweh’s call to repentance would be greeted with the contempt worthy of a local deity with no sway beyond local borders and certainly not in the Assyrian temple cults. The fear that encounter with difference evokes in the prospective emissary is spelled out in one of Scripture’s more vivid narratives, the marvel of which is that a people so different are said to have repented immediately (Jonah, esp. chap. 3).

Jesus’ proclamation of God’s reign was shared with all equally, but a disproportionate number of the stories of specific encounters with individuals are devoted to those he had to cross a boundary to reach: the Gerasene demoniac, the Roman centurion’s servant, the anointing sinful woman, the Samaritan woman, the woman caught in adultery, Zaccheus the tax collector, numerous lepers, and others. The Synoptic Gospels record that this boundary-crossing ministry was so intrinsic to Jesus’ ministry that he developed a reputation for consorting with tax collectors and prostitutes, people whose Jewishness was compromised by the moral failings of enemy collaboration and sexual promiscuity. From Jesus’ standpoint, his difference-engaging ministry was extending and redefining God’s covenant community, but the religious authorities believed his boundary violations compromised community purity and faithfulness to God. In defending his outreach in parables—the good Samaritan, the Pharisee and the tax collector, the lost sheep—Jesus portrayed God as reaching people over differences, so that salvation was accessible in faithfulness to that outreach, not in inherited identities and purity codes.

Biblical Warrant in Sending

Sending and being sent are constitutive of Christian mission, and encounters with difference prove to be foundational in signal biblical instances of sending and being sent.

The call of Abram articulates God’s promise to and blessing on Abram in the context of a sending in which leaving the familiar and going to the new and different are intrinsic: “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.” The world of difference becomes explicit in the promise’s conclusion, where God assures Abram that he will make a difference in a world defined by difference: “And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:1–3).

Israel is defined throughout the Old Testament as God’s chosen and holy people, in contrast to the surrounding peoples, whose different religious loyalties and moral practices are to be avoided (e.g., Deut. 7). Missional outreach to the peoples is minimal, but the Old Testament testifies often to a confidence that ultimately “the nations” will acknowledge the sovereignty of the God of Israel. The contrast between ministry among one’s own and ministry among the peoples is sharp in the Second Servant Song of Isaiah: “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth” (Isa. 49:6). Sending persons into the pagan world is not in view, but the witness of the faithful servant is conceptualized as lifted up so that it radiates out to the nations, those who are other and different.

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In his account of the Canaanite woman’s faith in the district of Tyre and Sidon, Matthew records Jesus confining his sentience to Israel—“I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel”—but this understanding of a purely local calling is challenged immediately and successfully by the foreign woman’s importunity. Matthew characterizes her identity as different not only ethnically and nationally but also by the term “Canaanite,” which in Israelite history evoked religious abhorrence and national enmity (Matt. 15:21–28). The woman expanded Jesus’ understanding of his calling to include a sending to the Gentiles. Looking to the future, Jesus saw God’s reign culminating in a judgment over all the nations (Matt. 25:31–46) and consummated in an embrace of human differences at the messianic banquet: “Then people will come from east and west, from north and south, and will eat in the kingdom of God” (Luke 13:29).
Sending is intrinsic to the concept of mission of any kind.

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vision was fulfilled initially not so much through explicit sending as through the geographic dispersion of the Jesus movement in the persecution that began with the stoning of Stephen (Acts 8:1–4). Yet the initiatives of Peter and John in Samaria and Philip with an Ethiopian official, each incident on a frontier of difference, resulted from explicit sendings by the community or by the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14, 26, 29).

The boundary-crossing initiative of the early Christian community that was both its greatest challenge and its lifeline to survival was the incorporation of Gentile believers into the body of the faithful without the intermediate step of entering Judaism. Peter’s venture with the Roman centurion Cornelius at Caesarea emerged from sendings by the Holy Spirit as Cornelius sent servants to Joppa and as Peter accompanied them home (Acts 10:5–8, 17–22). The commission Paul received through Ananias at his conversion explicitly affirmed proclamation to Gentiles: “He is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before all nations” (Acts 28:19). Luke reiterates this sending to “all nations” in closing his gospel (Luke 24:47), and his second account of the ascension extends it “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was a harbinger of the church as a Mediterranean entity beyond Palestine by virtue of people of different languages and nationalities being present to hear about “God’s deeds of power” (Acts 2:1). This Scripture related to the extension of God’s work in the world are closely associated with depictions of God, Christ, or the Holy Spirit sending individuals to undertake particular initiatives. The more major of these sending initiatives concern encounters with persons and groups who are different from those who are sent, different in ways that are sociologically identifiable. Indeed, environments of difference seem to evoke narratives of sending and being sent. It is around this dimension of difference that historically the term “mission” has gathered, so that it has long been customary to speak of “Jesus’ mission,” “the disciples’ mission,” “the early church’s mission,” “Paul’s mission,” “the Gentile mission,” and so on. Such terminology not only is appropriate, but it is also quite precise in designating specifically as mission those ministries that engage the dimension of difference. In this way, the difference-based definition of mission clarifies a long-standing practice in biblical exegetics and theology. Conversely, the definition has solid biblical warrant in Scripture’s association of sending with encounters with human difference.

Difference in Contemporary Thought

Defining Christian mission as ministry in the dimension of difference connects missiology with the philosophy of difference in contemporary thought. In his seminal 1968 work Difference and Repetition, French philosopher Gilles Deleuze asserted the ontological priority of difference over identity. “Conceiving the same on the basis of the different” makes identity secondary to and derivative from difference.

Michel Foucault elaborates how difference must be liberated from abstraction, concept, representation, and dialectic, and celebrates the fruit of such liberation:

The freeing of difference requires thought without contradiction, without dialectics, without negation; thought that accepts divergence; affirmative thought whose instrument is disjunction; thought of the multiple—of the nomadic and dispersed multiplicity that is not limited or confined by the constraints of similarity; thought that does not conform to a pedagogical model . . . but that attacks insoluble problems—that is, a thought that addresses a multiplicity of exceptional points, which are displaced as we distinguish their conditions and which insist and subsist in the play of repetitions.

So central has difference become that the Encyclopedia of Philosophy defines postmodernism itself in terms of difference: “Postmodern thought means the appeal to differences—differences in theories, differences in formulations, differences in identities. Postmodern thought rejects hierarchies and genealogies, continuities and progress, resolutions and overcomings.”

Writing with urgency to mitigate the clash of civilizations evident in the attacks of September 11, 2001, Jonathan Sacks calls for a shift away from a Platonic view that true knowledge is to be found in universals that generalize from particulars. Instead, knowledge and wisdom are accessible from the particulars of human communities. Historically universalist cultures, including contemporary global capitalism, he argues, have viewed particularities as “imperfections, the source of error, parochialism and prejudice” and have therefore marginalized and diminished difference in favor of universal categories and goals. Sacks declares: “We need . . . not only a theology of commonality—of the universals of mankind—but also a theology of difference: why no one civilization has the right to impose itself on others by force: why God asks us to respect the freedom and dignity of those not like us.”
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Sacks thus puts a different twist on classic philosophical debates about the relative reality of universals and particulars, debates that have involved George Berkeley, David Hume, Bertrand Russell, A. J. Ayer, and others. Where past stress on the reality of the particular, as opposed to the universal, has entailed religious skepticism, Sacks argues instead for the integrity of the particular and the different in God’s revelation and work. Certainly a theology of difference would stem from the diversity intrinsic in God’s creativity and would analyze the ways in which humanity has distorted God’s abundance of difference to create a virtual taxonomy of sin, of which the urge to suppress difference is one expression.

The Christian mission enterprise is the world’s most extensive and longest sustained engagement with human difference, and it has reflected thoroughly on that engagement. Recent philosophical insistence on the integrity and autonomy of difference calls on Christian missiology to articulate yet more precisely its stance toward difference, given that mission’s errand in a world of difference is founded on a revelation that celebrates both universality and particularity. It may appear incongruous to suggest that missiology can be enhanced by postmodern and deconstructionist perspectives that dismiss the possibility of universally valid revelations and therefore oppose all universalizing projects, including religious ones. Yet postmodernism’s exploration of the possible priority of difference over identity may help explain the perennial Christian conviction that engaging the other who is different is intrinsic to Christian faithfulness.

The other who is different presents a frontier over which the journey of understanding is both outward and inward, both exploratory and reflexive. Knowing the other authentically requires mature self-knowledge, yet such maturity is not accessible to the isolated self, or to the isolated society or the isolated culture—or the isolated church. We do not and cannot know ourselves truly without knowing the other as well. Similarly, the Gospel understanding that Christians of any particular setting have (and the setting may be a region, culture, or church) is intrinsically and inevitably partial and incomplete. Every Christian community, wherever it is located, needs the perspective and insight about the Gospel that other communities can offer from experiences and worldviews that are differently shaped. The truth of what God has done in Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit is ultimate, universal, and final, but our apprehension of it is limited, contextual, and provisional. This provisionality draws us into a pilgrimage into difference, through which we hope to see less darkly, toward that place where we will see face to face.

Mission is ministry in the dimension of difference. This understanding identifies the distinctively missional element in the history of the Christian movement, and it clarifies missiology’s theological reflection on it. It is grounded in Scripture’s witness to the sending activity of God, which typically catalyzes God’s people to engage difference. The definition connects missiology with contemporary philosophical and theological discourse about difference. Finally, it provides a criterion of analysis and comparison in the missional lives of the churches, in mission scholarship, and in interreligious discussions of mission in a world of difference.

Notes
7. www.saddleback.com/about/saddleback/index.html. Many congregations define their mission outwardly, among them First Methodist Church in Seattle, which declares, “We’re out to change the world,” and then clearly distinguishes ministry from mission; see www.firstchurchseattle.org/who-we-are.html.
11. E.g., Ps. 67, 97; Isa. 62; Jer. 46–51; Joel 3:18–21; Amos 9:11–12.
15. Mark identifies her as “a Gentile, of Syro-Phoenician origin” (Mark 7:26).
16. The NRSV represents the sense, though not the syntactic form, of the Greek: “He who worked through Peter making him an apostle to the circumcised also worked through me in sending me to the Gentiles.”
The Missiology of Old Testament Covenant

Stuart J. Foster

A generation ago, Old Testament scholar G. Ernest Wright commented in the predecessor to this journal: “The church which lacks the Old Testament again becomes easy prey to paganism.” He explained: “It is the Old Testament which initially broke radically with pagan religion and which thus forms the basis on which the New rests.” Since that time, thinking missiologically about the Old Testament has probably not had the attention it deserves. The present article, inspired by Wright, sketches out a more precise formulation of his statement: it is the worldview communicated by covenant concepts, understood in the historical and religious context of the ancient Near East, that makes for a radical break with the worldview of paganism. Old Testament covenant provides both a model and a standard for communicating the Gospel across cultures.

Covenant concepts, used for the relationship between God and his people, form a large part of the Bible’s skeletal structure. They may not integrate everything, but without them there is no integration at all. This article reviews briefly what a covenant was in the ancient world. It then asks the missionary question, What was accomplished by using covenant ideas (which every pagan knew) for something radically different—the relationship between the creator God and his people? What was the impact, what did it communicate, when this God made covenant with a people (as no pagan god ever did)? This article proposes that the missiological purpose of covenant concepts in the Old Testament can be put in the following terms: The covenant structure highlighted relationship with Yahweh and, within that relationship, elevated exclusivity, security, accountability, and purpose.

Much recent Old Testament scholarship has emphasized continuities between Israelite beliefs and those of their neighbors. The “radical break” with paganism Wright mentioned is rejected or sharply qualified. Robert Gnuse defends continuity vigorously: “Above all, it is important that future discussion reflect the sensitive awareness of Israel’s great continuity with the ancient Near Eastern world.” Similarly, Walter Houston writes: “It is not possible any longer to speak of ‘Canaanite’ culture as something foreign to Israel.” Ziony Zevit wrote a book entitled The Religions of Ancient Israel. But a careful reading of the Old Testament itself suggests that its writers were well aware that continuity with the surrounding religions was the normal thing; that is why they had to argue so vigorously against it. The writers were an embattled minority, resisting the assumptions and practices dominant in society. The “radical break” was not easy.

It would be much simpler if polemic was the only canonical mode of religious interaction with paganism. Many pagan religious customs were indeed adopted and adapted in normative Israelite religion, let alone popular practice. Winged creatures called cherubs supported the thrones of pagan gods, just as, figuratively speaking, they did Yahweh’s (Ps. 99:1). The highly detailed sacrificial system and regulations described in Leviticus have many parallels in documents of the second half of the second millennium B.C. The very language of a Ugaritic hymn to Baal could be taken over and turned into a hymn to Yahweh (Ps. 29). If so much from pagan religious practice was usable, perhaps when redefined, what were the criteria for determining what was rejected?

Covenant in the Ancient Near East

This brings us back to one of the most widespread pagan customs of all. Throughout the entire ancient Near East, for almost three millennia, people made covenants. As Donald Wiseman comments, “The covenant idea and its terminology has been shown to form the warp and woof of the fabric of ancient society.” Covenants were a way of creating family-like relationships beyond the natural family (what Frank M. Cross calls “kinship-in-law”). In scale, they stretched from the intimacy of marriage relationships all the way to international and imperial relations. An ancient Near Eastern covenant may be defined in its prototypical form as (1) a chosen relationship of (3) mutual obligation, (4) guaranteed by oath sanctions. In any given context only one of these aspects might be in focus. The relationship was chosen, perhaps by one party much more than the other; it was not something people were born into. It was a personal relationship analogous to family, so that in suzerain-vassal treaties one party is “father” and the other is “son”—even where one party has just been wreaking havoc on the other. There were mutual obligations, sometimes assumed, sometimes explicit in massive detail. The obligations were not necessarily equal by any means, but both parties in a covenant bound themselves to do something for the other, to treat one another in certain ways. Key relational terms in the ancient world all have covenantal associations: “love,” “peace,” and “loyalty” (also “quarrel”—relationships break down). Finally, the commitments made were guaranteed by oath. The parties invoked the gods to punish any failure to keep the commitment. This invocation could be in words or in ritual—for example, the sacrificial dismembering of an animal for what should happen for the person who broke covenant.

Old Testament Innovation

Pagan gods were an integral part of covenant-making and covenant-keeping, but only as witnesses and enforcers (like referees). They were not themselves parties to covenants (they did not play in the game). This brings us to the radical innovation in the Old Testament. There the creator God, Yahweh himself, took on what had always been a human role and made covenant with people (while not abandoning the role of enforcer). Traditional pagan practice was both adopted and transformed.

Beyond particular practices and customs lies a system, an “overall synthesis.” Ancient paganism was focused on human needs, on maintaining and enhancing fragile human existence in the face of hostile forces. Gregorio Lete writes of Canaanite religion that the various mythologies addressed “the origin, function and cessation of human life and of the real world as it unfolds.” These myths provided a framework of meaning. In contrast, the cult (or formal worship practices) dealt with “the more immediate...
demands of the life of the faithful.” For everyday human life in its natural course, “as a technique, the cult tries to co-ordinate and control... by means of well-defined rituals that put the faithful in contact with the appropriate god for every case.” The world was saturated with spiritual powers. These were open to human manipulation, but were ultimately arbitrary. Yet the promise of power through technique was very attractive.

The Old Testament proposed a radical innovation, a new system tightly organized around relationship with Yahweh. As creator God, he had power. But he also committed himself to relationship with his people. The covenant refrain “You will be my people, and I will be your God” echoes throughout Scripture (literally from Genesis to Revelation: Gen. 17:7; Exod. 6:7; 29:45; Lev. 26:12; Num. 15:41; Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 29:12–13; 2 Sam. 7:24; 1 Chron. 17:22; Jer. 7:23; 2 Cor. 6:16; Heb. 8:10; Rev. 21:3). The use of covenant concepts communicated that this relationship was to be exclusive, secure, accountable, and purposeful.

Exclusive. A personal relationship with deity was not in itself unique in the ancient world. Indeed, the great variety of deities made it quite easy to have personal favorites and specialists for every need. The pagan religious pantheon put competing powers at the center of its conception of life. However, the political concepts of overlord and vassal in covenant treaties did not allow for competing loyalties. Naturally they existed in practice, but the purpose of an overlord in creating a covenant relationship was to insist on excluding others from that role in the vassal’s life. Like no pagan religious concept, this was a model for communicating monotheism, not in an abstract ontological sense, but as a demand for commitment. Covenant defined and shaped monotheism. This accounts theologically for the prominence of the treaty form of covenant in the Old Testament.

Logically, exclusiveness of covenant relationship with Yahweh depended on his role in creation. Nature was not an arena of competing powers, but the realm of one ruler. This gave him both the right to insist on being treated as overlord and the ability to fulfill his obligations. His good intentions were not going to be stymied by any opponent.

Secure. The specific, kinship-type, mutual obligations of covenant communicated a relationship of both security and accountability. Yahweh’s covenant obligations were expressed as promises, backed up by oath commitments. Such specific commitments provided a radical security. Noah and his family knew that no other worldwide flood was coming, that the natural cycle would not fail until the end. They could set out confidently to fill and reshape the world (Gen. 9:17–20). Pagan deities had implicit obligations to defend and provide for their worshipers and temples, primarily out of self-interest. But Yahweh made explicit commitments. Old Testament theologian Walther Eichrodt highlights the covenantal “atmosphere of trust and security” in contrast to that of pagan religion. Alister McGrath makes this

Accountable. Within the mutual commitment of covenant, security was never divorced from accountability. One of the great temptations of Israelite history was to forget this, to cry “The temple of Yahweh! The temple of Yahweh!” (Jer. 7:4) and to presume that its mere presence, or earlier, that of the ark (1 Sam. 4:3), guaranteed immunity from disaster. Within the pagan system the fundamental danger was of inadequate manipulation of the gods (though there could also be grim consequences for misbehavior). But the Old Testament record relentlessly makes the point that covenant unfaithfulness had the most severe consequences. Oaths with sanctions and curses (as well as blessings) were built into the covenant structure. Yahweh could not be manipulated. He would not abandon the relationship; neither would he let his people abandon the relationship. Walter Brueggemann comments that law and grace, conditional and unconditional, are “misguided polarities,” and that covenant relation is a deeper category: “Our most serious relationships, including our relationship to the God of the gospel, are at the same time, profoundly unconditional and massively conditional.”

This tension between security and accountability did not exclude the presence of genuine bafflement from the life of faith, experiences of frightening insecurity, or hardship that defied neat analysis, where covenant transgression and punishment did not line up. Yet this was the framework within which those very problems were brought to Yahweh (Pss. 44; 89). This was why covenant people had a right to complain to their covenant God, “How long?” (Ps. 13). This framework was bigger than the experience of blessing, which was the goal of paganism. The primacy of the relationship could even lead to the paradox of a God who inflicted hardship, to humble, to test, to grow covenant children in their trust of their covenant father and lord (Deut. 8:2–5).

Purposeful. Covenant concepts also provided purpose in history, an overall narrative framework of life and meaning. Purpose came in two ways: from the structure of covenant itself and from the nature of the God to whom covenant bound his people.

Covenant structure set up a relationship in time and through time. The commitment was made at a specific point between specific parties. It was explicitly not a natural part of the cycle of life. It began. It was renewed across generations. Obligations were made for the future. Consequences, both for good and for ill, could be expected. There were curses as well as blessings to be looked for in the realm of historical events. This outlook was not part of the fundamental framework of paganism, which sought to sustain cosmic order as life was threatened by chaos.

The covenant tie to the creator God also linked God’s people to God’s purpose. Because he declared himself to be acting to renew and restore his creation by dealing with the people he placed in charge of it, his people shared in his purpose. The covenant relationship was designed to lead to the peace of shalom, a comprehensive, wholesome well-being extending throughout a now-marred creation. In the Old Testament, that intimate relationship was never achieved. Though begun, its full consummation lay in the future with the renewal of creation.
This eschatological framework of final purpose links the Old Testament story of God’s covenant people with the overarching story of the whole Bible. Thus Christopher Wright argues that the grand narrative which “embodied Israel’s coherent worldview” can be summarized by the sequence of covenants that were made and remade through the Old Testament and into the New.25 As N. T. Wright puts it, discussing the problem of evil in creation: “The question is no longer a static one, as though the world simply existed in a settled state; it is dynamic and relational. If there is an answer to the problem of evil, it will include divine action within history.”26 Covenant connected people to this God. His divine action would be in and through them. In the overall structure of the Scriptures, the unfinished narrative of the Old Testament sets up a climax of covenant fulfillment focused on Jesus in the New Testament.

The Assyrians, as one example, were happy to argue that their god Asshur willed the expansion of the Assyrian empire—they had a purpose in history.27 The point is not that ancient Near Eastern religions did not have examples of purpose, of accountability, of security, and even of exclusivity. What was distinctive was the overall synthesis made by Old Testament covenant-shaped theology, which sought to integrate life tightly around relationship with Yahweh, using a common cultural form in a startling way.

Conclusion

Many societies in the twenty-first century no longer have an understanding of ancient covenant customs. For most contemporary English speakers the term “covenant” itself is archaic to the point of obscurity. Some peoples may have no clear traditional custom for making those who are unrelated by birth into family. (Lomwe speakers in northern Mozambique are one example.)

Notes

3. The development of covenant theology in Reformed theology is outside the focus here.
4. I am aware that for many the terms “pagan” and “paganism” are pejorative. They are not intended here in that sense but are used to highlight common elements in many ancient religions, in which worshipers related to a multiplicity of often competing spiritual powers. It should be noted that G. Ernest Wright’s article addresses (among other things) a highly intellectual and sophisticated paganism that he saw as very attractive to mid-twentieth-century North America.
5. An earlier version of these ideas is found in Stuart Foster, An Experiment in Bible Translation as Transcultural Communication (Stellenbosch: SUN Press, 2008), pp. 74–82, along with a more detailed defense of the positions taken here.
6. Christopher Wright is quick to concede that there is no such thing as a single “center” for all Old Testament theology (The Mission of God, p. 325). While I agree, I would also argue that the integrating theme of the creator God who makes covenant ranges across the full sweep of the Old Testament and into the New as nothing else does. Yet another Wright, New Testament scholar N. T. (“Tom”) Wright, sums up the controlling themes of first-century, Scripture-shaped Judaism (and Christianity) as “creation and covenant” (Paul: In Fresh Perspective [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005], pp. 21–24).
8. It should be noted that even Gnuse eventually acknowledges “the complete emergence of a new worldview” in Israel (Heilsgeschichte as a Model, p.145). He sees this as the culmination of a lengthy process and dates it rather close to the New Testament era.
13. Frank Moore Cross, “Kinship and Covenant in Ancient Israel,” in
Beyond Contextualization: Toward a Twenty-first-Century Model for Enabling Mission

R. Daniel Shaw

In one course I taught recently, I had forty-two students from thirteen nations, with a combined 313 years of mission experience in forty-six countries. Such prior knowledge of the world generates an expectation of rich classroom participation and dialogue. Managing the interaction is both rewarding and challenging for professors who seek to ensure that all voices are heard. Such a teaching experience is symptomatic of our contemporary world and reflects the shifts taking place in the nature of mission. How can we build maximally on these changes to reflect the glory of God throughout the earth? These shifts signal the need for a new approach in the way we teach missiology, as well as in how we approach the challenging task we call world mission.

In the circumstances of our post–9/11 and increasingly post–Christendom world, what resources does missiology as a discipline have for responding to current challenges? A decade ago Doreen Massey, in an article reflecting on the state of affairs throughout the social sciences, emphasized the need for crossing disciplinary boundaries. Missiology, itself a very young discipline, is intrinsically cross-disciplinary, drawing from a multiplicity of sources, including theology, the social sciences, and religious studies. Having moved beyond the dated boundaries of colonial paradigms, missiology seeks to integrate perspectives and data from social, political, economic, and religious spheres long held separate.

With more missionaries coming from the non-Western world, Ajith Fernando’s call for changing the missionary job description must be taken seriously. He argued that local people must be allowed to do what they best know how to do, while outsiders should assist in ways that reflect their strengths. Fernando’s and Massey’s observations underscore an increasing need for missiologists also to incorporate the contributions of recent psychological, linguistic, and anthropological explorations into “mind-brain” processing. The implications of this growing cognitive discipline place new emphasis on the processes involved in mission and raise questions about appropriate ways to equip future “mission bearers.”

Global understanding of what mission is has shifted; heightened awareness of contemporary world conditions is called for. At the same time, the heart of mission hears the call to discern God’s intent for human beings and to consider how we who go in Christ’s name can enable people everywhere to understand what that intent might mean for their spiritual well-being. These two—the conditions of our world as disclosed by the human sciences and God’s Good News that Christ is the source of our reality—form twin points of reference as I seek to apply recent cognitive models of cultural understanding to mission practice.

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Twentieth-Century Colonial Models

From William Carey through most of the twentieth century, the Protestant approach to missions can be viewed in large measure as one of cargo. It was perceived as a matter of conveying the Gospel, however defined, as a product from Christendom to poor benighted heathen. Though largely altruistic and well-meaning, this approach to mission coincided with expansive Western colonization as well as with burgeoning Western business enterprise around the globe. As a result, a Western understanding of God became hegemonic, one that had been developed over centuries by wedding Hellenistic logic to the scholastic method. As Westerners, missionaries assumed a realist perspective, that held truth (God’s truth) to be timeless and culture-free. Any contextualization attempted was culturally conditioned to fit Western categories and was relevant to the colonial powers rather than being connected to local cultures.

In the mid-twentieth century the work of Eugene Nida took Protestant mission theory a step beyond this product-oriented model. Nida adapted communication theory to develop a Source-Message-Receptor (S-M-R) model of mission. The S-M-R model focused on codes presented by a communicator that receptors in turn had to process in order for them to make sense. To the extent that the forms used by receptors matched the meanings presented by the source, the message was deemed communicative. The communicator, however, retained control of the content, and Western assumptions were almost always operative. The S-M-R model yielded a picture, in effect, of theologically trained missionaries taking the message of the Gospel to people of differing cultures and circumstances and telling them to follow the missionary’s way to God. This largely prescriptive approach to communicating the Gospel placed the emphasis on what the Gospel is (especially what it is for the communicator) and the results it brings rather than on the nature of the relationship between people and God.

Taking its cue from Nida, the communication model for mission that prevailed during the second half of the twentieth century focused on clearly presenting the codes and ensuring that the message as decoded was the “closest natural equivalent.” Conceptually, this encoding/decoding model focuses on the sequential linkages between elements in a “serial processing structure,” with each link dependent on the one before it (see figure 1). The model was extremely helpful in enabling missionaries to develop the concept of contextualization, as well as making a vital contribution to Bible translation. Despite having “dynamic equivalence” in its name, however, the model was relatively static and product oriented: the goal was to present the Gospel properly, as understood in the West, in a new context and thereby enable people to have God’s Word in their environment so that they could be enriched by knowledge that those in the West had already acquired. Mission became a matter of knowledge transfer, and it remained embedded in an essentially colonial approach to communicating God’s truth. By default, the meaning of what God has to say was viewed as bound to the text, in the possession of the communicator, rather than being relevant to the context where the receptor lived.

A transition began in the late twentieth century, exemplified by David Bosch: people must be allowed to find their own way to God. Using their own understanding, they can connect with the message that clearly impacts them and do so in ways that outsiders, in large measure, cannot fathom. More attention began to be paid to the fact that Scripture emphasizes incarnation instead of communication. God demonstrated the concept in the Garden of Eden, and the theme extends all the way through the canon to Revelation. Christ’s sojourn on earth was the ultimate expression of “God with us” (John 1:14, 1 John 1:2), but the entire canon is about God’s desire to interact with human beings, who are viewed as the crown of creation (Ps. 8:5), among whom God seeks to dwell (Exod. 6:7).

The Need for a New Model

A revolution in the social sciences began in the mid-twentieth century. Following the philosophical developments of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky in psychology, Noam Chomsky in 1959 spoke out strongly against the behaviorist approach to understanding human experience (language, culture, and emotion). Chomsky’s work—which sought to isolate the underlying triggers of meaning that can be expressed in a myriad of ways, linguistically as well as culturally—excited anthropologists and psychologists. Ward Goodenough redefined culture, not as the sum total of human experience but as what people need to know in order to behave correctly. Prototype theory in linguistics, advanced by Eleanor Rosch, focused on categories that reflect psychological reality. She began with color but the concept was quickly applied to kinship and all manner of linguistic and cultural categories that impact how human beings process information. These studies contributed to George Lakoff’s work on metaphor. Anna Wierzbicka’s work on semantic primes and the early work of the cognitive linguists helped in developing a new understanding of mental processes as “connectionist networks” by which the mind processes information. In 1995 Roy D’Andrade laid out the development of this revolution, particularly focusing on the concept of schemas.

Connectionist network theory reflects an entirely different model of how the human brain works. As ideas enter awareness,
individuals process information based on their experience with the schema the information elicits. Incoming information is assessed by comparing it with what the mind-brain already knows. While processing new information, individuals unconsciously seek to expend the least amount of effort for the greatest gain. Their perception of value or benefit is directly correlated with what is considered pertinent within a particular context. But what is considered pertinent is culturally conditioned, which means that all kinds of information—psychological, linguistic, and cultural—are forced to interact simultaneously.

The implications of this approach are vast. The S-M-R, or code, model is linear and focused on the result, that is, the delivery, in as intact a fashion as possible, of a prepackaged product. Connectionist network theory, by contrast, directs attention to the processes by which recipients construct meaning in their contexts. The diagram in figure 2 attempts to represent a connectionist network. The complex process shown in the diagram is actually slower than the serial processing of earlier linear models, but it more clearly represents how human beings process information.20 This process-oriented model can be related directly to Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson’s “inferential model,” or relevance theory of communication.21 The starting point for relevance theory is the intent of the communicator. For Sperber and Wilson, effective or “relevant” communication takes place when an audience infers the intent of the presenter and both the intent and the inferences more or less match. As anyone who has traveled knows, there is much room for mismatch and therefore miscommunication. How much energy people are willing to expend on processing information is largely a product of the perceived benefit. Changes come about from a desire to build relationship through the communication process. The greater the shared experience, the greater the likelihood of effective exchanges that will create mutual understanding and relationship. Communication needs to capture the conceptual awareness that begins with a communicator’s intent, but it is simultaneously dependent on the knowledge-base of the people in the new audience and on their experience with the new ideas being introduced.

It is important to take note of the feedback loop present in both the S-M-R model and the inferential model. Feedback is crucial to communication, and how people respond is critical to ongoing communication in either model. The difference is the focus of the two models, either on the surface forms and meanings (words, grammar, and all the trappings of communication and culture) or on the deeper, cognitive understanding of intended meanings. Kraft had it right when he emphasized “receptor-oriented communication.”22 In mission theory we must move to a new model that emphasizes the process rather than the product. The code model asks, “How is an understanding of God translated or transmitted from one set of cultural forms and meanings to another?” The inferential model asks, “How does God’s intent become cognitively relevant to and understood by human beings?”

The findings of cognitive studies have significant implications for our understanding of effective cross-cultural mission. How should mission theorists engage those findings in developing new mission approaches? Not just cognitive studies, but all fields of endeavor in our rapidly changing post-Christian world are undergoing development. How should mission teachers respond so as to equip their students for effective service as Gospel message bearers in reaching the world for Christ? These questions dominate the remainder of my discussion.

### Seeking Cognitive Balance

According to relevance theory, communication is always designed to change the “mutual cognitive environment” by precipitating transformation that results in a new balance.23 The mental-neurological network is always seeking balance, which, when achieved, is not the same as it was before the new information came in. The scope of relevance theory goes far beyond the impact of speech and includes all the senses, which are constantly enhancing human experience and triggering adjustments relevant to understanding.24 Cognitive study encompasses all aspects of human understanding: cognitive, evaluative, and affective. The intent of the source of the communication and the inferences an audience makes regarding that intent jointly seek a path of least resistance to achieve maximum understanding for mutual benefit. Through interaction both the source and the audience expand their mutual but different understandings. Both the message bearer and the receptor are changed; neither cognitive environment is left unaltered. Each arrives at a new balance that provides insight regarding the entire experience.25

When this understanding of the communicative process is applied to communicating the Gospel, the stakes grow larger. If the intent of Gospel communication is to enable people to become more like God intended them to be, that is, to display God’s image, then transformation in those who bring the Gospel and in those who hear and “receive” it will move both toward that goal. This understanding has important theological implications for long-established missiological themes surrounding God’s will, the incarnation, the role of the Holy Spirit, the nature of the message, how the message works itself out in a new environment, and how new disciples will themselves be missional. By implication, theological development is respective to the environment in

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**Figure 2. Parallel Distributive Processing of Ideas**

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which people think about God, that is, in which they theologize. Mission practitioners must strive to foster development of a biblical theology in the new context that is perceived by the receptors to be relevant and that brings change. The precipitated change should impact those who receive the Word without leaving the message bearers who initiated the process untouched.

I found this to be the case in my experience as a Bible translator among the Samo in the jungles of Papua New Guinea’s Western Province. I tended their environment with my theological boxes set, all systematized and ready to be communicated. The problem was that the Samo did not have boxes similar to mine. It was only as they enabled me to see the world through their eyes that I was able to translate God’s Word and introduce it into their context. My cognitive environment changed as I gained new perceptions of things I thought I knew about God but that, in reality, the Samo understood better than I did. I learned to think from within their categories, or “boxes,” and am so much more aware of God because of it. The reality of the spirit world around them is a case in point. My view cast a disparaging eye on the presence of the hogai (bush spirits), but their perspective enforced the need for protection at every turn, leading to camouflage, amulets, and rituals to keep spirits at bay. They would not let me walk a forest trail without an escort—“in case hogai appear.” These were committed Christians who knew and understood Scripture and applied their cultural awareness to interpreting what the Scriptures say about spiritual beings. I have found that these spiritual forces are very real and that they impact our lives whether we recognize it or not. I have learned so much!

Implications of Developing a New Model

What effect does incarnation—or the theological concept of God with us, which permeates the whole of Scripture—have on the human condition? How can missiologists incorporate insights from contemporary academic research into their thinking so as to make adjustments in present-day approaches to mission? Figure 3 presents an oversimplified attempt to contrast the assumptions of the code, or S-M-R, model with those of the inferential model, or relevance theory, and to adumbrate a new approach for contemporary mission. For such an effort the concept of paradigms as used in the social sciences is helpful. Manifestations will vary with every context, but, following Thomas Kuhn, we can understand paradigms as reflecting assumptions, values, symbols, and representations of ideas that drive human interest. Kuhn maintained that paradigms do not evolve slowly over time; instead they change rapidly within a discipline because of the buildup of unforeseen pressures. As social, political, and economic changes represented by globalization, tribalization, and cultural upheaval engulf our world, we find ourselves in a Kuhnian period of adjustment.

Because cognitivist network theory posits incremental readjustment (people are being constantly bombarded from every angle with new input and in quest for a new steady state), the model would seem to be at odds with the Kuhnian picture of revolutionary rather than evolutionary paradigm shift. But gradual accumulation of small-scale changes is what Kuhn characterizes as an era of “normal science.” The period since the Enlightenment can be viewed as one such era. Then comes an event or set of circumstances that raises challenges to the status quo so significant that suddenly the normalcy of the old paradigm becomes problematic. Whatever the fate of arguments that we are now in the throes of a wholesale paradigm shift, clearly considerable transformation is taking place.

The world environment is now markedly different from what it was even a few years ago, posing probing questions both for the world at large and for missiology as a multidisciplinary field.

For mission theory the question becomes one of how to move from a sending or transmittal approach to transformational mission with a focus on relationships. Furthermore, how can those who are being transformed be encouraged to go beyond themselves and to become missional, that is, sent by God to others who also need transformation? Here we find a need for the old paradigm, as well as a new model. It is a case of both-and, not of either/or. To insist on a rigid choice between the old and the new would itself be to cling to the old model. The code model and the inferential model are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Our desire should be to complement the old by adding the strengths of the new, thereby reducing the weaknesses of both.

New approaches for communicating the Gospel need to take into account equipping and encouraging members of the local community to be missional among their own people, for they best understand their own cognitive environment and intuitively possess an awareness of how inferences made within it will effect a response to God’s intent. The dynamism of such an approach is superior to having message bearers tell people what outsiders think insiders need to know. A transition is needed from preaching the Gospel to living the Gospel within the context where people live.

This point demands that we reexamine our understanding of contextualization. Instead of outsiders reconfiguring local cultural forms to fit the shape of Christianity with which they are familiar, we need—following the theological implications of the incarnation—to allow local people to contemplate the implications of God-in-their-midst. Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator addresses this
Toward a New Missional Perspective

How might a contemporary mission approach be defined? David Bosch and Paul Hiebert help to point the way for us. Bosch discussed paradigm shifts with their accompanying shifts in epistemological approach as being critical to theologizing. He cautioned against a monolithic approach to theology, represented by the old paradigm, and advocated a “critical hermeneutic” that recognizes the biblical text, by its very nature, as contextual. God has interacted with human beings through time and space and in multiple contexts so as to communicate God’s intent and God’s desire to be in relationship with human beings, wherever they are found.31

In discussing contextualization, Paul Hiebert also used the term “critical,” pointing out the dangers of uncritically contextualizing from a strictly local perspective.32 Sadly, he was not understood, and contextualization became a catchword for “ localization.” For Hiebert, “critical” implied a standard, so the Bible, not another cultural context, must be the standard for judging relevance. Contextualization forces interactive reflection, and it is from the interplay between people’s understanding of God’s intention for all human beings as well as for their particular environment that transformation takes place, that is, transformation that is both true to God’s intent and also relevant within the context.

A contextualized biblical theology reflects God’s intention for the people of a particular time and place and enables those involved (both insiders and outsiders) to be transformed more fully into the image of God. At this point, cognitive studies become highly significant for contemporary mission: we must value the “receptional apparatus” God has created. Human beings everywhere were created by God with a mind-brain for processing, through language and psychosocial awareness, all manner of human experience, including new transculturated conceptualizations.33 It is necessary to move beyond contextualization, as previously conceived, to recognition of God’s presence in the midst of people everywhere and to recognition of the ways that presence enables people to “know God.”34

This new missional model reflects God’s intention for people “from every race, tribe, nation, and language” (Rev. 7:9 CEV). As a statement of purpose, that wording may not seem new, but the emphasis the model places on the relevance of every context is quite different from twentieth-century approaches to mission. As God’s Word enlightens people of every cognitive environment, it transforms people’s experience in each specific context.35 We must constantly juxtapose the general and the specific. As Charles Van Engen notes, we must recognize both the “Church” (God’s people) and churches (God’s representatives in a particular place), “Theology” (God’s intent for human beings) and theologies (God’s revelation as processed by particular communities of believers), “contextualization” (God with us) and what Van Engen calls “re-contextualization” (people knowing God in their midst).36

As noted earlier, the new model for mission accents a both-and approach rather than an either/or perspective. It seeks to be interactive, modeled on God’s communication with human beings. It is relational, with a focus on being rather than doing. It is primarily enabling and encouraging rather than static and knowledge-focused. It envisions a biblical theology in context rather than a contextual theology.

What does a missional approach for the twenty-first century look like? From the discussion so far, it must be dynamic and interactive, intentional, relevant, global, and transformational. I now present each of these in turn.

- **Dynamic and interactive.** Meaningful relationships with human beings emanate from a vibrant relationship with God. Who will cross our path today, and how can we be used by God to touch them?
- **Intentional.** Understanding God’s intention to communicate, we follow God’s example as we intentionally communicate in ways that recognize the need to be relevant and appropriate in specific contexts.
- **Relevant.** In order to be relevant, missional message bearers must be appropriate from the perspective of those with whom they interact. Being relevant demands considerable anthropological research to bring to light things that people in other cognitive environments simply assume. Their perspective is reality for them, and the only way the message can make sense to them is by connecting with their assumptions.
- **Global.** Because the world is dynamic and integrated—connected via 24/7 media coverage, real time Web-streaming, and reality TV—there is little isolation.37 But globalization is much more than media coverage; almost any activity affects others half a world away. Local wars become international incidents, the world is awash with migrants, disease in one place impacts every place, and personal issues become the business of multitudes. We are each other’s neighbor, regardless of where on the planet we find ourselves.
- **Transformational.** Relevance theory demonstrates that transformation is directly intertwined with cultural, linguistic, and psychological factors. When processed in light of new information, the familiar is reframed, and new understandings arise within the community so that transformation “makes sense.” In this dynamic interaction all parties are transformed. Relationship is always a two-way street; local people come to see things from a different perspective as do message bearers; everyone comes away changed. Transformation is not a case of one-size-fits-all for everyone in a context. If anthropology has established anything, it is the fact of variation within any community, even though at one level successful interaction depends on having people in a society agree on what they hold to be true. Transformation takes place only when the community reaches a decision that what they have held to be true needs adjustment based on some standard to which they collectively agree. As Oswald Chambers so clearly states, “Reality is Redemption, not my experience of Redemption; but Redemption has no meaning for me until it speaks the language of my conscious life.”38

In sum, being missional encompasses the “essential nature and vocation of the church as God’s called and sent people,” which, in turn, enables God’s people to represent God’s intention in the world.39 The more complex our world becomes, the greater the number of options for being missional. What is critical is that...
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mission emerges from an attitude of heart that God uses to do God’s work in the world at large. God is about the business of drawing human beings to God’s self, and they, in turn, desire to draw others to God.

**Missiological Implications**

The systems of the world at large—sociocultural structures, political relationships, interdependent financial arrangements, and even manifestations of increasing religious fundamentalism—all indicate that radical changes are afoot. Old ways of interacting with and becoming knowledgeable about these world systems no longer work. Similarly, we have begun the transition to a new missiological model that radically reshapes how we go about connecting human beings with the Gospel. Relevance theory is more than a theory of communication. It is a philosophy of how we are to relate to each person we meet. Relevance theory offers a fresh understanding of the Gospel, with its potential to transform both those who bear the message and those who hear it. As we reach out missionally, we, like Paul, are blessed (1 Cor. 9:23). But our attitude as we connect with the world at large is critical. God gives us relationships with believers (for training and equipping for further ministry), as well as with nonbelievers (for being Jesus in the midst of needy people). We must follow the example our Lord set in sending his disciples to the ends of the earth. He encouraged them, as well as us, to connect with people wherever they might be found, to build them up in the faith, and to encourage them in turn to do the same for others (Matt. 28:18–20).

The implications of transformational development are multitudinous and must always be weighed within a context. The exact manifestations of transformation in various contexts, academic and otherwise, are relative to the time and place and to the needs of the people with whom we interact. Working out those details is part of the ongoing task placed before the wider missiological community. As a professor, my desire is for students to go from my classes prepared to reenter the environments from which they came, challenged and encouraged to develop new and contextually relevant applications of missiological perspectives. My prayer is for them to bring change to the church in those places and, in the process, send others forth to be a witness in other places.

As an anthropologist, I realize there is much that I can learn from every sociolinguistic group. Others know so much about spiritual power, about relationships, about what it means to be human. If, as message-bearers we are to communicate with people everywhere, we first must truly hear their voices and allow them to move us beyond what we already know. Reconceptualizing the praxis of mission on the basis of relevance theory and an inferential understanding of cognition calls for a major overhaul of traditional missiological models. Jesus came to connect with real people who expressed human need. To do so, he entered their world, took up their language with its implicit categories, learning the shapes and contents of their mental and conceptual “boxes.” We who call ourselves by his name must, as he did, go beyond our context, learn from those with whom we interact, and become God’s intention to them—the Word in their midst.

**Notes**

1. Doreen Massey, quoting Immanuel Wallerstein, states that “‘defining a discipline defines what lies beyond it’ . . . [seeing] identity as constituting itself, through counterposition; through a process of differentiating itself from what it is not” (“Negotiating Disciplinary Boundaries,” *Current Sociology* 47, no. 4 [1999]: 6).
7. For the language of Christ as the source of our reality, see Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1935), entry for December 21.
11. A schematic model of telecommunication (e.g., the sending and receiving of TV signals) would present a similar serial processing structure.
Asking the Big Questions: A Statistical Analysis of Three Missiological Journals

Gregory J. Liston

Opinions and discussions about how we should be researching missiology are extremely common: voices from the South need to be given more prominence;¹ the Bible should be the primary basis for missiological reflection;² a missiological encounter with Western culture is essential.³ The point cannot be elaborated here, but it should be noted that fostering the “development of a biblical theology in the new context” differs significantly from developing theologies in a locality as suggested by Robert J. Schreiter, Constructing Local Theologies (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1985).

The methodology utilized was to select three prominent academic missiological journals and to analyze their major articles for the period 2003–7, broadly categorizing these articles in terms of subject matter (what), regional focus (where), authorial demographics (who), theological perspective (which), and methodological approach (how).⁴

The three journals selected were Missiology, the International Bulletin of Missionary Research (IBMR), and Missionalia. The first two journals have an international focus. Missiology’s subtitle is “An International Review,” and it describes itself as “multidisciplinary, interconfessional, and practical.”⁵ The IBMR is described as “the very best in missionary research and sound biblical reflection on the Christian world mission.”⁶ These two publications are among the leading international journals in current missiology. Missionalia originates in and focuses on Southern Africa.⁷ It was chosen as a point of contrast to the two U.S.-based international journals, for it provides a perspective on academic missiology in the global South. Given that we stand at “the threshold of a new age of Christianity, one in which its main base will be in the Southern continents, and where its dominant expression will be filtered through the culture of those continents,”⁸ this contrasting perspective is of particular interest.

Subject Matter Focus—the “What” Question

What subjects are currently interesting missiological scholars? Where are they placing their research efforts? Samuel Escobar’s analysis of contemporary missiological subject matter in “The Iguassu Dialogue” provides an excellent starting point.⁹ From his...
initial framework, two categories were grouped together because of subject matter overlap and eight others were added, giving us the final set of eighteen categories.10 (See table 1.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Total No.</th>
<th>IBMR</th>
<th>Missiology</th>
<th>Missionalia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contextualization</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missions’ organization</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old religions</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biblical patterns</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global church</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty and inequality</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A new balance</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theological education</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostalism</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postmodern culture</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecumenical collaboration</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistics</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics and mission</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion of mission</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women and mission</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term mission</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church practice</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A new religiosity</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>302</strong></td>
<td><strong>101</strong></td>
<td><strong>121</strong></td>
<td><strong>80</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of course, many articles (43 percent) focused on more than one subject.11 In these cases, primary and secondary subject matters were recorded. This dual categorization enables us to do an additional “weighted” analysis that takes into account articles that deal with more than one subject.12 (See figure 1.)

Figure 1. Primary and Weighted Subject Matter Analysis

Compared with the margin of error (±2.3 percent), the differences between the primary and weighted subject matter analyses are negligible. Secondary subject matter essentially mirrors the primary in terms of prevalence, confirming that within these limits we have an accurate understanding of subject matter prevalence for the analyzed sample.

We can divide the subject areas into four groups. First, commonly encountered subjects across the three journals. These include contextualization, missions’ organization, and old religions. Second, subjects that are somewhat common across the three journals. Poverty and inequality, the new balance of Christian presence, Pentecostalism, and the theology of mission get reasonable coverage. Third, somewhat common subjects, but occurring variably. Most of the variance across journals can be explained by the editorial focus. For example, articles about biblical patterns for mission and theological education were virtually absent from the IBMR. And Missionalia had no “global church” articles (perhaps because migration to Southern Africa is not that common), but Southern Africa’s history of anti-apartheid advocacy led to politics and mission (particularly prophecy) being a common topic. Finally, very uncommon subjects occurring sporadically or not at all. Almost all the statistical articles in this survey appeared in the IBMR’s regular January global statistical update. Short-term mission was addressed only in one themed issue of Missionalia.13 And subjects such as women and mission, church practice, and a new religiosity got very little coverage.

Generally these results could be expected. It is no surprise that contextualization and old religions (particularly Islam’s challenge) were common subjects. Or that church practice (more akin to ecclesiology) was not. However, two surprising areas emerged. The first is the limited analysis of the West as a missionary challenge. Out of Escobar’s original framework, the least-treated subjects were postmodern culture and new religiosity—primarily Western subjects.14 Given that Western culture is “the most challenging missionary frontier of our time”15 and that the number of Christians in the West is free-falling,16 the relative lack of scholarly missiological attention to these subjects is a matter of concern.

The second surprise is the prevalence of articles on missions’ organization—articles that examine the specifics of how missionary organizations are structured and function. This subject, which was not in Escobar’s original framework, accounted for approximately 1 in every 9 articles, 1 in every 7 in the IBMR! While acknowledging the subject’s importance, we question this emphasis. A common mistake is to leap at organizational solutions to solve core problems. They can be implemented easily and often without deep analysis, but experience suggests they are rarely successful. Perhaps missiological research is jumping too quickly to organizational solutions, without first developing deep cultural and theological insight into the reasons why such change is deemed necessary.

**Regional Focus—the “Where” Question**

*Where* are missiologists focusing their attention? Which global areas are the most commonly researched? Certainly a diverse range of locations is being studied, with more than fifty separate regional foci. These locations were grouped into six major regions. Articles with an intentional global focus or no geographic focus were also recorded. (See table 2.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>IBMR No.</th>
<th>IBMR %</th>
<th>Missiology No.</th>
<th>Missiology %</th>
<th>Missionalia No.</th>
<th>Missionalia %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Global</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia / Oceania</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No regional</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>101</strong></td>
<td><strong>101</strong></td>
<td><strong>121</strong></td>
<td><strong>80</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Not surprisingly, Missionalia focused primarily on Africa. More than 5 in every 6 Missionalia articles with a regional focus (84 percent) dealt specifically with the African continent. The remaining articles focused on the global situation or came from one issue about archaeological investigation of American Indian mission stations.17

The international journals focused primarily on the global situation. Apart from this result, the variability across the two journals makes it difficult to draw any confident conclusions about missiologists’ predominant geographic foci. Certainly Africa (Christianity’s new “heartland”) is addressed relatively infrequently, particularly in the IBMR. But Asia / Oceania (also the Global South) accounts for over a quarter of this journal’s geographically focused articles.

Authorial Demographics—the “Who” Question

Who are the people conducting missiological research? Where do they come from? What gender are they, and what mindset do they bring to their research?18 (See table 3.)

Table 3. Analysis of Contributor’s Background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>IBMR No.</th>
<th>IBMR %</th>
<th>Missiology No.</th>
<th>Missiology %</th>
<th>Missionalia No.</th>
<th>Missionalia %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Europe</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other North America</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As expected, the clear majority of Missionalia’s contributors (68 percent) come from Africa, corresponding with the large proportion of Missionalia articles (86 percent) that focus on that region to research. (See figure 2.)

Figure 2. Comparison of Geographic Focus with Contributor’s Background for Missionalia Articles

Such a correspondence between author and subject is certainly not the case for the IBMR and Missiology. These journals may be international in terms of geographic focus, but they are decidedly not international in terms of the contributors’ background. Nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of articles were contributed from the United States. Including other Western countries raises the proportion to 81 percent. In contrast, only 10 percent of geographically targeted articles focused on North America, and 19 percent on the West. (See Figure 3.)

Figure 3. Comparison of Geographic Focus with Contributor’s Background for Articles in IBMR / Missiology

A complementary analysis of gender across the three journals reveals that nearly 5 out of every 6 authors are male (83 percent). In fact, over half of the “international” authors (121, or 55 percent) are males from one country, the United States.

Table 4. Contributor’s Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>IBMR No.</th>
<th>IBMR %</th>
<th>Missiology No.</th>
<th>Missiology %</th>
<th>Missionalia No.</th>
<th>Missionalia %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n/a a</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a“Helsinki 2003: Jesus and His People,” IBMR 28 (Jan. 2004): 23, a conference statement; no authors listed.

There are a variety of reasons for the disproportionate role of U.S. and Western scholars in these journals, many of which are not under the editors’ direct control. Possible reasons include the following: (1) there are vastly more missiologists in the West than in the Majority World, and so much more research is done by them; (2) the research being done by those in the Majority World is not as rigorous and/or accessible (particularly for journals based in the United States); (3) Majority World missiologists may choose “localized” journals for publishing their research; and (4) U.S. universities may entice the best missiologists from the Majority World to base themselves in the United States.

Whatever the reasons, the implication is clear. Today’s “average Christian” may be a poor, black, Nigerian woman, but today’s “average Christian missiologist” appears to be a rich, white, American man! If IBMR editor Jonathan Bonk is correct in saying that “to be spoken for implies a degree of powerlessness on the part of those who are represented by the voice of another,”19 then these international journals appear to be accepting, or perhaps even perpetuating, both the voicelessness and “a degree of powerlessness” in the Majority Christian World.

The prevalence of male authors from the United States in international journals appears to be largely independent of subject matter, geographic focus, and methodology, although it is interesting to note that almost all of the articles on postmod-
ern culture (91 percent) and theological education (71 percent) were written from this (perhaps narrow) cultural perspective. It is also relevant to note that this monocultural weighting was not declining between 2003 and 2007, the years of our research. Even acknowledging the sizable margin of error (±10 percent) in these data points, the trend appears to be quite the opposite. (See figure 4.)

Perhaps the most insightful way of analyzing authorial perspective is to use another Escobar framework from the Iguassu Dialogue, namely, missiological approach. According to Escobar, missiological research is postimperial (which follows in the trajectory of the Western missiological movement, but recognizes that new patterns of relationship and forms of Christian mission are emerging), managerial (which approaches missiology from a scientific, statistical, or business-management perspective), or from the periphery (which stands apart from the major historic thrust of Western Christian mission, questioning not just the degree but the kind of missionary action that is required). We categorized each of the analyzed articles into one these three missiological approaches. (See figure 5.)

![Figure 4. Percentage of Articles Written by Males from the United States](image)

Roman Catholic and Pentecostal research (both 6 percent) were significantly more prevalent than other theological perspectives, the former probably because of the Roman Catholic Church’s size, the latter because of the Pentecostal church’s growth. But most interestingly, the vast majority (77 percent) of missiological research had a generic or no clear theological focus and perspective. It appears as if most missiological research does not depend on the detailed theological perspective of the author, nor does it focus on a particular denominational stream of the church. There is a common theological perspective implied in almost all missiological research—that reaching out with the love of Jesus (however that is understood) is an important and valid activity for the church of God. The analysis for this article suggests that this commonality is most often enough to get on with, and our theological differences (in the main) do not have significant missiological implications.

### Theological Perspective—the “Which” Question

From *which* theological perspective do missiologists approach their research? And what is their theological focus? It is easy to misinterpret theological perspective and/or focus. Accordingly, if an author did not explicitly state (or clearly imply) his or her theological perspective/focus, it was labeled as generic. “Generic” implies that the contributor in an article either has no clear theological perspective/focus or that it is not essential to the article. (See table 5.)

### Table 5. Analysis of Theological Perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theological Perspective</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>IBMR</th>
<th>Missiology</th>
<th>Missionalia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anglican</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostal</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generic</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>302</strong></td>
<td><strong>72</strong></td>
<td><strong>104</strong></td>
<td><strong>58</strong></td>
<td><strong>80</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Roman Catholic and Pentecostal research (both 6 percent) were significantly more prevalent than other theological perspectives, the former probably because of the Roman Catholic Church’s size, the latter because of the Pentecostal church’s growth. But most interestingly, the vast majority (77 percent) of missiological research had a generic or no clear theological focus and perspective. It appears as if most missiological research does not depend on the detailed theological perspective of the author, nor does it focus on a particular denominational stream of the church. There is a common theological perspective implied in almost all missiological research—that reaching out with the love of Jesus (however that is understood) is an important and valid activity for the church of God. The analysis for this article suggests that this commonality is most often enough to get on with, and our theological differences (in the main) do not have significant missiological implications.

### Methodological Approach—the “How” Question

How do missiologists come to their conclusions? What methodological approach do they take? (See table 6.)

As with our analysis of subject matter, so we can divide these methodological approaches into distinct categories. Five are commonly used across the three journals: historical, cultural, missiological, church, and biblical overviews. Sometimes the overview stands alone, and no implications for the current missiological situation are drawn. This is common with historical overviews (44 of 75 articles—59 percent). But most often the analysis concludes...
“A well-balanced emphasis on spiritual life and high academic standards distinguishes the quality of this scholarly community . . . I challenge students to dig deeper, to develop a level of analytical and reflective thinking. I serve at a seminary committed to academic excellence and to missions and evangelism.”

Dr. Lalsangkima Pachuau
Associate Professor of History and Theology of Mission
Director of Postgraduate Studies

asburyseminary.edu
800.2ASBURY
with a series of implications for current missiological practice. Interestingly, the Southern-based journal has a higher proportion of biblical overviews. Three more approaches are sometimes used across the three journals: methodological analysis, personal overview, and theological overview. The remaining approaches are rarely used or are particular to one journal. Statistical summaries are an advertised and attractive feature of the IBMR, but they do not feature significantly elsewhere. Case studies predominantly occurred in Missionalia, particularly one issue that focused on short-term mission. Publication and conference overviews were not common in any of the journals.

### Table 6. Analysis of Methodological Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methodological Approach</th>
<th>Total No.</th>
<th>IBMR %</th>
<th>Missiology %</th>
<th>Missionalia %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missiological</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biblical</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodological</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theological</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistical Summary</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
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<td>Publication</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>121</td>
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Again, these results are generally expected. It is no surprise that historical and cultural overviews are common. It could be argued that theological or biblical reflection should be given a higher priority, particularly in the internationally focused journals, but this is a matter of degree. Similarly, having nearly 60 percent of historical overviews drawing no current missiological implications is notable and perhaps questionable. Nevertheless, the most interesting insight is that there appears to be no significant difference between the international journals and the Southern journal in terms of methodological approach. Both “postimpe-

### Summary—the “Why” Question

Having examined the what, where, who, which, and how of current missiological research, we come to the last of Kipling’s honest serving-men: why. Why should missiologists continue their work, and why should all Christians care? This analysis reveals both the dimensions of current missiological research, as exemplified in the pages of three flagship journals, and the broad directions it might profitably pursue.

First, missiological research reveals the breadth of current mission endeavor. God is at work in all corners of the globe. Our vision is often myopic, and consequently our emotions oscillate wildly based on localized successes or failures. Missiological research gives perspective and balance.

Second, we should find the means to give the South a voice. It is hardly a new insight to suggest that the missiological endeavor needs to listen hard to those who speak “from the periphery.” Most agree with this in theory. This analysis suggests, however, that we have some way to go to achieve it in practice.

Third, the West matters. This analysis suggests that it is not just Western churchgoers who make the mistake of seeing the missionary task as “out there” rather than “right here.” Western missiologists make the same mistake. Most researchers are from the West, but proportionally little of the research is about the West. The need for people of courage and insight—and particularly those with a Southern voice—to tackle this most difficult missionary frontier could not be clearer. It is not cowardly or second-rate to give your life to winning the West.

Finally, we should aim for significant cooperation in our missiological endeavor. Often interdenominational or even cross-cultural dialogues are approached with a good deal of skepticism. There are too many differences. But this analysis suggests that meaningful collaboration has a viable future, for our methodological approaches have a lot in common. With mission as a central hermeneutic and motivator, we can see that much more unites than divides us.
The Legacy of George Leslie Mackay

James R. Rohrer

George Leslie Mackay (1844–1901) was among the most remarkable missionaries of the late Victorian era. During his three decades in Taiwan (1871–1901), he received little substantive assistance from other Canadian missionaries yet, at the time of his death, left a community of more than 2,400 baptized communicants and a much larger body of regular hearers who attended more than sixty churches led by full-time native preachers.1 Mackay (pronounced “muh-KIGH”) established a hospital, a school for girls, and “Oxford College,” his training center for native church leaders. Just as important, as one of only three known missionaries in nineteenth-century China to have married an indigenous spouse, he left behind descendents who continued to play leading roles in Taiwan’s Presbyterian Church after his death.

Mackay’s achievements have been largely overlooked by modern historians of mission. During his lifetime, however, Canadian publications hailed him as one of the greatest evangelists since the apostolic age.2 In Taiwan, where Christians constitute roughly 5 to 6 percent of the populace, George Leslie Mackay remains a widely known folk hero. Every day thousands of people pass by wall-size photographs of Mackay and his students at Taipei’s Mackay Memorial Hospital, one of the most respected medical facilities in the island. In 2001 the government in Taiwan issued a commemorative postage stamp to mark the centenary of his death. Presbyterian youth groups can be spotted wearing T-shirts bearing Mackay’s likeness, along with his motto, “It is better to burn up than rust out.” Christian parents can read children to sleep with tales of Mackay printed in cartoon storybooks, while a seemingly endless stream of newspaper articles, art prints, postcards, posters, wall calendars, mugs, and medallions recalls his life. Preachers in Taiwan frequently draw upon his book, From Far Formosa (1895), for sermon illustrations, and politicians have appealed to his memory to promote various agendas.

Indeed, the legendary Mackay at times threatens to eclipse the historical missionary. As the Canadian who became “the son-in-law of Taiwan,” Mackay has served as a useful icon for Taiwanese nationalism, a symbol of the warm ties binding the island to the Western democracies.3 Christians in Taiwan often invoke him, with little historical justification, as the one who brought democratic ideals to Taiwan, a champion of the rights of Taiwan’s tribal indigenes, and an early proponent of Taiwanese independence. The actual complex history of his career deserves to be better known, not only by scholars of mission, but also by Taiwanese Christians in search of a usable past.

Childhood and Education

George Leslie Mackay was born March 21, 1844, in Zorra Township, Upper Canada, the youngest of six children of George and Helen Sutherland Mackay. His parents had emigrated to Canada in 1830 from Dornoch in Sutherlandshire, Scotland, an area reeling from the harsh Highland Clearances. Sutherland was a hotbed of evangelical dissent from the Church of Scotland. The common folk flocked to revivals spurred by Na Daoine (“the Men”), itinerant Gaelic lay preachers who called upon the people to be born again and who prophetically attacked landlords and ecclesiastical moderates for their injustice against the poor. Com—

21. Some articles (16 percent) had no clear missiological approach, especially statistical and historical articles that simply stated facts or summarized events but provided no perspective or insight on those events. These articles have been excluded from this analysis.
22. Note that in this analysis we have combined theological perspective (i.e., the theological background or stream from which the authors are doing their missiological research) and theological focus (i.e., the theological stream or denominational group that the author is focusing on). In almost all cases, the theological perspective and theological focus match. So, for example, if a Roman Catholic area of focus is being researched, it is almost always a Catholic author doing the research.
23. “Thave six honest serving-men / (They taught me all I knew); / Their names are What and Which and Why, / And How and Where and Who” (slightly altered from Rudyard Kipling’s story, “The Elephant’s Child”).

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mon people listened also to controversial evangelical ministers of the established Kirk, such as the fiery John MacDonald, the so-called Apostle of the North, who often visited Dornoch on his missionary journeys.4

Most Zorra settlers were displaced Highlanders with strong evangelical leanings. The Mackays and their neighbors clung tightly to their religious traditions. For many years they continued to use Gaelic at home and in worship, and the “family altar” was a central part of their routine. Mackay later recollected the importance of daily prayer and worship with his parents, and especially the influence of his father, who taught him the Westminster Shorter Catechism by heart while he was still a small child. In 1834 a zealous evangelical named Donald McKenzie received ordination from the Presbytery of Glasgow as a missionary to Canada. The Gaelic-speaking McKenzie settled in Zorra in 1835, where until 1872 he shepherded one of Canada’s largest Presbyterian congregations while continuing to perform missionary duties in nearby counties. Under his leadership Knox Church in Embro became something of a “school for prophets.” During

By the age of ten the young George Leslie Mackay had decided that he, too, would become a missionary.

the course of his long pastorate, McKenzie watched nearly fifty young men from his congregation enter the ministry as pastors or missionaries, among them George Leslie Mackay, whose father served the congregation as a ruling elder for twenty-five years.5

Mackay was only a few months old when his family followed McKenzie into the Free Church of Canada. Although the ecclesiastical disputes that divided the church in Scotland did not exist in Upper Canada, the evangelical leanings of the settlers led them to sympathize strongly with the Scottish dissenters. Missionaries from the Free Church of Scotland, such as Robert Burns of Paisley and his nephew, the revivalist William C. Burns, soon visited Zorra, where the people generously contributed funds to support the Free Church back home. Burns became Mackay’s childhood hero, and the Mackay family closely followed his career after he went to China as a missionary of the English Presbyterian Church.6 By the age of ten the young George Leslie Mackay had decided that he, too, would become a missionary.

Mackay attended Knox College in Toronto from 1864 to 1867. Knox professors conceived of the school as a missionary institution for training evangelists. Mixing evangelical piety and Scottish Common Sense philosophy, the Knox curriculum stressed Scripture, biblical theology, and natural science as the essential elements of Christian higher education. Knox students learned that sound scientific methods inevitably support the authority of the Bible, and that knowledge of natural science is vital to effective evangelism. Classmates later remembered Mackay as a serious scholar. He especially relished geography, geology, and natural science and participated in the Knox Literary and Scientific Society, which met monthly to present essays and debate controversial topics.7 As a missionary, Mackay drew heavily upon his Knox experience as he built his own training school for native preachers, modeling his lessons upon the Knox curriculum and incorporating the lyceum format of the Literary and Scientific Society into his own teaching methods.

From 1867 to 1870 Mackay attended Princeton Seminary, at the time a favorite choice for North American Presbyterians planning careers as foreign missionaries. At Princeton he became devoted to Charles Hodge and participated in the Committee of Inquiry, a student organization that investigated mission theories and sponsored visiting missionaries from around the world. Mackay later recalled how he “ransacked” the library’s collection of mission books and heard missions debated “a thousand different ways” during these years.8

Upon graduation he offered his service to the Canada Presbyterian Church as a foreign missionary and then sailed for Scotland to meet another boyhood hero, Alexander Duff. During the winter of 1870–71 Mackay sat through Duff’s historic lectures on evangelistic theology and often visited Duff’s home. He also studied Hindustani and considered offering himself to the Scottish or American Presbyterians as a missionary to India.9 In April 1871, however, he received instructions from the Committee on Missions in Canada to return home to receive ordination. On June 14, 1871, the General Assembly of the Canada Presbyterian Church, meeting in Quebec, appointed him their first overseas missionary, with instructions to choose a field in China in consultation with the English Presbyterian missionaries in Amoy. Weeks later, a seasick Mackay was bound for the Orient on the steamer America. Except for two furloughs, in 1880–81 and 1893–94, he would spend the remainder of his life in Taiwan, dedicated to the task of building an indigenous church led by native preachers. Mackay later honored William C. Burns, Charles Hodge, and Alexander Duff by naming chapels in Taiwan in their memory. Assessing their precise influence upon his missionary work, however, is difficult, for Mackay never committed his own missiological principles to writing in any systematic fashion. In 1877 and 1890 he characteristically skipped the important Shanghai missionary conferences held by Protestant missionaries in China, and throughout his life he showed a marked aversion to correspondence with other missionaries. Even in his private journals he rarely engaged in theological reflection, leaving us in many cases to read between the lines and to conjecture about his ideas.

Still, a few significant influences clearly stand out. First, the blend of evangelical piety and Baconian science that suffused his early years stayed with him.10 Mackay was a lifelong amateur naturalist who invested a great deal of energy teaching his students the rudiments of geology, zoology, anatomy, and botany as an essential component of their evangelistic work. Mackay always insisted that the argument from design was the most effective way to convince Chinese people of a sovereign God, and that evangelistic preaching ought to begin with the doctrine of creation.

Second, while never formally disavowing Presbyterianism, Mackay always exhibited the characteristics of a religious dissenter who placed his own sense of God’s will ahead of denominational loyalty. Throughout his career he exhibited a fierce independence from the mission committee in Canada, and he consistently opposed establishing formal Presbyterian government in Taiwan as an unnatural “accretion” that should not be forced upon converts by foreign ecclesiastical authorities. His personal scrapbook suggests that he identified with such diverse evangelists as William Booth, De Witt Talmage, and Dwight L. Moody, men more renowned for achieving spectacular results as preachers and organizers than as theologians.11

Third, Mackay, like Duff, regarded the training of native clergy as his single most important task, and he repeatedly declared that only Chinese Christians could build a church in China. But unlike Duff, who targeted upper-caste Indian youth
and emphasized the importance of rigorous Western education, Mackay identified more with the common people of Taiwan and sought to adapt the Gospel as much as possible to local patterns of thinking. Mackay preached and taught only in the island’s dominant Hokkien language, and he selectively adapted Western education to suit the immediate practical needs of his native preachers. For him, all missionary work, including medical and educational ministry, was ancillary to evangelism.

Perhaps Mackay owed most to the evangelical tradition of the Scottish Highlands, to Donald McKenzie, and to his boyhood hero, William C. Burns, who had gained notoriety among China missionaries for his itinerating ministry through the countryside of Fujien Province. Mackay, too, became famous for itineration and for his desire to live among the common folk of Taiwan. Throughout his career he stirred controversy by criticizing other foreign missionaries and insisting upon indigenous leadership in every facet of ministry. It is tempting to see his cadre of Taiwanese preachers as a parallel to Scotland’s Na Doine, a zealous group of lay itinerants whom Mackay regarded as superior to any seminary-trained Presbyterians from the West.

Mackay’s identification with the common people of Taiwan led him in 1878 to marry Tiu Chhang Mia, the seventeen-year-old adopted granddaughter of his first female convert, Thah-so. “Chhang-a” would play a vital role in his ministry throughout the remainder of his life. Believing passionately that the people of Taiwan were equal to Westerners, he married his own daughters, Mary and Bella, to native preachers and spent his life attempting to preserve the independence of his movement from Canadian control. Although Mackay was not completely free from the ethnocentric biases that typified Victorian Christians, his deep love for Taiwan was authentic. It would be difficult to find any other missionary of his era who more clearly exemplified the principles of missionary identification.12

Early Ministry in Taiwan

Mackay’s career falls neatly into two major phases. The first extends from his arrival in Taiwan in December 1871 until his first furlough in 1880, by which time he had already become a celebrity in Canada. The second extends from his return to Taiwan in 1881 until his death twenty years later. During the first phase, Mackay launched an amazing itinerating ministry that quickly reaped impressive results. The consummate pioneer missionary, he chose as his field the previously unoccupied north end of the island because he longed for freedom to follow his own methods and to learn by trial and error. Remarkably, by the end of his first summer in Taiwan he already had a cadre of dedicated converts who remained faithful leaders throughout their lifetimes, and these became the nucleus of a rapidly growing movement that more closely resembled an indigenous Chinese sect than a Presbyterian mission.13

Mackay had extraordinary linguistic abilities. Working at first with a native tutor loaned by the English Presbyterians in Amoy, he began his ministry by studying Chinese characters and the spoken language for as many as sixteen hours a day. Blessed with a prodigious memory, he learned to write one hundred new characters daily and spent the balance of his time practicing his reading and speaking with anybody who would listen to him. After only a few weeks his first tutor ran away, but Mackay had already met a young literati, Giam Chheng Hoa, who agreed to move in with him and become his new teacher in exchange for religious lessons. Giam and Mackay forged a deep symbiotic relationship grounded upon unfeigned mutual respect and admiration. The course Mackay pursued would have been impossible without this foundation. His first convert, and later the first ordained native pastor, Giam knew the island intimately. In a very real sense he became Mackay’s teacher and was the catalyst for the conversion of the other first four recruits. Throughout the first several years of Mackay’s ministry, this group marched barefoot together throughout northern Taiwan, dispensing Western medicine, pulling teeth, preaching, and establishing chapels.14

The growth of Mackay’s movement was phenomenal, suggesting that social conditions in North Formosa were unusually favorable for conversion. But Mackay’s personality and tactics also played a crucial role in his success. Having launched his itinerating campaign, he often passed weeks at a time without contact with other Westerners. If he suffered culture shock, his journals do not reveal it. Instead, he seems to have relished his growing intimacy with the band of men who traveled with him day and night. As they walked, and whenever they rested, Mackay taught his recruits Bible, theology, natural science, and materia medica; they in turn taught him the details of their culture and “how to speak like a Chinese” person. Never staying in one place for more than a few days at a time, they spent less than six months in the port of Tamsui, Mackay’s ostensible headquarters, during his entire first seven years on the island.

Mackay believed that his wandering lifestyle imitated Jesus. He certainly was familiar with the example of William C. Burns. But unlike Burns, who had almost no converts to show for his years of itineration, Mackay had already established seven chapels and had more than seventy baptized followers by the end of his third year in Taiwan. By the time he returned to Canada for his first furlough, his so-called peripatetic school had trained some two dozen preachers who weekly proclaimed the Gospel to more than a thousand regular hearers. Many foreign observers noted the remarkable devotion that existed between the missionary and his followers. To them Mackay was not so much the agent of a foreign religion as a prophet and spiritual father.15

But where did other Canadian missionaries fit within such a movement? Mackay regarded his visible success as incontestable proof of both divine blessing and the wisdom of his methods. Throughout his life he stubbornly resisted any pressure from Canada to change his ways, repeatedly leading him into conflict with church leaders at home. The mission committee
wanted Mackay to accept additional missionaries and to build a more traditional mission compound in Tamsui. Beginning with James and Jennie Fraser in 1874, it sent out a series of missionary couples to assist Mackay. These newcomers soon found themselves marginalized from the actual life of the community, Mackay leaving them alone in Tamsui to learn for themselves the language and to establish their own roles.16 Except for the last couple, William and Margaret Gauld, none of the “assistants” stayed long in the island.

Mackay considered the Frasers, who had small children, a major nuisance. The mission committee in Toronto instructed him to build a Western-style home for the couple, to give up his ill-conceived efforts to go native, and to lodge with the Frasers until a “charming” Canadian lady could be sent out to share his work. Although Mackay grudgingly built the house, he categorically rejected the rest of the committee’s wishes.17 Instead, at the suggestion of his students, in May 1878 he married Tiu Chchang Mia, a “little sister” who was well known to all the native preachers. It was a brilliant move on Mackay’s part, sealing with holy matrimony his unusual mode of living. Never again would Canadian leaders urge him to settle down with other missionaries. Instead, “Chhang-a” at first itinerated with Mackay and his students and became the revered spiritual mother of the growing movement.

Furlough and Settling Down

Marriage and the arrival of his first daughter, Mary, in 1879 required lifestyle adjustments. His first furlough in 1880–81 marks the start of the second, or “domestic,” phase of his ministry. Leaving their infant daughter in Taiwan with Chhang-a’s grandmother, Mackay and his young wife sailed to Canada on a world tour, visiting Malaysia, India, the Holy Land, Rome, Paris, London, and Scotland before arriving in Zorra six months later. For Tiu Chhang Mia, not yet twenty, this first trip away from home was a major nuisance. She informed him that she felt comfortable with his family and that he could travel for as long as he needed. At each stop they explored historical sites, mosques, temples, and cathedrals. Everywhere they visited the missions of different Christian denominations. These assistants were allowed to study language, plant gardens, help maintain the buildings in Tamsui, write letters home, and perform small tasks assigned by Mackay. But they did not engage in direct evangelism or teaching native church leaders, responsibilities that Mackay kept tightly in his own hands and shared with chosen native Christians.20

The real heart of the Christian community in North Taiwan was the expanding network of chapels in the interior of the island. These were the exclusive preserve of the native preachers, whom Mackay himself trained and appointed. Critics charged that Mackay was unfaithful to Presbyterianism and acted as a bishop over the native church. Mackay angrily rejected the notion that Western institutions could be simply transplanted to Taiwan by fiat. To be lasting, church polity would have to evolve gradually out of the “inner workings” of the Chinese mind. In the meantime, he insisted, Christians in North Formosa already enjoyed authentic self-government without the creation of formal Presbyterian structures. Every one of the churches elected elders, and he was in constant contact with these leaders, with whom he deliberated in all matters confronting the community. He likewise consulted the preachers constantly, and in 1885 he and a group of elders together laid hands on Giam Chheng-Hoa and another early preacher named Tan He, ordaining them as the first two native pastors in Taiwan. Henceforth these two men sat with Mackay and any ordained Canadian assistant in regular “mission councils,” discussing policy together. For Mackay, the reality of shared governance mattered more than strict conformity to Presbyterian polity.23

Mackay himself handled virtually all of the instruction at Oxford College, lecturing daily on topics ranging from biblical studies to geography to natural science and medicine. His advanced students assisted him with teaching younger students how to read and write Romanized Chinese. In fact, the school more closely resembled a lyceum than a Western college. Each assemblies at churches and public meetings throughout Ontario, Quebec, and the Atlantic Provinces. Contributions for his work poured into the Presbyterian mission fund, money that he used upon his return to Taiwan to construct a home for his family, build larger churches, open a boarding school for girls, and construct Oxford College as a training center for native preachers. For the rest of his life Mackay would itinerate only twice a year, the remainder of his time spent teaching and directing affairs at “headquarters” in Tamsui.

But celebrity and increased wealth proved a mixed blessing, for with it came mounting pressure from home to expand the Canadian presence and establish a more normal Presbyterian mission. He received especially strong pressure from the Women’s Foreign Missionary Committee, which wanted to send single women teachers to assist him.19 Throughout his career Mackay engaged in a constant battle to keep funding from Canada without strings attached. He demanded freedom to set mission policy without intervention, threatening to resign and take all of the converts with him if not granted autonomy. The mission committee in Toronto knew that the irascible missionary was not bluffing. For twenty years he successfully blackmailed them into giving him free rein to pursue whatever policies he pleased.

As a result, nothing resembling the typical Victorian mission compound existed during Mackay’s lifetime. His goal was to see his community develop into a fully self-governing and self-propagating native church upon his own death. To this end, he would allow only one missionary couple at a time to come out from Canada to assist him, and he made it clear that these newcomers would be required to serve under the supervision of native Christians. These assistants were allowed to study language, plant gardens, help maintain the buildings in Tamsui, write letters home, and perform small tasks assigned by Mackay. They did not engage in direct evangelism or teaching native church leaders, responsibilities that Mackay kept tightly in his own hands and shared with chosen native Christians.20

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student was regularly assigned composition and debate topics, which they would deliver as formal speeches that were critiqued by peers as well as by Mackay. Twice a year, before and after each term at school, he took his most advanced students on lengthy itinerating trips into the interior of the island, to give them experience preaching in public and facing opposition. The training at Oxford College was not designed to instill a liberal arts education, but rather to equip self-confident preachers, teachers, and healers who would soon hold responsibility for chapels of their own.

The boarding school for girls, designed to equip Bible women and Christian wives, was likewise under native leadership. Tiu Chhang Mia herself, assisted by some of the older Bible women, served as headmistress and surrogate mother for the girls, who came from churches throughout the mission field. In a controversial pamphlet addressed to the Presbyterian women of Canada, Annie Jamieson, wife of Mackay’s third assistant John Jamieson, defended Mackay’s refusal to accept Canadian women teachers. Tiu Chhang Mia, Jamieson observed, toiled away day after day, “while ladies in Canada know nothing . . . of what she is accomplishing.” Chhang-a knew “just how to deal with her own people.” She “works away training girls, helping women, attending to the wants of students, caring for and thinking of everyone but herself. She is known and loved by converts throughout the whole field.” Jamieson confessed that she had initially resented Chhang-a but in time came to understand the wisdom of Mackay’s position: “While the Doctor is busy arranging matters or preparing messages in front of the house, people will be out back pouring stories into her sympathetic ear. I would gladly relie her, for I am sure she is often tired, but then who of them all would dream of coming to me? I did not grow up among the people. I have not been to their homes; I do not know their children and aunts and uncles and neighbors, and all about their family troubles. How could they be expected to come to me?”

Second Furlough and Death

In 1893 Mackay and Chhang-a returned to Canada on a second furlough, this time bringing with them their three children and a young student named Koa Kau, a future son-in-law whom Mackay wanted to introduce to the Canadian church. He left behind the Gaulds, only recently arrived in Taiwan, who were still unable to speak the language. The furlough, he informed the mission board in Toronto, would prove that the native preachers were fully able to sustain their church alone “if all foreigners were withdrawn.” This time landing in Vancouver, the missionary was dumbfounded when his wife and Koa Kau were not permitted to disembark until a head tax had been paid. Although the matter was soon cleared up, Mackay spent the rest of his time in Canada speaking out against racism and demanding an end to discrimination against Chinese immigrants. As moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly in 1894, he had a very visible platform from which to thunder his opposition to anti-Chinese prejudice in Canada, as well as his faith in the complete equality of Chinese Christians.

During his furlough, the Sino-Japanese War dramatically transformed the situation of the Christians in Taiwan. Claimed as a colonial prize by the victorious Japanese, Formosa was to become a showcase of Japan’s ability to administer an empire as efficiently as the Western powers. Although Mackay stated his optimistic belief that the change in government would ultimately prove a blessing, the transition brought a host of new problems. Perhaps most obvious was the Japanese insistence that all educational and medical facilities on the island conform to modern Western standards. To survive under Japanese rule, Mackay clearly would need to adjust his missionary methods to satisfy colonial administrators.

We will never know how successfully Mackay would have adapted to the new reality. Late in the winter of 1901 he discovered a small lump in his throat that turned out to be an aggressive cancer. British physicians at Tamsui and the mainland were helpless to arrest the progression of the disease. On the afternoon of June 2, 1901, George Leslie Mackay breathed his last. As word of his death spread from church to church, a stream of mourners descended upon Tamsui, where Mackay’s body rested in a glass-faced coffin in Oxford College. Young and old crowded around the coffin, reaching out to touch his face. His daughter Bella described the scene in her diary, noting that “young men wept like a child as well as old men, women and children. Some would remain weeping over the coffin for a whole hour, then they would go out of the room, then they would re-enter again and weep more bitterly than before.”

Giam Chheng Hoa presided over the burial of his dearest friend. Eighteen of the oldest preachers and elders carried the coffin to the grave that Mackay himself had selected years before. The cemetery was too small to hold all of the mourners that gathered from around the mission field, including more than three hundred non-Chinese dignitaries who came to honor the fallen missionary. Many converts from distant stations could not arrive in time for the burial. For days they streamed into Tamsui, to sit beside Mackay’s grave and weep, as Bella recorded, “like one having lost a father.”

Legacy

For all his unusual characteristics, George Leslie Mackay was very much a man of the Victorian age. He shared his era’s tendency to rank races and cultures along an evolutionary scale, sometimes asserting the inferiority of the island’s indigenous tribal peoples to the dominant Chinese populace. His journals occasionally engaged in the sort of Orientalist representations of Asian civilizations that modern students of culture seek to avoid. He was no champion of interreligious goodwill, confidently predicting the future annihilation of Buddhism, Taoism, and other forms of “heathenism” with triumphantalistic certainty. His acerbic attacks...
upon Roman Catholic “papistry” were only slightly less virulent.

Despite his flaws, to a degree that has been rare in any period of history, George Leslie Mackay allowed himself to truly encounter and to be transformed by the people he sought to serve. During his first weeks in Taiwan, as he drove himself relentlessly to learn the language, he recorded in his journal that he wanted “no barriers” between himself and the people. This desire to become one with the people, to identify with them as wholly as he possibly could, deeply touched many of those whom he encountered. Thousands responded by accepting his Lord as their own and reorienting their lives around the new community that he had called into existence. Possessing an authoritarian temperament, as his critics correctly charged, he exercised his power to carve out for the native Christians a degree of autonomy and freedom perhaps unparalleled among China missions of his day. That he is still lionized in Taiwan by Christians and non-Christians alike, long after most other Victorian missionaries have been forgotten or deconstructed, testifies to the enduring bonds that mutual affection and respect can forge between people of sharply different cultures.

**Selected Bibliography**

Mackay’s mission correspondence is located in the United Church of Canada Archives in Toronto, along with valuable correspondence of his Canadian assistants. The Jennie Fraser Papers are especially helpful. His personal journals are preserved at Aletheia University in Tamsui, Taiwan. Copies are also held at the Taiwan Theological Seminary Archives in Taipei.

**Works by George Leslie Mackay**

1895  

**Works About George Leslie Mackay**


**Notes**

1. Much of this article is based upon the author’s examination of Mackay’s journal, held at Aletheia University in Tamsui, Taiwan, and the Correspondence Relating to the Formosa Mission in the Presbyterian Church of Canada Board of Foreign Mission Papers, held at the United Church of Canada Archives in Toronto, Canada (hereafter UCC Archives). The photograph of the Mackay family on p. 223 of this article is from R. P. Mackay, Life of George Leslie Mackay, D.D., 1844–1901 (Toronto: Board of Foreign Missions, 1913), p. 35. The picture of Oxford College on p. 225 is from George Leslie Mackay, From Far Formosa: The Island, Its People and Missions (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1895), facing p. 291.


3. When the directorate general of posts of the Republic of China issued a Mackay commemorative stamp in 2001, the cachet cited his “unselfish devotion to Taiwan” and the directorate’s desire “to strengthen the bonds of friendship between Taiwan and Canada.”


5. Obituary of George Mackay, dated March 21, 1884, preserved in George Leslie Mackay’s scrapbook. I wish to thank Mackay’s granddaughters, Anna, Isabel, and Margaret Mackay, of Toronto, for graciously sharing this with me. On McKenzie, see the material in the Donald McKenzie vertical file at the UCC Archives. On the Scottish community of Zorra, see Graham Leslie Brown, “The Scottish Settlement in West Zorra Township, Oxford County” (M.A. thesis, Univ. of Western Ontario, 1970); William M. Campbell, Zorra (Boston: Sherman, French, 1915); Marjory Harper, Emigration from North-East Scotland, vol. 1, Willing Exiles (Aberdeen: Aberdeen Univ. Press, 1988), pp. 191–239; W.A. Mackay, Pioneer Life in Zorra (Toronto: Briggs, 1899), and, by the same author, Zorra Boys at Home and Abroad (Toronto: Briggs, 1900); W. D. McIntosh, One Hundred Years in the Zorra Church (Knox United, Embro) (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1930); and W. A. Ross, History of Zorra and Embro: Pioneer Sketches of Sixty Years Ago (Embro, Ont.: Embro Courier Office, 1909). The Woodstock Public Library, Woodstock, Ontario, also has a very useful local history file.


7. Knox College Literary Society Records, Archives of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, Toronto. In addition to Vaudry, on Knox College,
Q. Who provides financial support for native missionary evangelists in Russia and other countries of the former Soviet empire?

A. Since 1991 Christian Aid has expended millions of dollars to support Slavik Radchuk and other native missionaries who conduct huge evangelistic campaigns and reach millions through radio and TV broadcasts in the Russian language which is understood in 15 countries of the former USSR.

Q. Who has been winning souls and planting churches in Russia and the former USSR since Communism collapsed?

A. Native missionary evangelists like Slavik Radchuk have won millions to Christ and planted thousands of new churches in Ukraine, Russia and other former Soviet states.

Q. How is Christian Aid financed?

A. Christian Aid is supported entirely by freewill gifts and offerings from Bible-believing, missionary-minded Christians, churches and organizations.

Q. Are other indigenous missions in need of financial help for their missionaries?

A. Christian Aid is in communication with more than 4000 indigenous missions, some based in almost every unevangelized country on earth. They have over 200,000 missionaries in need of support. All Christians who believe in Christ’s “Great Commission” are invited to join hands with Christian Aid in finding help for thousands of native missionaries who are now out on the fields of the world with no promise of regular financial support.

For more than 50 years Christian Aid Mission has been sending financial help to indigenous evangelistic ministries based in unevangelized countries. Currently more than 700 such ministries are being assisted in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe. They deploy more than 75,000 native missionaries who are spreading the gospel of Christ among unreached people within more than 3000 different tribes and nations.
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The Legacy of Carl Thurman Smith

Wong Man Kong

Carl Thurman Smith was a pastor, missionary educator, and historian. He was born and educated in the United States, where he served as a pastor until he reached age forty. He originally had no idea that he would spend the second half of his life on the other side of the globe—in Hong Kong, where he at first taught theology in a seminary. While teaching theology, he developed a keen interest in the history of Hong Kong, which he found included many fascinating stories about Chinese Christians. After he ended his connection with his missionary agency, he stayed in Hong Kong, where he lived a simple life as an independent scholar while pursuing his historical projects, which proved to be of lasting value. He published one solid, well-researched article after another on South China, Hong Kong, and Macau. On April 7, 2008, he passed away in Macau at the age of ninety. Three lengthy obituaries, in Chinese and English, appeared in Hong Kong newspapers, which was a most unusual tribute for the passing of a scholar in Hong Kong. It suggests that Carl T. Smith was dearly missed and that his legacy is significant in the history of Hong Kong.

Family Background and Education

Carl Thurman Smith was born on March 10, 1918, in Dayton, Ohio. He was brought up in a middle-class family; his father was a purchasing agent, and his mother was a teacher. His parents were pious, and they raised their children according to Christian belief, with the family joining the Hale Evangelical and Reformed Church in Dayton. Carl was confirmed at the age of fourteen and became a member of the church. He taught Sunday school and conducted junior church. He wrote, “During my early adolescent years, I independently arrived at a decision to enter some form of Christian service. My home background was religious but no external pressure was placed upon me in making this choice. The natural development of my interests led me to this choice.”

Carl performed well in high school and university. He attended Steele High School in Dayton, graduating in 1936. Those writing commendations for him mentioned that he was “remarkably level-headed” and had “interest in genealogical studies.” He majored in philosophy and minored in Greek at DePauw University, in Greencastle, Indiana, from which he earned a B.A. in 1940. According to his Greek professor, Rufus T. Stephenson, Smith was “a likeable young man of the more conservative type, of splendid Christian character” and “an excellent student who enjoys going to the bottom of things. He is an easy and forceful speaker and a leader among young men here. He has excellent health, a finely balanced personality, and gives unusual promise of usefulness.” As he had decided to enter church ministry, he joined and was elected president of the Oxford Fellowship, a group for preministerial students.

Following graduation Smith pursued the bachelor of divinity degree at Union Theological Seminary, in New York City, graduating in May 1943. He considered himself a “rational religious thinker” as he had begun questioning the soundness and validity of some biblical accounts at the age of twelve. Such intellectual concerns did not lead him out of the church; rather, he committed his life to pastoral work when he was in university. His questions remained unresolved until he took a course taught by Paul Tillich (1886–1965), then on the Union faculty. Smith acknowledged the power of Tillich’s inspiration but did not become a disciple of Tillich. He said, “Tillich’s philosophy is too metaphysical. So, I rather chose Karl Barth (1886–1968), from whom I can have a biblical base.” Perhaps he would have become a theologian had he not met Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971), who emphasized combining religious commitment with devotion to social and political affairs. These contributed to the making, for Smith, of a keen social consciousness that became the basis for transforming his passion for theological knowledge into his quest of history. His thesis at Union combined history and theology as he studied the life and thought of John Casper Stoever (1707–79), a prominent Lutheran pastor.

Pastorate in the United States

After graduation, Smith served as a pastor for seventeen years. He joined the Evangelical and Reformed Church, which ordained him in June 1943. He was dispatched to take charge of the ministry at the Dewey Avenue Reformed Church in Rochester, New York. In 1945 the Evangelical and Reformed Church planned to start a new church in northeast Philadelphia, and in 1947 Smith was appointed to start up the congregation “from ‘scratch’ without the nucleus of even a few members to act as a foundation for the new venture in faith.” He canvassed the neighborhood, seeking those interested in the church. After a year, in April 1948, the congregation had grown from zero to forty, large enough to be officially chartered; it was then known as the St. Stephen’s Evangelical and Reformed Church in Philadelphia (now St. Stephen’s United Church of Christ). By the time Smith decided to leave, the membership had grown to 202. Such growth suggests that Smith was a committed pastor who took good care of the congregation. Even after he left for Hong Kong as a missionary educator, he kept his ties with the congregation through correspondence and other contacts. In 1998, at the advanced age of eighty, he flew all the way from Hong Kong to Philadelphia to take part in the celebration of the golden anniversary of St. Stephen’s.

While building the church, Smith paid attention to self-development. He enrolled in a number of courses at the Temple School of Theology, from which he earned twenty credit units. Of the courses that he took there, he particularly remarked on the inspiration he received from Lefferts Loetscher (1904–81), a well-known scholar of church history, and Edwin Lewis (1881–1959), a theologian who had gone through a drastic shift of position from liberal to neoorthodox. Not surprisingly, Smith found Lewis particularly thought-provoking.

While serving as a pastor, Smith responded to the missionary call from his church and offered himself for overseas mission. He became a missionary under the auspices of the United Board.
for World Ministries, a missionary agency of his church, which, after merger, had become the United Church of Christ (UCC). The board assigned him to affiliate with the Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China, which was looking for a missionary educator to teach theology at its seminary, the Hong Kong Theological Institute. In order to prepare for his future work in Hong Kong, Smith took courses in Cantonese at the Yale Institute of Far Eastern Languages in New Haven, Connecticut.

In Hong Kong and at Union During the 1960s

In January 1961 Smith arrived in Hong Kong and immediately joined the Hong Kong Theological Institute, where he taught systematic theology, Old Testament, and church history. The institute needed scholars to provide leadership in adapting to all necessary changes, as it had already been resolved that it was going to be a part of the Chung Chi Theological Seminary, which was to be opened in 1963. Smith performed well in his teaching and was a key contributor to the seminary. At one time he was its only full-time faculty member. In particular, he made good efforts in offering new courses, such as the history of Christianity and church in Hong Kong, in which he paid special attention to the overlooked stories of Chinese Christians. Research literature and books for the general public then available provided views exclusively from the missionary side. Smith determined that he would write the history of Chinese Christians from their point of view.

He was keenly aware of the scholarly needs in the future development of the theology division and engaged in studies accordingly. Between 1965 and 1966 he enrolled in the master of sacred theology program at Union Theological Seminary, his alma mater. For his thesis he proposed to research “the development of Chinese congregations in Hong Kong from 1841 to 1870,” which was intended to shed light on the impact of Christianity in nineteenth-century Hong Kong. In 1966 Smith submitted a thesis entitled “Schools and Chinese Christians, and communities. From 1966 to 1969

the seminary underwent great changes, including merger with Tsung Tsin Lok Yuk Seminary and its eventual incorporation with Chung Chi College, in which it became the Theology Division and was housed in the college’s Theology Building. These changes altered the ways that the seminary operated and posed a threat to Smith’s position in the college as a missionary educator.

A Simple Life in Hong Kong from the 1970s

After another five years of service in Hong Kong (1966–70), Smith took a furlough in California. In late 1970, when he had nearly finished his furlough, the United Board of World Ministries suddenly informed him that the Theology Division of Chung Chi College had raised enough money to support itself and to hire an Asian theologian to replace him and teach his subjects. As a missionary-sending agency, the United Board of World Ministries was pleased to see that an indigenous church or institution in a mission field had come of age and could now support itself. The board decided that Smith should be dispatched to another mission field where his services would be needed. Smith, though, did not want to start a new career in another mission field, because it would mean cutting himself off from more than a decade of hard work in research, scholarship, teaching, and ministry in Hong Kong. He decided to act against the instructions of the United Board of World Ministries, which then made it clear that his expenses in Hong Kong would no longer be covered. The Theology Division, however, welcomed him back to Hong Kong, although he might be assigned only part-time teaching. Smith was given the right to reside in staff quarters of Chung Chi College until his extended retirement age of sixty-five in 1983. Therefore, from 1972 at age fifty-four until his retirement, he served in various capacities as a part-time lecturer and honorary lecturer of the college.

In Hong Kong Smith was used to living a simple life. Now he had to live even more simply. But he had a strong will, as well as great determination to keep up his research. Since the pension he received from his church and the missionary agency did not cover his expenses in Hong Kong, he took some part-time jobs. For example, he worked at the Department of History, University of Hong Kong, where he helped establish the History Workshop between 1975 and 1978. The workshop turned out to be a true blessing for many scholars in Hong Kong studies. He was also grateful to many colleagues and friends who helped him in the midst of financial difficulties. In particular, he was hired as a consultant for historical projects of the Hong Kong Anglican Church (the Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui). What Smith appreciated most was the spirit of care behind such appointments.

Smith was a sedentary scholar who transformed long hours of hard work in libraries and archives into journeys of adventure in uncharted lands of the past. He was also keenly aware of the need to take part in Hong Kong society. He was a member of the Council of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, which he served as vice-president for almost two decades beginning in 1976. After his long years of service, he was elected honorary vice-president. Between 1977 and 1979 he wrote short essays on Hong Kong history for South China Morning Post in a series called “A Sense of History.” On another frontier, from 1987 to 1990 he served as a member of the Antiquities Advisory Board.
of the Antiquities and Monuments Office of the Hong Kong government. In 1996 Hong Kong Baptist University established the Archives on the History of Christianity in China, to which Smith donated his own precious collection of 300 church history–related rare documents in the next year. At the invitation in 1996 and 1997 of the head of the Chung Chi Theology Division of Chung Chi College, he offered courses on the history of Christianity in Hong Kong. His active involvement in numerous capacities indicated his dedication to promoting study of the history of Christianity in Hong Kong and the history of Hong Kong itself.

When he was over the age of eighty, Smith was pleasantly surprised to have a number of academic recognitions bestowed upon him. The Cultural Affairs Bureau in Macau appointed him a full-time researcher and provided stipends that enabled him to stay in Macau and to continue his work in archives and libraries. In 2003 the Centre of Asian Studies at the University of Hong Kong honored him as one of its distinguished fellows. On October 30, 2005, the Inter-University Institute of Macau awarded him the degree doctor of letters, honoris causa.

Hong Kong Research and Writing

Smith’s impressive results in scholarship demonstrated the wisdom of his decision to remain in Hong Kong. From the mid-1960s onward, he produced an impressive number of publications. Originally he had been more interested in theology, which had given him a framework for his biblical interpretation and had facilitated a sense of social consciousness. After a few years of teaching in Hong Kong, he was able to grasp certain features of Chinese culture, out of which came two theological essays in 1967. Yet, for most of his writings throughout his career in Hong Kong, Smith took a more historical approach.

While teaching theology in Hong Kong, Smith began to reflect upon history from a left-wing, even a contrarian, viewpoint. His academic training and the inspiration from such leading scholars as Reinhold Niebuhr, Edwin Lewis, and J. C. Hoekendijk in particular enabled him to see things from a sensibly different perspective. In particular, he paid more attention to the marginal groups whose voices were suppressed and who thus became invisible in history.

Early in his academic career in Hong Kong, Smith chose to pursue the history of Christian missions in China. At that time, it was customary to write from a strongly mission-centric perspective, giving primacy to missionary voices. This approach, however, was at odds with Smith’s own academic views. So he embarked on a long journey of discovering the history of ordinary Chinese Christians. He wrote, “I was immediately struck by the paucity of detailed information about the Chinese converts. From what social and economic group had they come? How did becoming a Christian affect their relationship with non-Chinese? Did they become less Chinese and more Westernized? Did their social and economic position change? To what extent were they alienated from their cultural tradition? These questions led him to examine missionary archives, public records, and other primary source materials, which resulted in some remarkable works that shed light on the inner thoughts and feelings of many individuals who were otherwise invisible in the prevailing historical depictions.

As a sober researcher combing through newspapers, wills, land records, and many other sources, Smith uncovered much substantive information that enabled him to pursue his investigations. Instead of viewing things through the eyes of governors or major officials, he was able to write a history “from below.” He focused not on missionaries but on their Chinese students. He paid less attention to the socially and commercially powerful Europeans and more to the Chinese mistresses they kept. He explored the history, not of major Taipans (the leading European or American businessmen), but of the Jewish, Armenian, and Parsee merchants in Canton, Hong Kong, and Macau. He examined, not the affluent and powerful Chinese social leaders in Hong Kong, but groups of young maidservants that they kept, known as mui tsai (lit. “little sister”). As Smith was fascinated by the rapidly changing urban landscape, he studied not the central business district, where money and power interacted subtly, but peripheral localities, which revealed a truer taste of what Hong Kong was like. Some of his articles are collected in A Sense of History: Studies in the Social and Urban History of Hong Kong (1995).

Finally, Smith’s writings reveal his style, his methods, and the fruitfulness of his research. In a new introduction for a reprint edition of Chinese Christians (2005), Christopher Munn highlighted the salient features of Smith’s scholarship: “The richness of detail and anecdotes that make the book a pleasure to read often lead us away from the main point of each chapter: sometimes, indeed, the ‘point’ is in the detail—in conveying an impression of complexity and the muddle of so much of Hong Kong’s history. This is not a fault but a product of Smith’s unusual methodology and of his reluctance to generalize.”

Smith’s legacy is not merely at the level of scholarship presented in research literature but at the operational level, which has greatly facilitated research into Hong Kong and Macau history. He developed a unique file-index system to handle his research materials. The size of his system is enormous, comprising 140,000 note cards that contain all the precious information that he extracted from the various sources that he consulted. A considerable number of scholars have made use of his cards. These cards were microfilmed in the early 1990s by the University of Tokyo, and later by the Genealogical Society of Utah. In 1997 Smith permitted the Public Records Office, Hong Kong, to digitize all his cards. And in 2006 Smith donated the cards to the library of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. The cards are now housed at the Hong Kong Central Library.

Conclusion

Smith’s critical decision in 1972 to return to Hong Kong deeply affected the legacy for which he is now remembered and cherished. His extensive writings and thorough use of many different sources earned him lasting respect from scholars in the field of Hong Kong and Macau history. And his generous sharing of his file-index system has become an extended blessing to those interested in a wide range of topics covering the history of Christianity in modern China and many interesting individuals in Canton, Hong Kong, and Macau.

No two Anglo-American missionaries in Hong Kong were completely alike, although they may have come from similar backgrounds in following the same religious call. Neither were
their stories identical. Smith once commented on the contributions of missionaries in Hong Kong, “The missionary story in Hong Kong has not been without its moments of failure, lack of vision, pettiness and rivalry, pretensions and pride, but it has also had its better moments which have left their imprint on Hong Kong.”22 Smith himself struggled with moments of hardship in the midst of financial difficulties, cherished moments of satisfaction in discovery and in the contribution he made in scholarship, and treasured moments of pleasure in meeting and making friends who shared the same passion for history. Smith’s books and articles will continue to inspire those who seek to grasp the rich history of Hong Kong.

Selected Bibliography
For a bibliography listing Smith’s sixty book chapters and articles published in academic journals, see http://escadocs.blogspot.com/2008/04/carl-t-smith-bibliography.html.

Works by Carl Thurman Smith

Notes
1. I am grateful to a number of scholars who assisted me in preparing this article. They are Lee Ka-kui (chief editor, Hong Kong Educational Publishing Company), Ying Fuk Tsang (associate professor of Chung Chi Divinity School), Leah Rousmaniere (associate director of development for stewardship, Union Theological Seminary), William Stone (pastor, St. Stephen’s United Church of Christ), and Irene Wong (archivist at the University Library of Hong Kong Baptist University). This article is a substantially revised version of an earlier article that I coauthored with Lee Ka-kui, “The Reverend Carl T. Smith: A Missionary-Turned-Historian,” Modern Chinese History Society of Hong Kong Bulletin 6 (July 1993): 91–97.
4. Ibid.
7. William Stone, pastor of St. Stephen’s United Church of Christ, e-mail to author, October 1, 2008.
9. In 1960 the school became Conwell School of Theology, chartered separately but still on the campus of Temple University until 1969, when it combined with Gordon Divinity School, now Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, South Hamilton, Mass.
14. In 2009 the Department of History at the University of Hong Kong decided to close the history workshop. The research materials have been relocated to various libraries.
15. Smith wrote quite extensively about the history of the Hong Kong Anglican Church. Deborah Ann Brown helped organize and type his manuscript into eighteen files. She also quoted it extensively in her book; see “The History of the Anglican Church in Hong Kong,” in Turmoil in Hong Kong on the Eve of Communist Rule: The Fate of the Territory and Its Anglican Church (San Francisco: Mellen Research Univ. Press, 1993), pp. 59–110.
16. Smith played an active role in making possible the success of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. In December 2005 it organized a special event at the Hong Kong City Hall, “Carl T. Smith: A Celebration of His Works on Hong Kong and Macau,” paying tribute to his contributions both to the organization and to scholarship. See Newsletter of the Hong Kong Branch of Royal Asiatic Society, January 2006, p. 4.
18. Newsletter of Macau Inter-University Institute 1, no. 2 (November 2005): 1.
Book Reviews

Kingdom Without Borders: The Untold Story of Global Christianity.


Like two waves merging from different angles to crest together, these two publications break upon the scene of current studies in global Christianity and contribute significantly to its rising tide. For over thirty years now, scholars have pointed out the recent, seismic shift in the center of Christianity from Europe and North America to Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Yet as Miriam Adeney and Mark Shaw attest, we still grapple to understand and respond appropriately to this revolutionary change in our religious scene. Thus Adeney is compelled to narrate “the untold story of global Christianity” (p. 11), and Shaw to question its causes and implications.

Adeney introduces her book as “a continuation of Hebrews 11, that great list of people down the ages who lived and died by faith” (p. 8). Drawing upon personal encounters and published accounts, she employs her notable gift of storytelling to narrate the ordinary but extraordinary lives of Christians around the world. Far from abstract, academic discourse, her work creatively weaves together real-life experiences with reflections on the major missiological issues they illustrate: for example, suffering and martyrdom, Internet use in evangelism and discipleship, interfaith relations, and environmental stewardship. Overall, she affirms that “God is doing something new in our time…. This book is not primarily about us [Christians in the West] or what we should do. It is a humble celebration of the kingdom that glows [sic] from generation to generation and will never be destroyed” (p. 40)—a kingdom without borders.

Shaw notes the remarkable resurgence of Christianity worldwide, contrary to widespread twentieth-century assumptions that secularization would supersede religion, especially Christianity. While acknowledging multiple factors contributing to the rise of twentieth-century Christianity, Shaw proposes another major driving force not yet adequately recognized: namely, revivals. He analyzes the nature and dynamics of revivals through a series of case studies spanning the globe, from the Korean revival of 1907, to subsequent revivals in West and East Africa, India, America, Brazil, and China. The main thesis of his compelling argument is that global revivals are “charismatic people movements that seek to change their world by translating Christian faith and transferring power” (p. 198). Penetratingly, he demonstrates the interplay of spiritual, cultural, historical, global, and group dynamics through which these revivals have propelled the growth, vitality, and diversity of global Christianity today.

While Shaw offers more in-depth historical, theological, sociological, and missiological analysis, Adeney offers a more artistic montage of God’s kingdom in our midst today. Together, these complementary texts exemplify, methodologically, the complex, interdisciplinary nature of studies in world Christianity. Significantly, both Adeney and Shaw clearly account for the rise in global Christianity primarily in terms of grassroots, indigenous movements worldwide—as opposed to those who persist in interpreting it as right-wing American imperialism or one-way globalization from the West to the rest. Certainly both books are essential reading for anyone seeking to understand and participate in God’s kingdom in the world today.

—Diane Stinton

Diane Stinton is Associate Professor of Theology in the World Christianity program at Africa International University (AIU)/Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (NEGST), Nairobi, Kenya. She has written Jesus of Africa: Voices of Contemporary African Christology (Orbis, 2004) and edited African Theology on the Way: Current Conversations (SPCK, 2010).


In this multiauthored and multiedited collection of essays, missiologists from across the globe reflect on pressing issues in contemporary Christian mission. These essays, written by authors from various Christian traditions (including Lutheran, Reformed, Roman Catholic, and Anabaptist), were all originally presented at events organized by the Chicago Center for Global Ministries. They celebrate the centenary of the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, as well as anticipate topics explored at the 2010 Edinburgh conference.

The essays investigate an impressive range of issues, including globalization, the relationship between mission and migration, race, gender, ecology, dialogue, and short-term missions. As usual in a collection of essays by several authors, some contributions are stronger and more engaging than others. Some of the essays seem to do little more than summarize material already available elsewhere. Others offer fresh perspectives on perennial and emerging concerns.

All the essays recognize and celebrate
the changing direction and dynamics of global mission—no longer “from the West to the rest” but “from everywhere to everywhere.” Participants at Edinburgh 2010 were drawn from the world church in a way that was inconceivable in 1910. Several essays reflect helpfully on the implications of this multidirectional expression of mission, with its very different power dynamics and ways of operating. The first essay in the collection, “From Edinburgh to Edinburgh,” by Stephen Bevans (the 2008 Scherer Lecture), provides a succinct summary of the key missiological changes in the past century in relation to its context, content, means, and attitude.

—Stuart Murray Williams

Stuart Murray Williams works under the auspices of the Anabaptist Network as a trainer and consultant, with particular interest in urban mission, church planting, and emerging forms of church. He is the founder of Urban Expression, a pioneering urban church planting agency with teams in several cities in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.

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—Mark A. Noll, University of Notre Dame

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Nicholas Black Elk: Medicine Man, Missionary, Mystic.


Nicholas Black Elk makes a significant contribution to the broadly cast genre of “Black Elk studies.” Through the use of published and unpublished material, as well as drawing on his children’s personal experience of Black Elk and his context, author Michael Steltenkamp, professor of religious studies at Wheeling Jesuit University, Wheeling, West Virginia, attempts to redress a gap in the existing literature. In doing so he provides an interpretive biography that opens a new window on Black Elk as a historical figure. Beyond the reach of antecedent biographies, which have focused largely on the protagonist’s earlier life and documented disaffections, this work portrays Black Elk as a complex figure. Steltenkamp argues for an interpretation of Black Elk as a religious leader who, in the end, lived an integrated spirituality woven from his traditional Lakota heritage as it encountered Christian faith and practice through the broad span of the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth. To construct this analysis, the author relies rather heavily on Black Elk’s daughter, Lucy, as a companion witness to the story he is attempting to tell. Setting the trajectory of Black Elk’s becoming against the marker of his progeny is not necessarily an inappropriate hermeneutical tactic. It allows the character to live for the reader in a way that biographies written with less direct access to Black Elk’s story cannot do. The author is to be commended for the broad reach of his story and his willingness to engage the complex conversation that unfolds between traditional spirituality and Christian theology.

—Wendy L. Fletcher

Wendy Fletcher is Principal and Dean, and Professor of the History of Christianity, at Vancouver School of Theology, Vancouver, British Columbia. She works extensively in the area of cross-cultural research and education.

Alaskan Missionary Spirituality.


Alaskan Missionary Spirituality is a collection of primary-source material on an epoch of Christian mission rarely dealt with by historians: the Russian Orthodox mission to Alaska during the
eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The organization, translation, and introductory notes by editor Michael Oleska allow this material to be read like one continuous story, a story of courageous and highly effective evangelization of the native Alaskan population.

The editor’s introduction provides necessary background, highlights the accomplishments of individual missionaries, and guides the reader into the collection by describing several significant characteristics of this movement. The organized effort began with a group of missionaries from the Valaam Monastery in Finland. Right from the time of their arrival in the fall of 1794, these monks were determined to “establish an American Church, respecting and employing the languages and artistic culture of Alaska within the community of Orthodox churches” (p. 7). As was the case in Siberia, the Alaskan culture was dominated by shamanism. Interestingly, these Russian missionaries preached the Gospel “without directly attacking the traditional shamanistic world view of the natives” (p. 13). In fact, they sought to present Christianity as the “fulfillment of what the Alaskans already knew” (p. 13). The result was tremendous success, with thousands being baptized and gathered into churches that employed their own art and music to contextualize the eternal message of Christ.

Unfortunately, the sale of Alaska to the United States in 1867 led to a widespread attempt to assimilate the population by imposing English and enrolling children (sometimes removed from their homes by force) in boarding schools, thus destroying much of the native culture and social fabric. Such insensitivity notwithstanding, this valuable book recounts and documents what must be one of the most effective missionary efforts in the history of the church.

—Edward Rommen

Edward Rommen served as a missionary in Europe. He is a priest in the Orthodox Church in America and an adjunct professor at Duke Divinity School, Durham, North Carolina.

Earth, Empire, and Sacred Text: Muslims and Christians as Trustees of Creation.


David Johnston, visiting scholar in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, University of Pennsylvania, casts a “common theology of humanity and creation” for Christianity and Islam, not only using the sacred texts of the two faiths, but also describing the economic, social, and political milieu that his theology seeks to address. Indeed, in keeping with the author’s belief that any theology needs be constructed with reference to its larger setting, this work is much more wide-ranging than a one-dimensional discussion of some interesting points of contact between the two religions. Johnston, though, allows that between the two there are important differences that cannot be glossed over, and that such differences will affect the manner in which theological dialogue can take place.

Johnston’s background is trans-cultural, rooted not only in the American context but also in those of Europe and West Asia, which affords him a unique vantage point from which he sees an urgency for Christians and Muslims to cooperate in programs of social justice: little short of our temporal salvation is at stake. He does not shy away from showing how intractable problems such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict...
can benefit from such cooperation and dialogue. Similarly, he unflinchingly addresses larger difficulties of ecosocial justice and planetary sustainability.

Johnston helpfully shares with the reader how he, as a committed Christian, can read the Qur’an in a manner that does justice to the Qur’an as a text while not imposing on it Protestant thought patterns. Over the centuries, Protestants have stumbled by reading Christian inferences in the text that may not be there, or missing points of contact between the two religions because of dissimilarities in language. Johnston’s facility with Arabic and his familiarity with the tradition of Qur’anic commentary serve him well in this undertaking.

An evangelical Congregationalist, Johnston quotes from beyond the usual cast of characters that one might expect—for example, the controversial theologian John Hick. Johnston’s political and socioeconomic analyses draw on sources as disparate as Paul Krugman, with The New York Times, and the late Edward Said. Similarly, Johnston uses thinkers such as Patricia Crone, whom Islamicists will recognize as less than mainstream. His indictment of George Bush’s policies in Iraq cannot be dismissed as merely due to some political agenda lurking in the background, seeking to clothe itself respectfully in theology. Similarly, his objections to globalization or his view of postmodernism are not rooted ideologically.

While not the easiest read, this book is well worth the effort, especially if it provokes readers to ask new questions and entertain fresh answers.

—Steven P. Blackburn

Steven P. Blackburn, ordained in the Congregational Christian Churches (NAACC), is Faculty Associate in Semitic Scriptures at the MacDonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, Hartford Seminary, Hartford, Connecticut.

Making Headway: The Introduction of Western Civilization in Colonial Northern Nigeria.


This book, which is about the competing meaning of Western civilization among northern Nigeria’s vast communal groupings, documents the perspectives of colonial administrators and Christian missionaries, as well as the reactions of various peoples and local rulers, especially emirs, chiefs, and Islamic clerics under British colonial rule in the first half of the twentieth century. What did it mean to “make headway” in the context of the introduction of Western civilization to northern Nigeria? In an interesting presentation of the various policies, strategies, and ideologies of the bearers of Western civilization to Northern Nigeria, Barnes shows us what “making headway” meant in the local contexts. As he ably demonstrates, for the missionaries, making headway was a fight against “the sacred North run as a land apart, suspended in time and space” (p. 91). For the colonial administration, it was about how governance related to the institution and sustaining of so-called indirect rule—involving, for example, the appointment and deposition of rulers, negotiation with these rulers on how to govern and accomplish government objectives, taxation, public works, and education. This education involved (1) a leadership that followed colonial directives; (2) clerical and artisanal training; (3) reconciliation of Muslim and British values; (4) denationalization/detribalization; (5) resistance to the harmonization of the educational systems of the southern and northern protectorates; (6) cultural transfer; (7) creating and extending northern Muslim autocratic rule over outsiders (southerners); and (8) making sure that African Christians, particularly the southerners among them, and their way of life never gained a toehold in the North. This initiative failed, causing colonial officials to concentrate on schools as the conduit for cultural transfer.

This delightful book makes a strong case that, instead of a coherent mission imposing Western civilization on northern Nigeria during the colonial era, there were competing agendas. Rather than Western civilization having the clear upper hand in the interchange, the peoples of northern Nigeria had considerable agency in determining which variants of Western culture they chose to embrace. Overall, this volume makes a valuable contribution to interdisciplinary inquiry in education, African studies, and religious studies.

—Mojúbáolú Olúfúnké Okome

Mojúbáolú Olúfúnké Okome is Professor of Political Science at Brooklyn College, City University of New York. She is the author of A Sapped Democracy: The Political Economy of the Structural Adjustment Program and the Political Transition in Nigeria, 1983–1993 (Univ. Press of America, 1998) and is coeditor of the online journal Irínkeríndọ: A Journal of African Migration.

Quest for Peace: An Ecumenical History of the Church in Lesotho.


This is an extraordinary book by any measure. Comprising nearly eleven hundred double-column pages, to my knowledge nothing quite like it has ever been published in Africa about Christianity in a particular country—in this case, Lesotho. It is one tangible result of a farseeing project conceived in the mid-1980s, when both the country and its churches were convulsed by bitter ethnic, political, and ecclesiastical confusion, suspicion, misrepresentation, and outright conflict. The idea was to engage a neutral but informed outsider to write a short popular history of peacemaking efforts by church leaders between 1970 and 1985. This, it was hoped, would serve as a counternarrative to the more sensational stories that so easily capture the news, co-opt our Christian memories, and spawn mistrust and confusion. The result was an impressively comprehensive volume that references 175 years of Lesotho denominational and nondenominational history.

Research and published with the full cooperation and encouragement of church leaders, this volume will do more
to foster a sense of shared identity and common cause among Lesotho’s Christians (75 percent of the total population) than anything else conceivable. Replete with pictures, maps, and tables, each of the book’s seventeen chapters includes both a study guide and an action guide tailored for use by individuals, small groups, and entire congregations. Plans are under way to translate the book into Sesotho. Of special interest is Appendix B, providing a partial directory of 277 denominations in Lesotho (pp. 944–49).

The author estimates that there are probably three times as many African Initiated Churches in the country as appear in his registry, which is nevertheless an impressive indication of both the profusion and the vivacity of indigenous Christianities in a country whose total population hovers around two million.


The easiest way to procure a copy is to order it directly from the author at cwhincks@gmail.com. A copy of the book shipped by surface mail from Lesotho will cost $55; shipped from Toronto, the book will cost $69.

—Jonathan J. Bonk


City of God: Christian Citizenship in Postwar Guatemala.


City of God is an ethnographic study of “neo-Pentecostal formations of Christian citizenship in postwar Guatemala and the kind of responsibilities that such an identity prompts Guatemalans to shoulder” (p. xxii). It concludes that the active members of the megachurch El Shaddai “are more likely to pray for Guatemala than pay their taxes; they tend to speak in tongues for the soul of the nation rather than vote in general elections; and they more often than not organize prayer campaigns to fight crime rather than organize their communities against the same threat” (pp. xvi, 201). O’Neill’s rapport with these neo-Pentecostals helps him to convey the weight of their perceived burden, even as he analyzes how it tends to downplay historical, political, social, and economic factors. Guatemala is the most Protestant country of Latin America: a nation chosen by God (pp. 7–8). Neo-Pentecostals think it can change only through conversion, individual repentance, Bible study, and hard work, which open the believer to the “values of progress: punctuality, responsibility, and cleanliness” (p. 160).

From February 2006 to May 2007 O’Neill lived in Guatemala City, where 5,338 people were killed in 2005, or 15 a day (p. 20). His fieldwork focused on Christian citizenship in neo-Pentecostal megachurches, but all ethnographic data come from only one church: El Shaddai. (O’Neill mentions in note 10 on p. 216 that he also visited four other megachurches, but these get only one reference each in the
index.) El Shaddai is likely the most active church in promoting the unique brand of neo-Pentecostal citizenship, thanks to its founder, Harold Caballeros. Caballeros was excluded from participation in the 2007 elections by a technicality (or by refusing to engage in corrupt practices, according to embittered members; p. 203). The sense of disappointment this created is vividly described in the book, which does an excellent job of analyzing the central role church cells, spiritual warfare, fatherhood, charity projects toward rural Indians, and international networks play in El Shaddai.

O’Neill is well-read and has an engaging and original writing style. His theoretical preferences range from Foucault and Heidegger to Geertz and Harding, although earlier key literature on Pentecostals, progressive Presbyterians, and politics is missing. City of God is an absolute joy to read. It rightly criticizes limited Western understandings of democracy and develops a new field of studies: the religious dimensions of citizenship. It is another worthy contribution to the University of California’s “Anthropology of Christianity” series.

—Henri Gooren

Henri Gooren, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan, is the author of two books and various articles on conversion and on religions in Latin America.

Converging Ways? Conversion and Belonging in Buddhism and Christianity.


A book like this lays to rest any doubt that Buddhism has become a European religion. So far is this true that a certain Eurocentricity, innocent but ironic, here becomes proof of Buddhism’s transculturation. Nary a non-European voice represents or interprets Buddhism for Europe; and so, as in North America, Buddhism proves itself remarkably adaptable and adoptable, by the cognitively inclined especially. As several authors included in the volume are themselves advocates of and for Buddhism’s transculturation and already consider themselves Christians, a unifying theme is that of multiple interreligious affinity and identity, a phenomenon once thought of as un-European.

Delivered at a conference of the European Network of Buddhist-Christian Studies, the ten papers of this collection run the gamut from the anecdotal and autobiographical to the historical and social scientific, and finally to the controversial. A third of the book is a triangulated debate—lively, though civil—between Paul Williams, a former Buddhist; Perry Schmidt-Leukel, a pluralist Christian; and José Ignacio Cabazón, a pluralist Buddhist. Being contested is Williams’s reconversion to Catholicism, an act Schmidt-Leukel scorns and Cabazón mourns. The volleys are stratospherically cerebral, and in the end it is the Christians who see each other as the “Other.”

Thankfully, other essays rectify the impression that Buddhism is always excruciatingly cognitive and unconcerned with practice. On Catholic Zen, excellent essays have been included; theologically, though, they seem conventionally inclusivistic, despite a delightfully playful, koan-like testimonial on achieving deep insight into the emptiness of “self” by Reuben Habito, who experienced kensho as a Jesuit.

From all this, much can be learned, though less about Buddhism than about its European appropriation. And for all the stress on interreligiosity, one regrets the absence of sustained discussion of how individuals assimilate religious influences without their being integrated into a singular system, cognitive or affective.

—Richard Fox Young

Richard Fox Young is Associate Professor of the History of Religions, Princeton Theological Seminary. Earlier, he served with the Presbyterian Church (USA) in South and East Asia.

Jesus Wars: How Four Patriarchs, Three Queens, and Two Emperors Decided What Christians Would Believe for the Next 1,500 Years.


In Jesus Wars Philip Jenkins turns his attention to the doctrinal struggles of the fourth to sixth centuries. These issues can be tedious and abstruse, but in Jenkins’s writing they pulsate with drama. Jenkins recounts the story of the church’s attempt to clarify issues that the Council of Nicaea had left vague, especially the nature/natures of Christ. He elucidates the theological issues clearly and fairly; but he also roots them in the rivalry between historic patriarchates, in which emperors, empresses, and churchmen all played their parts. Jenkins’s description of the churchmen’s methods is unsqueamish: “bufalloing and bludgeonining,” “head-breaking,” murder. The Council of Chalcedon was a cliff-hanger, and it settled the Christological questions in ways that have largely satisfied Western Christians. But Chalcedon also led to the secession of Monophysite churches, the weakening of Christian unity in the East (which enabled the triumph of Islam), and the transfer of Christianity’s heartlands to the global West.

Jesus Wars is an excellent read, and Jenkins as always provokes thought. Two things, I think, would have been worth exploring further. First, Jenkins might have pursued the relation between theology and ethics. He quotes Dorothy Sayers, who observed that different Christologies lead to different approaches to Christian behavior. As Jenkins makes clear, the Nestorian, Monophysite, and Chalcedonian churchmen differed in Christology—but not in their readiness to use violence to compel truth. Why? The second-century Epistle to Diognetus had said, “Compulsion is not God’s way of working.” Jenkins does not explore the theological deviation that enabled the fifth-century power-brokers to repudiate this early Christian commonplace.

Second, Jenkins might have explored the relation between doctrine and mission. The bishops, he observes, were faced with dioceses only half Christian. As they concentrated on Christology, were
they also thinking about this missionary challenge? Did the bishops think that
dogmatic precision was necessary to convert the minds and lifestyles of pagans
and syncretists?

—Alan Kreider

Alan Kreider, for many years a Mennonite missionary
in England, is Professor of Church History
and Mission (retired) at Associated Mennonite
Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana. With his wife,
Eleanor, he published Worship and Mission After
Christendom (Paternoster, 2010).

The Cat and the Toaster: Living System Ministry in a Technological Age.


For over forty years Douglas Hall has been a leader of the Emmanuel Gospel Center in Boston. The Cat and the Toaster is the story of Hall’s journey with his wife, Judy, and what they learned about the theory and practice of urban ministry. During his years in Boston, Hall has seen Christianity grow, not decline. This important book helps answer how this has happened.

With Boston as case study, ministry is most productive, Hall argues, when operating within the whole story of God and the organic nature of the city. A relational, or living-system, approach, with sensitivity to complexity, is key. Consequently, when programs and initiatives are imposed on the urban fabric, the result can be counterproductive to the overall work of the church in the city.

By showing how ministry is related to the city and how the city relates to ministry, Hall has made a unique and vital contribution. While Hall looks for revival in the city, we can wonder whether it is not already occurring.

—Mark R. Gornik

Mark R. Gornik is Director of City Seminary of New York (www.cityseminaryny.org).

Death in a Church of Life: Moral Passion During Botswana's Time of AIDS.


The eighth in the University of California Press series “The Anthropology of Christianity,” this volume is a microstudy of one small Apostolic congregation in a township in Gabarone, Botswana. The author, Frederick Klaits, is a cultural anthropologist who teaches in the Thompson Writing Program at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina. Between 1993 and 2006 he spent extended
periods living in the township, learned Setswana, and became a member of the congregation that is the focus of his inquiry. He writes with affection and respect for its leadership and members, and he is open about how his own life was influenced by his participation in its life and worship.

The period of Klaits’s residence and research in Botswana was the time when the AIDS pandemic became evident. His study concerns the efforts made by members of the Apostolic congregation to sustain love in the context of the illness and death brought about by the pandemic. Using his knowledge of the vernacular language and drawing on close involvement in the congregational life, he explores ways in which the worship and rituals of the church propound an ethic of love. The caring relationships that obtain within the church community are shown to be in tune with Batswana values and of high value in coping with the effects of HIV and AIDS. Low in jargon, high in human sympathy, carrying its erudition lightly, and largely written in a narrative style, this analysis will be a rich resource for all with an interest in faith, ethics, and community life in Africa today. The book has a link to online audio files of the people’s preaching and singing.

—Kenneth R. Ross

Kenneth R. Ross has served as Professor of Theology at the University of Malawi (1988–98) and as General Secretary of the Church of Scotland Board of World Mission (1998–2009). He is the author of Following Jesus and Fighting HIV/AIDS (Edinburgh: St Andrews Press, 2002).


This cross-disciplinary study addresses cultural history, Chinese poetics, musicological assessments, hymnologists’ biographies, and religious influences of Protestant hymnology during the last two centuries. Including over fifty illustrations in its six chapters, Hsieh presents a historical cornucopia of Chinese hymnody, garnished by biographies of key foreign and Chinese hymnists and musicians.

Hsieh, a musicologist and librarian at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, has done extensive research in key North American archives related to Chinese Protestantism but also has obviously obtained other materials and information from a wide range of circles within “cultural China.” Believing that studies in hymnology can offer an aesthetic gauge for levels of

A Call for Papers for the 13th Assembly of the INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR MISSION STUDIES

Migration, Human Dislocation, and the Good News: Margins as the Center in Christian Mission

The IAMS 2012 Toronto Assembly will explore the profound missiological dimensions of human migration and dislocation, past, present, and future. We will attend especially to the many repercussions of widespread contemporary human movement for the theory and practice of Christian mission.

The Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, reflecting the lives of God’s people who were uprooted, exiled, and scattered, features epic experiences of human mobility such as the call to a new land, exodus and resettlement, and the scattering of the early Christians. The last half-millennium has seen the Gospel span the globe, often accompanied by the disenfranchisement and sometimes obliteration of other peoples. Dislocation, compelled and voluntary, continues to characterize our contemporary human story as people cross state boundaries or move within their own countries in search of safety and well-being. Christian mission, often a feature of large-scale movements of peoples, must continue to attend responsibly to these historic global realities.

We welcome papers on mission and diverse aspects of human mobility from across the disciplines. These can touch upon a range of themes including ethnicity, race, gender, HIV-AIDS, human rights, violence, poverty, nationalism, other religions, and ecclesiastical tradition. In addition, we urge IAMS Study Group members to prepare papers and share research, especially as these relate to the Assembly’s migration theme.

Timeline: (1) Proposed topic, with 150–200-word abstract, is due by July 1, 2011. (2) Draft paper is due by January 1, 2012. Papers are not to exceed 4,000 words, including notes. Writers will be expected to strictly adhere to the style guide for Mission Studies.

All proposals with abstracts will be carefully reviewed by the IAMS Executive Committee. Writers will be notified of the committee’s decision before April 2012.

Address all correspondence to:
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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR MISSION STUDIES
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Toronto Assembly – IAMS
August 15-20, 2012 (Wednesday – Sunday)
For more information, go to: www.missionstudies.org
indigenization and spiritual maturity, she assesses these matters within hymnals produced not only in Mainland China but also in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and other places in Asia where overseas Chinese live and worship. Going beyond her concern for indigenization, she provides details about “contemporary” and “global” music that now appears in recently published hymnals.

Hsieh’s strength is clearly in musicology, with specialization in the history of Chinese Protestant hymnology produced by foreign missionaries and indigenous Chinese pastors, intellectuals, and hymnists. Her scope includes hymns and hymnals produced over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, not only in now-standardized forms of Mandarin Chinese but also in eight Chinese dialects or languages used by Han ethnic groups. One would welcome information about Christian minorities in China and their hymnology as well (the author offers some hints of this in Taiwan). Problems of different systems for transliterating names and terms are solved primarily by using Chinese characters, but for those who do not read Chinese, this is not adequate. More significant is the author’s apparent unfamiliarity with the Songs of Canaan series, produced by leaders in unauthorized churches in Mainland China, even though they are quite famous and available publicly in Christian bookstores and in CDs.

Nevertheless, one sincerely delights in seeing the relatively lengthy treatments given to Tzu-chen Chao (1888–1979) and John E. Su (1916–2007), two major figures whose hymns continue to be sung in Chinese Protestant worship. Also, the history of the multiflora influences of Bliss M. Wiant (1895–1975), musicologist at Yenching University in the years before 1950, is helpful for understanding shifts in liturgy and hymnology during the period when nationalism and indigenization were major concerns.

This award-winning and richly detailed volume will be much appreciated by those interested in the development and flourishing of Chinese Protestant hymnology. It fills a major void within Protestant and secular scholarship in the history of Chinese Christianity.

—Lauren Pfister

Lauren Pfister teaches at Hong Kong Baptist University and does research in the areas of comparative philosophy and comparative religious studies, with an emphasis in Chinese traditions.

The Spirit in the World: Emerging Pentecostal Theologies in Global Contexts.


This collection of twelve essays is written mostly by those who live and work in the United States, but the authors have considerable experience in various global Pentecostal contexts, which they bring to bear on the reflections of this book. Although the book concentrates on only a portion of global Pentecostalism—the so-called classical Pentecostal churches with roots in the 1906–9 Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles—yet these churches have influenced global Pentecostalism in ways that belie their numbers. The book is divided thematically into three sections of four essays each.

The first section is introductory and theological. Frank Macchia suggests that Pentecostalism has a theologically distinctive message in its focus on the baptism in the Spirit. Margaret Poloma, who writes from a sociological perspective, discusses the development and flourishing of Chinese Protestant hymnology. It fills a major void within Protestant and secular scholarship in the history of Chinese Christianity.

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divine healing and revivalism and their interaction with scientific modernity. Korean Pentecostal mission theologian Wonsuk Ma discusses Pentecostalism as a religion of the poor and the significance of its central message of empowerment for witness. Doug Petersen focuses on Pentecostalism and social concern, the subject he knows best from his vast practical experience in Latin America.

The second part of the book is missiological, dealing with Pentecostalism and cultural diversity. Paulson Pulikottil uses postcolonial theory to look at the dominant influence of the Indian (Syrian church) context on the emergence of Pentecostalism in Kerala. Koo Dong Yun considers the multicultural origins of Pentecostalism and the role of Asians, in particular the revivals among the Korean minjung and their implications for Pentecostalism to be seen as a religion of the oppressed and poor. African-American anthropologist Deidre Crumbley illustrates gender and power issues by fieldwork among Nigerian Aladura churches and her own inner-city church in Philadelphia. In the essay by esteemed Nigerian historian Ogbo Kalu, one of the last before his untimely death in December 2008, the author describes how Pentecostals have responded in innovative ways to the African worldview.

The final part deals with ways that Pentecostalism deals with religious diversity, with contributions by editor Veli-Matti Kärrkkäinen on the role of Pentecostal pneumatology, Opoku Onyinah on Pentecostal responses to African witchcraft, Amos Yong on responses to Buddhism, and Tony Richie on a Pentecostal theology of religions. As Jürgen Moltmann observes in his preface, Pentecostalism was born in revival movements in several parts of the globe; it was not a monolithic movement but was founded on experiences of Spirit baptism and healing, a religion of the poor (p. ix). But in light of some of the more crass expressions of Pentecostalism promoting an extravagant lifestyle and prosperity by faith, one wonders whether an idealistic depiction of Pentecostalism as an option for the poor has passed its sell-by date.

Allan Anderson is Head of the School of Philosophy, Theology, and Religion and Professor of Global Pentecostal Studies at the University of Birmingham, England.
offer an interesting slant on the difficulty of putting ideals into practice. Hawai‘i was a stronghold of abolitionism among ABCFM missions, and several missionaries saw a parallel between slavery and the forced labor exacted from commoners by the chiefs. Awkwardly, however, the missionaries were dependent on the chiefs’ influence for the strength of Protestantism on the islands.

The Gulicks’ main accomplishment ultimately was their success in inspiring their children to pursue missionary callings. The children appear in many ways to have been more interesting characters than their parents, and it is to be hoped that Putney will continue the saga of this missionary dynasty.

—Paul Harris

Paul Harris is Professor of History at Minnesota State University Moorhead.

Introduction to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century.


Timothy Tennent’s Introduction to World Missions joins a growing list of important evangelical and Pentecostal introductions to the biblical portrayal of mission and to the theology and practice of mission. Taken together, they are a body of post-liberal, postfundamentalist literature on mission that is aware of critical studies and grounded in both anthropological and history-of-religions studies. Were I teaching introduction to mission today, every chapter of my Catholic approach to mission would list the corresponding page numbers in Tennent that I would require my students to read.

Tennent, a graduate of the University of Edinburgh, where he imbibed the spirit of Andrew Walls and the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World, is president of Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky. His book breathes awareness that the frontiers of mission are no longer geographic but intercultural and interreligious. His approach is up-to-the-minute in timeliness and sensitivity to ecumenism and dialogue with world religions, while presenting affirmatively—in the spirit of 1 Peter 3:15—the reasons that propel Christians to proclaim the triune God as the world’s Redeemer.

The book is divided into four parts. Part 1 introduces the reader to historical and social megatrends that are the context of mission. Part 2 centers on God as Father, Creator, and source of the providence in which mission participates in God’s bringing about a new creation. Part 3 is on God the Son, the revealer and embodiment of the redemption of the new creation. Part 4 develops the doctrine of God the Spirit as the one who empowers the church mission. The entire book is predicated on the reality that only an authentic disciple of this redeeming God can be a genuine ambassador of God’s reconciling mission.

—William R. Burrows

William R. Burrows is Managing Editor Emeritus of Orbis Books and Research Professor of Missiology at New York Theological Seminary.

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From All Nations, To All Peoples

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

January Student Seminars on World Mission

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. Cosponsored by Evangelical Covenant Church (Lafayette, Indiana).

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. Cosponsored by Christar and The Mission Society.

January 17–21

Culture, Values, and Worldview: Anthropology for Mission Practice.

January 24–28

The City in Mission.
Dr. Dale T. Irvin, New York Theological Seminary, considers the city in the mission of God. Cosponsored by Bay Area Community Church (Annapolis, Maryland).

February 7–10

Dr. Christopher J. H. Wright, Langham Partnership International, London, unfolds the relevance of Deuteronomy for contemporary Christian mission and ethics. Four days. Cosponsored by Bay Area Community Church (Annapolis, Maryland).

March 7–11

Christianity in America.
Dr. Edith L. Blumhofer, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois, introduces participants to the formative role Christianity has played throughout U.S. history. Cosponsored by Black Rock Congregational Church (Fairfield, Connecticut) and First Presbyterian Church (New Haven).

March 14–18

Christian Mission, the Environment, and Culture.
Dr. Allisson M. Howell, Akrofi-Christaller Institute for Theology, Mission, and Culture, Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana, considers Christian responses to climate change—something that is not new in human history—and the catastrophes that often accompany climate change, so as to provide a framework for Christian mission in facing new crises.

April 4–8

Christian-Muslim Relations: A Nigerian Case Study with Global Implications.
Dr. Jan H. Boer, Vancouver, British Columbia, through intensive examination of Nigeria draws guidance for parameters within which Christians and Muslims can relate to each other and both flourish. Cosponsored by Christian Reformed World Missions and Mennonite Central Committee.

April 11–15

Cross-cultural Partnership for the Sake of Discipling the Nations.
Dr. Paul R. (Bobby) Gupta, president of Hindustan Bible Institute, Chennai, India, and a senior mission scholar in residence at OMSC, offers lessons from India for formation of partnerships to disciple whole nations through church-planting movements. Cosponsored by Wycliffe International.

April 25–29

Transformational Leadership: An Entrepreneurial Approach.
Rev. George Kovoor, Trinity College, Bristol, United Kingdom, brings wide ecclesiastical and international experience to evaluation of differing models of leadership for mission. Cosponsored by Moravian Church Board of World Mission and Wycliffe International.

May 2–6

Christianity in Asia: Traditions and Challenges.
Dr. Daniel Jeyaraj, Liverpool Hope University, United Kingdom, traces the distinctive forms Christianity has taken in Asia and identifies challenges raised by Asian contexts, drawing out implications for missionary practice today.

May 9–13

Spiritual Renewal in the Missionary Community.
Rev. Stanley W. Green, Mennonite Mission Network, and Dr. Christine Sine, Mustard Seed Associates, blend classroom instruction and one-on-one sessions to offer counsel and spiritual direction for Christian workers. Cosponsored by Mennonite Mission Network.

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Reconfiguring Home: Telugu Bible Women, Protestant Missionaries, and Christian Marriage
James Elisha Taneti

Orality: The Not-So-Silent Issue in Mission Theology
Randall Prior

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

The Vatican’s Shift of Its Missionary Policy in the Twentieth Century: The Mission of the Augustinian Fathers of the Assumption in Manchuria
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