IJFM
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The Journal of the International Society for Frontier Missiology

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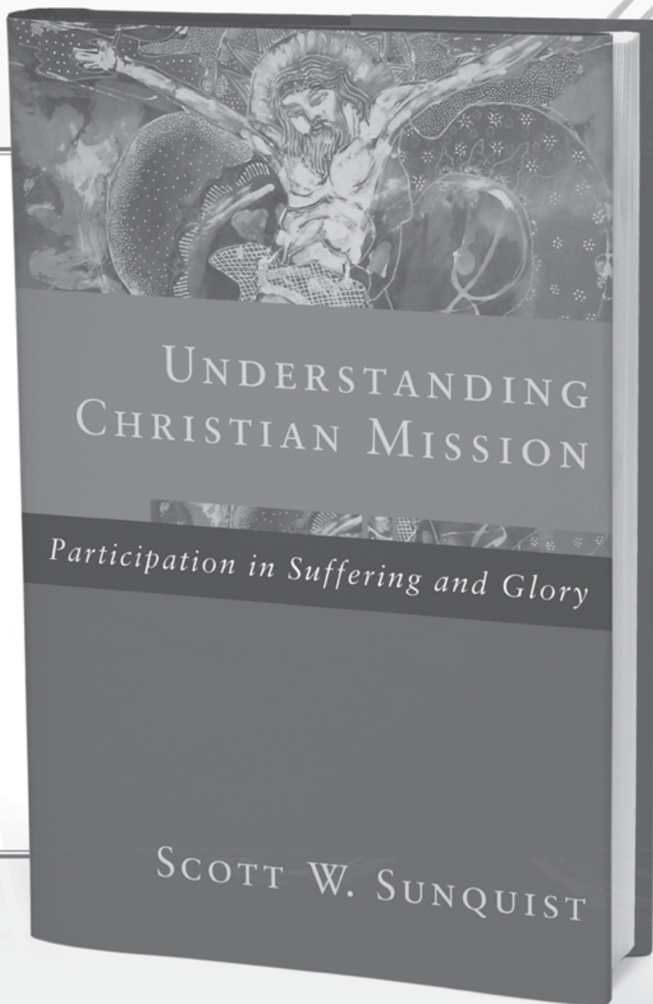

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From the Editor's Desk

Caring for History

Ralph Winter was a prodigious writer. Like many others he used a pen to think. He wrote very few books, but over the years articles flowed from his pen that punctuated evangelical consciousness with prophetic jabs. My wife, Beth, is his oldest daughter and has been given the task of editing over fifty of his personal journals. His daily and weekly scribbles are sacred witness to a devoted mind pressing into God's purposes. They stretch from his early missionary service in the mountains of Guatemala to his statesman role at the U. S. Center for World Mission. The initial journals were written in Spanish as he learned to think the thoughts of a new native terrain, and as my wife translates and edits she will frequently mention a surprising historical occurrence. Collectively these little interjections have impressed upon me the need to take care of historical legacy.

Historical care is what I might call it. The general historical consciousness we carry in evangelical mission, that memory we draw on in our mission enterprise, not only needs the historian to fill in the gaps, but the archivist to faithfully hold and care for documents that maintain an accurate account of our past. It's those holdings that can correct the popular notions and apocryphal legends which we so easily generate in promoting our mission enterprise. Ralph Winter's role in mission was legendary, but he also was a historian, and I think he reluctantly agreed to preserve his journals for editing because he knew their candid and personal observations would take better care of history.

Winter's reflex was not only to interpret the past, but to care for it. He often mentioned the tragic destruction of libraries throughout the ages that inflicted such difficulty on man's ability to understand his own past. When Donald McGavran was in his twilight years and losing his ability to read, his home was close to the campus of the center where Winter worked. Winter prioritized this man's legacy in mission and assigned our staff to assist him: to care for his ailing wife, Mary; to receive dictation of his entire last book; to move his personal library; and to simply transport him to a lecture where his observations from seven decades in mission service could still transfix an audience. Nothing extraordinary, really. All this is very indicative of the honor and respect missionaries have normally given to their mentors and their historic legacies.

Editorial *continued on p. 60*

The views expressed in **IJFM** are those of the various authors and not necessarily those of the journal's editors, the International Society for Frontier Missiology or the society's executive committee.

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The recent establishment of the Ralph Winter Research Center carries this mandate. A distinguished group gathered from different parts of the country for an inaugural forum on the legacy of Donald McGavran (p. 61). They met in a room adjacent to the archives of McGavran and Winter, where the quiet faithful service of archivists like our Helen Darsie convert old correspondence and artifacts into ordered memory. It's here that Winter's wife, Barbara, took nearly five years to faithfully cull through her husband's 900 boxes and file drawers of papers and a trove of correspondence. Why does it matter? Well, there's a deep sense that when we lose our collective memory, we begin to lose our orientation. Mission always moves forward with the gospel, but its skill and dexterity rests on a clear historical consciousness.

This issue of the journal recalls three important legacies in frontier mission; that of Donald McGavran, Ralph Winter and J. H. Bavinck. Their legacies stem from different traditions (Disciples of Christ, Presbyterian, and Dutch Reformed, respectively), each profoundly but almost unconsciously shaping evangelical mission today. McGavran's archives are located in both Wheaton and Pasadena, which now serve as pilgrimage sites for those tackling doctoral studies on his missiology. The fading memory of J. H. Bavinck will hopefully be revitalized with the recent publication of a reader for the English-speaking world (p. 75). H. L. Richard reviews this Dutch missiologist's prescient contribution to our theology of culture and religion.

And during a year of events commemorating the 40th anniversary of Lausanne '74, we also offer a reprint of Harold Fickett's scintillating description of Ralph Winter's speech on the remaining frontiers of mission at that historic congress. That speech actually represented a confluence of different legacies that today is seen as the single movement called "frontier mission." I offered a particular angle on the history of this frontier mission movement when I addressed the ASFM in Korea last year, and I include it here in the hope that it will highlight the unique missiological dynamic that runs through our international networks (p. 89). ISFM 2014 will focus entirely on the legacy of world evangelization that developed across four decades since Lausanne '74, and you can look forward to those papers and addresses in future issues of the journal.

At *IJFM*, we'll try to do our share in caring for our mission legacies.

In Him,

Brad Gill
Senior Editor, *IJFM*

The **IJFM** is published in the name of the International Student Leaders Coalition for Frontier Missions, a fellowship of younger leaders committed to the purposes of the twin consultations of Edinburgh 1980: The World Consultation on Frontier Missions and the International Student Consultation on Frontier Missions. As an expression of the ongoing concerns of Edinburgh 1980, the **IJFM** seeks to:

- promote intergenerational dialogue between senior and junior mission leaders;
- cultivate an international fraternity of thought in the development of frontier missiology;
- highlight the need to maintain, renew, and create mission agencies as vehicles for frontier missions;
- encourage multidimensional and interdisciplinary studies;
- foster spiritual devotion as well as intellectual growth; and
- advocate "A Church for Every People."

Mission frontiers, like other frontiers, represent boundaries or barriers beyond which we must go yet beyond which we may not be able to see clearly and boundaries which may even be disputed or denied. Their study involves the discovery and evaluation of the unknown or even the reevaluation of the known. But unlike other frontiers, mission frontiers is a subject specifically concerned to explore and exposit areas and ideas and insights related to the glorification of God in all the nations (peoples) of the world, "to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God." (Acts 26:18)

Subscribers and other readers of the **IJFM** (due to ongoing promotion) come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Mission professors, field missionaries, young adult mission mobilizers, college librarians, mission executives, and mission researchers all look to the **IJFM** for the latest thinking in frontier missiology.

Who We Are

Stewarding Legacies in Mission

The Legacy of Donald McGavran: A Forum

edited by IJFM Editorial Staff

In August of 2013, the Ralph D. Winter Research Center (RDWRC) hosted a forum on the legacy of Donald McGavran. During the second half of the 20th century, McGavran became a global spokesman for church growth. He was a third generation missionary to India, and returned there with his wife, Mary, for some three decades of service. His observations and study of people movements to Christ in India (and in other parts of the world) were sparked by the 1934 publication of J. Waskom Pickett's *Christian Mass Movements in India: A Study with Recommendations.* In 1955, this interest led to the publication of McGavran's seminal book, *The Bridges of God,* and moved him into global significance in the field of missiology.

Last summer's forum was instigated by the recent biography published by Vern Middleton, *Donald McGavran: His Life and Ministry—An Apostolic Vision for Reaching the Nations* (William Carey Library, 2011). The book covers McGavran's life until he became the founding Dean of the School of World Mission at Fuller Seminary in the 1960s. Greg H. Parsons, director of the RDWRC, led the lively roundtable discussion over the course of two days (a list of participants is provided on p. 62). The *IJFM* has now edited those discussions for the general mission public with the hope of making McGavran's legacy more accessible to a new generation of mission leaders. Plans are being made for a similar forum in 2015 on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of McGavran's passing in 1990.

Stewarding the Legacy

Parsons: This forum on Donald McGavran is a first for the Ralph D. Winter Research Center, and we've tried to pull together for 24 hours some of you who either knew him well, worked or studied with him or have just studied his life… Let me just say we feel that stewarding the legacy of McGavran is a high priority to us here. It's something God has put into our hands to do. The US Center for World Mission has McGavran archival materials and also

quite a bit of McGavran's library. Wheaton has a good portion as well, but we also have copies on microfilm of most of that. We've gone through and pre-sorted a lot of it and culled it down, but the entire process is in order to make this available for missiological research.

Richard: I was astonished when I got here—when I moved here to the US Center for World Mission in 2006—and started hearing rumors that there were archival materials on McGavran somewhere. Finally, I went over to the library and looked at the materials and made a bee-line out of there to Greg Parsons' office and said, "This is criminal, immoral; this stuff is sitting here and no one in the missiological community knows that it's here. This is absolutely unacceptable." He agreed with me and we've been campaigning since then to make these archives available.

Walters: I was pursuing a Ph.D. on McGavran's work and I scraped together some money and came out here and spent a week. They set me up, with a filing cabinet next to the table and a copy machine. And I settled there for I don't know how many hours every day, just going through those files. My formal education was in history up until my seminary work and I was just amazed at the richness at this collection and found enough to write at least a mediocre dissertation!

The Essence of McGavran

Parsons: I thought a good place to start might be to try and determine the essence of Donald McGavran's legacy. Let me start with something that McGavran said: "Churches grow when they expect to grow." It's those who are thinking about growth, those that want to do it, who get into prayer and then are looking for whether they are growing or not. The expectation of growth seems to lead to McGavran's type of questioning: "Why is this? Why is that?" Those are the questions he used to ask students. Vern, as his friend and biographer, what do you think of when it comes to the essence of McGavran's legacy?"

Middleton: That "essence" would be very comprehensive. But, essentially it has to do with the advancement of the gospel to the ends of the earth. And by that, McGavran would mean the development of the body of Christ in various places—not necessarily churches, but bodies of Christ. When I think of McGavran's influence, I think back to the Indian context of how tribal movements and caste movements were developed and nurtured. He was very cognizant of how the gospel moved and worked within social structures, and how we might utilize these social structures to bring about the growth of the body of Christ in great numbers among particular peoples. I think of the context in which he lived and ministered and the various movements to Christ in that region. In his immediate setting he didn't witness very much in terms of what he called a caste-ward movement; in his setting, the people came from assorted backgrounds to join the body of Christ. So he didn't see in his Satnami context any significant people movements like those he began studying elsewhere. The people movements were over in Orissa (Odisha); he went over and studied that and made

Forum Participants

Vern Middleton: Missionary to India; studied under McGavran; Professor Emeritus of Missiology and Church Growth at Northwest Baptist Seminary; long-time personal friend and biographer of McGavran.

Charles Kraft: Missionary to Nigeria; former Professor of Anthropology at Fuller; prolific author on mission communication and spiritual power; served on the faculty with McGavran.

Paul Pierson: Missionary to Brazil, former Professor of the History of Missions; former Dean of the Fuller School of World Mission.

Alan McMahan: Associate Professor of Intercultural Studies at Biola University; Donald McGavran Church Growth Award, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1998; specialist in global and American church growth; experience in SE Asia.

Brad Gill: Senior Editor, *IJFM.*

Steve Wilkes: Research Professor of Missions, Mid-America Baptist Seminary; PhD dissertation on church growth; American Church Growth leader.

Jeff Walters: Professor of Christian Missions at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; PhD dissertation on the application of McGavran's principles to urban ministry.

Bruce Graham: MA from Fuller SWM (1970s); personal assistant to McGavran (1980s); trainer of South Asians; Office of the General Director, Frontier Mission Fellowship.

Greg Parsons: Director, Ralph D. Winter Research Center; Chancellor, William Carey International University; PhD dissertation on the early life and core missiology of Ralph Winter.

H. L. Richard: Author, specialist and field researcher in Hindu studies who helped found the Rethinking Forum focused on ministry in high-caste Hindu contexts.

Jeff Minard: Director, William Carey Library, publisher of multiple works by the faculty of the School of World Mission.

excellent records and insights on the people of Orissa (Odisha) coming to Christ. He went up to Madya Pradesh to study an incredible thing, the very liberal United Church of Canada was having a people movement to Christ. It was a remarkable thing. He saw these caste-ward movements in southern India, and he went and studied them. There was something essential to McGavran in what he chose to study.

Graham: I'd say he always kept aiming at that goal. The goal of seeing the church grow among different peoples dominated his thinking. He kept emphasizing the same thing over and over and over again. And then, towards the end of his life, when he couldn't see very well, Dr. Winter asked me if I wouldn't spend maybe three months, or so, to go and sit with Dr. McGavran and just try to help him get down on paper what he might want to pass on to a younger generation. And his final book on his last seventeen years in India among the Satnami people was the result. I'd go to his office at Fuller—he was 85 or so—just with a tape recorder and he would dictate what he wanted to say. I'd leave and transcribe it and then return the next day and read and edit it with him. I picked up that book again just a couple of days ago, and now having lived in India for some years, I realize there's a lot of wisdom here that you wouldn't necessarily recognize without knowing the rural Indian context in which a lot of his thinking emerged. And his essence, his conviction about the goal, is captured in that early context.

Walters: I hesitate to speak when there are anthropologists in this room who might say it better, but it seems to me that one of the great aspects of McGavran's legacy is that people ought to be able to hear the gospel and respond to the gospel in their own cultural context, where they are comfortable—not having to cross big cultural barriers in order to hear the gospel. We in the American church

There's a lot of wisdom here that you wouldn't recognize without knowing the rural Indian context where his thinking emerged.

had really not ever realized that. You know Andrew Walls brings that up with his Indigenous Principle. But I think that was one of McGavran's great contributions.

Parsons: Don't we discover the essence of McGavran in his early work *The Bridges of God?* The main idea, if I have it right, is *"people like to come to Christ with other people who are similar to them."*

Wilkes: What he said was that people *tend to* come to Christ…

Walters: I think he used the word *"prefer"* at later points, too.

Receptivity, the Harvest and Deployment

Wilkes: I believe McGavran's legacy was his profound emphasis on going after the harvest. I think it's his focus on the harvest which is his most strategic contribution. McGavran would say: send missionaries where there is a great harvest and hold the rest lightly. Now, what's happening today, and I speak from the Southern Baptist world which I know the best, seems to be a reversal. We've flipped things and we're focused on unreached peoples, and we're beginning to ignore the harvest. McGavran might very well come along and say that's not right. This is not to say that we should not go after the unreached peoples, but it's to suggest that we keep the balance.

Walters: Is that really how McGavran understood the harvest, though?

Wilkes: He meant where people are coming to Christ. That is what harvest meant…

Walters: I think he was always talking about the edge of the harvest—and the mobility of resources.

Wilkes: No, his emphasis was on finding out who was receptive and putting the major portion of our resources there.

Gill: There is a quote of McGavran's, and Vern, your book picked up on this, where he states that in any population

there are receptive areas. So he didn't treat receptivity across broad basins as "no" or "yes" but in any population there are segments that are receptive… Would you say this was one of his convictions?

Middleton: Yes.

Kraft: Find out the reasons, and apply them to places that are not now receptive.

Wilkes: But that is not to say that he would encourage people to go to areas where they had tried to share the gospel and they saw no response in ten years. I don't think he would say "stay there."

Walters: He never said to leave… he said just don't put all your resources there.

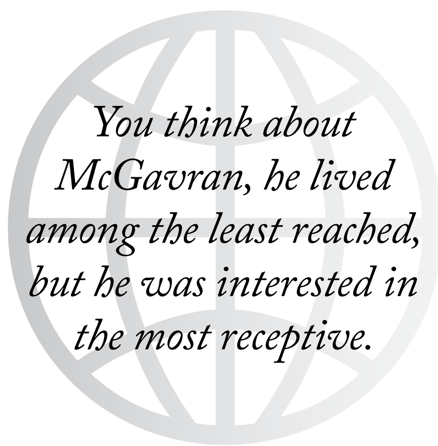
Graham: I remember a kind of tension between the emphasis of Dr. Winter and Dr. McGavran on this. Dr. Winter was trying to stress where the gospel had not gone at all, and McGavran was stressing our going to where the harvest was promising, so there was a little bit of tension there.

McMahan: It almost seems as if they are advocating different strategies. McGavran most receptive, Winter least reached. Right? But aren't these poles in a creative tension, where one offers a corrective to the other? I mean, when you think about McGavran, he lived among the least reached, but he was interested in the most receptive. So, you wouldn't want to abandon either one of these. I think Winter would say, among the least reached, focus on the most receptive. Right?

Walters: Even amidst these apparent tensions, I think McGavran's focus all those years on evangelism and church planting is a legacy that is part of what has become just common evangelical understanding in the late twentieth/early twenty-first century. Amidst the ebb and flow of the church's concern for justice and social concerns, when he was in India and then at Lausanne '74, McGavran was constantly pushing and reminding us all that we're to be making disciples, making disciples, making disciples. I think it's a big piece of his legacy.

The Quality of the Man

Pierson: I'm always interested when I come across early indicators of these important figures in mission history. I don't know if you all knew this, but the character of the powerful Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (SVMFM) was changing at the 1920 convention—the big one, post World War I. McGavran had gone there with Mary, but he was not planning on becoming a missionary. He was going to stay home and make some money. But he had a chat with Robert Wilder, the major motivator of the SVMFM. Do you know that story?



You think about McGavran, he lived among the least reached, but he was interested in the most receptive.

Yeah, he had a personal meeting with Robert Wilder and that conversation with Wilder made him decide that he was going to go to India. In those days, those were pivotal life decisions.

Wilkes: I think one usually remembers whenever they heard this man for the first time. He came to our Southern Baptist school when he must have been eighty-four years old. I was just a PhD student sitting among faculty members in a meeting with him. I just sat in a little corner and watched how he got up and in that same manner of his said, "You're too busy for me to do anything casual with you, so I have prepared a lecture." I remember the points to this day. I don't know if I took notes, but I remember the points. I was already a McGavran man, you could say, and I was chomping at the bit with him there among us. He said, "America will never be won to Christ by the existing churches of America. Its seminaries are training people to pastor existing churches. The seminaries are not prepared to win America to Christ." I bought into it.

Kraft: Overall, we need to realize that in speaking of McGavran, we're talking about something that is truly miraculous. That God would get a hold of somebody from the most liberal of mission boards, and the most institutionalized mission approach that you could imagine, and make a McGavran out of him is something to behold.

Wilkes: Was he very, very liberal?

Middleton: Coming out of Yale, yes, he was.

Kraft: But he changed. He became more of a fundamentalist.

Middleton: I do cover this in my book in greater detail, but this change came while he was in India through the tragic death of his daughter Mary Theodora. For a few weeks he went into a definite depression as a result of this loss, and he blamed himself. It was as he came out of that depression that he started to respond more warmly to the Lord, and he talks of walking with the Lord in a number of his letters, how he regained his love of the Lord. From that point on, he never turned aside from the Lord.

Kraft: Another miraculous thing was when he was going through that transitional period between his work in India and when he arrived at Fuller. He was trying to teach church growth in very liberal schools in the States, and one witnesses his tenacity, that he didn't get discouraged and quit. He very well could have given up on everything, including the Gospel. But he had a single focus. It's possible to point out the kinks in this man's armor, but

this man was a marvelous miracle in the way he just hung in there.

Walters: Having only studied McGavran's writings and correspondence, having never met the man, I'm interested in how he talked about the scriptures. He was accused as a missiologist of being "a-theological," which is obviously not true; how did he talk about the Bible? In faculty meetings, in class, in his life and in his conversation, how did he use the Bible?

Kraft: In my experience he went to certain scriptures a lot, but he paraded one Greek phrase [*panta ta ethn*e more than any other]. But he had become a literalist, so to speak, which was quite different from his upbringing. His theological stance was reactionary.

Walters: In terms of trying to know him better, Vern, you mention in your book that early on McGavran began memorizing large portions of scripture.

Middleton: Well, this was a discipline within the family. For instance, he could quote the entire gospel of John.

Walters: Really?

Middleton: Oh yes. This was a discipline of his. He could quote large portions of the word of God and store it as a reserve in his mind. He was a very sharp thinker.

Wilkes: Wow. He should have been a Baptist!

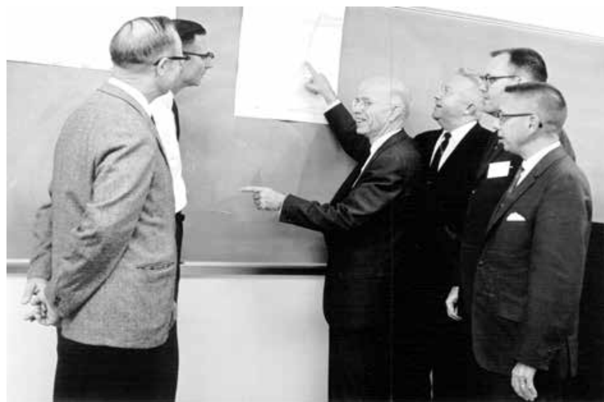
Graham: I think we need to place this particularly within the Indian context, a rural situation where oral communication and rote memory is the way people learned. McGavran would go in and teach them how to memorize Psalm 23, or how to memorize the Ten Commandments. He would memorize and carry certain verses with him, certain passages, using them over and over again. Vern, I think you shared with us one time that this came into his prayers and devotion.

They were not afraid to ask the inconvenient question, to stir the pot, or to color outside the box… a characteristic of any good missiologist.

Middleton: Yes, his prayers were almost like quoting Scripture. When he prayed, he prayed the word of God.

The Practitioner-Scholar

Kraft: McGavran fought against what I see as one of Satan's best tools, and that is the tendency towards "intellectualism." McGavran knew this was why he and his missiological faculty were not respected even among the theological faculty of his own school. We were looked down on as practitioners, as those who get the job done. There's a sort of understanding that you go to



seminary to get the important thing, which is correct theology. If a few people get saved on the way, that's good, too. McGavran was a personal force that pushed us beyond an intellectualism that says that the theoretical academic stuff is primary. McGavran was a practitioner/scholar who talked about harnessing the academic disciplines for the gospel. I know we harnessed the discipline of anthropology as best we could.

Pierson: I think another vital characteristic of McGavran's scholarship was asking inconvenient questions. Now, even though I succeeded McGavran and had occasions of interaction with him, I didn't know him as well as Ralph Winter, whom I knew from Princeton in the early 1950s. Both these men displayed this characteristic: they were not afraid to ask the inconvenient question, to stir the pot, or to color outside the box, however we might say it. And I think that is a characteristic of any good missiologist. But that would be McGavran—he was not afraid of dispelling the fog, or however you want to put it, but asked the questions that nobody else wanted to ask.

Wilkes: McGavran and Winter were willing to make statements about certain mission groups or certain teams, which were not according to protocol. McGavran did it a lot. It's almost embarrassing to read at times. But underneath were difficult questions that needed to be asked.

McMahan: Wouldn't you say that one of his contributions was his pragmatism? I mean he got criticized for that, too, but he wanted to look at what worked and what was actually happening rather than spinning around in circles in academia.

Kraft: Fierce pragmatism.

Parsons: You had to be ready for these questions. I remember that McGavran was asked to teach over at a church in the valley, but he was old and needed a ride. The class asked for volunteers to drive McGavran, and as it turned out, a young man who was on his way to serve in the Cameroon raised his hand. So, from Pasadena back and forth to the class, McGavran was just peppering this young guy with questions: do you know about this part of the world, these people, and the work over there in Cameroon? I mean, McGavran absorbed that kind of information from anyone who was a student who was doing anything, anywhere.

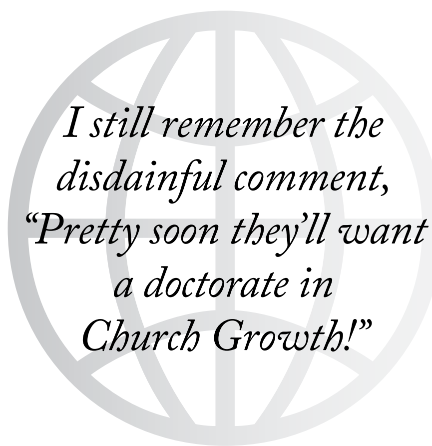
Pierson: I was sitting with him on his porch chatting with him during those last few months. The last question I remember (we were talking about the growth of the church in Nepal) is that he wanted to know which groups were being reached and which ones were not being reached. Vintage McGavran. It was the last conversation I remember having with him.

McMahan: I think that one of the things that comes out of McGavran's legacy is a preference for research analysis. Our discussion made me reflect on my earlier work at the Alliance Theological Seminary and the innovation—I don't know that they were the first, but they were certainly one of the first—that combined social science and theology into the seminary curriculum. It was a finishing school for missionary candidates and a little bit innovative in its day. Seminaries didn't typically hire anthropologists.

Kraft: I had been at the Hartford Seminary Foundation, at the Kennedy School of Missions, and then on the faculty at UCLA when I joined McGavran's faculty at Fuller. At Hartford, we came in as missionaries and went out as anthropologists and linguists. Now, McGavran established his School of World Mission to reverse that trend. When it was going well, if you came in as an anthropologist, you went out as a missiologist. Now it's reversed again, and it's gone the other way. Now we develop specialties, like Islamics, Children at Risk, and so forth, which are various sub-specialties with no real integrating core. (I have suggested that our core should be Incarnational Ministry because everybody can agree on that). But McGavran established the core of church growth that we all rallied around. Now, mind you, his faculty didn't all agree 100% on things then, either, but we were all committed to seeing the Gospel go forth and churches getting started. I've diagramed this out in my book on the history of the SWM/SIS at Fuller, and you'll see that the intention is that a discipline like Anthropology was to be "Anthropology for Christian witness" and not just "Anthropology for the sake of Anthropology."

Influence and Resistance

Pierson: When I was Dean [at the School of World Mission], we were trying to get our DMiss program approved by ATS. It had been tentatively approved and it went to an ATS meeting and some of the people were against it. And I still remember a very disdainful comment by the president of one seminary who said, "Pretty soon they'll want a doctorate in Church Growth!"... I'll never forget that. We did get it approved, but not immediately. But the whole concept of missiology in ATS was not recognized very much in those years, in the 1980s. Actually, it was the late Orlando Costas who got up and spoke in favor of it, and as a Latin American and Dean at Andover Newton, he carried a lot of weight... There's been a lot of growth in that... in Missiology as a recognized discipline, but 30 years ago, it was not very much the case and McGavran was seen as irrelevant to the main work of the Church, I think. Would that be fair to say?



Kraft: Yes.

Pierson: [I mean irrelevant to] the so-called main-line denominations. The more marginal groups, who were more missiologically-oriented, were certainly much more open to his ideas. But his own denomination basically rejected him. And by the way, it's fallen from two million to 800,000 since 1950—his own denomination—which may be a lesson to them. We always hear we're a post-Christendom, post-Western, post-Colonial, post-everything kind of culture. None of us knows fully what that means, but McGavran's insights certainly need to be applied to our rapidly changing culture. None of us exactly knows how... there will be a lot of mistakes along the way. But we need to see it that way.

Kraft: A lot of people were stunned by his early writing, like *The Bridges of God.*

Richard: I was working in McGavran's original context of India when I read *The Bridges of God,* and I have to say, that one read and I was convinced. I started asking folks and leaders in mission about these ideas. I told them, "This is the only way it's going to happen. This is sound historical documentation on how things happen." (We were praying for North Bihar in particular because that's the state we were in). But they were all opposed to it. "No, no, this is terrible, because of all the nominalism and rice Christianity that comes out of these mass movements." But we had a kind of separatist bias in our ecclesiology, a "pure church" orientation, and during my early years in India there were no warm vibes towards McGavran. But, to me, his historical case studies were unanswerable and his historical documentation was sound.

Pierson: When I went to Brazil, I somehow came across that same book, *The Bridges of God.* A Mennonite missionary and I organized a little study group at our language school around that book. Then, after starting churches in the far interior on the Brazil-Bolivian border, I was asked to go teach in a seminary, where I began to teach missions and I used some of McGavran's stuff. When I was elected president of Seminary of the North in

Recife, I was included on the Council of Theological Education of the Presbyterian Church of Brazil, and at that time there was financing for a theological professor to come annually and lecture. I corresponded with McGavran and got him to come, because at that time the Presbyterian Church in Brazil wasn't growing very much.

Middleton: He was sensitive to the dynamics of peoples and groups and how they were coming to the Lord. So he wanted to help us understand that these movements arose out of certain patience, ministry, cultivating, and then the movements would begin.

Richard: Well, the irony in India is that no one wanted them… the greatest one out of India of course is the Punjab story, but who did it?…

Wilkes: What's the book?

Richard: *People Movements in the Punjab* [by Fred Stock], but it's very much the same thing all across India. When these things started, in this case it was the Presbyterians in the Punjab, they hated it. They didn't want anything to do with it. They thought this kind of movement was embarrassing.

Pierson: Here's part of the history that I asked Fred (he and I were Chemical Engineers together at Berkeley), and he said "Well, if I hadn't gone to Fuller my first furlough, I would not have returned to Pakistan." And they went on to have a very fruitful ministry, and now their son Paul and their son-in-law Mark are as well… It's a very interesting example of McGavran's influence on just one family, to say nothing of countless others.

The irony in India is that no one wanted anything to do with it. They thought this kind of movement was embarassing.

Gill: How often do you think that's the case? McGavran rescuing frustrated, depressed missionaries.

Pierson: I think this was typical for much of his influence.

Middleton: Most of the time when McGavran came for Church growth seminars in India, he would go across India and different places and then he would head to Bangladesh and end up at the seminary there. And out of that came some very significant movements in Bangladesh.

Richard: But he started a lot of controversy when he went into Bangladesh, in the 1980s, maybe in the late 1970s, when he said, "the Muslims of Bangladesh are not interested. The Tribal peoples and the Hindu minority are all responsive. Why are you people wasting your time with the Muslims?" I think if he were here today, he would retract that statement. The stuff that is happening among the Muslims in Bangladesh today is overwhelming and it's not unrelated to those years of seemingly fruitless labor.

Research and Principle

Middleton: McGavran told me an amusing story. In India in 1954, he sent his family home and he wanted to go across Africa. So he went to the ticket office and asked how much a ticket across the Indian Ocean to Mombasa would cost. "About three hundred dollars." McGavran said to himself, "Well, I don't have that kind of money." But he saw all these Indians going across, so he asked, "What do they pay?" "Well, they pay 15 dollars and they sleep on the deck," he was told. He said, "Give me one of those tickets." So, he slept on the deck across the Indian Ocean to Mombasa and that's when he made his trek across Africa doing research on the African churches. He told me when he came back that he predicted there were about twenty million Christians in Sub-Saharan Africa at the time, something like that. He said he predicted there'd be about three hundred million by the end of the century. He said, "I couldn't get the article published. They thought it was too optimistic. They didn't believe me."

Pierson: I remember his story about sleeping on the deck. That was the 1950s McGavran.

Middleton: He was away three months from his family…

Pierson: And he would have been about fifty-something?

Middleton: Ah, yes, he was about 57.

Wilkes: Good gracious!

McMahan: One of the things that strikes you about McGavran is his real emphasis on accountability. That's part of the inconvenient questions that he asked, right? That was part of the drum beats he kept bringing up. You know, we measure growth by counting people in a fellowship of believers. You can tell us you are doing mission stuff out there, but where is the accountability in it? Did he get blowback? I know he did because people said it was all about numbers. That's one of the big criticisms, but it comes out of that emphasis on accountability.

Kraft: I think Winter articulated it with, "If there is anything to count, count it." But he also said we're not interested in this debate about quality vs. quantity, because we're only interested in quality. But we find out about quality by counting stuff.

Graham: I think Dr. Winter would add another [dimension] to that: it's not just quality or quantity, it's about growth. He always wanted to calculate the growth of groups… One reflection I have had on the way McGavran framed his analysis of church and the coming to faith is the impact of years living and working in an agricultural environment. You think of India, where you know, it's farmers, it's sowing, it's all of that kind of thinking and terminology. This is how McGavran understood and described the dynamics of growth. You think about the Church now, and it seems like so much of our church and our thinking now is shaped by a business model of how a business functions.

Wilkes: I think another major contribution is (I haven't examined it enough to make this statement but I'm going to make it anyway), I suspect that probably the majority of evangelical mission societies, agencies that exist today, use some of McGavran's thinking without even knowing it. I think his thinking has pervaded so many people, it's just sort of "out there"… and people are saying "I hate church growth," and they're out there using it!

Kraft: I don't think McGavran would care if some people took his ideas. He would say, "Do what they want to do with them."

Pierson: But the issue is, are the principles being understood and applied well? That's the real issue.

Richard: Thinking about this legacy—and it's a legacy for today—in many ways I think we need to look at today's

context. A massive part of our context is the church planting movement "hype." I'm a bit irritated by what seems to be an implicit presentation that these ideas came down from heaven to the Baptists and they acknowledge no debt to McGavran. There's no admission the man ever existed. But another problem is a simplistic repackaging of McGavran: the latest publications on movements to Christ among Muslims are only looking at recent movements, since the year 2000. Surely you need at least two decades before you can do any meaningful analysis of a movement. McGavran was analyzing historical movements over decades, and there wasn't a risk that he was promoting "fly-by-night" phenomena as the "real thing." What is the lasting value of movements? Institutions have to develop or there is no hope that a movement will persist. But do you hear a word about it? Nothing. Just the simplistic telling of Bible stories all over the place and the gathering of statistics. But no statistics of the back door. Attrition is never mentioned. It's in this context that a more comprehensive understanding of McGavran is critical.

Walters: This idea that McGavran's ideas have filtered out into the missiological community without people recognizing them is both good and bad. It's good in that the ideas are generally accepted, and it's bad because ideas can become trivialized and superficial and people can forget the theological and anthropological undergirding.

McMahan: I've seen this from the vantage point of the American Society for Church Growth. After working in Asia, and teaching Missiology, which is when I really became a student of McGavran, I came back to do a PhD at Fuller. I began to travel with Carl George doing church growth consulting; I started attending the ASCG meetings and eventually became the president. But I became perplexed by the question of what had happened to the church growth movement because, by the mid-1990s, it was in a state of decline in North America. And you know what? There were flaws in it that sort of led to the decline. But it drove me back to studying McGavran again to compare [the 1990s] to the material produced during the heyday of church growth. What does it mean to rearticulate McGavran's vision to the next generation? Is it still relevant? Because there was actually quite a lot of hostility I encountered throughout the country towards church growth and people who were very dismissive of McGavran—and that was an interesting journey.

I have come to the conclusion that McGavran's missiology was really quite a bit different than the church growth practice in the U.S. and there is a bit of

a disconnect there. As it became faddish in the U.S. and proliferated to thousands of churches, with all the church growth conferences and church growth products, and as places like the Charles E. Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth were shrink-wrapping it all into a tape, a workbook, or a textbook, it became a paint-by-numbers kind of an approach that many people adopted. But it was inherited by people who really didn't have cross-cultural experience, who didn't have missiology. It became more of a technique. And when you didn't think about the context, and you didn't have the missiology to think about your context, you didn't really know how to analyze your community. So the failures began to multiply in the application of these principles. I don't think it's McGavran's fault, but one of the real challenges, now, is how to encounter the audience that has dismissed it as being erroneous, those who threw the "baby out with the bath water" kind of thing.

Walters: When we were appointed to go to the field, we were going to be church planters in Paris. I thought I was well prepared for French culture and West African culture, but when I got there, my culture shock was the city. I'm from the white suburbs of Memphis and I'm a country-leaning suburban boy, so when I walked out of my Paris apartment and looked both directions, there were more people and definitely more colors and languages than had been in the whole town where I had pastored. It was pretty shocking. I began to ask questions like: what is a people group here? What is a homogeneous unit? Although I vaguely remembered that phrase from my school, McGavran began to come back to me,… so I read all of McGavran's work and I was struck by its value for the urban questions I was asking.

The Concept of Culture

Kraft: The impression that we had of McGavran was that he was seeing stuff that nobody with his background

> *McGavran's missiology was quite different than the U.S. church growth practice [which] became a paint-by-numbers kind of approach.*

could be expected to see. But he was missing a lot of the intermediate stuff. What you guys are saying about the demise of McGavran's principles could be rectified if we could correct and fill in the places where he missed. He recognized his weaknesses in the area of culture, which is why he was so attracted to Tippett.[1] The problem was that McGavran didn't understand him. Tippett was broader and deeper than any missiologist either before or since. He had an incredible intellect. And, with the help of William Carey Library, we're now seeing many of Tippett's unpublished volumes coming off the press. I was the junior to Alan Tippett and I could see that his role was to try and help McGavran navigate some of the objections to his approach. McGavran was such an enthusiast he could play the same tune on any fiddle and on any string of any fiddle, and he didn't see a lot of the cultural implications of what he was advocating. The problem was nobody understood Tippett. Students would come out of the Introduction to Anthropology course saying, "There was something really important there but I can't quite figure out what it is." One of the first things they did, was to turn that Intro course over to me. McGavran was pretty uncomplicated in a lot of ways. And Tippett was incredibly complicated. So, it was a fun ride.

I think McGavran regretted ever having hired me, but you can't be weak on culture. When you know what's going on culturally, then you are able to adapt to various situations. The whole phenomenon of insider movements that is being debated is an illustration of where we need to be clear on receptor-oriented communication. You have to ask questions about where the receptors are, what will appeal to them, what will attract them—this kind of thing is the next step beyond McGavran, I think. He would study situations and come up with all kinds of data, but I think this data should have been vetted by anthropologists.

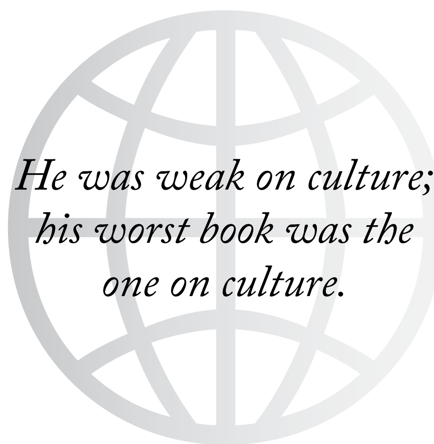
I don't want to criticize McGavran because what he did and the way that he went at it was so unpredictable given his background. I mean this is a guy that's beyond predictability. His head and his heart were in the right place. He'd say to the incoming missionaries, "Figure it out. Research. Find out what's gone right, what's gone wrong." All this considered, the criticism that he's light on culture is pretty much irrelevant, I think. Nobody can do all things, and he didn't do all things. He was focused. He was driven. Tippett was by his side, and by the time Paul Hiebert joined our faculty we had a pretty solid anthropological understanding.

But he was weak on culture. His worst book was the one on culture, entitled *The Clash between Christianity and Culture* or something like that. It was a terrible book. If not in that book, then somewhere else, he said that Christian culture is a culture where more than 50 percent of the people are Christian. He chose to use a term like, "Christian culture." I mean, culture is like a table. It's like a road. It's something that's there to be used by anybody, by non-Christians or Christians. If he spoke of Christian structures, we might deny that right away, because Christian people use structures in a way that's either favorable to the gospel or not favorable; they use the same structures that the enemy uses, but they use them for God's sake. God's put certain things into the human environment that are there for us to use as Christians.

So we needed to step beyond McGavran. He saw stuff, but we had to help him figure out how to get there. And the problem wasn't so much with the places where people movements were happening, as the places where they were not happening, but could happen—finding out under what conditions a society could move into a people movement. Remember, McGavran's last assignment in India was a failure at this point. He couldn't get a people movement going among the Satnami, but I don't think that's a permanent thing. I think it could be worked out.

On Hinduism

Richard: Speaking of McGavran's influence on us, I'm not a deep student of McGavran for another reason. Although I was in his world of India, I got side tracked into high caste Hindu stuff, which has been my focus for twenty-five years now. And I got threatened with being excommunicated from this wonderful McGavran group when I criticized his treatment of Hindu theology. I completely disapprove of McGavran's mindset in his systemization of Hindu theology. McGavran was aware of Subba Rao and the movement I studied in my Master's degree. His concern was whether this movement would develop "into a form of Hinduism or a form of Christianity." There's so much to unpack in that expression, but in the spirit of McGavran's concern for ethnic realities, I believe this is a false black and white dichotomy when we examine it closely. I believe a movement like Subba Rao's could still be a form of Hinduism, and still be Christ-centered, and it should not become a form of Christianity. Anyway, I don't know how far we're going to get into this kind of stuff, but where I have gone may sound too negative towards McGavran. Maybe his concern that this particular movement could develop into either a form of Hinduism or a form of Christianity could have been defended. But the expression itself raises the question of whether McGavran really understood just where the principles he spelled out would lead. So I am criticizing McGavran because I have taken his principles into some places that he didn't take them. I am essentially a McGavranite, and following him and criticizing him is how I view that role.



He was weak on culture; his worst book was the one on culture.

Wilkes: You don't have to agree with everything he said.

Parsons: You know it is interesting, and really unfortunate that the book *Churchless Christianity* (which is really a terrible title—it should be "Christianity-less Churches in India"), Hoefer's book, despite being written before McGavran died, was stuck in India and never got printed. Finally, we found a copy and it was printed ten years later, the first William Carey Library edition, but McGavran never saw it. I could go back to the time I interviewed McGavran and he talked about being the principal of the school and all those little Hindu boys and girls were learning their Bible verses, but never becoming Christians. But those schools were the foundation of this movement of people who follow Christ outside the church—of millions of people—which Hoefer and others researched, and yet which McGavran never, at least on earth, knew had happened—these whole other movements that are separate from Christianity in India.

Wilkes: What are we saying? That they were part of Hinduism, but they embraced Jesus as their god?

Richard: Well, "part of Hinduism" means anything under the sun.

Wilkes: So they don't renounce the Hindu community?

Parsons: They're a part of the Hindu community…wouldn't that be a more accurate way of putting it?

Richard: Yeah.

Pierson: And that's, of course, a big issue now with "insider movements" in Islam, a huge issue.

A New Generation and a New Context

Richard: McGavran's legacy needs to get to teens and twenties, who today are all caught up with justice. Here we come with some old guy with a goatee who's been dead for decades. No one wants to listen to that.

Walters: Just because McGavran said it, doesn't mean people are going to believe it. It's not like saying Thomas Jefferson said something, right? So to a lot of people it means nothing to say that this is McGavran, this is what he taught, without talking more about what it means.

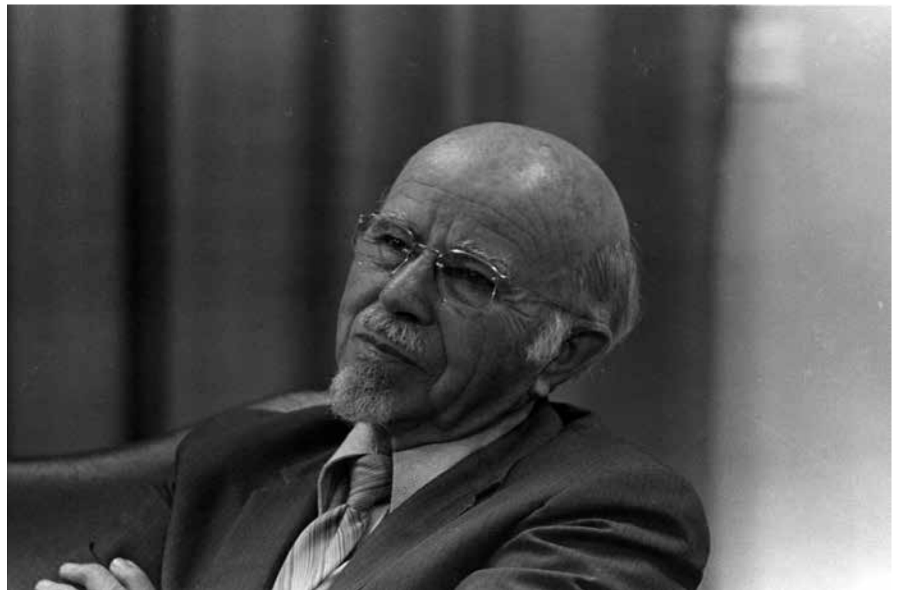
Richard: So, how do we steward this legacy when our present context is so strong for justice, for eradicating prostitution and emancipating kidnapped and trafficked women? My own daughter has been in the slums of Varanasi these last two years under APU's [Azusa Pacific University's] program on Transformational Urban Leadership—which is wonderful stuff, and I'm very excited my daughter is doing it. She's got it all mixed with a McGavran heritage. She doesn't want to go to Delhi where it's all church-based thinking; she wants to go into Kolkata (Calcutta), partly because of some of my writings. They say the Church is not going to be able to do it [in Kolkata], so they are working outside of "Christendom," whereas in Delhi they are main stream Christendom. So my daughter, who already knows Hindi and wants to develop her Hindi, will not go to Hindi-speaking Delhi. She is driven by the justice issues and the slum issues. How are we going to talk McGavranism into that world?

Walters: We've got to be sure that we are answering the questions that people are asking. And, in fact, my students are asking, maybe not in the same words, the same kind of questions that McGavran asked: "Why?" They're not asking, "Why aren't churches growing or not growing?" but they are asking, "Why, as the world changes, aren't people coming to Christ? Why aren't these movements happening? How do we do that?" And they're tired of formulas. I mean, so many people are looking at Church Planting Movements and saying, "Well, that's interesting, but it's not very helpful," because whether Garrison intended those to be a series of formulas or not, that's how my students interpret them. I guess McGavran had the same problem. I mean, here's the thing: he described these movements, but what are the questions [for these movements]?

McGavran's legacy needs to get to teens and twenties, who today are all caught up with justice. How do we steward this?

So what are the questions for today? And how do we answer them in a way that's, you know, appealing? They see poverty and McGavran together and they're interested in the question it raises: how are we answering that question? What's the application? I think the way to preserve McGavran's legacy is to apply it in today's context.

For instance, [there's] what I've been thinking about for four years. I'm a people group guy, you know, and I'm an HUP [Homogeneous Unit Principle] guy. But I got into a city and boom: what in the world is a people group in a city? What does it mean, you know, all this mix up of people?



We're not in a village any more where we can meet under a tree and we're not, you know, even in a country with a caste system where those boundaries are reasonably well defined, so what does [the concept of a people group] mean [in an urban context]? This generation is still buying into the missiology; they just don't know what it means for them anymore.

Parsons: I think another factor, too, is the way the younger generation takes in information. They're not the kind that would go sit in on a seminar or even read a book unless they are forced to. So the question, in part, is how are we trying to communicate to them?

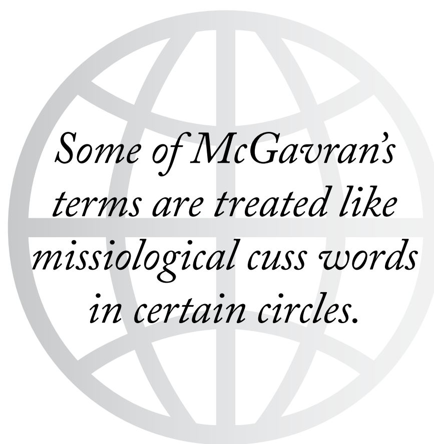
Pierson: There was an assumption in the early missionary movement that when enough people became Christians, then social justice—and social transformation—would come about almost automatically. I think of a certain publication out of Princeton at the end of the 19th, early 20th century that exaggerated that assumption. Early missionaries were not against social transformation. They believed in it. They were just naïve in how easily they thought it would come about, and naïve in their understanding of how difficult the structures of injustice were to break. Personally, I think McGavran was probably kind of naïve about that, too.

Gill: The consequence is that some of the terms from McGavran's thinking are treated like missiological cuss words in certain circles which prioritize social concerns. The whole social transformation stream that emerged from Lausanne 1974 had a very hard time with the Homogenous Unit Principle. It was critiqued in '82 by Rene Padilla, and you've got a lot of that school of thought still thinking that they have successfully "dissed" McGavranism. It's out there and it's active or they think they probably have laid the HUP to rest. What's really promising is that we finally have publications, like Vern's book, which are coming out and correcting the stereotypes that have arisen around McGavran. We're fighting popularizations which have arisen in reaction to an insufficient understanding of McGavran.

Walters: I'm thinking of one of the leaders in the whole multi-ethnic church movement who spent years just slamming McGavran. Slamming, slamming, I mean… the anti-Christ McGavran. He said you can't be the true church unless you are multi-ethnic, this sort of a thing. About three years ago he reversed himself completely and put out an e-book that McGavran was right and that he hadn't really understood McGavran.

Wilkes: I really, really believe that nobody in history has ever brought together a set of principles like McGavran's that helps win the world to Jesus. Well, if that's the legacy of McGavran, it's not just the past, but it's the future. I wouldn't say we need to start another church growth movement because that's not going to happen necessarily. We don't need to use the term "church growth" today. I'm not sure what term we do need to use.… I've been looking for the right one. But we do need to reintroduce to a new generation these principles that are the best way in history to win peoples to Christ.

Kraft: Well, my point earlier today was to have a central focus. We once had a central focus on church growth that's inappropriate today, I think, but what's going to substitute for it? What is it that we can all endorse, commit ourselves to, make enemies over, whatever.



Richard: You suggested in the context of Fuller to alter terminology to focus on "incarnational ministry."

Kraft: Incarnational ministry, yeah.

Richard: Incarnational ministry seems too broad for what we're talking about. We're thinking more narrow.

Pierson: I'm thinking of the verse from the closing words of Romans, that all the *panta ta ethne* will come to believe and obey. That's the focus of mission and that's McGavran's focus—you can call it church growth, but it's really that the people of every ethne will come to believe and obey and be part of all those who will be gathered into churches. We probably need to find new ways of stating that. I think people who are working among the urban poor are doing a very valid and important ministry, but the ultimate goal again is for every ethne to come to believe and obey. And what that means in any context is going to change. But, this is a different way of stating McGavran's focus of church growth. Church growth is not about the numbers of the churches, it's about people of every ethne coming to believe and obey. So that's the goal of mission, and however we couch that, whatever terms we use, that's what we want to say. Because there are a lot of people out there who have different goals and a different understanding of mission, but that's the ultimate focus, the biblical focus, McGavran's focus, and our focus. **IJFM**

Endnote

[1] Alan Tippett was a mission anthropologist who served with McGavran first in Oregon and then on the faculty of the School of World Mission. His voluminous unpublished works are presently being published by William Carey Library twenty-five years after his death.

Stewarding Legacies in Mission

The Theory of Practice: Reflections on Donald McGavran

by Charles H. Kraft

I was hired by Dr. McGavran in 1969 to be the fourth member of the School of World Mission faculty. I was at that time teaching at UCLA and took this position as a part-time faculty member to teach anthropology in relation to church growth. I had completed my career as a field missionary and had "paid my dues" as a scholar by writing theoretically.

I write this piece to highlight one aspect of McGavran's legacy that I found to be helpful to our students and to the movement. McGavran had a keen mind and could have held his own with any group of academics. However, at retirement age, rather than choosing and giving his attention to a known academic discipline as he could have, he chose to develop an area in which *practice* rather than theory was the name of the game.

In academic circles, studies that focus on practice rather than theory are looked down upon. Whether it be philosophy or theology or sociology or, my fields, anthropology and, linguistics, theory is religion and the scholars are the gods. Articles and books are written to impress other scholars, not to help ordinary people who seldom can even figure out what is being written by the scholars.

McGavran, during a long career as a missionary, having seen a variety of mission activities, had come to focus on the fact that the most important thing for missionaries to understand is that God wants people to be won to Him and gathered in churches. Other involvements of missionaries should always be secondary to this single purpose.

Now, there were missiology programs that had been captured by the quest for academic respectability. McGavran reacted against these programs in favor of training that specialized on developing "hard, bold plans" for carrying out Christian mission. He was for *practice,* letting the concern for theory fall where it might. There is theory in McGavran's approach, but it's the theory of practice, not theory for its own sake.

I believe the greatest heresy in Christianity is academicization. And the handmaiden of academicization is the quest for academic recognition rather than practical application. That quest, then, is often fed by the insecurity of scholars who are trying to outdo other scholars in creativity.

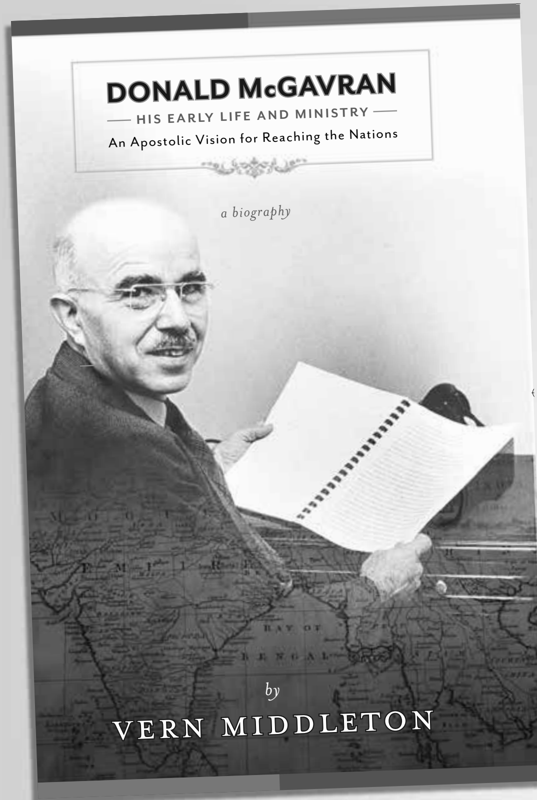
Perhaps at least partially because McGavran was older, with most of his career behind him, he had the personal security that enabled him to thumb his nose at the scholars and stand for something *practical* and applicational. So he chose one tune, a tune he could play on any fiddle, and with "fierce pragmatism" he fought the theoreticians as well as God's enemy.

Personally, I found this approach very congenial. My own approach to missiology as to all of life is practical. I have very little patience for the theory-oriented scholars in my previous field, linguistics. They play games with ideas and help very few. I contend that I am not a scholar. Nor was McGavran. *Scholarship is something we do, not something we are.*

When McGavran came to Fuller, he gave up something very important. By virtue of the academic focus of Fuller, he was forced to exist in an atmosphere of theoretical academics. He and the mission faculty were able to fight this to some extent, but with aims so practical, we were never considered scholars.

So, whatever happens from here on in, I believe McGavran chose the right way, the way of practice and the theory of practice that created an approach that has brought many into God's Kingdom. It is irrelevant that we were looked down on. It is crucial that this legacy continue, that our mission movement continue to be practice oriented rather than scholarly. This is where God's heart is, and where ours should be also. **IJFM**

Charles H. Kraft served as a missionary in Nigeria, taught African languages and linguistics at Michigan State University and UCLA for ten years, and taught anthropology and intercultural communication in the School of Intercultural Studies at Fuller Seminary for the last 35 years.



Donald McGavran
His Early Life and Ministry
An Apostolic Vision for Reaching the Nations

This biography is more than one man's interpretation of another person's life—it has numerous traits of an autobiography. It includes insights gleaned from archives, as well as hours of discussion with both Don and Mary McGavran about the interpretation applied to particular events.

Vern Middleton has been a lifelong church planter and missions professor. He served in India from 1965 to 1976. During his time in India he was mentored by Donald McGavran and they formed a close friendship in ministry and church planting experiences. It was out of this context that interest grew to write McGavran's biography. During the last decade of McGavran's life Middleton had the opportunity to interact with him and this shows on virtually every page of the biography.

When I was young, one summer in Mexico City I read **Church Growth in Mexico**, one of Donald McGavran's first books. What a revelation. He described "ten Mexicos"—Mexico City, Liberal Cities, Conservative Cities, Tight Little Towns, Roman Ranchos, Revolutionary Ranchos and Ejidos, Indian Tribes, Tabasco, Northern Border Country, and Oscar's Masses (named for researcher Oscar Lewis). This analytical approach, this categorizing, this managerial perspective, was a breath of fresh air for me. I glimpsed how to begin making missiological sense of the maelstrom. I have been grateful ever since.

- Miriam Adeney, PhD
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The Missiological Vision of J. H. Bavinck: Religion, Reticence, and Contextual Theology

by H. L. Richard

Editor's note: This is an article-length book review of the new publication The J. H. Bavinck Reader, *eds. John Bolt, James D. Pratt and Paul J. Visser; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013, pp. 417.*

The translation and publication of the early Dutch writings of J. H. Bavinck (1895-1964) is cause for celebration in the English-speaking missiological world. Bavinck was a Dutch Reformed missionary to Indonesia who became an exceptional missiologist. He is introduced here in an insightful 92-page essay that segues into a selection of his works, primarily (translating the Dutch titles) *Religious Consciousness and Christian Faith* (1949) and *Christ and the Mysticism of the East* (1934). These are insightful studies with definite current relevance, but there is room also for criticism of Bavinck so this review article will both highlight strengths and point out problems.[1]

Bavinck the Missionary

Bavinck's field experience was in Java, where he served through most of the 1930s. He became the first Reformed professor of missions in the Netherlands, and his outstanding inaugural lecture of 1939 is included in this volume. Bavinck is best known in the English-speaking world for his 1960 work *An Introduction to the Science of Missions* (1954 in Dutch). His final work was posthumous, *The Church Between Temple and Mosque: A Study of the Relationship Between the Christian Faith and Other Religions.* (1966).

Paul Visser, in his analysis of Bavinck, suggests that in his field experience in Java, "Bavinck's work was marked by four characteristic features" (13). This is clearly the foundation for Bavinck's later thought so these four points will be outlined here.

> First of all, he showed real capacity for entering into the Javanese mind. His first priority was to immerse himself in the native culture as the initial stage of cross-cultural evangelism: "A person who carries the gospel to them will have to lean over toward them as far as possible in order to bring them into as close a contact as possible with the crux of the gospel."[2] (13)

The entry into culture for Bavinck included studying the Hindu and Buddhist roots of Javanese cultures as well as the Islamic element that later became dominant. He carefully observed the traditional *wayang* puppet performances

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and their cultural and spiritual significance. Quoting both Visser and Bavinck again, what would now be called a dialogue group became a vital part of Bavinck's field experience.

> In 1931, a Cultural-Philosophical Study Group was set up in Solo to help the Javanese, Dutch, and Chinese to get to know each other. Bavinck counted participation in this group among the most wonderful experiences of his life. For him, the best moments came when "our conversation rose above all earthly things and turned to the divine world beyond us. Then we no longer thought of ourselves as Javanese, Chinese or Dutch; then, in a certain sense, we all became children standing in the presence of the ineffable greatness of the Eternal One. It was apparent that there were boundary lines. And yet, during these night-time discourses, we realized, deeply and intensely, how fruitful and wonderful it was that we could speak with one another about these things in such an atmosphere."[3] (14)

Thus Bavinck engaged the living religiosity of Java, all for the purpose of effectively sharing the good news of Christ, which is Visser's second point. "Second, Bavinck showed a passion for explicating the gospel message better" (14). Visser considers the crown of this to be Bavinck's 1934 work on *Christ and the Mysticism of the East,* the heart of which is translated as the last section of this book. Greater analysis of this will follow, but Visser's summary statement is worth quoting at this point.

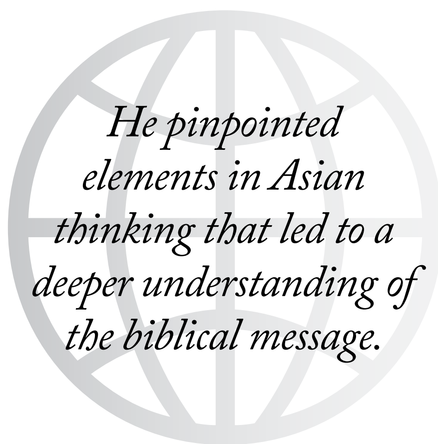
> Because of his strong inner bond with Christ, the Final Answer, he felt free to openly absorb and savor Asian thought. He observed striking similarities between the gospel and Javanese mysticism, pinpointed elements in Asian thinking that led to a deeper understanding of the biblical message, and discovered aspects of Asian experience that provided a point of contact for the proclamation of the gospel. (15)

In a time when caution and fear seem to dominate in discussing non-Christian traditions, it is refreshing to read a commendation of "absorbing" and "savoring" alien thought and culture. And that non-Christian cultures provide a context for deeper understanding of the Bible also needs to be highlighted.

Thirdly in Bavinck's experience in Java, he "showed a special concern for youth work" (15). This was especially in the context of Western scientific emphases that were undermining traditional ways, a point that will not be developed further here.

> Finally, Bavinck showed sympathy for rising Indonesian nationalism and the cognate necessity of establishing the independence of the indigenous churches. (16)

This was J. H. Bavinck the cross-cultural worker, sensitive and supportive towards contextual concerns and trends.



If there is a weakness in Visser's survey of Bavinck's life and thought it lies in failing to adequately highlight the concept of *possessio* as Bavinck's fundamental perspective in contrast to indigenization or contextualization. Bavinck suggested that

> The Christian life does not accommodate or adapt itself to heathen forms of life, but it takes the latter in possession and thereby makes them new.... Christ takes the life of a people in his hands, he renews and re-establishes the distorted and deteriorated; he fills each thing, each word, and each practice with a new meaning and gives it a new direction. Such is neither "adaptation," nor accommodation; it is in essence the legitimate taking possession of something by him to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth. (1960:178–179)[4]

There is an inadequate mention of this concept of *possessio* on p. 82, but *possessio* is not mentioned in any of the writings translated in this book. Is that due to the nature of the contents, or is it possible that this concept was developed by Bavinck later in life after the writings translated here?[5]

The Gospel and Human Religiosity

The great theme of Bavinck's missiological writing, and of this collection of his writings, is the engagement of the gospel with other religious traditions. Visser again summarizes this well.

> The question of the relationship between religious experience and God's revelation in Christ was *the* theme that governed the whole of Bavinck's missionary theology. This question goes to the essence of missions and governs the whole methodology of missionary work.[6] (42; italics original)

This focus makes the study of Bavinck centrally relevant to missiological discussions at the present time. Debates about insider movements tend to involve assumptions about religion and religions, and the only hope for settling some of those disputes lies in greater clarity of conception and communication on the topic of the gospel and other religious traditions.

This analysis of Bavinck's teaching on this rich and important topic will begin with his profound exegetical insights into human religiosity. But then Bavinck's handling of the world religions will be analyzed as inadequate and erroneous in some key aspects. Finally, some other areas where Bavinck contributed insightful observations, such as contextual theology, self-critical missiology, and reticence will bring this paper to a close.

From a theological perspective the key doctrine in terms of Christian inter-religious understanding is the concept of general revelation (at one point defined

by Bavinck as "that objective voiceless speech with which God addresses people," 283). The crucial biblical text for this doctrine is Romans 1, and Bavinck is deeply insightful in his analysis of this doctrine and this text. Heavy emphasis is placed on the statement in Romans 1:21, which affirms a definite knowledge of God in all people. Bavinck rightly critiques an overly philosophical approach to this teaching, focusing on a genuine personal encounter with God;

> In other words, that so-called general revelation is depicted for us in the Bible as a much more personal involvement of God with each person than we in our theology once understood it to be. We will have to rethink our theological concepts repeatedly in order to disentangle them from all their abstract philosophical accretions and to understand them again in terms of biblical reality. (238)

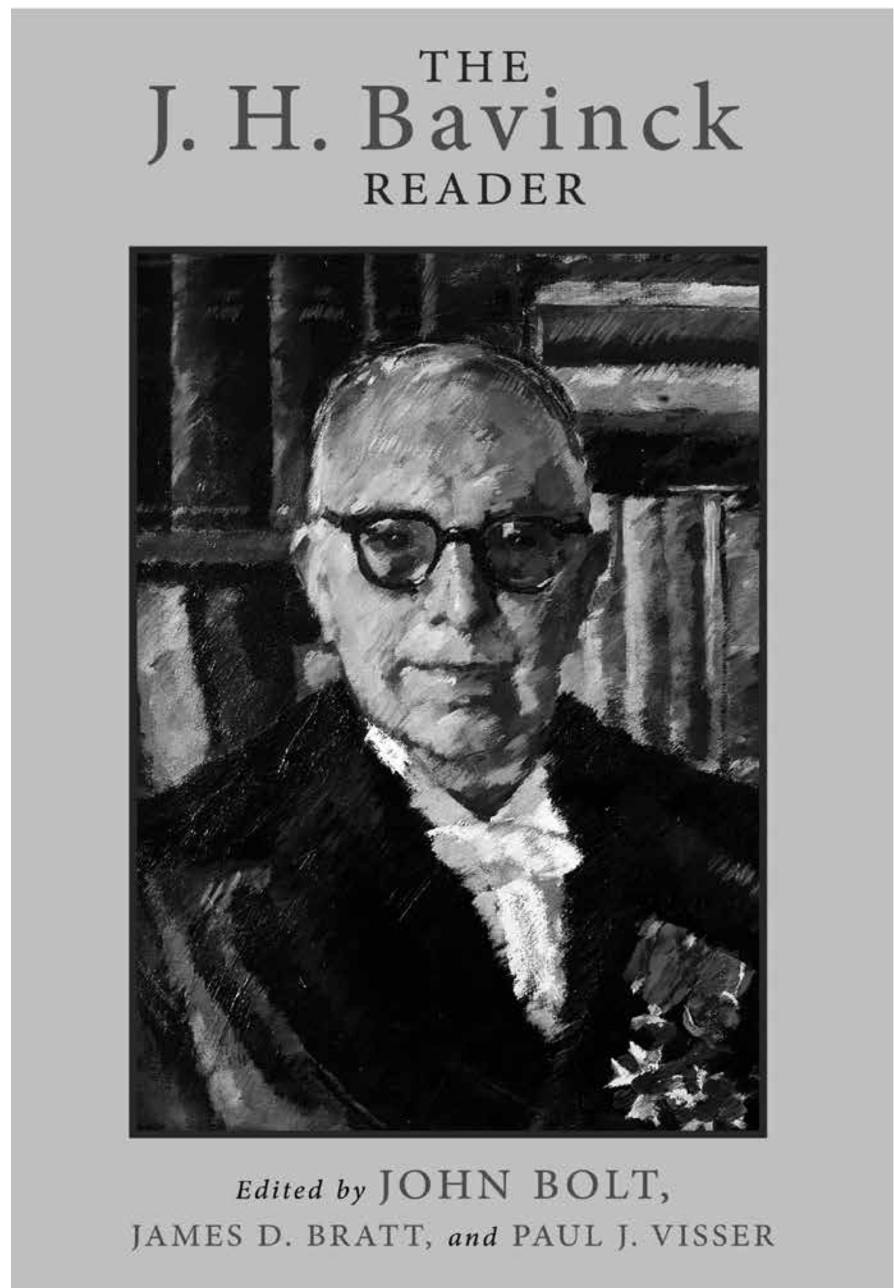
Bavinck is deep and thorough in his analysis, at times almost to the point of tediousness. Yet he coaxes some precious insights from his sources. Bavinck is critical, as hinted above, of traditional teaching on general revelation that suggests a rationalist bias. So he wrestles with the biblical text for an answer to the question of what it is in humanity that receives general revelation.

> If general revelation is the father of religion, there must also be something in the human being that makes it possible for a person to receive that general revelation. But then I have to add immediately that Scripture regards that inner principle as so completely unimportant that it does not even mention it. (282)

Further on in this exposition Bavinck goes even further, stating that "I am convinced that it will defy the sharpest thought of ever discovering its true nature" (283). This is refreshing reticence, and this trait in Bavinck will be noted again later. The Bible does not address the topic in question, despite a long history of Christian assumptions to that effect, such as a particular bias towards the human intellect being able to discern truths about God. Bavinck suggests an intentional silence in Scripture, to which the response must be an embraced agnosticism. One can question here whether a superior alternate approach might be to rebuke the framework of the question which assumes there can be a legitimate compartmentalization of the human being, and instead focus on the whole person being encountered by the being and person of God at every moment of existence.

This personal encounter of each person with the almighty God is of course not the only point in Romans 1, and Bavinck equally focuses on the fact of human suppression of this general revelation of God (Rom. 1:18).

> *"Suppress."* This need not be understood as a conscious action. It can develop in total silence in the human heart. I am inclined to understand this in the sense of repression, as the concept of repression has been developed in recent psychology. As a rule, repression occurs unconsciously, but that makes it no less real. (242)



This suppression or repression of the truth of God which is manifest to the human being then immediately translates into an exchange of God's truth for human folly (Rom. 1:23).

> *"Exchanged."* Here an active verb reappears. They have exchanged. Now the image of the immortal God slips through their fingers, and they fill the void that overwhelms their entire being, including their thinking, with all sorts of fantasies. In those fantasies, they drag God down to the creaturely level, pulling him down to the level of mortality. (245)

At this point Bavinck's exposition is very much in line with traditional Protestant understanding. His next paragraph, however, introduces an interesting nuance. Most likely it was Bavinck's dialogical experience and living relationships with believing practitioners of other faith traditions that provided his personal foundation for this understanding.

> *"Made to look."* This is an extraordinarily cautious statement. The text [Rom. 1:23] does not read, "They have exchanged the glory for the images of mortal men, etc." But it reads, "images made to look like mortal human beings." Here account is taken of the fact that pagans also feel that the images that they make of their gods are not totally accurate representations of the gods themselves, but are only approximate expressions of the reality of those gods. (245)

The response on the human level to general revelation, however, is nothing positive, for "whenever the living reality of God manifests itself and displays its evidence to such a one, two processes begin working. The first is the process of repressing, the second that of replacing" (246). Further,

> This occurs instantly, so that people actually never arrive at the point of knowing. They see, but they do not see. They never fully see. God definitely reveals himself, but people immediately push it away, repress it, suppress it. They are knowers who do not know, seers who do not see. Their juridical position is different from their actual reality. (285)

This human rejection of the light of God leads to the thrice repeated judgment of "God giving them over" that concludes Romans one (vs. 24, 26, 28). Bavinck's exposition here is not merely theological, but deeply personal as among those implicated are his friends and partners in dialogue.

> ...it cannot be denied that in this entire process something thoroughly tragic happens. "They are given up." "Their hearts become darkened." When this process begins to work, these people simply do not understand it and over against it they are powerless. They are the active agents who, by virtue of their immorality, wring moral norms out of their life on every side and repress and replace the truth. But, these people at the same

> time are victims who at any given time can no longer resist, who no longer have any anchor, and who "lose themselves." They do something, but something is also done to them, overwhelms them, sweeps them along, washes away all their resistance. (247)

Bavinck caps this profound and compassionate exposition by drawing three very important practical conclusions. The first point is rather long-winded, but there are tones of compassionate concern that carry all the way through it and make it inadvisable to edit.

> In the first place, we need to keep a sharp eye on the fact that there is something distorted in the human condition. People have been resisting, suppressing. They have done so unconsciously. But they do so all the time, moment by moment, always unaware that they are doing so. But at the same time, there is always a definite unsettledness deep within them as a consequence of that suppression. This amounts to a definite dissatisfaction and tension. As a rule, the engine of this suppressing process runs noiselessly, but not so noiselessly that they never feel it running now and then and thereby realize that something is amiss in their lives. People play hide-and-seek with God. They are honest neither with themselves nor with life. They will never admit this, but it always hangs over them. Nevertheless, there are moments when they vaguely suspect something sour and distorted about their existence. Here it is impossible for me to get into this at any depth, so I will only say this. When people begin to be illumined by the light of the gospel, they sometimes suddenly become aware of the horror of this suppressing process and realize that they have always known but have never wanted to know. It strikes me that a great deal of the unsettledness, the primal fear, and the tension of which people give evidence at various times in their lives is connected with this basic phenomenon at the root of their existence; they do not live honestly in this world. (285)

Bavinck goes on in a second point to emphasize the diverse manifestations of this process in the complexity that is human life.

> In the second place, we must not overlook the possibility of a variety of individual differences. There are people who appear to be so completely comfortable with the process of repressing that they take no notice of it....However, there are other cases where the suppression happens with much more difficulty and sometimes even seems to fail entirely....The history of religion as well as missionary experience teaches us that it makes no sense to paint all pagans with the same brush. We will have to observe with great care what has happened in every individual life. We need to be sensitive to the wounds inflicted in each person's struggle against God. Feeble human feet can never kick

> aside God's presence with us without incurring a penalty. That very painful reality is played out in each human life in its own unique way. (285–6)

Finally Bavinck comes back to his first point again, the reality of the knowledge of God within each human person.

> In the third place, I believe that we may never forget that what has been suppressed has, for that very reason, not been completely obliterated. It has not been destroyed or rubbed out, but it has only been suppressed—no more and no less than that. That can only mean that somewhere, deep within the hidden recesses of people's beings, that repressed and suppressed truth is still present. (286)

With this profound exposition of general revelation as it impacts the human race Bavinck has put the theological and missiological world in his debt. There is a great deal of insightful material passed over in this summary of Bavinck's position, and careful study of the volume, and Bavinck's other works, is advised. One further point is sufficiently intriguing to this reviewer to demand comment. Bavinck makes an interesting distinction between general revelation and the human religiosity that results from it.

> No continuity exists between the gospel and human religious consciousness, although definite continuity does exist between the gospel and what lies behind human religious consciousness, namely God's general revelation. [297]

Bavinck applies this insight to every believer, suggesting that "In the Christian's struggles with life, that faith pushes back against the religious consciousness that is still a living and tenacious power even in him or her" [298]. Bavinck goes on to say that preaching the gospel

> involves saying an emphatic "no" to all human religious consciousness—that of the Hindus, the Buddhists, and the Muslims. Those who are sent can say "no" to these religious notions with heartfelt conviction only when they have learned to reject heartily the religious consciousness in their own heart. [299]

Somewhere, deep within the recesses of people's beings, that suppressed truth is still present—it has not been completely obliterated.

Bavinck goes on to balance this by affirming that missions is much more than saying "no," it is saying "yes" to the suppressed voice of God that is general revelation. After weeks of reflection I am still in two minds on what to think about Bavinck's point here. "Religious consciousness" is not part of my normal vocabulary; I am aware of fighting the idolatry and paganism of my own heart, but I am not sure that exactly corresponds to what Bavinck is saying. Certainly people cannot attain to God without Christ and the Holy Spirit; is this just an emphatic way of making that point? Is this possibly a manifestation of Bavinck being too concerned about Kraemer's semi-Barthian approach to religion (see below)? Perhaps readers of this review and the book will find more clarity than I have.

The World Religions

Woven amidst many stimulating insights there is a deep problem in Bavinck's approach to the world's religions. A critique of this approach was already begun by the editors of this volume.

> Knowledgeable readers will notice immediately that we have given the third major section of this volume, a translation of *Christus en de Mystiek van het Oosten,* the title "Christ and Asian Mysticism" rather than "Christ and the Mysticism of the East." To speak of "the East" in global terms *in distinction from the West* is misleading to contemporary readers for a number of reasons. First, its generality suggests a single monolithic worldview while the reality is remarkably diverse and complex. Second, it fails to clarify the importance of geographically oriented streams of religious faiths such as those of South and Southeast Asia (India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia) in distinction from East Asia (China, Korea, Japan). Third, these changes are in keeping with Bavinck's own sensitivities. As the reader will discern, Bavinck is very aware of this diversity, and his treatment of the religious world of Indonesia in chapters 7–11 fully honors the diversity as well as the generalization. (x, italics original)

This is a helpful step in the right direction. But on another complex terminological issue, the editors felt constrained to retain Bavinck's terminology. In a note on the first page of the collection of his writings the editors state that

> We are retaining the expressions "non-Christian religions" and "world religions" as they are used by Bavinck himself, even though there are solid arguments to be made against the use of "religions" in the plural as a general description. (95)

This note is appreciated, and it is probably true that editing out from Bavinck these kinds of expressions would involve too much tampering with his texts.

But the editors themselves are guilty of a serious faux pas when on page 305 they replace the false reification of "the East" with "the Hindu religion," suggesting that "the editorial change that specifies Hinduism is an editorial change warranted by the content of the paragraph and is provided for accuracy and clarity" (305). In reality, however, "'Hinduism' suggests a single monolithic worldview while the reality is remarkably diverse and complex," and so one misleading reification has been replaced with another. (A simple solution to this problem would have been to reference "Hindu traditions"

in the plural rather than "the Hindu religion" or "Hinduism.")

This is only the tip of an iceberg of problems. There are also numerous errors of fact related to Hindu traditions, alongside inadequate interpretations and applications also in relation to Indic traditions. But it is in presuppositions that the problem most deeply lies, so that needs to be central to this critique.

In what is generally a very insightful statement on the very topic presently under discussion, Bavinck reveals his fundamental presuppositional fallacy.

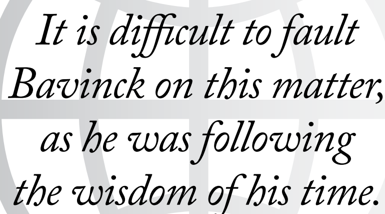
> Time and again, it became apparent that the various religions of the human race are so endlessly diverse, so complex, so rich in ideas and experiences, that it is completely impossible to explain them satisfactorily in just a single word. Now, after many years of work in the science of comparative religions, we realize that we are only at the beginning of a long journey in determining what is most essential about religion. (150)

Were Bavinck with us today he would, no doubt, with his editors and the wider academic community, agree that what the long journey of religious studies has determined thus far is that it was a false assumption that there is an essence to religion and religious traditions, which in fact are complex conglomerations of beliefs and traditions that were wrongly labeled as single religions. The assumption about essences influenced Bavinck's terminology about "the East," and mars much of his further analysis of religious traditions.

In one sense it is difficult to fault Bavinck on this matter, as he was following the wisdom of his time. Visser in his introduction points out that Bavinck was deeply influenced by Hendrik Kraemer (36), best known for his work *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World,* prepared for the International Missionary Conference in Tambaram in 1938. In an introduction to a reprinting of this classic work, I suggested that

> Kraemer's understanding of Hinduism was woefully distorted in the direction of the classic Orientalist position which forced the complex data of Indian religiosity into the neat box of a Hindu religion based on sacred texts and pantheistic philosophy. Especially Kraemer's dismissal of *bhakti* Hinduism is tragically misguided. (Richard 2009:xix)

Kraemer and Bavinck were both influenced by the prevailing thought of the time about the centrality of non-dualist philosophy to Hindu traditions. In one of a number of sections in this book where Bavinck is reading non-dualist assumptions into Hindu positions, he supports his case about essentials and fundamental principles by referencing the work of the German Indologist



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Paul Deussen (325). Richard King, among others, has shown how Deussen and other Western Indologists failed to keep their own preferences from influencing their academic work.

> Heavily influenced by German idealism (especially Kant and Schopenhauer) as well as Romanticism, early Orientalists such as H.T. Colebrooke, Max Muller and Paul Deussen tended to locate the central core of Hindu thought in the Vedas, the Upanisads and the traditions of exegesis that developed from them....For Deussen, an avid disciple of Schopenhauer, the Vedanta philosophy of Sankara represented the culmination of Hindu thought, providing evidence that the idealisms that were in vogue in nineteenth century European thought were already present at the "core" of the Hindu religion. In particular one finds an increasing tendency within Western scholarship not only to identify "Hinduism" with the Vedanta (thus establishing an archaic textual and canonical locus for the Hindu religion) but also a tendency to conflate Vedanta with Advaita Vedanta—the nondualistic tradition of Sankaracarya (c. eighth century CE). Advaita, with its monistic identification of Atman and Brahman, thereby came to represent the paradigmatic example of the mystical nature of the Hindu religion. (King 1999:128)

Errors related to this problem repeatedly appear in Bavinck's work, so only a sampling will be presented here. It should be noted that this problem mars *The Church Between Temple and Mosque* as well, largely invalidating that as a reliable resource. The core problem, as suggested above, was the assumption there was an essential system in non-Christian faith traditions. Bavinck wrote that

> closer study revealed that these religions were intricate systems in which great and comprehensive concepts of humans, the world, and God were articulated in various ways. Thus, the study of other religions led to several remarkable discoveries that forced scholars to face the question as to what value could be attached to these religious systems. (100)

Discussion of the systems is found again on p. 105 before a qualifying insight:

> when dealing with the issue of general revelation and non-Christian religions it is necessary to distinguish between these religions as systems of thought and the personal religious experience and searching of each religion's adherents. (106)

It is this kind of understanding, along with recognition of competing systems of thought, that has led to the deconstruction of the concept that there is an essential element to any of the world's religions. But the time was not ripe for this recognition, and Bavinck

went on to take away with the left hand what he had given with the right.

> Therefore, examination of revelation in other religions must be restricted to the religious systems themselves and not focus on the systems' particular adherents. (107)

The assumption of a system easily led to the assumption that the deepest truth of a faith tradition was to be found in sacred texts. As Richard King pointed out, "There is a clear literary bias within modern Western conceptions of religion" (1999:62). This appears in Bavinck when he states that

> each of these religions recognizes a book or a collection of books, sometimes only a set of oral traditions that are regarded as revelation The religion is then accountable to that revelation in its totality of convictions, sentiments, morals , and patterns of behavior that are passed down from generation to generation. (149)

This mindset leads to the oft-stated absurdity that the Rig Veda is the final scriptural authority for Hinduism, when in fact the RV is hardly acknowledged at all in living Hindu practice, and various authorities, some inscripturated and some not, are evident in the many vastly varying Hindu traditions.

Bavinck's self-imposed pressure to essentialize led to numerous dubious generalizations.

> India has produced a mixture of religious and philosophical movements, but it is not too bold to say that this idea of the experience of totality has been the most controlling motif driving all thought and inquiry. (153)

> In all of their thinking about God, the people of Asia could never escape the supposition that God is identical with the cosmos, that he is the summation of all cosmic forces and cosmic order. (386)

Particular teachings are also distorted under the essentializing influence.

> One needs, once and for all, to be set free from the restrictive ties of *samsara* [the world/reincarnation] and be exalted into the glorious deliverance of being absorbed into divinity. [188]

A strange, perhaps heretical-type expression by an Asian Christian might be born from a genuine need to understand God's word.

This is the error of reading Hindu traditions as if they are consistently advaitic, the error addressed by Richard King in the long quotation above. Another commonly-held error relates to karma. Bavinck suggests that

> The Hindu religion has the concept of karma for designating that automatically activated connection between evil and punishment; punishment follows evils with ironclad necessity. [237]

But more recent scholarship has shattered the notion of "ironclad necessity" in karma; see Lipner 1994:232–239 for an exposition of the varying meanings of karma in different schools of thought.

These broad errors of interpretation run alongside quite a number of factual errors that will be noted as a service to readers and editors. On p. 126 there is an odd reference to Sri Krishna in "opposition" to Arjuna, referencing the Bhagavad Gita. This may be Bavinck's error and may be a translation error, but opposition is certainly not the right word for what is discussed in that context.

On pages 186–7 there is some confusion with *yoga* mistakenly printed for *yuga* in two places. Footnote 64 mistakenly says that Satya-yuga, which is in fact the first cosmic age, is identical with Kali-yuga, which is in fact the fourth cosmic age. The description in the text at this point suggesting that there is hope only in Vishnu should be identified as a distinctly Vaishnava belief.

The editors also confuse the complex semantic field related to *brahman.* Note 4 on page 306 mistakenly identifies a distinction between *Brahmá* and *Brâhma;* aside from the strangely creative orthography here, the proper explanation is a distinction between *brahmā* and *brahma; brāhma* is not even a word. The policy of avoiding diacritical marks compounds the problem as the note goes on to misleadingly distinguish *Brahman* and *Brahmin;* it is a quirk of older English transliteration that Sanskrit *brāhman* (the name of the highest caste) misleadingly became English Brahmin; more recently Brahmin is not in use, the more correct Brahman *(brāhman* when basic diacriticals are used) being employed for the caste name. A related spelling error occurs in note 35 on page 324 where Shatapatha Bramana appears; this should be *Brahmana,* and in fact is the identical word *(brāhman)* as the name for the highest caste, though it is conventional in English to drop the final "a" from the caste name and keep it when the reference is to the Vedic texts.

Note two on page 331 misprints the name of the mountain in Indonesia, which should be Maha-meru as in the text. Note 8 on page 354 mishandles the distinctly Indic term *dharma* by suggesting it refers to "one's religious obligations." In light of the editors' earlier qualifications about "religion," this is an odd error; dharma is holistic, covering every aspect of life and not only "religious" duties.

Affirming Contextual Theologies

Sprinkled through Bavinck's text are strong affirmations of the need for contextual theologies and clear pointers regarding the attitude necessary to foster such theologies.

> A strange, perhaps heretical-sounding expression by an Asian Christian can be the symptom of earnest, independent searching and reflection. It might be born from a genuine need to understand God's Word and to reflect on it from a person's typically eastern spiritual approach. In that

> case, it would be entirely wrong if we bluntly and insensitively objected to it. What is most important in such situations is that a genuine desire exists to be led by God's Word and to bow before the majesty of what that Word conveys to us. If that desire is present, I believe that we may endeavor to lead such people further down the road of true knowledge with complete confidence and discernment. And then we can also cherish the expectation that Christ's Spirit will gradually lead the churches of Asia more deeply into the truth of God's Word. At this time, then, I do not want first of all to assess the formulations of these eastern Christians critically or to weigh their orthodoxy for you. I will not trouble you by indicating whether they risk the danger of Patripassianism, Docetism, Nestorianism, or some other —ism. Our only concern this afternoon is to reckon with what grip these people have on the gospel and how they have been captivated by the adoration of Christ. [124]

The relevance of this comment to Insider Movement discussions should be obvious. Might it be possible that common ground among disputants could be found in this paragraph?

Directly speaking to the point of "indigenous theology" Bavinck stated that

> We are always profoundly aware that an indigenous Christian theology needs to be developed, both in India and on Java, one that works through struggles with Islamic mysticism and Hinduism. The cultivation of such a theology, to be sure, is a task that will require not just years but centuries. But its seed must be sown already now, so that these kernels can germinate and bear fruit in God's time and with his blessing. [304]

The recognition of a need for indigenous theologies assumes the obvious but neglected point that the churches of the West have not fully exposited the unsearchable riches of Christ. The Christian messenger to the non-Christian world must be ready to learn not only local languages and cultures, but new insights into Scripture based on alternate perspectives of other peoples.

> First of all, let us acknowledge that Asian people in general have seen the delicate strands that connect humanity and the world to one another more precisely than we have. For that reason, we can learn all sorts of things on these matters from them. However, of greater importance for our investigation is that we can also better comprehend many things in the Bible that point us to the unity of microcosm and macrocosm. [340]

This stress on what the Western messenger can learn is often in Bavinck's teaching accompanied by a devastating analysis of the Western world in general. This statement from the penultimate page of the book brings together the exhortation for patience in developing contextual theology with both great faith and bitter realism.

> All of this is work that takes a long time. We cannot define ahead of time the lines along which specifically Asian thought about Christ will develop. Many factors exist that will determine that process. A great deal of hard thinking still needs to be devoted to it before people will be able to draw the clear, broad lines running from the gospel to all areas of life and spirituality. But of one thing we are certain, that Christ will increasingly receive and maintain a position of triumph in the world of Asia. We believe that not because the times are so propitious, but because he is the Conqueror who will not falter but will bind the heart of Asia to the truth of God. At the moment, many factors resist the spread of the gospel in Asia. The example of western Christianity offers Asian people very little that would cause them to hold in high esteem the dominant religion of the West. [410]

At this point Bavinck is demonstrating a deeply self-critical missiology. Considering this comment about the Christianity of the 1930s, one wonders what words Bavinck might find regarding Western Christianity in the early twenty-first century. Similarly, a passing comment suggests that "In the modern world, people's spiritual condition is worse than those within the non-Christian religions" [108].

Bavinck is so profoundly on target in his reticent approach towards developing contextual theology that it seems tedious to quibble with some of his illustrations. Yet this reviewer sees Bavinck violating his own principles at a number of points, and considers it appropriate to draw attention to these points for the furthering of the cause Bavinck so splendidly espoused.

There is a tension this reviewer cannot resolve between Bavinck's apparent use of "guru" for Jesus on p. 389 (perhaps he is just reporting that Asians speak in this way?) and his clear renunciation of using "guru" terminology of Christ on p. 122. In my opinion, Bavinck's rejection of guru terminology is weak and needs itself to be rejected; this is the one blot in his wonderful inaugural address for the chair of missiology. Bavinck's main objection to referring to Jesus as guru is that thus

> we place Jesus on a level with all the many gurus known from the days of the ancient Veda poets right up to our own time. [122]

But Bavinck had just insightfully expounded how the apostles shifted from a focus on Jesus as Christ to Jesus as Lord when the gospel moved from the Jewish to the Gentile world [114].

Yet it was axiomatic that there are many lords (1 Cor. 8:5), and Spirit-filled messengers will make obvious that they do not see Christ as just one among many.

Bavinck makes a second point, that "new Christians in [South and Southeast] Asian nations universally shrink back from proceeding on the basis of the guru idea" [122]. Bavinck is simply ill-informed here, as nothing is more natural in India than reference to Christ as guru. For just one example that Bavinck might have been expected to be familiar with, Narayan Vaman Tilak wrote thus of his encounter with Christ:

> As a Hindu I had, and still have, a typical respect and love to my guru; and, when Jesus became my Guru, naturally I regarded and loved Him with all the fervour and intensity of a real disciple. I experienced a peculiar fellowship with Him. This much I know, that I could not be happy if I missed Him. (quoted in Winslow 1930[1923]:22)

Bavinck goes on to give a good explanation for why Christians rejected guru terminology;

> It is certainly the case that in these churches only a very small beginning has as yet been made in developing indigenous theology. By the nature of the situation, they are still strongly influenced by the mission and the missionaries that preached the gospel to them. Yet, it is slowly becoming possible to investigate how the gospel is being appropriated within the younger churches....here and there we encounter typically eastern ways of thinking and speaking. The most striking examples of this are among those without theological training, that is, those who have not been educated by western theologians at one of the various theological seminaries. Precisely such people, who have not received training in dogmatics, can sometimes express the content of the gospel in their own unique way using thought-forms and images borrowed entirely from their own world. [123]

This is a constant problem in contextualization, that traditional churches want to hold to the old ways rather than adopt communication that resonates with non-Christian hearers. Bavinck's rejection of Christ as guru is lamentable.

His approach to mission is dialogical: "missionary work is in practice always discussion and cannot be anything but discussion."

Bavinck also failed to demonstrate adequate sympathy in an area that he acknowledged as being very complex, which is (in traditional theological terms) the transcendence and immanence of God. In a passage where he is again guilty of reading Hindu traditions as advaitic, Bavinck goes on to say that

> Admittedly, in the course of history there have certainly been voices that have proclaimed emphatically that we should worship God as Lord and that in no case should we ever regard him as identical with ourselves (Ramanuja). But in opposition to that position, a whole crowd of thinkers maintained that they had no desire to abandon the typical *hesitation* and *vacillation.* Yes, there were even those who emphatically asserted that God must not be seen as Lord over us, but must be felt as the depth of our own beings. *Atman* equals *Brahman.* This typical *wavering* has received not a little reinforcing on Java from Islam. [307, italics added]

The pejorative terms highlighted above seem unworthy of Bavinck, especially when he proceeds to express the biblical position as "not a simple matter."

> Thus, "we always especially face the problem of doing equal justice to the absoluteness and the personality of God, the incommunicable and the communicable attributes, God's absolute sovereignty over, and his communion with the world." Small wonder, then, that is it not a simple matter for us to view clearly the relationship of these matters to one another. Rather than succumbing to the vague, mystical meditation on the depths of Being-in-general that has hypnotized Asia to such a powerful degree, we want to stand on the solid, reassuring foundation of Scripture that reflects both sides of this matter.[7] [313]

Scripture does not solve the problem, merely shows both sides, and if we are to be self-critical we are often left wavering and vacillating. Bavinck's analysis at this point is biased to his own position and unnecessarily harsh towards his opponents.

Reticent Theology

These, however, are rare aberrations in Bavinck's treatment of other faith traditions. He calls for and demonstrates deep respect and appreciation for ideas and practices which he is unable to accept. His whole approach to mission is dialogical, as in this statement; "Missionary work is in practice always discussion and cannot be anything but discussion" [81].[8]

Bavinck as a rule is careful not to overstate what the gospel offers. For example, on the doctrine of God he grants that there is a "struggle that theology always has whenever it talks about God: on the one hand it may not remain silent about God; but on the other hand it can never adequately express in its own language what it would like to say about God" [312–3]. Talking about "God in the soul" (a sub-heading on p. 319) it gets even more difficult.

> It is not easy to respond to all these observations, especially because we sense that, against our will, we are standing here before one of the greatest of all mysteries. Nothing is more difficult for a person to understand than the riddle of God dwelling in the creature, of the presence of eternity in time. In addition, the Bible always speaks of these things with extreme sobriety and care. Thus, only with great reservation and reverence do we endeavor to make a few comments. [319]

Moving to a doctrine that might be thought rather simple and clear, Bavinck has this to say about creation:

> All of this is what Christian theology intends when in contrast with the doctrine of emanation it posits the conviction that the world has been created "out of nothing." To think that all puzzles have been solved by this would be foolhardy, for the concept of creation is extremely difficult to comprehend. [327]

This is reticent theology, acknowledging mystery and allowing room for contextual insights to develop. It is a humble theology that is ready to grant insights even where there are disagreements.

> In the final instance, Asia experiences life as a reality to a much lesser degree than we do. It regards a person much more as a tiny speck in this world, one with whom the cosmic powers play their capricious game until the notes of the gamelan fade away and the game is over. In the depths of our being, we are only spectators of the world drama, as many eastern poets have reflected. We are really not players in this game, not partners, but we are only silent spectators, momentarily under the impression that we are being carried along on the stream of life until we awaken from the dream and see our true selves again. Now, I do not deny that a great deal of truth is contained in that whole eastern view of life. [384]

Conclusion

Paul Visser in his introduction suggests that "Bavinck's work presents a powerful and authoritative starting point in the cultivation of Reformed missiology" [91]. That is an unobjectionable opinion, but at the current time "Reformed missiology" can hardly be said to exist; maybe this volume will indeed contribute to a start. Yet Bavinck's insightful perspective needs to impact far beyond his own ecclesiastical tradition: his reticence is not distinctly Dutch or Reformed; his embrace of contextual theologies is relevant to other theological traditions; and his exegetical foundation for thinking about human religiosity is valid for all who honor the Bible.

Bavinck views missiology on a grand scale which humbles the practitioner. His hope lies in God's work over generations, not in gimmicks and fads. He presents a holistic vision of cultures coming under the Lordship of Christ and surrendering their riches to him. This review closes giving Bavinck the last word in expressing that compelling vision.

> Culture can only be won over by culture, not by overwhelming people with the fragmented science that we so frequently want to offer to oriental peoples. It is my firm belief that we can be a great blessing to the Asian world only when we are able to provide an alternative model to the fundamental framework out of which they have lived, one that just as completely encompasses all of life and thought as theirs does. This is why one of the greatest issues facing missions in our time is this: Are the Christian churches of our day capable of providing a worldview that is just as fruitful and effective in providing direction for Asian life as their ancient model has been? Mission is much more than simply bringing a few souls into contact with the gospel. It is both an enormous, inner struggle against an entire worldview and an attempt to give birth to a view of all things based on a new set of principles. To attempt to find in the short confines of this chapter something that we could posit as an alternative to the major cosmic scheme of Asia would be foolish. Such matters are far too complicated for that and by their very nature cannot be easily developed; they need to grow slowly. [362–3] **IJFM**

Endnotes

[1] This reviewer self-identifies in the tradition of Bavinck, but with missiological knowledge and experience focused on issues in Hindu ministry.

[2] The quotation is from Bavinck, "Christendom en Cultuuruitingen" in *De Macedonier* 36, 1932:44.

[3] The Bavinck quotation is from "De Cultuur-Wijsgerige Studiekring" in *Het Triwindoe-Gedenboek Mangkoe Nagoro,* part 7, Surakarta, 1939:9–11.

[4] I have highlighted this in the paper "All Things are Yours" in *Mission Frontiers* vol. 33 no. 3, May–June 2011, accessible at http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/all-things-are-yours (Sept. 25, 2013).

[5] The significance of Bavinck's concept of possessio was first brought home to me by Harvie Conn in a manuscript he was developing from class lectures on interreligious engagement. Regretfully, I had to point out that the manuscript was fatally flawed due to dependence on Bavinck in the treatment of Hindu traditions (see further below in this paper), and my proposal to rewrite leaning on Roger H. Hooker's *Themes in Hinduism and Christianity* (itself a bit too deferential to the advaitic stream among Hindu traditions) never came to fruition.

[6] Cf. Bavinck, "the momentous and dominating problem of the relation between Christian faith and the non-Christian religions" *(The Impact of Christianity on the Non-Christian World,* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948, p. 81; Visser provides his own translation of this in a footnote to the quotation above, suggesting the "ruling problem for missiology.")

[7] The quotation here is from Bavinck's uncle, the noted Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck, volume 2 of *Reformed Dogmatics,* p. 117.

[8] Visser quotes this in his introductory essay, from "Het Evangelie en de Andere Godsdiensten," *Het Zendingsblad* 39, 1941, p. 54.

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A Genius for God: Ralph Winter's Recasting of World Evangelization

by Harold Fickett

Editor's note: Originally entitled simply "A Genius for God" as the first chapter in Harold Fickett's The Ralph D. Winter Story: How One Man Dared to Shake Up World Missions *(William Carey Library, Pasadena, CA 2012). Reprinted by permission.*

In the summer of 1974, Christian leaders gathered in Switzerland for the evangelical Protestant equivalent of Vatican II. Twenty-seven hundred representatives from a hundred and fifty nations at the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization considered whether the whole world might be evangelized by the year 2000. Billy Graham called the congress together. England's leading evangelical, John Stott, spoke, as did East Africa's Bishop Festo Kivengere, South America's Rene Padilla, and Susumu Uda of Tokyo. Popular apologist Francis Schaeffer came down from his study center, L'Abri, in nearby Huémoz, to address the gathering. The schedule was replete with such luminaries. None made the lasting impact, though, of an idiosyncratic professor from California's Fuller Seminary named Dr. Ralph D. Winter. Winter's speech accomplished nothing less than fixing Lausanne's attention on more than 2 billion "unreached peoples," reigniting cross-cultural evangelism, while restoring to many of the delegates and their organizations a reason for being.

Winter's epoch-making speech began in the most unpromising way. He apologized, awkwardly, that his remarks might end in confusion. The texts of the plenary addresses, like Winter's, had been circulated beforehand, with several experts scheduled to speak in response. For scheduling reasons, those responding to Winter's paper actually spoke before Winter himself. His points were critiqued from the podium before he made them. In these circumstances Dr. Winter chose to respond briefly to his critics with cobbled-together remarks and then proceeded to the substance.

Ralph Winter was not quite fifty years old. In the Day-Glo 1970s, when even Billy Graham's hair trailed over his collar, Dr. Winter looked like a throwback to the black-and-white 1950s. He wore a plain, dark suit and bow tie. His was of average height, slim, mostly bald, and he wore half glasses for reading his notes. He initially spoke in an urgent deadpan, like the announcer at the beginning of early sci-fi pictures. He came across as the Caltech-trained

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engineer he had once been, a Mr. Wizard or "Bill Nye the Science Guy," illustrating his speech with complicated charts. Here was a man born to wear a pocket protector.

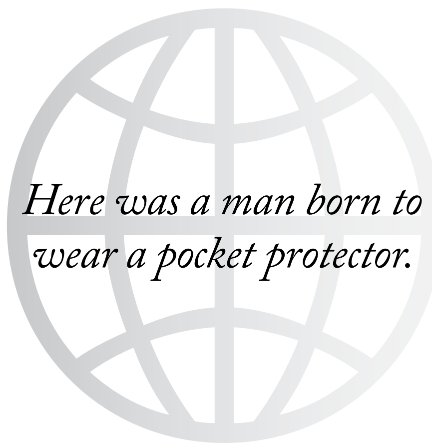
Winter was far more than an entertaining popularizer, though. He belonged in that class of intrepid thinkers, populated by Buckminster Fuller, his old Caltech professor Linus Pauling, and Segway inventor Dean Kamen, who are ready to tackle any problem that attracts their attention. His peculiar genius lay in turning a first-class scientific mind to the problems of world evangelization. He referred to himself as a "social engineer."

Despite its unpromising beginning—and the charts—Winter's speech would be interrupted twice by applause before its passionate conclusion brought down the house.

The second time applause broke out, Dr. Winter remarked, off the cuff, "Now don't clap too soon because this is a really nitty gritty question." The audience laughed, as did Ralph. He was not above having a laugh in the midst of what would be remembered as the most important speech of his life. He had a fine appreciation of life's absurdities, and the ridiculous put a twinkle in his eye.

In its written version, his speech came to be called, "The New Macedonia: A Revolutionary New Era in Mission Begins." In the spoken version, after acknowledging his respondents' helpful correctives, Ralph Winter summed up the position of the Christian movement vis-à-vis the rest of the world and clarified, as no one else, the nature of the task before it. He freed the delegates from false assumptions that would have made the task impossible. He spoke to their deepest suspicions and misgivings. He showed how the way forward had been anticipated in the first years of the church's existence, when the Holy Spirit revealed Christianity to be a faith at home in any culture. The faith's strength lay in its capacity to hop from one culture to another across the centuries, as old centers lapsed into passivity and frontiers became new capitals.

At that time there were 2.7 billion people in the world who were not Christians—1 million for each delegate to the Lausanne Congress. Of these, 83 percent were Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, or secular Chinese. These statistics would seem to mandate that by far the greater part of efforts in cross-cultural evangelism should have been directed toward these groups. In fact, 95 percent of evangelistic efforts were directed at the 17 percent of non-Christians who were neither Muslim, nor Hindu, nor Buddhist, nor Chinese. An enormous task had yet to be done.



Winter's assertion contradicted what most accepted or feared true. It was the settled wisdom of the missions community that Christianity never truly takes hold in a country until that nation has a thriving church run by nationals. There must be a Korean church for the Koreans; a Nigerian church for the Nigerians. The remarkable success of both these national churches proved this true, whereas the failure of the Japanese church to become something more than a Western import kept it small and without much influence. At the time of the Lausanne Congress almost all of the world's *nations* had Christian churches—of one denominational stripe or another. Even an overwhelming and at-times ruthless Muslim nation like Afghanistan had a fledgling church—one Ralph Winter had done much to encourage by helping to send J. Christy Wilson and dozens of others there. (Ralph's interest in Afghanistan grew as a result of his family hosting Ali Askar from Afghanistan for a year when Ralph was in high school.) It appeared that the era of cross-cultural evangelism—the era of India's William Carey and China's Hudson Taylor—had come to an end.

Further, most mission agencies were all too conscious of how missionaries had at times abetted the predations of colonialism and wanted to get out of the business of carrying on "the white man's burden," as Rudyard Kipling put it. Twenty years before, when Ralph Winter and his wife had first gone to Guatemala as missionaries, they had been called "fraternal workers," as were all Presbyterian missionaries, implying they were only in the country to assist the indigenous church, not run it. Western Christian leaders feared that "missions work" had too often been confused with meddling in other people's national churches.

In his written paper—and in the body of his work that many of the delegates already knew—Winter established that every nation had its national church only if nationality were defined in the often-arbitrary way of geographic borders. Within China, for example, many "nations" existed, in the sense of distinct peoples, each with its own language and culture. These nations or people groups often lived in close proximity to one another and yet were as different as American white Anglo-Saxon Protestants are from Bengalis.

Winter's understanding of "people groups" came from the groundbreaking work of his colleagues at Fuller Theological Seminary, Donald McGavran and Alan Tippett. The three Fuller professors recognized that the true dimensions of the task of evangelization

would never be recognized unless the Christian world began to think in terms of people groups rather than geographical nations. Each people group should have its own independently thriving church in order to be considered adequately evangelized.

If one looked at the world in terms of people groups rather than modern nations, Winter argued, some 2.3 billion people and their succeeding generations would remain unevangelized if the extremely difficult task of cross-cultural evangelism did not become the church's highest priority.

Winter devoted much of his written paper to distinguishing three types of evangelism. Most commonly, people are called upon to present Christ's message and embody his love to their neighbors—people with whom they share a common language, culture, and similar social status.

Others traverse borders of language, culture, and social position but remain within the same civilization, as when an American ministers in Europe or parts of the world that have been Westernized.

The most difficult evangelism takes the missionary out of his own culture. It often involves learning a language that has no common foundation with a missionary's mother tongue—or even a written basis or grammar. (Winter crossed these frontiers earlier in his career when he ministered to the Mam people in Guatemala.) Truly cross-cultural evangelism places a missionary in societies whose language, ethnicity, and worldview are profoundly distinct from the missionary's home culture.

Evangelism that takes a missionary from one civilization into another may be so difficult that one of Winter's respondents raised the possibility that it should not be attempted at all. Winter understood it was best for someone from within a community to evangelize a people whenever possible. He insisted, though, that obedience to Christ demands crossing every type of

Most remember this moment in his life. More than a few make the mistake of presuming it his greatest achievement.

frontier and boundary when there are no other options.

One might think this to be an unexceptionable point for the gathering in Lausanne. Many resisted Winter's analysis, however, because they truly believed there was no longer any need for Westerners to evangelize "the heathen."

The missions community had jumped to this conclusion because it aligned its stance with the American civil-rights movement. Public institutions, and certainly the church, should be "integrated" whenever possible, expressing the unity we have in Christ. Every nation should have but one church, and the proliferation of denominations—different types of churches—should be resisted on principle.

In practice this meant that once a "national church" had been established, different peoples who lived within that nation were left to be evangelized by their countrymen.

Winter pointed out that national boundaries were often artificial constructions that included different peoples who were furthest removed from each other culturally, separated by language, social organization, and status—as different as Hindu Brahmins from Boston Brahmins. In fact, Hindu Brahmins were so different culturally from other castes in India, like the Dalits (untouchables), that they were more open to being evangelized by Westerners than other castes. Like it or not, this was simply the case.

Looking through the distorting lens of national churches, 83 percent of the world's non-Christians had become effectively invisible to the missions community. (This is why the term "hidden peoples" was initially used for "unreached peoples.")

Winter said that he had grown up with similarly misleading assumptions. He saw cultural differences among nations as a nuisance and the lack of homogeneity within his own culture as a positive evil. Winter had long awaited the time when everyone, whether black, Chicano, or an Asian emigrant, would worship in places and ways with which he was familiar. But he had since thought better of this. He now saw the church and its various expressions as a grand orchestra. People should not be invited into the church and all commanded to play the violin. Rather, they should be invited to come and play their own instruments—worshiping in a way that fit their own social customs—as long as everyone played from the score of God's word.

Winter pointed out that it was never his intention to exclude anyone for any reason from a given church. He thought that our unity in Christ should not be equated, though, with uniformity in worship and lifestyle.

He based his argument largely on Paul's mission to the Gentiles. Paul, as the first "cross-cultural missionary," was all things to all men that he might win some. He argued continually in his epistles for the freedom of the Greek churches to continue in their own way of life, countering the "Judaizers" who tried to persuade the Greek Christians that they must adopt Jewish customs.

Winter developed an interesting parallel between the question of meat eating in the New Testament and the contemporary situation in India. The Greeks felt free to eat meat (offered to idols) while Jewish Christians thought this an abomination. Paul defended the freedom of the Greeks to eat meat while counseling them not to exercise it in a scandalous way. Winter pointed

out that Indian Brahmins who became Christians might remain reluctant to eat meat—since their caste practiced vegetarianism—while most Christians in India included meat in their diet. Why not allow Brahmins to have a church of their own where they would not be under pressure to renounce their traditional dietary habits?

In the most passionate moments of Dr. Winter's speech, he pressed the point home. If God gathered the whole world into a single congregation Sunday after Sunday, there would inevitably be a great loss of the Christian tradition's rich diversity. "Does God want this?" Winter asked.

> Do we want this? *Christ died for these people* . . . He didn't die to make Muslims stop praying five times a day or to make Brahmins eat meat. Can't we hear Paul the evangelist say that we must go to these people within the system in which they operate? This is the cry of a cross-cultural evangelist.

Winter finished with a charge to the congress:

> We must have radically new efforts of cross-cultural evangelism in order to effectively witness to these twenty-three hundred eighty-seven million [2.387 billion] people. And we cannot believe that we should continue virtually to ignore this highest priority.[1]

With this declaration and the crashing waves of applause it received throughout the world, Ralph Winter became the most renowned theoretician of evangelical missions.

Most who know about Ralph Winter remember this moment in his life.

More than a few make the mistake of presuming it his greatest achievement.

Standing at the podium in Lausanne, Winter was only on the cusp of the most interesting and productive period of his life. Everything that had come before would turn out to be only a preparation for the huge risks he would soon take in service of what he had called "this highest priority." As he often pointed out, the speech he gave at Lausanne was as much the product of his colleagues' thinking as his own.

Winter's years of experience and study had yet to coalesce into his fully mature understanding of the Christian faith itself. He had applied his inventive, scientific mind to many of the organizational and technical challenges faced by evangelical missions, but he had yet to grasp fully the mission at Christianity's core and its implications for the world's greatest intellectual challenges and practical problems. His fully mature thinking, which came surprisingly late in life, sketches out a road map for the Christian movement's direction in the twenty-first century, just as his remarks at Lausanne influenced the final years of the twentieth. Just as Winter was unafraid to risk his reputation to challenge conventional thinking in order to turn the world of missiology upside down at Lausanne, so he would boldly challenge made-up minds on theology in his later years.

At Lausanne, the drama of Winter's life might be said only to have begun. At Lausanne he had risked criticism and disagreement. When he struck out in new theological directions a few years later, he put the meaning of his life at risk and soon faced ridicule, active opposition, and even vicious, personal attacks. Yet Winter was a visionary who sought to wed pragmatism with truth, even at great personal cost. He believed that the success of the kingdom of God was of paramount importance.

The story of Ralph Winter's life, which provides a wonderful basis for examining his thinking, was a long, adventure-filled process of discovery, with the California engineer always ready to ask probing questions and follow wherever the evidence led. It began much in the way it ended, with a boy who influenced everyone around him and was always recruiting people into his plans. **IJFM**

Endnotes

[1] For the full text of the speech, see Ralph D. Winter, "The Highest Priority: Cross-Cultural Evangelism," in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne, Switzerland,* ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis, MN: World Wide Publications, 1975), 213ff.

Stewarding Legacies in Mission

Global Cooperation and the Dynamic of Frontier Missiology

by Brad Gill

Editor's note: This article was first presented as a plenary address at the Asian Society for Frontier Mission (ASFM) meeting in Seoul, Korea, in October 2013, on the theme of Global Cooperation.

Over the past year or so, certain missiological associations and mission movements have been recognizing their 40th anniversaries.[1] Each has taken the opportunity to reflect on the discipline of missiology, to crystallize the vision and purpose of our profession, and to publish insightful summaries of their four decades of cooperation.[2] It's clear from these commemorations that missiology distinguishes itself from the rest of the academy, for it is not just a scholarly exercise that recedes into theoretical abstraction. It is an "interested" discipline which prioritizes the practice of mission towards God's purposes for this world.[3] It's in this context that I want to offer some reflections for our frontier mission associations.

While the roots of both the Asian (ASFM) and American (ISFM) frontier mission associations do not run very deep into the past, I believe any reflection on our short history reveals a certain dynamic in our missiological cooperation. I'd like to capture some of the essential features of this dynamic through an historical excursion, with the hope of nurturing and extending an apostolic missiology.

Frontier Mission

From the genesis of our societies they have carried the designation "frontier mission." It's the original flag of our association. It was chosen to signal a certain re-focusing in mission that emerged during the latter decades of the twentieth century. It was a time in mission history when a common ecumenical perspective had arisen that believed vital national churches were capable of finishing the task of world evangelization in their respective countries. In 1974 this singular identification of a church with its political boundaries was found wanting. Ralph Winter's plenary address at the Lausanne International Congress on World Evangelism in '74 reconfigured that lost world into a mosaic of thousands of people groups who remained without an effective church in their midst. Reaching that lost world would require us to recognize a myriad of cultural,

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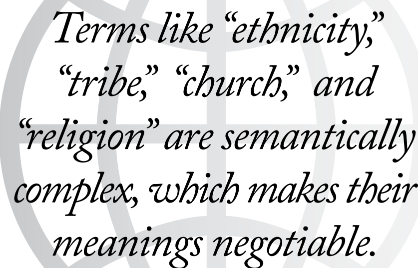
linguistic and religious barriers to the gospel.[4] The term "frontier" was lifted from general missionary discourse and applied to this particular challenge of reaching into the "unreached peoples" of the world. While we can always suggest other mission frontiers, "frontier mission" took on a singular meaning: it identified with Paul's apostolic mission to see the gospel enter and transform the remaining unreached peoples.[5] After four decades it remains the flag under which we cooperate as societies for frontier mission.

But it's more than a new rallying flag. These frontiers provide the essential backdrop of the biblical narrative from Genesis to Revelation. The call of Abraham (Gen. 12) to be a blessing among that Table of Nations (Gen. 11) assumes a plurality of peoples who each represents a socio-cultural frontier. Jesus references this Old Testament perspective when he commissions the apostles to disciple *panta ta ethne* (all the peoples) in Matt. 28:19-20. And then, that magnificent Revelation of John reveals the great plurality of tribes, tongues, nations and peoples which will worship at the throne of Christ (Rev. 5:9; 7:9). From the primeval origins of man to the great consummation of history, God's heart is to penetrate the darkness of every human frontier so that all can worship Him in the light, and the glory, and the majesty of His Kingdom. "Frontier mission" is embedded in the biblical mandate.

A Negotiable Frontier

Every generation begs for a clear call into mission. It certainly was the case with my generation. I do recall sitting with two eminent missiologists, Donald McGavran and Ralph Winter, and their wives, and a cadre of younger 20-and-30 somethings when we birthed the watchword "A Church for Every People." Both these leaders in world mission had helped light a fuse just five years earlier at Lausanne '74, where evangelization was recast into a new mandate which would undergird "frontier mission." It gave tremendous clarity to a younger mobilization movement in mission.

But the assumptions and concepts which buttress this mandate did not diffuse into the mainstream of mission without critique.[6] "Frontier Mission" did not go uncontested, and from the outset, the very definition of "reaching unreached peoples" was disputed.[7] Over the years we've had to reassess our assumptions as we've listened to the feedback and research of those who have been sent across these frontiers. And conditions have changed with the increasing complexity of globalization, urbanization and modernity. Then there's the critique



Terms like "ethnicity," "tribe," "church," and "religion" are semantically complex, which makes their meanings negotiable.

from the church's wider ecumenical mission agenda (*missio dei*) and the newer voices of a burgeoning southern Christianity. All these have combined to force a reassessment of this concept of a cultural frontier.

We've had to recognize that concepts which bear on human relations like those which bolster "frontier mission" don't carry absolute meanings. Terms like "ethnicity," "tribe," "church," and "religion" are semantically complex, which makes their meanings negotiable. These terms remain conceptually open to the application of new criteria from a rapidly changing world.[8] But I believe the process of reassessment has brought greater precision and matured our frontier missiology. After all is said and done, here we are meeting together because this particular frontier still commands our attention.

Take the currently debated concept of "ethnicity." It is fundamental to our original understanding of the biblical mandate "to make disciples of *panta ta ethne*" (Mt. 28:19). For the past 40 years we have used an "ethnolinguistic" categorization to map a lost world of peoples who each need a relevant church. But the term ethnicity is complex, open and debatable, having only recently been defined in English dictionaries. And the increasing impact of globalization forces us to reexamine what's happening to ethnic identity in the crucible of migration and teaming urban contexts.[9] Consequently, eminent mission anthropologists are reexamining the modern loss of "groupness" in ethnic identity, some even concluding "that we really cannot speak of distinct people groups."[10] Simultaneously, a younger generation is emerging (in the USA) that views ethnicity quite differently, causing us to rearticulate what we mean by this frontier.

Secondly, the definition of frontier mission also involves the interface of not just one, but two contested concepts: "ethnicity" and "church." The watchword "A Church for Every People" that emerged in the early 1980s,[11] involved the pairing of culture and church as a simple derivative of the "homogenous unit" principle (i.e., a church primarily comprised of one ethnic group). At Lausanne '74 and its subsequent meetings, that rather bounded concept[12] met resistance from those whose criteria for categorizing humanity had more to do with the social injustices and the economic disparities that divide mankind.[13] From their vantage point, a church's social and ethnic homogeneity held negative connotations, for it seemed to justify the segregation of mankind into racial and cultural inequalities. Based on this criteria, it was difficult to see frontier mission as

asserting the freedom for individuals and cultures to identify with their particular background in any movement to Christ. These differing perspectives on ethnicity and church illustrate their complexity for frontier mission.

Thirdly, the different dimensions of ethnicity (language, culture, religion, etc.) have an elastic quality under modern conditions: it bends, sharpens, fades and blends according to context. In the last couple of decades, the missiological community has paid growing attention to the *religious* dimension of ethnic identity. While we originally categorized unreached peoples as discrete cultural challenges, they were also viewed through those large religious blocks of Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Animist. More recently, we have been reexamining the complex relationship between "culture" and "religion," both of which are embedded in any ethnic frontier. One cannot interpret religion monolithically or unilaterally, for the "religious" barrier to any gospel witness can often include a cultural (ethnic) resistance to the perceived threat of an alien Westernization and its form of Christianity. Note that the elasticity of ethnicity grants us the latitude to examine which factor or combination of factors (culture, religion, etc) create the greater barrier on that particular ethnic frontier.

This swirl of discussion over ethnicity was not simply a theoretical exercise. It was pushed by data emerging across these frontiers. In particular, we were confronted with research that profiled the decisions of tens of thousands of new Hindu Jesus followers (*bakhti*) who did not wish to join what they perceived as a foreign Christendom.[14] We realized that people handle their religion culturally, and their culture religiously, and that across a vast Hindu bloc, different peoples would handle the fusion of religion and culture differently. The term "socio-religious" emerged as a way to convey the reality of this fusion of culture and religion, and it too has been controversial.[15] Our rejection of a monolithic religious frontier has led us into a decade of sorting the threatening subject of religious identity.[16] The entire controversy over "insider movements" emerged from new interpretations of how God was working on the frontier, and the contested concepts of religion and culture are front-and-center in this debate. While we continue to understand this frontier as ethno-linguistic, this debate has pushed us to examine particularly the religious side of ethnicity. But this shift proves the semantic range of ethnicity as a flexible concept for any hindrance we face.

But it is in our global cooperation that new ideas are born, refined, and developed for the frontier.

I believe this negotiability is essential to the dynamic of frontier missiology. The truth of the gospel confronts frontiers that are inherently complex, and reexamining the terminology and concepts we use is crucial to the maturation of our missiology. It's interesting to me that John's vision of that multitude in Revelation 3 uses multiple terms of "tribe, tongue, nation and people" to convey different aspects that define and bind together humans into community. By doing so, the Bible seems to confirm a breadth to the ways we understand the human borders of our identities within the people of God. Any global cooperation in frontier missiology will thrive on that same ability to negotiate our terms and concepts.

This negotiation is only one aspect of our cooperation in frontier mission. Further reflection can identify other "habits of cooperation" which can be the building blocks for any global cooperation.

A Collective Awareness

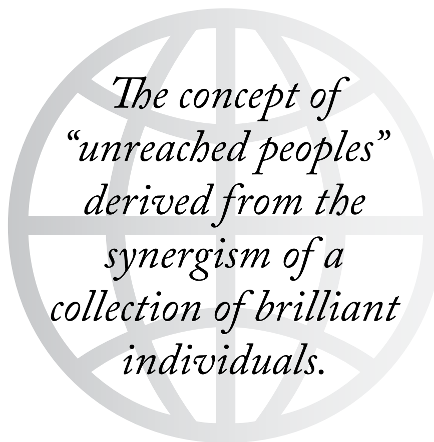
There has been a growing and cumulative understanding of this frontier through surges of new awareness. The Spirit of God, the "Go-Between God" who operates between the Church and a lost world without Christ, has progressively been helping his Church discover important aspects of our mission on this frontier.[17] The Spirit has catalyzed new perspectives that expand our missiological comprehension, and we've witnessed how these new concepts can then assimilate into mainstream missiology. This surfaces in the creation and diffusion of concrete tools like the "C-Scale," the "Kingdom Circles" or the church planting method we now call "Discovery Bible Study."

But, most important, let's note that we become aware together. It's a collective development. An insight that emerges is not necessarily the origination of any new truth, but something that "dawns on us." The Spirit alerts us individually and collectively to something that was already there, a perspective or idea or reality that has somehow gone unnoticed by the mission community. Our attention will fasten on a biblical, theological or cultural aspect lying somewhat outside of our general awareness. It could have originated with a particular person, but the insight quickly grows beyond that person. It is here, at these times, that we witness the vital role of cooperation. Global cooperation does not just serve to spread our ideas, but it is in our global cooperation that new ideas are born, refined and developed for the frontier. This collective awakening to new concepts refines our understanding of the unreached "Other" who live across barriers of darkness, mystery, culture, religion and evil.

My wife, Beth, is the oldest daughter of Ralph Winter, and it has been left to her to transcribe and edit over 50

personal journals her father left when he passed away in 2009. From time to time she alerts me to what she is discovering. The first five years or so they were written in Spanish, which was the language he used among the highland Mayan peoples of Guatemala. But when he joined the faculty of the School of World Mission at Fuller Seminary, he entered a missiological "school of thought" that was thinking on a much more macro level than he had been wont to do. What has become clear to my wife is that the development of the concept of "unreached peoples," and the impulse to count them, and the passion to mobilize a generation of Christians to reach them, all derived from the synergism of a collection of brilliant individuals. No one person alone would have stumbled over this arresting fact (that 2.7 billion people lived in cultures without a Bible translation or a community of churches in their language who could reach them for Christ). Together, the MARC researchers (at World Vision) and the professors at the School of World Mission (many of whom worshipped at the same churches) began to unearth and then discern the enormity of the apostolic challenge still facing the church. We need to remind ourselves of the obvious: missiological awareness flourishes in a collegial atmosphere. It's what creates the dynamism.

Throughout the entire book of Acts we sense this progressive awareness in the mission of the church. Amidst all the powerful acts of the Holy Spirit, one of the signs and wonders is an ethnocentric church being reluctantly led by the Spirit across an ethnic frontier. The illuminating experience of Peter in Acts 10 is an exemplary case for frontier missiology. His walk up that dangerous road and across a socio-religious boundary into the home of that Roman centurion Cornelius is a study of this vital reality. Peter and his companions are stunned by God's baptism with the Holy Spirit, his confirmation and spiritual acceptance, of this small household of pagan God-fearing Romans. Note that this new awareness had an impact in two directions, one towards the lost and the other towards the church. It clarified to Peter something that had heretofore remained out of focus: God is not one who shows partiality and favor to any one people. Certain "absolute absolutes" which operated silently in the underlying presuppositions of this leading Apostle were suddenly shifted and became mere "relative absolutes."[18] His obedience to the Father's voice (beyond his own understanding) began what would become increasingly a broader and more corporate awareness of God's intention on that Gentile frontier.



It's essential that we appreciate the way a "thought collective" grows across these few chapters of Acts.[19] It not only represented the experience of a single apostle, Peter, but also included the reports of Barnabas and Paul from the frontier in Asia Minor. Awareness is not normally born all at once in one person's thinking but grows progressively in a "fraternity of thought." One singular event in Cornelius's household is interpreted and developed more systematically as it connects with Paul's call, gifting and ministry. And Luke's narrative shows how this event unfolded from Peter's testimony in Acts 11 through to the climax in the decisions of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. This corporate climax is a biblical endorsement of how the Spirit works collectively in missiological maturation.

Of course, we as a fraternity have been assisted by the editing and publishing through journals and publications. Greater economy and facilitation is now at our disposal with the internet and new forms of social media. But we still face the challenge of language, and I suspect that the singular use of English greatly impedes the quality and comprehensiveness of thought. We do expect that national initiatives will facilitate a more natural collegial interaction, and we have attempted through meetings like the ASFM to provide global cross-pollination. But even greater synergism is needed if we are to see breakthroughs in historically-resistant domains.

The Intersection of Ideas

I want to look a little closer at another way in which our frontier missiology has developed. Somewhere around the year 2000, when mobilization for unreached peoples climaxed with the global AD 2000 movement, there was a gradual shift of focus to how we interpret the larger macro-religious worlds of Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. As I mentioned earlier, it seems to me that before this past decade, these religious blocs of unreached peoples had been an essential category in our thinking, but we focused more on the cultural and ethnic differences. Now we began to focus on the Muslim and Hindu religious blocs, and it was our frontier missiological discussions that allowed for a cross-pollination of these very distinct religious worlds. This fulfilled the original aspiration to be an association that gains from the intersection of different disciplines and domains.

One of the contributing factors that prompted this shift to religious phenomena was Herb Hoefer's research on the *Jesu Bakhti*, that huge demographic of Hindus who had turned towards Christ but who had remained within their 'other' religious world.[20]

It was originally called "churchless Christianity," but some people alternatively called it "Christianity-less churches." This massive *Jesu bakhti* anomaly was somewhat like Peter finding himself on the doorstep of Cornelius' home. There was surprise and wonder. These devotees to Christ did not "convert" to the church; they remained devoted to Christ "inside" their socio-religious world and "outside" mainstream Christian church life.

What's interesting for my purposes here is the way this Hindu phenomenon then *intersected* with what had developed in one part of the Muslim world. John Travis had developed the C-Scale as a way to understand the range and types of contextualization among churches in his particular Muslim context. Suddenly, from deep within the Hindu world, the *Jesu Bakhti* emerged as a vivid example of the type Travis had called C5[21], but in an entirely different religious world. This combination of a well-researched phenomenon in one religious world with the church typology of another religious domain catalyzed a spontaneous combustion in frontier missiology. It's part of the dynamic we need to continue to promote.

What also becomes apparent in retrospect is that we were focused on the binary tension of "other religions" and "the church." There were perceived contradictions in this consideration of C5 which disturbed, and continue to disturb, those within our historic "Christendom" structures of the church. Admittedly, the majority of us had to adjust to the re-categorization of this surprising reality, and the subsequent polarity of perspectives (usually directed towards different understandings of "insider movements") has felt a lot like the heat generated in the first-century Jerusalem Council.[22] The conflict seemed to concentrate around presuppositions of church and other alien religious worlds.[23] As long as we looked at this development through the lens of the church the tension remained.

The intersection of Kingdom and this religious frontier allowed us to cross a threshold which was strange and alien.

Simultaneously, another independent theological concept showed up in our collective missiological awareness: the Kingdom of God. It was taken from biblical and theological studies and brought into the discussion on this C5 phenomenon we were witnessing on the religious frontier.[24] I should step back and mention that "Kingdom" is a broad and comprehensive theological term which integrates a wide semantic range of meaning; but what's important is that it can transcend our ideas of church, ecclesiology and the gravitational pull of Christendom. When we allowed the perspective of Kingdom to frame our considerations of a C5 movement beyond Christianity, it helped us begin to think with a new hermeneutic. The prism of Kingdom theology freed us from much of the cultural and institutional overhang we carried from our own Western "church" experience. While there may have been aspects of Kingdom theology we ignored, what we gained in the intersection of Kingdom and this religious frontier was deeply illuminating and freeing. It allowed us to follow the steps of Peter and cross a threshold which was strange and alien, and it helped open us to how God was manifesting His glory on the frontier.

I'm trying to point out here a certain characteristic: when two ideas are fused in new and helpful fashion, we can benefit from what sociologists have called "complimentarity."[25] It's a combination of ideas that generates new and fruitful insight. It's a mixture that's catalyzed our "thought collective" with the combination of the Kingdom of God and the religious frontier. We witness it as well in the intersection of data from the two religious domains of the Hindu religious world and that of the Muslim religious world. The fruitfulness of these complimentary discoveries is like striking gold. There's a surge of new missiological effort to dig deeper, to find bigger nuggets of gold, and then the realization that underneath this complimentarity is a whole field of gold with seams going in many directions.[26] Indeed, what we today call the model of "Kingdom Circles" is one clear example of this very productive pairing of the concept of the Kingdom of God with that of a religious frontier.[27] And these types of tools then enrich a cooperative fraternity of thought which amends, refines and applies these tools for Kingdom service.

A Common Orientation

I believe our collective awareness (or fraternity of thought), with all its negotiation and conceptual intersection, has progressively developed a common orientation at the core of our two associations. Some might call it a "paradigm" for frontier mission, but I want to communicate a little less structure and a little bit more of a "thought style," so I would prefer to call it a common orientation. We lean toward certain values. If you're reluctant to admit that our associations together operate with a singular orientation, I can introduce you to opponents who would treat our connection as a hardened, closed and formidable paradigm. The more recent battery of criticism against "insider" perspectives and against particular Bible translation practices is part of a process of self-awareness that alerts us to certain identifiable convictions (or practices) we hold in common. As abbreviated as it is, we do have a tradition, and we're being forced by detractors to examine our terms, our assumptions, and to embrace (or reform) our orientation.

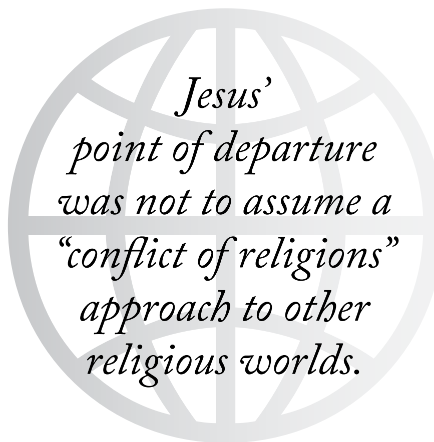
I want to quickly summarize three core convictions I recognize in our

history. Common convictions express what we are and what we believe our association is good for. While our convictions have developed progressively over time, they are representative ideas that constitute a central core to our way of seeing the world and our mission in it. They should make us a "we" that is able to act from a common identity,[28] while not detracting from the unique and distinct strengths arising from our different national heritages or local theologies. So this is a quick work of synthesis, with all the risk of being a reductionist. I should say as a disclaimer that not all those in our association would frame our orientation in frontier mission as I do. But this is my humble attempt to identify a basis for our global cooperation.[29]

On the frontier we preach a gospel of the Kingdom that offers unencumbered access to Christ

In 1974 when Dr. Ralph Winter formulated the challenge of unreached peoples to that great evangelical assembly in Lausanne, Switzerland, there was an immediate resistance to the identification of churches with a homogenous principle.[30] Winter had to amend his original address to answer the resistance to his initial paper, and I believe that amendment (which comprised one third of his speech) remains one of the fundamental perspectives underlying our cooperation.[31] The respondents to that address felt that Winter's cultural grid over the world's unreached would splinter the global unity of the church. Winter's response was to show that "freedom in Christ" was essential for any true unity in the church. In essence, Winter asserted that "where there is no freedom, there can be no genuine unity." Every people needs the freedom to congregate so that a genuine unity might exist across the church. This theological treatment of freedom in Christ remains one of our core convictions in frontier mission. We believe every person and every people must have direct access to God, and that there must be no cultural imposition that impedes man's ability to respond to the gospel.

This principle of freedom in coming to Christ gained further attention (and controversy) as it was applied to the *religious* identity of those who turned to Christ. The emergence of the Kingdom Circles[32] was an effort to diagram how those from other non-Christian religious worlds might freely turn to Christ without having to pass through Western/Christian socio-religious expectations. Over the past few years, new studies of identity, both biblical and sociological, have added greater perception to these observations.[33] While there remains debate over just how much of a non-Christian religious background one can retain, our ssociations generally adhere to the perspective that religion is embedded in culture, and that this enmeshment creates a certain ambiguity and opportunity for anyone and everyone to maintain aspects of their original religious world. It is more often a matter of context. The cultural and religious plurality within the global religious worlds of Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist make us reluctant to dictate any unilateral determination of one's collective religious identity. But I believe we would also affirm the freedom to throw off any custom or religious practice that impedes, spoils, or constrains a person's ability to follow Christ.



Again, this is where the idea of the Kingdom has offered us new ability to articulate this freedom in Christ. We have shifted our gaze to the religious world of Jesus in the gospels, and to his articulation of the Kingdom of God. While he made religious distinctions, he did not allow religious identity to implicate anyone's freedom to turn to him and potentially remain within one's original tradition (Jn. 4:1-42). His point of departure was not to assume a "conflict of religions" approach between our Christian faith and other religious worlds.[34]

On the frontier we actively contextualize ecclesial movements

I have intentionally used the term "ecclesial movement" in describing our progression from earlier terminology such as church planting. While the two terminologies may carry the same spirit and intention, our orientation is to be free of a prescribed ecclesiology and to allow those who come to Christ within a new cultural and religious context to actively contextualize the church for themselves. *Ecclesia* carries all the Pauline intention of church, and "movement," the expectation of growth and extension,[35] but it also opens us to new contextual forms of corporate life as new believers join the body of Christ.

In 1972 the term "contextualization" was coined to grant freedom for younger church movements to formulate their own understanding of how the gospel must impact their cultural context. Heretofore, there was research focused on church growth, on the emergence of people movements to Christ, on the nature of indigenous churches, on factors of receptivity, and on methods which allowed the broad harvesting of new believers *where the church already was.* The transition was towards new study and outreach to the seemingly unreceptive populations, and our hope was that more perceptive contextualization of the gospel and church could make these very populations more receptive.

Again, the Kingdom theme assisted us. The Protestant tendency is to close

down our understanding of ecclesiology and how we expect the church to institutionalize. We prefer "our" ecclesiological custom to be applied universally (and inappropriately) in all contexts. To view "church" from the perspective of the Kingdom of God, allows us to transcend any particular culture's presuppositions regarding church custom, practice and organization.[36]

It was in this vein that Jesus in the Gospels was discovered as a new guide on this matter of contextualization. The more common missionary tendency had been to concentrate on Pauline portions of scripture as the template for ecclesial movements, and thereby to marginalize the actual Jesus movement in the Gospels. But Jesus also was responsible for an "ecclesial movement" that called men and women into the Kingdom of God, and that ecclesial movement rippled through the religious environment of his day. He did not plant a synagogue, or reproduce synagogues, but he led an ecclesial movement, a Jesus Movement, that we take as evidence of his *active contextualization*. He respected the socio-religious organization of his particular Judean context, which was quite distinct from the predominantly Graeco-Roman world of Paul, who would alternatively choose to plant and multiply synagogue-like structures. Both Jesus and Paul actively contextualized in their respective environments, and ecclesial movements emerged.

We respect that the ecclesia (the body of Christ) in any particular cultural or religious context will need to determine how Christ encounters their particular culture.[37] They will need an *active* contextualization that sorts and sifts what to accept, what to adapt and what to reject from their own culture. It is a *contextualization by the insiders*.[38] There is more and more evidence emerging of how these ecclesial movements are identifying and contextualizing their faith.[39] These studies indicate the need for restraint by leaders outside the cultural context, but they also encourage a greater partnership between the apostle, the "alongsider," and the local leaders of an emerging ecclesia.

The push and pull of globalization forces decisions on Christ-centered communities that demand a new sensitivity on our part.

On the Frontier we mediate between different forms of Christianity

The introduction of the C-Scale (C-Spectrum)[40] was an important moment across our networks. Its original intent was to simply describe the different contextual forms of church in one particular region of unreached peoples. While it has been popularized as a way to legitimize Christward movements that remain inside non-Christian religious worlds (i.e., insider movements),[41] it was also originally intended as a general affirmation of Christian freedom to congregate. It was Kingdom-minded and ecumenical in the best sense of the word. It transcended the denominational character of Protestant Christianity by affirming the different forms of church. It answered the call for new "meta-narratives" that would mediate between the different cultures, theologies and churches across our world.[42] Our associations seek to be affirmative of the plurality of church expression found across the frontiers; but, we are intentional towards new, emerging forms of Christ-centered community, especially on those frontiers where the Gospel is breaking into new cultural and religious contexts.

We tend to respect a certain global reality in and around this C-Scale: the obvious and ever-increasing impact of the Western world on frontier contexts. We recognize that the historic forces of Westernization have been pervasive and powerful, and too often have preceded and/or even partially negated any influence of the gospel. Now a multi-regional global influence imposes itself more immediately, both locally and worldwide. It pulls and pushes some persons to assimilate in more modern directions, but it also provokes others to react against any modern imposition of new ideas on their traditional identities.[43]

I'd simply like to suggest that this push and pull, this variety of forces introduced by globalization, must be factored into the contextual decisions of ecclesial movements that are appearing across the frontier. It forces decisions on Christ-centered communities, and this demands a new sensitivity on our part. Non-Western societies, especially urban contexts, can easily condition their populations towards more Western forms of association and organization, and ecclesial movements may choose to adopt a more Western template of church rather than more traditional forms of religious association.[44] The freedom of the gospel demands that we listen sympathetically to these new forms of Christianity, that we expect and affirm diversity, and that we encourage people to discern wisely between these expressions of Christianity. From a biblical perspective, the entire book of Romans was Paul's apostolic effort to preserve biblical truth and yet allow freedom in expression and practice between Jewish and Greek forms of Christianity.[45] A gospel of freedom requires that we both mediate and contend for that freedom.

This mediation has been very necessary in our American context, where representatives among us have been called on to attend consultations where new forms of ecclesial movements (i.e., insider movements) have been questioned, examined and judged.[46] While we do affirm the importance of mediation, we also recognize that voices of church tradition will predominate in

these consultations; newer voices or those voices that remain on the margin of the church, who form and identify themselves differently, need to find some way to be heard. The gravitational pull of mediation tends toward the conservative voice, and an active contextualization cannot settle for this. The ability of the gospel to penetrate all remaining frontiers must not settle back into established forms, no matter how powerful or effective their particular form of ecclesia has been in history. Therefore, we not only mediate, but we *advocate* for those younger forms of ecclesial life, so that a new movement of redeemed life is free to express itself through traditional customs and identity. These new models of ecclesial life are not required for all new believers, but it is the path least supported and understood, and may allow the gospel to bridge effectively into some of the resistant domains of major religious worlds.

A Collaborative Agency

While we share a common orientation, our associations are not deliberative bodies that make decisions for strategic ministry. We're more a reflective body and expect those mission agencies represented in our associations to think and act out of a common fraternity of thought. Our original charter in the USA affirms the strategic role of the mission agency,[47] and most of our participants are members of agencies that decide and act in ministry somewhere across the frontiers.[48] It is in those agencies that we expect deliberation and decisions to accomplish strategic ministry. But, in our fraternity, we provide a space to transcend these strategic agendas with a broader sense of collaboration that brings together different roles and "agents" under the canopy of frontier mission. I see four roles in our associations, each contributing to the dynamic of frontier missiology.

The Apostle. Our conviction that the Gospel of the Kingdom must offer free and direct access to Christ is modeled for us in the apostolic ministry of Paul. A great percentage of our association either serves or has served in contexts requiring the apostolic function, and we grant special value and place to those who represent this frontier role.

The Alongsider. But our commitment to active contextualization among ecclesial movements is also modeled for us in the ministry of Barnabas, who was sent across a frontier to get "alongside" an already existing Jesus movement. He nurtured these new believers, developed new leadership, and brokered them into the greater church movement. A spirit of humility, service, and encouragement constrains this form of leadership, and we have those among us who demonstrate this role among movements today.

The Advocate. There are also some of us who are more like the Apostle Peter, not serving directly in a frontier setting, but our position allows us to mediate between forms of Christianity. We give voice to how God is moving in new ways among the unreached populations. Again, it was Peter's awareness and advocacy that released the church to embrace new forms of ecclesia across cultural and religious frontiers, and there are those in our associations who themselves are functioning in this way.

The Insider. Increasingly by the grace of God we may find among us representatives from within new ecclesial movements. Visa and other economic and political constraints might restrict their participation, but we desire to enlarge our tent to include these brethren. By God's grace we would expect them to gain the majority, for the gravitational pull of our association is in their direction. We listen for their voice, a voice from the edge of the Kingdom.

Concluding Recommendations for our Global Cooperation

I have attempted to describe the dynamic of apostolic collaboration throughout this paper. I have used history to identify a combination of features that can contribute to our future cooperation. It involves:

- A Negotiable Frontier
- A Collective Awareness
- The Intersection of Ideas
- A Common Orientation
- A Collaborative Agency

I would like, therefore, to suggest some modest contours for our future global cooperation as an International Society for Frontier Missiology (ISFM):

- That we continue to promote the *collective awareness* of new currents in frontier missiology.
- That we remain primarily *reflective* associations, not deliberative bodies, that can support mission agencies in strategic initiatives.
- That we encourage the creative *intersection* of different disciplines, contexts, paradigms and initiatives in our international and intergenerational forum.
- That we continue to *advocate* an active contextualization that is specially attuned to those voices emerging from within highly resistant socio-religious contexts.

A Kingdom Perspective on Global Cooperation

Friends and associates, the Kingdom is here, it is at hand and it is coming. Like John the Baptist, we should be impressed with the fullness of this

promise. When John's movement was compared to a superior movement following Jesus upriver, his identity was secure in the coming glory of the Kingdom, for "a man can receive nothing unless it is given him from heaven" (Jn. 3:27). He was simply "a friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, and rejoices greatly because he hears the bridegroom's voice" (v. 29). When the Kingdom comes, when the King is present and doing his work among us, we should be marked by this profound joy. It's a joy that delights in the entire range of the bridegroom's redemptive and transforming agenda. Let his redemption come. Let his transformation come.

Let the dynamic of our cooperation be expectant. Like John we must release and bless new movements displaying God's surpassing glory. We can expect new initiatives to arise, new strategic networks to be born, and new frontier missiology to emerge. We can expect our brothers to specialize, to spin off in new endeavors, to concentrate on new frontiers. We expect that a younger generation will see new visions. And the graybeards will dream new dreams. The Kingdom of God moves across a wide horizon and it's our joy to cooperate in this dynamic expectation of our coming King. **IJFM**

New models of ecclesial life are not required for all new believers, but it's the path least understood and supported.

Endnotes

[1] There were 40th year commemorations of The Asian Mission Association (in 2013), the American Society of Missiology (2013) and The Lausanne Movement (2014).

[2] Note especially the historical retrospect on the 40th anniversary of the ASM by Dana L. Robert, "Forty Years of North American Missiology: A Brief Review," in the *IBMR,* 38:1 January 2014.

[3] Dwight Baker, "Missiology as an Interested Discipline – and Where is it Happening?" in *IBMR,* 38:1, January 2014.

[4] Ralph D. Winter "The Highest Priority: Cross Cultural Evangelism," in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne, Switzerland.* (World Wide Publications: Minneapolis, MN) 1975.

[5] Dana Robert, "Mission Frontiers from 1910 to 2010," in *Missiology: An International Review.* Vol XXXIX, no. 2, April 2011, Electronic issue. Robert documents disputes over the definition of frontiers and argues that the concept of unreached peoples represented both a shift and a narrowing of discourse about mission frontiers and raises questions about the nature of frontier discourse in the twenty-first century.

[6] Bradley Gill, "A Church for Every People" and Donald McGavran, "A Church for Every People: Plain Talk About a Difficult Subject." in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader* (1st Edition), eds. Steven Hawthorne and Ralph D. Winter (William Carey Library: Pasadena, CA) 1981 pp. 597f. and 622f.

[7] Edward Dayton of Mission Advanced Research and Communications (MARC) was part of the early debate and gives a review of the different perspectives in "To Reach the Unreached" in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader* (1st Edition), Ed., Steven Hawthorne and Ralph D. Winter (William Carey Library: Pasadena, CA) 1981, pp. 586-87.

[8] Lawrence Rosen, *Bargaining for Reality,* p. 185f.

[9] Brian Howell and Edwin Zehner, eds., *Power and Identity in the Global Church* (William Carey Library: Pasadena, CA) 2009, pp. 1-25.

[10] See Paul Hiebert's claim of disappearing people groups in *The Gospel in Human Contexts: Anthropological Explorations for Contemporary Missions* (Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, MI) 2009, pp. 90, 92. Our North American meetings of the ISFM felt it necessary to address the impact of globalization on ethnicity in the 2010 meeting (See *IJFM 27:4 The Globalization of the Frontiers* at ijfm.org). In the fall of 2013, the ISFM met to examine the diaspora of global peoples and how the stretching and segmentation of global 'ethnoscapes' is impacting our concept of frontier (See *IJFM 30:3 ISFM 2013: Dancing with Diaspora* at ijfm.org).

[11] World Consultation on Frontier Mission, Edinburgh, Scotland, 1980.

[12] Robert Priest calls it a "crude anthropology" in Howell and Zehner, ibid.

[13] Rene Padilla, "The Unity of the Church and the Homogenous Unit Principle," in *Mission Between the Times: Essays on the Kingdom* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids) 1985, pp. 142-169; also, Tite Tienou's recent piece in Lausanne 40th online: www.lausanne.org/en/documents/40th-anniversary/2285-titetienou.html

[14] Herbert Hoefer, *Churchless Christianity* (William Carey Library: Pasadena, CA) 2001.

[15] See the debate by Daniels and Waterman on the term "socio-religious" in *IJFM* 30:2, Summer 2013, p. 59f.

[16] On the subject of Religion and Identity, *IJFM* 28:4, Winter 2011 and on the subject of Interpreting Religion see *IJFM* 29:2, January 2012, both online at ijfm.org.

[17] John V. Taylor, *The Go-Between God: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission* (Fortress Press: Philadelphia) 1973.

[18] The declension of "absolute absolutes" and "relative absolutes" in expositing this passage is taken from the ministry of Dr. Sam Kamaleson, who served pastors throughout the world with World Vision International for many years.

[19] I am using the sociology of Mary Douglas and her development of Fleck's concept of thought worlds in *How Institutions Think* (Routledge: London) 1986, pp. 16-17.

[20] Herbert Hoefer, *Churchless Christianity* (William Carey Library: Pasadena) 2001.

[21] Travis' category here was for those followers of Christ whose identity remained within the understood borders of their non-Christian religious world and did not join the normative "Christian" church.

[22] See ijfm.org for *IJFM* 24:1 Spring 2007, *The Jerusalem Council: Descriptive or Prediction?*

[23] Len Bartlotti, "Seeing Inside Insider Missiology: Exploring our Theological Lenses and Presuppositions." In *IJFM* 30:4 Winter 2013, p. 137f.

[24] Recognition needs to be given to many who have developed this concept of the Kingdom in collegial interaction over the last two decades, but due to security concerns we do not publish their specific titles and ministries.

[25] I am using the conceptual work of Margaret Archer in her *Culture and Agency: The Place of Culture in Social Theory* (Cambridge University Press) 1992, p. 143f.

[26] Ibid., p. 175.

[27] "Kingdom Circles" in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (William Carey Library: Pasadena, CA) 2009, p. 675.

[28] For the basis of these statements regarding a common orientation, see Oliver O'Donovan's philosophical treatment of community in the 2001 Stob Lectures at Calvin College. *Common Objects of Love: Moral Reflection and the Shaping of Community* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids) 2002.

[29] I am indebted to Oliver O'Donovan's philosophical treatment of community in the 2001 Stob Lectures at Calvin College. *Common Objects of Love: Moral Reflection and the Shaping of Community* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids) 2002.

[30] Ralph D. Winter, "The New Macedonia: A Revolutionary New Era in Mission Begins." In *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader* (4th Edition) Eds. Steven Hawthorne and Ralph D. Winter (William Carey Library: Pasadena, CA.) 2009, pp. 356-360.

[31] Ibid., p. 357f.

[32] See note 26.

[33] See Kathryn Kraft's excellent treatment of identity and conversion in, *Searching for Heaven in a Real World: A Sociological Discussion of Conversion in the Arab World,* (Regnum Studies of Mission, Regnum Books International: Oxford, 2012) and David Greenlee's *Longing for Community: Church, Ummah, or Somewhere in Between* (William Carey Library: Pasadena) 2013. For biblical material see William S. Campbell's *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity* (T&T Clark: London) 2008, and his more recent "Differentiation and Discrimination in Paul's Ethnic Discourse," in *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies,* Vol 30 No 3, July 2013. Also Philip A. Harland's *Dynamics of Identity in the World of the Early Christians* (Continuum Int'l Publishing: New York) 2009.

[34] Rick Brown develops a Kingdom approach distinct from a "conflict of religions" approach in, "The Kingdom of God and the Mission of God: Part Two," in *IJFM* 28:2 Summer 2011, pp. 54-58 at ijfm.org.

[35] We have built upon McGavran's expectation of "people movements" yet we recognize that an urban movement may grow in a sociologically different way than rural people movements.

[36] Ibid., Brown on Sectarian Mission versus Kingdom Mission, p. 55.

[37] The African mission theologian Kwame Bediako has done a thorough study of the different positions that are taken on how the church handles culture in his book *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and Modern Africa* (Regnum Books: Oxford) 1992.

[38] This is the main point of Hwa Yung's study *Mangoes or Bananas: The Quest for an Authentic Asian Christian Theology* (Regnum Books: Oxford) 1997.

[39] See Darren Deurksen's ISFM 2012 talk on Hindu movements, "Must Insiders Be Churchless? Exploring Insiders' Models of 'Church'" *IJFM* 29:4 Winter 2012, pp. 161-167 at ijfm.org; also see the recent research of Ben Naja, "A Jesus Movement Among Muslims: Research from Eastern Africa" *IJFM* 30:1 Spring 2013, p. 27f. at ijfm.org.

[40] John Travis, "The C-Spectrum: A Practical Tool for Defining Six Types of 'Christ-Centered Communities' Found in Muslim Contexts" in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader,* 4th Ed. (William Carey Library: Pasadena) 2009, pp. 664-665.

[41] Rebecca Lewis, "Insider Movements: Retaining Identity and Preserving Community" in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader,* 4th Ed. (William Carey Library: Pasadena, CA) 2009, pp. 673-676.

[42] Paul Hiebert calls us to be "In-betweeners" who mediate the different expressions of the global church through new meta-narratives of transcultural sensitivity. *The Gospel in Human Contexts: Anthropological Explorations for Contemporary Missions* (Baker Academic) 2009.

[43] Brad Gill, "Lifting, Pushing, Squeezing and Blending: The Dynamics of Ethnicity and Globalization" in *Mission Frontiers* May-June 2010, pp. 8-10 (online at missionfrontiers.org).

[44] The thesis of Mark Noll's study of World Christianity is that the conditions of non-Western societies today mimic the conditions of 19th Century America where the American voluntaristic church template arose, and thus we can expect more American type churches across the world. *The New Shape of World Christianity: How American Experience Reflects Global Faith* (IVP Academic) 2009.

[45] William Campbell, "Differentiation and Discrimination in Paul's Ethnic Discourse" in *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* Vol 30 No 3 July 2013 pp. 157-168.

[46] At the Bridging the Divide Consultation over the past four years "insider believers" have needed an advocate to stand and interpret how to participate in a Western context of Christianity.

[47] The original ISFM charter states that we "highlight the need to maintain, renew, and create mission agencies as vehicles for frontier missions."

[48] At the recent ISFM 2013 there were 35 agencies represented among 65 participants.

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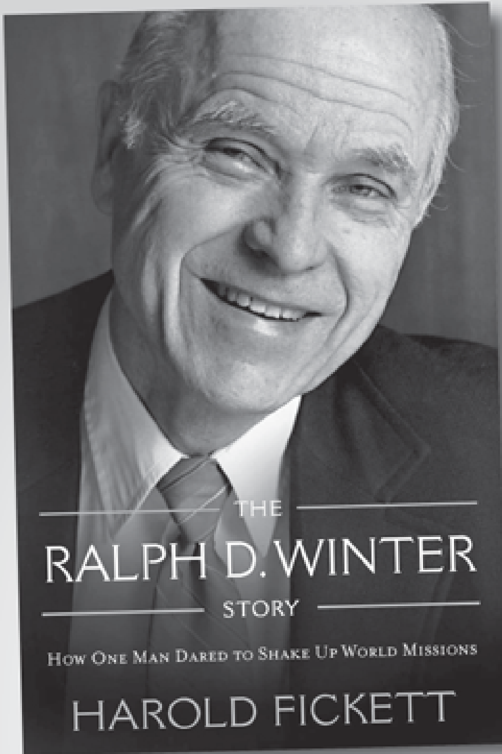

The Ralph D. Winter Story

How One Man Dared to Shake Up World Missions

Legendary American missionary strategist Ralph D. Winter always provoked strong reactions, one way or another. The U.S. Center for World Mission and William Carey Library are bringing us an important biography, *The Ralph D. Winter Story: How One Man Dared to Shake Up World Missions* (William Carey Library, 2013), by renowned author Harold Fickett. This long overdue book captures both the genius and the controversy of a self-described "social engineer," named by *TIME* magazine as one of the 25 Most Influential Evangelicals in America.

Winter's honor was well deserved. An engineer by training, he asked fresh questions and came up with innovative answers no one had ever considered. Winter's work redefining the missionary task to focus on unreached or "hidden" peoples was revolutionary. His dogged determination to find a better way to train local Christians resulted in the powerfully effective Theological Education by Extension movement (TEE).

The book shows how Winter grappled with the theological meaning of the bone-marrow cancer that eventually killed both Roberta and himself. His tentative answers on "evil intelligent design" provoked new ways of thinking, fresh controversy, and a unique initiative—the Roberta Winter Institute, which focuses on the wide open field of disease eradication for the glory of God.

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Go to www.RalphDWinter.org for further information.

Ralph Winter was one of the most important and creative mission thinkers of the late 20th century. He was also a fervent supporter of the whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world. This biography will be inspiring and challenging.

— Lon Allison, Executive Director, Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College

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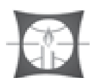

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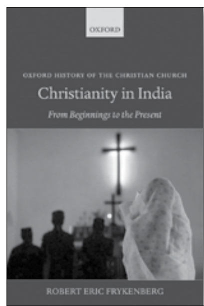
Book Reviews

Christianity in India: From Beginnings to the Present, Oxford History of the Christian Church, by Robert Eric Frykenberg (Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 564 + xxxii)

—*Reviewed by H. L. Richard*



This magnificent scholarly work will be definitive for the study of Christianity in India for many years to come. It deals with the broad sweep of developments rather than the minutia of names and dates. Its first 100 pages set the stage for understanding the complexity of Christianity in India, both past and present, before embarking on an analysis of the early St. Thomas traditions.

The preface outlines a fundamental point that is essential for any true understanding of India or Christianity in India.

> …more often than not Christians within India can be seen as being rooted within the history of distinct ethnic communities, each different from the next. These are distinct peoples that have not or do not, as a rule, intermarry or even interdine outside of their own community, and often do not share many common memories or traditions. "Caste" is the catch-all concept that has long been used to capture what is a uniquely indigenous, if not Indic (or Sanskritic) legacy, in this particularistic sense. "Birth," in Sanskrit, is *jāt;* and *jāti,* the Sanskritic term for "caste," its most precise or accurate indigenous equivalent. Wherever one turns there seems to be no escaping this phenomenon or its consequences. It lies at the very bedrock of an entire civilization and all its manifold cultures, and subcultures. The result, for Christians, has almost always been that they have tended to carry "dual identities" or have become manifested as possessing "hybridized" cultural features; moreover, since all ethnicities are ranked, by degrees, into respectable and non-respectable, or polluting, categories or *varnas* (or "colors"), various Christian communities are also fitted into some category and ranked, whether they like it or not. In this respect, Christianity in India merely reflects the entire country and its multiplex antiquities and legacies—which are very difficult to escape. (pp. vii-viii)

The preface closes with the author confessing how humbling such a study is and how much is still to be learned.

Chapter One introduces Christianity in India. Illustrating its complexity (and demonstrating that his study cannot possibly be exhaustive), Frykenberg suggests that

> As far as can be determined, there is almost no form of Christianity that has ever existed in the world–ancient, medieval or modern–that has not entered and that does not still thrive somewhere within the continent (aka subcontinent). (p. 5)

Two further introductory chapters follow, entitled "Contextualizing Complexity." Chapter Two takes a look at the lands, peoples and social structures of India. This, of course, raises the issue of caste, under its proper Sanskrit designation as *varna* (color/category/class) *ashram* (stage of life) *dharma* (duty).

> Actually, there had never been any single place in all the continent of India where the idealized social structures of *varnashramadharma* actually existed, except in the imaginations of the Brahmans who had invented the system. This apparent contradiction, or discrepancy, confused Europeans many centuries ago. It still causes confusion.… In a continent comprised of perhaps some 2,000 to 3,000 distinct castes, each ethnically exclusive, names of actual castes and opinions about relative ranking orders can be remarkably different. (p. 49)

The particular situation of south India is noted:

> The caste system of the south never really consisted of more than three classes of castes: (1) Brahmans, numerically very small but remarkably influential; (2) Non-Brahmans, including small Baniya (Vaishya) trading communities, who have ruled the land since ancient times and have remained powerful; and (3) Untouchables or "Outcaste" people who remained more heavily concentrated in Madras (i.e. Tamil Nadu), Kerala and Andhra than almost anywhere else. (p. 50)

Chapter Three, the third introductory chapter, closes with the exhortation that failure to understand the complex contexts of India while considering Indian Christianity "is to court enormous misunderstandings and overly simplistic notions" (56). Unfortunately, both are far too prominent today and this book provides a vital antidote.

The chapter on the Thomas traditions is one of the most insightful in the book. From a purely historical point of view it concludes,

> …the historicity of apostolic origins rests upon conjectural or uncertain evidence. Yet, large measures of circumstantial and corroborative evidences are such that the plausibility, if not possibility, of historicity cannot be entirely or lightly dismissed. (p. 114).

But the cultural context provides the true setting for understanding the tenacity of Thomas stories.

> Thomas Christians of India have themselves tended to fashion their own full rich heritage of historical understandings in ways comparable to how such understandings of ancient India were long fashioned by virtually all other elite communities within the Indian continent. Each community, from out of its own store of cultural and material resources, sought to preserve its own oral traditions, its own epic historical narratives *(itihāsa-purānas),* and its own narrative genealogies or lineages *(vamshāvalis).* (p. 92)

The British Raj followed the principles that had governed Indian political developments from time immemorial; the British Raj "was as much Indian as it was British"; one can even say that it was Hindu.

Next, an extensive chapter introduces Roman Catholic missions and the related political power struggles rooted in European rivalries.

> Among movements known to have occurred, the most famous was the conversion of fishing communities, Paravars and Mukkavars, along the shorelines. For the Paravars, this event was as political as it was a "spiritual" event. This proud and venturesome seafaring folk engaged in fishing, pearl diving, trading and piracy. Threatened by Arab sea power and Nayaka land power, they turned to the Portuguese for "protection." They then adopted the Christian faith in order to strengthen bonds of mutual obligation. (pp. 137-138)

Protestant missions are then introduced with an indigenous term for the missionary: *dubashi*. *Dubashis* are two-language people, brokers, mediators, cultural go-betweens.

> The central argument of this chapter is this: that the functions and roles of *dubashi* Christians, whether they were Europeans or Native Indians, were–essentially, inherently, and intrinsically–infrastructural. This means that, despite rhetorical claims to the contrary by adversaries of Christian missionary movements in India, their task was always relatively humble. (p. 166)

> …it is also important to note that few if any actions that turned different local communities in the direction of Christian faith, including Evangelical/Pietist Christian faith, can be attributed directly to efforts made by foreign missionaries themselves. Time and time again, as we shall see described in more detail in other chapters, infrastructures that missionaries helped to build served this purpose; but usually only after a period of thirty to fifty years' incubation. Then, an explosion of spiritual energy among local Christians would inspire local leaders to bring the new message to their own people and to do so in their own native (mother) tongue. (p. 167)

Chapter seven is one of a number of interludes in the book that provide extensive background information, this one on the political logic of India and India's unification under the British. The political realities of Indian life, which play over into many machinations involving Christianity in India, are summarized in two principles (this quotation from chapter 2; these principles are fleshed out in chapter 7).

> This [political] logic is bound within the concepts of *mandalanyāya*, of the "logic of circles" or "spheres," and *matsyanyāya* or the "logic of fish." The first logic relied upon reasoned diplomacy for the building of alliances and consensual links between entities of relatively equal strength, while the second was a formula for relations between political entities of inherently unequal strength, which relied upon predatory action and raw force… (pp. 54–55)

There is quite an extensive account of the development of Madras as the great British city, and then of its neglect (corruption playing a major role) as Calcutta and later Delhi became the center of British power (pp. 194ff). Frykenberg's central point is that the British Raj followed the basic principles that had governed Indian political developments from time immemorial; the British Raj "was as much Indian as it was British" (p. 204); indeed one can even say that it was Hindu (cf. chapter 10).

A chapter outlining the *āvarna* ("outcaste") conversion movements in south India follows, demonstrating the principles quoted above from page 167. One of the most striking chapters of the book then follows on, "Missionaries, Colonialism and Ecclesiastical Dominion." There are four sections to this chapter. The first covers some of the conflicts in Kerala as Anglicans moved to take control over Thomas Christians. The second recounts the remarkable story of Karl Rhenius, a Lutheran missionary from Prussia who was in the midst of the remarkable conversion movements taking place at that time among a number of caste groups in Tamil Nadu. Long-standing Anglican and Lutheran cooperation ended with an Anglican takeover as Rhenius was dismissed for not being sufficiently Anglican in his theology or ecclesiology. In outlining this conflict, Frykenberg makes an important point noted elsewhere in his book as well, that indigenous Christian opinions, surely the most important viewpoints on many matters, remain almost impossible to discern:

> The fact that more is known about missionary protests and government policy should not blind us to the possibility that much of what really happened still lies hidden from the gaze of historians. (p. 257, 266)

The third conflict was over caste. The Lutheran missionaries had considered caste a social system not entirely unlike the European feudal system with its nobility and peasantry. Bishop Heber of the Church of England had agreed, but his successor as Metropolitan Bishop of India, Daniel Wilson, laid down the law against any type of compromise with caste in the church. In Frykenberg's words,

> Stigmatized Vellalar [middle caste] Christians, referred to disparagingly in missionary records as "Tanjore Christians," found themselves marginalized and oppressed. (p. 159)

The Vellalar Christians had a heroic leader in the poet Vedanayakam Sastriar.

> Vedanayakam, on behalf of Thanjavur [Tanjore] Christians, accused missionaries of committing four cruelties; (1) tampering with Tamil Scripture, replacing old versions with their own; (2) forcing integration of all Christians into one caste,

Extensive problems in administering India led to the development of an educated elite needed to rule the country, with major missionary collaboration. This tended to divide the missionary force . . .

> and excommunicating from the Eucharist all who refused to comply; (3) prohibiting flowers for festive celebrations such as weddings and funerals; and (4) removing Tamil lyrics and Tamil music from worship services. (p. 261)

Finally, Frykenberg gives us a broad analysis of the dual identity of Indian Christians which sheds light on the caste conflict and Vedanayakam's position.

> All Christians, whether high caste or low caste or aboriginal/ tribal *(varna, āvarna, or adivāsi)* in origin, tended never to shed their distinctive identities based on "birth" or *jāt*. . . .This meant that virtually all Christians tended to identify themselves as much by birth, caste and community as by church, denomination, or theological outlook. . . .Since missionaries from abroad were alien and since no movement could ever occur that was not conveyed by a local agent in that local agent's own "mother tongue," no local Christian community or congregation ever escaped encapsulation within its own ethnic, hyphenated, hybrid identity–the paradox of representing both parochial and universal claims. (p. 263-264)

Frykenberg's objection to the Anglican intrusion into caste arrangements in traditionally Lutheran south Indian churches is clear. This must not be taken to mean that he approves of caste prejudice in the church; how much caste prejudice was actually present is difficult to discern since imperial decrees against accepted behaviors precluded all sensible discussion. But such decrees did not destroy, in fact hardly dented, caste realities. To this day, dual identities remain a reality and a matter of central concern in Indian Christianity.

Chapter ten introduces the birth of the construct of Hinduism and the complexities of government and church interaction in light of a growing "Hindu" identity.

> What is now called "Hinduism" was a product of collaboration between noble Native or Indian ("Hindu") and European (Farangi, Parangi, or Pfarangi) scholarly and political figures in the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. "Hinduism" was neither a British, nor a "colonial," nor even an "Orientalist" construction in any dismissive sense; nor was it a missionary invention. Rather it was the by-product of cultural explorations, and socio-political accommodations, before and during the early Raj. High-caste, mainly Brahmin pandits played as decisive a part as anything done by scholars from the West. . . .codifying an emerging single system of quasi-official orthodoxy. Meanwhile, as the syncretistic and tolerant, pseudo-political ideology brought various religious systems of India together under the imperial umbrella of "Hinduism," the Company's own governments, on advice from Brahman servants, took over management of all *pukka* religious endowments and temples, thereby inadvertently putting every local "Hindu"—i.e. Native—religious institution under a single, overarching structure of guardianship. Thus, by fiat, was a vast array of "Hindu" institutions that were welded together within the imperial apparatus gradually reified under the name of "Hinduism." (p. 269)

Four broad thematic chapters lead to the conclusion of the volume. "Elite Education and Missionaries" shows how extensive problems in administering India led to the development of an educated elite needed to rule the country, with major missionary collaboration. This tended to divide the missionary force, some focused on rural populations and some on educating the urban elite. "All missionaries tended to reflect and represent the social distinctions of classes within British society from which they had come" (p. 327). William Carey gets barely more than passing notice in this chapter; his significance in world mission history far exceeds his impact on Indian Christian history.

A chapter on "Catholic Renewal and Resurgence" includes some interesting observations of ecclesiastic power and caste. A happy (?) solution was found to one aspect of the caste problem in the church in Kerala;

> . . . it was not until the last Portuguese Bishop of Cochin retired in 1952 that some animosities between high-caste and low-caste Christians were resolved: two dioceses were formed, with a bishop of appropriate birth for each. (p. 378)

This broad summary of caste in Indian Christianity is striking indeed;

> Perhaps the biggest and most ceaseless and continuous of all ongoing arguments and conflicts, bringing about divisions and mutations among almost all Christian groups in India, regardless of whether they were Indians or Westerners, Catholic or Evangelicals, Anglicans or dissenters, Mar Thoma or Syrian, conservative or liberal, has continued to swirl around issues of caste and culture, ethnicity and "acculturation." Since it is difficult to find any time in the history of Christians in India when this was not a burning issue, this both remained and still is *the* enduring problem for *all* Christians in India. (p. 376, italics original)

A chapter introducing some of the striking "Trophies of Grace" from high caste communities focuses on Pandita Ramabai, of whom Frykenberg says "her critics never realized that Ramabai saw herself as both Hindu *and* Christian" (p. 403, italics original). Another eight remarkable figures are briefly noted before Frykenberg closes his chapter with this observation and question;

> . . . most of the much publicized "Trophies of Grace" that served as interpreters between Christianity and non-Christian

> India gradually melted away and disappeared, leaving hardly any community and scarcely a trace, except for their writings and writing about them that still continues to be published. Who can say whether and when any more of such "Trophies of Grace" will arise or gain such prominence? (p. 418)

A final thematic chapter outlines developments in the tribal *(adivāsi)* areas of the far northeast of India. The concluding chapter has a summary of major points touching again on many of the issues highlighted in this review, then an epilogue which notes five important new developments with brief commentary on each:

> . . . some developments during the last half-century, especially during the past twenty years, need to be touched upon briefly, or described in enough detail to indicate their significance for the history of Christianity as a whole. Among these are the rapid rise and expansion (1) of Pentecostalism; (2) of indigenously led Christian movements or indigenously organized missionary movements; (3) of indigenously mounted opposition movements, especially militant Hindutva, Hindu nationalism, together with increasing persecutions and martyrdoms resulting therefrom; (4) of Indian forms of secularism and/or secularization; and finally (5) of increasingly pervasive and influential forms of what some call "churchless" Christians within societies of India, if not South Asia as a whole. (p. 464)

A book of such importance and brilliance deserved a better closing paragraph. This is an essential volume to read and digest for all who want to truly understand Christianity in India today. **IJFM**

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In Others' Words

Editor's note: In this department, we highlight resources outside of the IJFM: *other journals, print resources, DVDs, web sites, blogs, videos, etc. Standard disclaimers on content apply. Due to the length of many web addresses, we sometimes give just the title of the resource, the main web address, or a suggested search phrase. Finally, please note that this April–June 2014 issue is partly composed of material created later in 2014. We apologize in advance for any inconvenience caused by such anachronisms.*

The Case for a Local Asian Theology

Why are so many Asian churches Pentecostal? In an August web-only publication of *Christianity Today,* Richard Mouw reviews an excellent new book by Simon Chan which asks that question among others. *Grass Roots Asian Theology: Thinking the Faith from the Ground Up* takes a look at the startling contrast between an ordinary Asian worldview of reality (Paul Hiebert's "Excluded Middle") which includes demons, witchcraft, sorcery, venerated ancestors and the "living dead," and the standard evangelical (but functionally agnostic) Western Christian worldview. Read this outstanding review (and then read the book) to better understand the Asian theology which is emerging, a robust theology which has its feet on the ground, and a biblical commitment to the power of the Holy Spirit to deliver ordinary people from evil.

Learning to Love the Enemy in Iraq

From CNN's Religion Blogs in August 2014 here is a story that is chock-a-block with good news straight from the heart of Northern Iraq. In it, a young man (who has lived with his family in Iraq for years despite the ongoing violence), writes about his NGO, Preemptive Love Coalition (preemptivelove.org) which has helped over 1000 small children obtain open-heart surgeries in Turkey, Israel, and now in Iraq proper. Why are so many children being born in Iraq with congenital heart and other defects? One guess is the DU (depleted uranium) and other chemicals from Iraq's weapons of war.

For-Profit Businesses, Impact Investments, and the Kingdom of God

In the September 2014 issue of *Christianity Today,* in an article entitled "Meet the New Kingdom Investors," Rob Moll writes about devout Christian businessmen and the dynamic ways they are helping to transform different parts of the world. See www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2014/september/meet-new-kingdom-investors.html. This article contrasts China's large scale and exploitative purchases of African land and mineral rights with global impact investments by Christian investors. The Ukrainian example given is a powerful one. This article reminds us of the new networks seeking to establish real profit-making businesses with a social impact. Business4Transformation (B4T) is a mission effort spearheaded by Patrick Lai that is striving to link Kingdom investors and mentors with missions-minded entrepreneurs already on the field. For the next OPEN Expo of B4T in North America, see: www.openexpousa.com. Check out Lai's book *Tentmaking: The Life and Work of Business as Mission.* For the book mentioned in Moll's article, here's the link for *When Helping Hurts* by Stephen Corbett and Brian Fickert: www.chalmers.org/when-helping-hurts.

Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in I Corinthians by Kenneth Bailey

In the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research,* July 2014 issue, we are treated to a great review of Kenneth Bailey's book *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in I Corinthians,* referenced by Kevin Higgins in his *IJFM* 31:1 article on the missiological implications of I Corinthians 8-10. But Gregory R. Perry, a New Testament professor at Covenant Theological Seminary, takes a look at three of Bailey's other themes: his treatment of Isaiah 28, his handling of the body metaphor, and his reference to Oriental versions of the Bible to help distinguish the meaning of I Corinthians. Perry's last paragraph alone is worth the tiny effort required to login or to start your free subscription to *IBMR* online.

Don't Miss these July 2014 *EMQ* Articles

For those of you with EMQ *(Evangelical Missions Quarterly)* annual subscriptions, Stan Nussbaum in "The Breakthrough Process" makes a persuasive plea for missionaries on the field to engage in ongoing research—research methods less formidable than a MA thesis or doctoral thesis, but substantive enough to lead to actual breakthroughs. In "Saying the Shahada" Gene Daniels brings receptor-oriented communication theory to this thorny issue of religious identity for Muslim-background believers.

In "The Chinese Church: The Next Superpower in World Missions?" Kevin Xiyi Yao has written a brief but excellent analysis of the burgeoning missions movement coming in the next decade from China. Citing some astonishing 2011 statistics gathered by a Korean missiologist [40% of urban believers are preparing for mission; 22% of ministers from mid-size cities are involved in overseas missions; and 18% of professional urban believers are involved in overseas missions (Li 2011, 12)], Yao thoughtfully looks at the challenges ahead—the biggest of which is education and training in missions, Bible, language and culture. It seems very timely that a Chinese translation of the *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* curriculum will be available early 2015. **IJFM**

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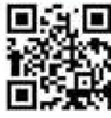

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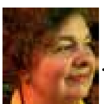

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For more information, see www.ijfm.org/isfm/annual.htm

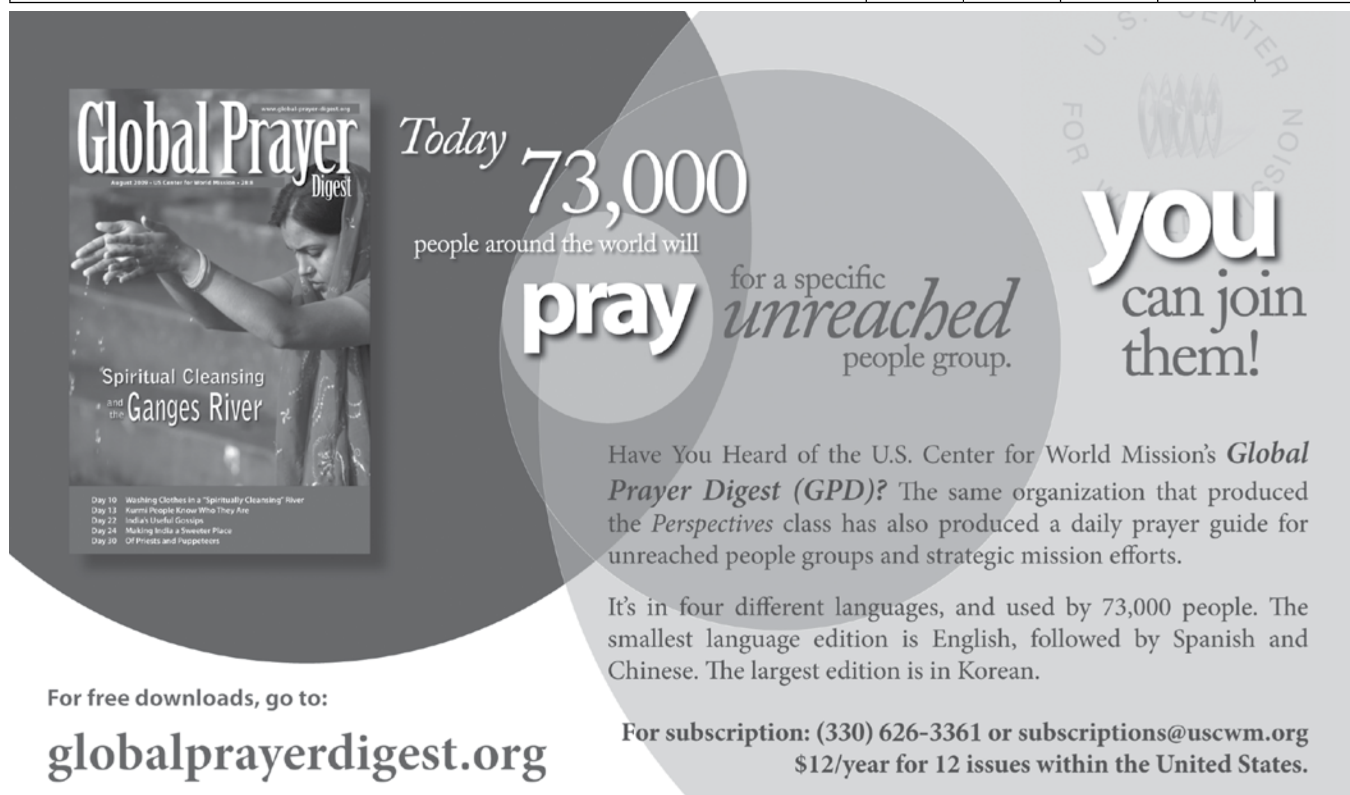
IJFM & Perspectives

On the World Christian Movement

Whether you're a Perspectives instructor, student, or coordinator, you can continue to explore issues raised in the course reader and study guide in greater depth in **IJFM**. For ease of reference, each **IJFM** article in the table below is tied thematically to one or more of the 15 Perspectives lessons, divided into four sections: Biblical (B), Historical (H), Cultural (C) and Strategic (S). *Disclaimer: The table below shows where the content of a given article might fit; it does not imply endorsement of a particular article by the editors of the* Perspectives *materials*. For sake of space, the table only includes lessons related to the articles in a given **IJFM** issue. To learn more about the Perspectives course, including a list of classes, visit www.perspectives.org.

Related Perspectives Lesson and Section

Articles in IJFM 31:2	*Lesson 7: Eras of Mission History (H)*	*Lesson 8: Pioneers of the World Christian Movement (H)*	*Lesson 10: How Shall They Hear? (C)*	*Lesson 14: Pioneer Church Planting (S)*	*Lesson 15: World Christian Discipleship (S)*
The Legacy of Donald McGavran: A Forum IJFM Editorial Staff (pp. 61–72)	X	X		X	
The Theory of Practice: Reflections on Donald McGavran Charles H. Kraft (p. 73)	X	X			
The Missiological Vision of J. H. Bavinck: Religion, Reticence and Contextual Theology H. L. Richard (pp. 75–84)	X	X	X	X	
A Genius for God: Ralph Winter's Recasting of World Evangelization Harold Fickett (pp. 85–88)	X	X			
Global Cooperation and the Dynamic of Frontier Missiology Brad Gill (pp. 89–98)				X	X



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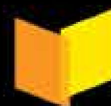

LOOK AT THE BOOK

READING THE BIBLE FOR YOURSELF

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