

Books and Missiology

To Bring the Good News to All Nations: Evangelical Influence on Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Relations, by Lauren Frances Turek, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020), xii + 295 pp.

—Reviewed by Dwight P. Baker



Taken as a product of thought, how productive could it be for a researcher to link “evangelicals” in the second half of the twentieth century as a group with the topics of “influence on human rights” and contributions to “U.S. foreign relations”? Is such an idea a non-starter or at best a mash-up? Or might it be a short path to an abrupt dead-end?

After all, how much can there be to write about something everyone knows to have been next to nonexistent?

Did not David Hollinger recently remind us that, at midcentury in the United States, the hands gripping the levers of power belonged to scions of the mainline denominations? Hands on the throttle were not those of fundamentalists or newly self-declared evangelicals. When that grip began to slip, it was to secular leadership that they ceded control.¹ Conservative Christians were not in the running. Not having attended the right schools or become members of old boy cliques or been in possession of imposing meritocratic pedigrees, they lacked proper credentials. Election to high office or appointment to senior governmental positions was not for them. That characterization might rankle, but in the second half of the twentieth century, the chasm between conservative Christians in the United States and significant influence on national policy was seemingly too wide to bridge, however often Billy Graham might have been invited to meet with various presidents.²

Quick Quiz

Not sure about the adequacy of that scenario? OK, let’s have a “pop quiz.”

Class, please close your books. Take out a clean sheet of paper. Place your name and the date at the top. Here is the question: Please identify a conservative US Christian leader in the second half of the twentieth century—whether evangelical

or fundamentalist—who assembled significant political influence that he or she brought to bear on the issue of human rights and did so in a way that became central to shaping the course of US foreign relations.

Brows furrow. A few hesitant scribbles. A hand is raised.

Jerry Falwell, you say? Hmm. . . . What’s that? . . . Yes, I agree. Falwell did make a lot of noise and pushed himself forward. But can we say that striving to drum up backing for the apartheid government in South Africa played a signal role in advancing human rights? Doesn’t that seem a mite retrograde?

A voice, tentatively.

Did you say, “President Jimmy Carter”? Again, hmm. . . . We’ll deal with him later.

Let’s shift the parameters of the question a bit. Instead of a stellar individual with whom policymakers fell in step and into whose train they willingly blended, please list several conservative Christian groups that were known for rallying broad-based support for the issue of human rights and for gaining a respectful hearing among US policymakers.

Another hand, furtively.

What? Falwell and the Moral Majority again? We really must work on this. The name of one person, in questionable standing, with the name of his organization appended, does *not* constitute a list or a group.

Plunging In

How did *you* answer? Did your list come up short, also? If so, *To Bring the Good News to All Nations: Evangelical Influence on Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Relations*, by Lauren Frances Turek, is just the place to dive in.³ Well researched, insightful, and solidly documented, *To Bring the Good News to All Nations* is a significant scholarly achievement. It shines light onto an oft overlooked intersection of evangelical missional engagement and US foreign policy. To proceed through the volume with utmost dispatch, the book consists of six chapters. The first three provide the framework and background, beginning with shifting missional realities in the United States. The number of missionaries sent by mainline denominations was declining; the number of missionaries being sent abroad by independent and evangelical churches and denominations was increasing markedly. Next Turek interrogates shifts in communications that occurred in conjunction with a growing evangelical sense of internationalism. I found the attention she gives to evangelicalism’s construction of mechanisms to influence US foreign policy to be deeply informed and illuminating. The book’s remaining three chapters look closely at the way evangelical engagement with human rights worked out in three markedly disparate settings. As their titles suggest—“Fighting

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Religious Persecution behind the Iron Curtain,” “Supporting a ‘Brother in Christ’ in Guatemala,” and “The Challenge of South African Apartheid”—the stakes were high with ample opportunity to get things wrong. But interventions, if well-conceived and carried out well, seemed to hold promise of immense benefit.

As the second half of the twentieth century opened, the cards on the table included the dire state of the world, at least as viewed by Carl F. H. Henry, a leading evangelical spokesperson.⁴ As a newly coalescing group on the US religious landscape, the self-labelled “new” evangelicals were restive to be recognized as distinct from fundamentalism, and they aspired to exert influence in corridors of power, in this case on the shape of US foreign policy. Another card, as indicated above, was the flux within the missionary movement from the United States. Numbers have weight; as they rise or decline they carry with them shifts in power to influence policy. As a whole, conservative evangelicals were ardent anti-communists, as were their missionaries and mission agencies. As their missionary force swelled, so did their expectations to help shape national policy. Though they recoiled from totalitarianism, they were only too willing to give authoritarianism a pass and to align themselves with repressive regimes that they could construe as being useful bulwarks against the spread of Communism.

But the path from aspiration to achievement, or even from launch to recognition, Turek shows, was neither short nor straightforward, nor was it free of egregious missteps. Rather than offer a précis of Turek’s highly readable account, I will look at key components and developments in evangelicals’ effort to acquire access to corridors of power and political potency sufficient to gain influence on foreign policy. I will also glance at some of the questions and issues that, for me, reading *To Bring the Good News to All Nations* brings to the fore.

Critical Components

In order to get underway on the path to influence, several steps were necessary. First of all, a new movement needs a striking cause. The cause has to be one that is intrinsic, that has anchorage in the beating heart and life blood of the movement. But for the cause to become influential, it also has to resonate widely beyond the movement itself. So, second, the cause has to be sticky; it has to have hooks that appeal to and attract support among members of the wider body politic. The smaller the movement, the greater the need for allies, a point of which the leaders of the nascent evangelical movement were strongly aware. But if the cause had to sell in multiple directions, both within the evangelical community and beyond those confines, how were these countervailing objectives to be achieved?

At this crux point Turek deftly, and wisely, anchors her account to the heartthrob of the evangelical movement, evangelism itself. What could be more central to evangelicalism than evangelism? To evangelicals, evangelism meant outreach to the neighbors

across the street and in their own neighborhood, certainly, but it also meant carrying the gospel around the world, to all nations. By the logic of saltwater baptism, what was evangelism at home became mission/missions once oceans were crossed. Evangelism and mission/missions, as the heart of evangelicalism, became the common cause around which disparate personalities and conservative Christian factions could rally, and the number and variety of evangelical missionary agencies increased throughout the twentieth century. Turek uses this point to good effect. Evangelicals went to every nation preaching the gospel for the simple reason that that is what evangelicals are and what they do.

At this point evangelicals took a critical step by invoking the language of human rights.

But how to enlarge the circle of support? What could attract allies? “Furthering Christian evangelism” was not likely to be a catchy slogan within the halls of Congress or among staff of US embassies around the world. True, the opportunity to preach the gospel far and wide may have value in itself, but, for evangelicals, freedom to respond openly to the gospel, to embrace religious change, and to assume a new religious allegiance, was equally vital, if not more so. At this point evangelicals took a critical step by invoking the language of human rights (see the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948).⁵ Looking within the evangelical community, discussion was couched in terms of proclamation and response to the call to follow Jesus Christ; freedom of religion was presupposed. Looking outward and in seeking allies, the language of human rights was embraced, along with the assumption of fostering democratic values and personal freedom of choice.

Building a Constituency

Having a cause and felicitous language with which to present it are essential, but they are not sufficient. Whether airy or erudite, a cause that exists solely as a project of thought will falter. It has to touch life, and terrestrial life exists in bodies. In a democracy a constituency, that is, bodies in sufficient quantity that are invested in the idea, is essential. Those bodies must be willing to carry themselves to polling places and there to place marks on ballots. The more bodies, the better. In the second half of the twentieth century, evangelicals had access to a growing constituency of such persons. Those individuals’ level of involvement ran the gamut from highly motivated members at the core to minimally involved well-wishers at the fringe. But together they composed a reservoir of goodwill that could be marshaled in support of office holders and administration officials who would look with favor on advancing human rights in general and freedom of religion in particular as integral to US foreign policy.

That growing constituency constituted a potent card that evangelical spokespersons could invoke in discussions with elected officials and administrative personnel. Bodies as votes counted.

How does one go about growing an informed and motivated evangelical constituency? For the motivation critical to the evangelical cause, nothing can outrank personal face-to-face contact. It would be hard to overstate its importance. First there were the missionaries themselves who went abroad to live and work for a shorter or longer period of time. They had primary contacts both here in the “homeland” and there, in the United States and in the countries where they served. The circle widened as the missionaries sent letters (later emails, blog postings, Skype conversations, and now Zoom meetings and more) back to family, friends, churches, and supporters with vignettes of the people and places and circumstances they encountered. Missionaries on furlough (today on home assignment, which tends to occur at shorter intervals than furloughs formerly did) spoke in churches and at camps and addressed conferences. Books and articles by missionaries reached an even wider audience (think of Elisabeth Elliot; but even if preeminent, she was far from alone⁶). As the century progressed and the number of evangelical missionaries increased, the number of church-sponsored mission trips exploded. The US reservoir of goodwill scaled up exponentially.

Some members of this reservoir possessed a bit of general background information, though maybe not as much as one might wish. Short-termers acquired a degree of firsthand knowledge by *having been there* and having formed friendships or acquaintanceships, according to their gifts and personalities. Some members of churches in the “field” reciprocated by visiting sister churches in the United States. Those in the United States who had not visited churches abroad knew someone who knew someone who had. In sum, for a sizable and growing segment of US evangelicals, the triad “evangelism → mission/missions → human rights” felt natural, for it wore a known face, that of a friend.

Direct Contact and Constructing a Constituency

What a difference two or three centuries make. *Well, of course; that is more than obvious*, you say. Indeed so, but I raise the point because of having read *The Poor Indians*, by Laura M. Stevens, shortly before receiving a copy of *To Bring the Good News to All Nations*.⁷ Nurturing and shaping the sensibility of a body of spiritual and financial supporters who can in turn influence public opinion—while an important facet of *To Bring the Good News to All Nations*—is completely central to Stevens’s account. What differs is the widening in the twentieth century of the mechanisms and opportunities for transmitting knowledge and broadening of horizons. Both authors have a focal constituency of mission supporters in view. For Stevens that constituency consists of incipient mission supporters in Britain and to a lesser extent in Britain’s American colonies. Turek’s focus is on conservative

Christians in the United States. The gaze of the British mission supporters of whom Stevens writes is singularly channeled toward Britain’s holdings in North America and the efforts there during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of a few, mostly British, missionaries to convert members of the Indigenous Peoples. For the British populace, reports from British missionaries serving in British held territories was largely something new. By the twentieth century, the case was quite different. Missionary accounts were a familiar genre. Far from being a novelty, they had a long and, to many, a well-known history. They had undergone a marked democratization as well. Laypersons and missionized persons as well as missionaries were in a position to comment on and interpret missionary efforts and achievements.

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In place of a single focus on one locale, during the second half of the twentieth century the eyes—and bodies—of US mission supporters were roving everywhere. That quality of *having been there* and having made firsthand contact with persons who lived *there* marks a crucial difference. This quality constitutes possibly *the* crucial contribution of the late twentieth-century craze for super-short-term missions and mission tourism. Personal contact and possession of at least some degree of direct experience shifted mission supporters’ epistemological stance. It placed evangelical mission supporters of the past half century in a qualitatively different position from that of the incipient British mission supporters of whom Laura Stevens writes. Back then, she contends, correspondence sent to homeland supporters by British missionaries in the American colonies coupled with the absence of contact between those supporters and the Indigenous Peoples of America served to foster a generalized feeling of benevolence toward the Indigenous Peoples that, significantly, stood in place of action on their behalf. The feeling *was* the action and was very nearly the full extent of it. Contact was never expected to be part of the equation, for personal jaunts across the ocean were simply not among the possibilities open to the vast majority of the British populace of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. One can surmise that were people then to travel such a distance and at such an expense, it was likely to be for a weighty reason such as commerce (profits to be made), conquest (riches and martial honor to be grasped), or permanent migration (“free” lands to be seized and occupied).

The one who came to the colonies might in fact be transient and erelong pass on to greener pastures, but the quest for gain likely lay at the root of both the coming and the going.

Widespread tourism, as a mode of conspicuous consumption motivated not by conquest or mercantile gain but undertaken solely to see and to spend, was to come later. By the mid-twentieth century, the decline of travel costs, both in money and in time, also opened the door to short-term missions, followed by super-short-term missions, and mission tourism. How did this shift play out in missions and in US foreign policy? For one thing, it vastly augmented the reservoir, not just of goodwill, but, as noted, also of persons who had a connection, however tenuous, “over there.” These were persons who were inclined to parse abstract issues in terms of real people whom they had met, with whom they had conversed, and possibly with whom they continued to communicate. When faced with news of dire social conditions and repressive political conditions, such persons made the progression from evangelism to mission/missions to human rights concretely, that is, as something that impinged on “my friend” Oscar or Svetlana or Ahmed or Mangyang or Jocee.

As we can see, even at the level of mission tourism, *being there* introduced qualitative differences in mission communication and in mission supporters’ sense of attachment and engagement. However strong the argument that the opportunity to *be there* in massive numbers was an effete outflow occasioned by the rise of a social sector in the West that was awash with discretionary cash and an overabundance of free time, the fact remains that lives were fundamentally changed through short-term mission engagement. Possibly the lives changed were more often those of the short-termers who ventured abroad than the lives of their temporary hosts. But the changes were real. Mark Noll, for example, writes of the significant impact that two stents of teaching in an underground pastoral training program in Romania, toward the end of the Cold War, had on him. Other factors along the way contributed to his shift in outlook, but his experience teaching in Romania enlarged his vision of the church and helped to reorient his career as a historian.⁸ Every short-term missionary’s experience had unique facets, but the reorientation of outlook Noll experienced was far from being something isolated. Being there and the experience of direct contact led to personal growth and redirection for many.⁹

Developing of Expertise, Making Connections

A defined cause, a terminology or language that can travel, a demonstrable constituency: wrap it all up in an anticommunist aura and you had, in twentieth-century United States, a combination with sales potential. Some assembly, however, was still required. Leaders were needed who had been around long enough to become known entities. They had to have shown that they were knowledgeable, reliable, and trustworthy; that they were in it for the long haul and could be depended upon. Time had to be invested in professional

development, meetings, presentations, and becoming known. There were friendships to form and sharing to be done. If these “friendships” were to extend to a deeper level than self-interested utilitarianism, they also required investment of time.¹⁰ Cultivating contacts and becoming a known entity included plenty of the humdrum of simply living alongside others and demonstrating that one was neither a shyster nor a shirker and that one was not likely to evaporate when things became difficult or to wilt under the glare of the spotlight. Such ministry partook of a long obedience.¹¹

Turek’s account does not develop each of these points. Some she cites or points to; others she assumes. But they constitute the logic that underlies her historical study of emerging evangelical influence on policy. Making contacts, acquiring expertise, amassing partners’ confidence, and becoming fluent in the language of presenting religiously critical issues in the language of impartial human rights discourse demanded patience. Turek takes Carl F. H. Henry’s 1956 inaugural editorial for *Christianity Today* as her starting point, but she reckons that evangelical influence on US foreign policy did not come to maturity until the mid-1970s.¹²

As I read Turek’s fluent account I was struck by the way that conservative Christians who wanted to gain influence often seemed to move by indirection (the comparison may be a bit macabre, but think of Esther, who, while having a very definite objective in mind opened by indirection, invited the king to a sequence of private dinners before blurting out her purpose, she wanted to deepen and secure her standing in the eyes of the monarch). One can, however, as easily see these political neophytes as moving in accord with bedrock elements of evangelical ethos and practice. What could be more quintessentially evangelical, for example, than hosting Bible studies and luncheon prayer gatherings for legislators, government officials, and similar figures? These off-the-record meetings brought persons in high office together on a common ground of personal engagement with biblical and spiritual realities rather than focusing on policy or partisan issues. Participants in them could meet and interact on the basis of their common humanity. Some groups, such as the Freedom Foundation, Turek relates, operated largely out of public view or convened meetings and conferences that were accessible by invitation only. Other evangelicals, such as Michael Cassidy in South Africa, cultivated the background role of catalyst, serving as intermediaries for occasions at which leaders of contending political forces could meet directly to sound out possible partners for cooperation and consider potential courses of redirection—and could do so apart from the glare of publicity and the high stakes associated with parliamentary proceedings.¹³

Embarked

The new evangelicals waited long at the door and in the vestibule, but with the aforementioned components at least embryonically in place, thereafter all went swimmingly, right? Not at all. There were successes, but they were intermixed

with drawbacks and outright failures. In the second half of *To Bring the Good News to All Nations*, Turek examines evangelical engagement with human rights in three widely separated and markedly different settings—the Soviet Union during its decline and implosion, Guatemala in the early 1980s, and South Africa during the death throes of apartheid.

While in office, President Jimmy Carter, by extending succor to Russian Pentecostals, focused a bright light on the issue of human rights in the USSR. Refusing to coast along after leaving office, he went on to recreate the position of Post-President, making it into a role of value, significance, and substance not previously seen. But while he was in office, Turek writes, evangelicals became disenchanted with his administration's failure to give sustained attention and follow through to issues they valued.¹⁴ Carter's successor, President Ronald Reagan, was not "their man" in the way that the self-identified "born again" Carter was, but Turek judges that Reagan, by a species of benign neglect, let causes dear to evangelicals move forward in ways that had not gained traction under Carter.

It was during the Reagan years that the evangelical foray into Guatemalan politics unfolded. Following the earthquake that struck Guatemala in 1976, the reconstruction assistance provided by California-based Church of the Word/Gospel Outreach along with the Bible study groups it helped to plant grew into a long-term connection. The contact was maintained as *el Verbo*, a sister church established in Guatemala City, grew in size and prestige. Influential persons—one of whom bore the name of Efraín Ríos Montt—flocked to it and rested in its branches. Elevated to a role within the leadership of *el Verbo*, Ríos Montt became the country's new president via a coup in March 1982. What could be more a sign of God's favor? When the Guatemalan war against the indigenous peoples, conducted under the guise of resistance to the spread of Communism, became too noxious for even the US government to back, evangelical coreligionists in the United States took up part of the slack. As a freelance end run around US foreign policy at that moment, they raised money and even supplied arms to support Ríos Montt and Guatemala's infamous campaigns of genocide against the Maya. Decades later, in 2013, an aged Ríos Montt was tried and condemned for "genocide and crimes against humanity" by a Guatemalan court.¹⁵

In South Africa, evangelical actions were a similar mix of the commendable and utterly deplorable, but eventually they came to a better end. Connections and contacts some evangelicals cultivated helped to clear a path for Michael Cassidy and African Enterprise to work across the lines of contention in that country. They were able to play a mediating role by providing a venue in which South African leaders who envisioned ending the era of government sponsored apartheid could meet and converse. But evangelicals' conversion to the cause of full human dignity in South Africa was delayed, and in practice

their conversion was instrumental. Turek records that in South Africa evangelicals did not turn against apartheid until they began to understand, not that apartheid was an abomination, but that their alignment with apartheid was impeding personal conversions. Evangelists came to see that by misaligning themselves with racial repression, they were alienating potential converts. Only then did they begin to change their stance. All the same, retrograde evangelical leaders such as Jerry Falwell continued advocating loudly in behalf of South Africa's apartheid government and busily raised funds to shore it up. Praise be for intermediaries such as Michael Cassidy, but overall the evangelicals' record was mixed at best.

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Any Legacy? The Fate of Human Rights Today

The leaf withers and the flower fades. To go beyond Turek's account in *To Bring the Good News to All Nations*, what has been the fate of the triadic flower, evangelism → mission → human rights, so long and so tenderly cultivated? Have all vestiges of evangelical internationalism been jettisoned in parallel to US evangelicals' unseemly embrace of the slogan America First? The current occupant of the White House (at the time of this writing), however, cannot claim all the credit for the sorry state of US evangelicals. According to Anne Applebaum, even before Donald Trump's ascension to the presidency, some US foreign policy personnel had already left the language of democracy and human rights behind.¹⁶

So, was the whole effort to enlist US foreign policy in behalf of evangelism *cum* human rights misbegotten? Was it a noble failure? Or possibly a temporary success, though now eclipsed? More largely, what is the mission community to make of American exceptionalism? Was the cause of American exceptionalism nothing but a last gasp of dying Christendom, something now well gone?¹⁷ What is to be made, not of US policymakers' embrace of causes advocated by evangelicals, but of evangelicals' one-time endorsement of whatever US policymakers put forward in the name of anticommunism? Historically, evangelicals have a reputation of having a high tolerance for authoritarian regimes. Does meaning well absolve all? Or if one embraces authoritarians as a lesser evil, does that inevitably lead to complicity when they become repressive or commit genocide? These questions and others like them are hardly idle queries. How mission spokespersons answer them carries huge consequences for proclamation of

the gospel. When is the Good News actually good news, and when is it twisted into an instrument of enslavement? Can a gospel that is not outraged at forced “reeducation” of Muslim Uighurs claim to be good news at all?

Raising Questions

Turek writes as an attentive and very well-informed historian. As such she addresses historical questions, and her domain is the “having happened-ness” of things. Influence tends to be inchoate or amorphous. What shape or shapes might influence take? How is or was it bodied forth and given substance? Were there natural affinities, channels, or ties of influence? Did evangelical influence go in particular directions and not others? Did it focus on some topics or issues and glaringly overlook others? Was it subject to being “played,” that is, were evangelicals naïve in their efforts and open to being coopted or duped? These and similar questions can be addressed on the strictly historical plane.

Of a different order are questions such as how concern for human rights relates to mission. Is such concern an impediment—not an error, but a lesser good that should be sloughed off because it dilutes and slows down missionary engagement? Going further, are investments of attention in and efforts on behalf of human rights, however well meant, outright error because they dissipate missional focus and divert missionaries’ attention and energy? Or, worse, does engagement with social ills turn missionary personnel, energy, and finances away from the sole “real” missionary task of proclamation? A different question from a different perspective: Is engagement in behalf of human rights intrinsic to mission? Far from being a lamentable distraction, is wider engagement with human beings’ bodily, temporal, and social concerns central and essential to mission if it is to be true to the name and character of Jesus Christ? Does true Christian mission pull others out of the world, or does it plunge the missioner and the missionized more deeply into the world? If the latter is the true calling of ambassadors of Jesus Christ, by what ways, in what forms, and to what extent might or should missional engagement with deep-seated issues of human rights take place?

These “should” and “ought” questions about how to carry out missionary practice do not fall within the purview of *To Bring the Good News to All Nations*. They are missiological questions. Turek writes, however, in ways that, for me, indirectly bring to the fore these and similar questions of missional means, intent, and degree of accomplishment. Her penetrating account of evangelical engagement calls for and calls forth deeper reflection. Not every plunge by evangelicals into the whirlpool of US foreign affairs was thoroughly thought through or had a happy outcome. What cautions does Turek’s work raise? What concrete steps of repentance for actions taken do her investigations demand? Conversely, when is contrition a proper response to opportunities overlooked or deliberately spurned?

Good Company

Published in 2020, *To Bring the Good News to All Nations* is a worthy addition to a recent spate of substantive books flowing from academic presses that examine evangelical Christian mission from the United States and the topic of humanitarianism or benevolence, broadly construed. In company with David Hollinger’s *Protestants Abroad* (2017), which focuses on the mainline denominations’ contribution, recent titles include Heather Curtis, *Holy Humanitarians: American Evangelicals and Global Aid* (2018); David P. King, *God’s Internationalists: World Vision and the Age of Evangelical Humanitarianism* (2019); Melani McAlister, *The Kingdom of God Has No Borders: A Global History of American Evangelicals* (2018). The year 2020 saw two more volumes join this list: Hillary Kaell, *Christian Globalism at Home: Child Sponsorship in the United States*, and Jeremy Rich, *Protestant Missionaries and Humanitarianism in the DRC: The Politics of Aid in Cold War Africa*. Mission, humanitarianism, and benevolence is showing itself to be a fertile field for cross-disciplinary reflection and interrogation.

Endnotes

- ¹ David Hollinger, *Protestants Abroad: How Missionaries Tried to Change the World but Changed America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2017).
- ² Grant Wacker, *America’s Pastor: Billy Graham and the Shaping of a Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Nancy Gibbs and Michael Duffy, *The Preacher and the Presidents: Billy Graham in the White House* (New York: Center Street, 2007).
- ³ Lauren Frances Turek, *To Bring the Good News to All Nations: Evangelical Influence on Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Relations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 2020).
- ⁴ In her Introduction Turek cites from Henry’s editorial for the 1956 inaugural issue of *Christianity Today*, see pp. 1–3.
- ⁵ A PDF of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights can be downloaded at <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>.
- ⁶ Elisabeth Elliot, *Through Gates of Splendor* (New York: Harper, 1957).
- ⁷ Laura M. Stevens, *The Poor Indians: British Missionaries, Native Americans, and Colonial Sensibility* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).
- ⁸ Mark A. Noll, *From Every Tribe and Nation: A Historian’s Discovery of the Global Christian Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 78–89.
- ⁹ The time length of short-term mission is amazingly elastic. For two examples of personal growth through short-term mission that extended well beyond the two-week image of a short-term mission trip, see Amy Peterson, *Dangerous Territory: My Misguided Quest to Save the World* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 2017) and Christine Jeske, *Into the Mud: Inspiration for Everyday Activists, True Stories of Africa* (Chicago: Moody, 2010).
- ¹⁰ Compare the penetrating observations of Phil Cooper in *The Big Kabuna* (1999). Three lubricant salesmen are rooming together at a trade convention. Cooper, played by Danny DeVito, advises his neophyte colleague Bob Walker, an ardent Christian played

by Phil Facinelli, on how to establish a relationship with someone who might otherwise be viewed simply through the gimlet eye of sales potential.

Cooper: . . . You, too, are an honest man, Bob. I believe that somewhere deep down inside of you is something that strives to be honest. The question that you have to ask yourself is, "Has it touched the whole of my life?"

Walker: What does that mean?

Cooper: That means that you preaching Jesus is no different than Larry or anybody else preaching lubricants. It doesn't matter whether you're selling Jesus or Buddha or civil rights or how to make money in real estate with no money down. That doesn't make you a human being. It makes you a marketing rep. If you wanna talk to somebody honestly, as a human being, ask him about his kids. Find out what his dreams are, just to find out, for no other reason. Because as soon as you lay your hands on a conversation, to steer it, it's not a conversation anymore. It's a pitch, and you're not a human being. You're a marketing rep.

¹¹ The phrase "a long obedience" is borrowed from the title by Eugene Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996).

¹² Turek's selection of Henry's 1956 editorial provides an excellent starting point, but the temporal span could easily have been extended further back. A decade earlier Henry had already expressed disquietude with the insular vision manifest among his fellow conservative Christians. See Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947).

¹³ The stakes of some meetings were high indeed, but one should not jump too quickly to a vision of all efforts at reconciliation as potential dramatic sequels to *The Journey* (2017). In this movie Ian Paisley (Timothy Spall) and Martin McGuinness (Colm Meaney), constrained by the contrived proximity of an artificially prolonged car ride, lay the relational groundwork for ending the strife in Northern Ireland.

¹⁴ Turek, *To Bring the Good News to All Nations*, 84.

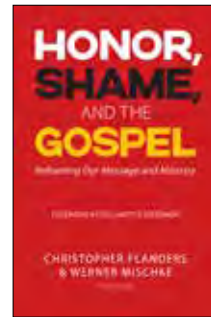
¹⁵ Turek, *To Bring the Good News to All Nations*, 149–50, 244n190; Stephen Kinzer, "Efraín Ríos Montt, Guatemalan Dictator Convicted of Genocide, Dies at 91," *New York Times*, April 1, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/01/obituaries/efrain-rios-montt-guatemala-dead.html>.

¹⁶ Anne Applebaum, "American Surrender," *The Atlantic* (November 2020), 86–93; see p. 88; also available online at <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/11/trump-who-withdrawal-china/616475/>.

¹⁷ In his thoroughgoing re-visioning of mission as reconciliation, Al Tizon, with bracing brevity and clarity, makes this point almost *en passant*, as an identification no longer in question or to be struggled over. His commendable work shows the value to be gained for mission theory by acceptance of a post-Christendom and post-US-centric perspective. See Al Tizon, *Whole and Reconciled: Gospel, Church, and Mission in a Fractured World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018).

Honor, Shame, and the Gospel: Reframing Our Message and Ministry, edited by Christopher Flanders, Werner Mischke (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Publishing, 2020), xi + 221 pp.

—Reviewed by Cameron D. Armstrong



David Bosch once summarized the discipline of missiology as “a gadfly in the house of theology,” due to the constant push against status quo boundaries.¹ In other words, missiology ought to question how ministry models are conceived and applied. Doubtless, some stakeholders in the current “house of theology” will find themselves challenged and perhaps

disturbed by missiological conversations. One such conversation is honor-shame.

In *Honor, Shame, and the Gospel*, Christopher Flanders and Werner Mischke bring together sixteen authors with considerable missiological experience in various global regions. The book is a result of the inaugural Honor and Shame Conference, which was held at Wheaton College in June 2017. Interestingly, Flanders and Mischke relate that the idea for the Honor and Shame Conference originally sparked out of an International Orality Network conference in 2014 on the intersections between orality, honor-shame, and theological education. Flanders and Mischke's goals for the book are twofold: assist current practice and “add energy” to further honor-shame dialogue (xxv).

Before moving into the actual chapters, Flanders and Mischke helpfully offer definitions of shame and honor. Whereas shame is “the feeling or condition of being unworthy or defective,” honor is “the positive recognition of or by a group or individual based on some type of excellence or norm” (xviii). In other words, shame is a lingering sense of unworthiness; honor involves public recognition of excellence. According to Flanders and Mischke, the Bible displays God as intimately involved in addressing honor-shame, transforming their shame into honor, as well as calling for his people to honor him. An honor-shame dynamic pervades the Scriptures.

The book is divided into two sections. Section 1 considers honor-shame in “general contexts.” The seven authors connect honor-shame with such issues as the glory of God, church history, and biblical interpretation. An impressive chapter by Jayson Georges quotes extensively from eight theologians across church history who used honor-shame language in their preaching, teaching,

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and writing. Another fascinating chapter on how Jesus was shamed in the Gospel of John, penned by E. Randolph Richards, notes, “Shame protects the boundaries of a group” (74).

Section 2 analyzes honor-shame in “various mission contexts.” Eight chapters depict how missiologists are applying honor-shame research in global regions as diverse as San Francisco, Cambodia, Croatia, and the Muslim world. The honest reflections of authors in how they stumbled into honor-shame realizations is quite emotional. For example, Audrey Frank’s chapter on ministering among Muslim women vividly portrays both their inherent shame and the power of the gospel to turn shame into honor. According to Frank, female honor is the “nucleus of all Muslim life” (199). Any attempt at gospel contextualization, then, must include honor-shame realities.

An honor-shame dynamic pervades the Scriptures.

Honor, Shame, and the Gospel possesses at least three strengths. First, the honor-shame conversation is clearly driven by field-tested ministry. Far from being a closed, academic forum behind institutionalized walls, the authors of this volume are actively involved in real mission endeavors with real people. Second, the wide range of contexts from which the authors’ experience comes is commendable. Honor-shame dynamics are shown to not only be something experienced by Asians or Muslims, but also by people in other regions, including North America. Third, the authors deeply engage the Bible. Especially in Section 1 of the book, the chapters by Stephen C. Hawthorne and Jackson Wu both illuminate the Bible’s teaching on honor-shame and depict its necessity for the planting and equipping of local churches.

Concerning weaknesses, there are times when the authors contradict one another. One example includes the relationship between the concepts of honor and shame. In Steve Tracy’s chapter on how honor-shame addresses abuse victims, he claims, “Shame is the opposite of honor” (103). Yet in an earlier chapter, E. Randolph Richards explicitly states the two are not opposites (74). Further, there seems to be a disagreement between authors concerning whether or not honor-shame is the only alternative to the Western value system of innocence-guilt. Tom Steffen, for example, posits other paradigms, such as power-fear and purity-pollution. Katie Rawson cites power-fear in her chapter on racial reconciliation. Yet these were the only mentions I found beyond honor-shame. While such contradictions indicate the honor-shame conversation is ongoing, a forewarning note in the introduction by Flanders and Mischke that the authors do not always agree could be helpful.

Beyond this first weakness, the authors also appear to overgeneralize cultures. Cristian Dumitrescu’s fascinating chapter on discipleship often makes claims like “the typical Asian . . .” (157)

and Steve Tracy declares that “80 percent of modern cultures can be described as honor-shame.” Interestingly, in another work, Christopher Flanders has himself called for an abandonment of labeling cultures as honor-shame. Instead, Flanders asks believers to consider how honor-shame is valued in *every* culture.²

These weaknesses aside, the conclusions and questions raised in *Honor, Shame, and the Gospel* merit attention from missiologists on a broad scale. Honor-shame connects with multiple areas within missiology. One particular field is orality. Besides the Honor-Shame Conference being spawned from discussions within the International Orality Network, the authors of this volume continually draw attention to biblical characters, storytelling, and oral learning preference. Flanders and Mischke’s choice to bring in two orality experts, Tom Steffen and Lynn Thigpen, signals an essential link between the two fields. Yet, as Lynn Thigpen notes in her chapter, honor-shame exposes a “dark side of orality” because it highlights the “toxic shame” of oral learners realizing they cannot compete with a literate elite (122). Such a link deserves further exploration.

For producing a work of missiology available to both the academic and field worker, Flanders and Mischke are to be commended. This book details how honor-shame conversations are essential for developing and executing mission strategy. Mission-minded Christians will no doubt benefit from such biblically based reflections. At the same time, the chapters humble and challenge readers with stories of how God transforms shame into honor for his glory. As such, this book is a genuine work of missiology. The “house of theology” is called to examine, evaluate, and perhaps tweak time-honored methods of fulfilling the mission task.

Endnotes

¹ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Society of Missiology Series 16 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 596.

² Christopher L. Flanders, “There is No Such Thing as ‘Honor’ or ‘Honor Cultures’: A Missiological Reflection on Social Honor,” in *Devoted to Christ: Missiological Reflections in Honor of Sherwood Lingenfelter*, ed. Christopher L. Flanders (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2019), 145–165.

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- Flanders, Christopher L. “There is No Such Thing as ‘Honor’ or ‘Honor Cultures’: A Missiological Reflection on Social Honor.” 145-165. In *Devoted to Christ: Missiological Reflections in Honor of Sherwood Lingenfelter*, ed. Christopher L. Flanders. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2019.

Suggested Reading List

- Georges, Jayson. *The 3D Gospel: Ministry in Guilt, Shame, and Fear Cultures*. Timē Press, 2014.
- Wu, Jackson. *One Gospel for All Nations: A Practical Approach to Biblical Contextualization*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2015.

Questions of Context: Reading a Century of German Mission Theology, Missiological Engagements, by John G. Flett and Henning Wrogemann (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 233 pp.

—Reviewed by Brad Gill



Evangelical missiology can easily create its own echo chamber, our voices bouncing off of walls we have erected. Someone needs to escort us beyond our gated community, and that was my experience recently. A Norwegian Lutheran missiologist, Thelle Notto, was reflecting on the early 20th century ministry of Karl Reichelt among Buddhist monks in China.¹ His

European, ecumenical-style commentary lifted me out of my American evangelical missiology. It was more than a study of encountering Buddhism—it was a reflexive experience, one that exposed and objectified my own mission orientation. The recent publication of John Flett and Henning Wrogemann’s *Questions of Context: Reading a Century of German Mission Theology* promises much the same experience.

This book finds its genesis in the remarkable absence of contextualization language in German mission theology. Over the past century German mission studies have had a deep interest in different cultural contexts (customs, art, symbols, institutions), and in how the faith is rooted differently in these contexts, where no formal theory of contextualization exists. To discover why, Flett and Wrogemann trace how a century of high colonialism, devastating wars, and post-war vulnerability shaped German questions of culture, cultural interaction, and the relationship between gospel and culture. A very evident distance developed between English and German missiology, rooted in their differences of language, culture and history. Yet the authors believe their shared colonial mission experience offers lessons for us.

...the value of this present study lies in the significant mistakes German missiology made, in the theological positions it constructed in support of those mistakes, and in the direction it has taken in reaction to these mistakes and the widening recognition of world Christianity. (10)

Shoki Coe coined the term contextualization back in 1973.² Before they arrive at Coe’s watershed moment, the authors narrate 165 pages of German mission theology. Beginning in the late 19th century with Gustav Warneck and Ernst Troeltsch

(chapter 1), they provide a chronological account, each chapter introducing two or three missiologists representative of that period. Their introductory commentary and concluding analysis of each chapter roots their narrative in its historical context and the relevant questions of that time.

Warneck’s magnum opus, *The Protestant Doctrine of Mission*, became the most influential textbook of mission for half a century, establishing individual conversion as the “undeniable goal of mission.” But Flett and Wrogemann point to how German missiology understood this evangelical experience to be embedded in the establishment of a local *Volk* church (*Volkskirche*). The idea of Volk stemmed from later 18th century German Romanticism, and German missionaries applied this idea of social unity to the peoples among whom they ministered. While difficult to translate into English, Volk was understood as

...a consistent ethnic group, unified by kinship bonds, a common region of settlement, a common language and religion...the sum total of social and environmental relationships, constituted both by ties of blood and by the sharing of common ground, by blood [*Blut*] and soil [*Boden*]...it was an enduring and organic unity... (it) existed at its inception in a pure form, a cultural matrix that constantly reproduced the same features. (17)

This idea of Volk would find fertile ground in the post-World War I (WWI) Germany, and the authors feature the way Bruno Guttmann developed the strategic nature of primordial ties (“The Orders of Creation”—chapter 2) as a basis for conversion of entire kinship groups.

Guttmann came to regard every ethnic group as a distinct entity that follows an inherent order (*Ordnung*) given by God the Creator. These orders of creation (*Schopfungordnungen*) consist of social and kinship relations and rites. Though it was possible, to some degree, to affect these orders, human sin did not and could not destroy them. (46)

Flett and Wrogemann see a foreshadowing in this earlier German thought, and link it to Donald McGavran’s promotion of the concept of “people groups” in North American missiology during the ’60s and ’70s. I recall in 1980, as a young mission candidate, reading the translation of the 1929 work of Christian Keysser, *A People Reborn*, a reprinting instigated by McGavran. I lacked the historical context that Flett and Wrogemann offer here on this German missiologist. In my enthusiasm for the idea of group conversion, I missed how McGavran, in his forward to the book, had recognized Hitler’s role in bringing the term Volk (or *Volkskirche*, “people’s church”) into disrepute. (Keysser himself would become a card-carrying member of the Nazi

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party). But McGavran persisted with the idea of peoples (Volk, ethne) and affirmed the importance of “Volk movements” in the evangelization of India. He discarded the Nazi implications and promoted instead his “Homogenous Unit Principle” against forceful winds of resistance in an individualistic and racially explosive post-World War II (WWII) America.

This admittedly cautionary tale foreshadows the recent missiological debate on people groups in mission strategy.³ It illustrates how a social science tradition can favor the communal-rural over the individual-urban, where Volk frames the values of community over-and-against cosmopolitan society.

History can be unkind to any settled mission theology, and the post-(WWII) years justifiably caused deep reaction to anything, anyone, or any idea previously identified with that holocaust. Not surprisingly, this idea of Volk came under severe criticism in German missiology. In chapter 3 (“Eschatology and Agency”) and chapter 4 (“Widening the Horizons”) the authors bracket this dark and introspective couple of decades with relevant contextual data and analysis, and one can’t help but sympathize with the questions that arise. The pendulum swings wide—a tendency we suspect of any community facing the agonies of their own abuse of power. Post-war existentialism, neo-orthodoxy, and ecumenical conscientiousness also stirred new questions of context.

History can be unkind to any settled mission theology, and the post-World War II years justifiably caused deep reaction to anything, anyone, or any idea previously identified with that holocaust.

The devastating loss of financial support for mission due to diminishing faith and commitment forced German missiology to reflect deeply on the true “agency” of mission—can it be just the mission organization, the mission mandate, or an activist church? This post-WWII period fostered a more transcendent perspective on agency—God’s agency. It is here we witness the annunciation of *missio dei*, the mission of God. It is God who enters this “time between the times” with his mission. Flett and Wrogemann’s chronology indicates how this view of the eschaton nourished ideas of contextualization in the ’70s, and specifically the way Shoki Coe

sets the whole within the eschatological ferment of the resurrection and the coming kingdom. Contextualization as a process is located in relation to something beyond, which comes to us and to which we are called to respond. It means both

the valuing of contexts as the location of God’s acting and our own embodiment, and moving beyond our own contexts in the mutuality of becoming the people of God. (219–20)

This was more than an escape from acute failure. German mission theology certainly was seeking to divorce itself from any further complicity with the State (and National Socialism), but darkness can also be a truly creative experience.

The contrast of this German mission narrative to the American is almost shocking. We in America swam in a very different stream, and these authors punctuate their text with this comparison. History matters. It fosters different questions of context. Post-WW II America could frame “25 Unbelievable Years”⁴ of tremendous mission enterprise and advance. Its own reconstruction was slight in comparison to post WWII Europe, and the context was fertile for more positive, optimistic, and pragmatic questions. Flett and Wrogemann present the division of two streams of mission, the German trajectory being far more deconstructive, while the GI Bill enabled American missionaries to educate themselves in the social-science method and surf the wave of opportunities that opened for global mission.

Deconstruction and Reconstruction

Much in German mission pivoted on the radical critique of J. C. Hoekendijk, a Dutchman who in those early years after the war turned ecumenical mission towards questions of ecclesiology—how are we to understand the church in mission? What is the church’s true missionary nature? This missiologist more than any other exposed the consequences of “Volk” in Western ecclesiology. Flett and Wrogemann reflect positively on the necessary critique of this rather controversial mission theologian:

Concepts such as *Volk* color an entire way of seeing the world. Reference to Volk framed the understanding of culture, assumptions concerning normative social institutions, gave priority to village life as bearing an essentialized identity, and provided evaluative means for the relative merits or faults of all cultures. It included, by way of example, expectations concerning the shape and purpose of education, health, economics, religion, governance, and the nature of their interaction. All of this found support in strong biblical warrants and sophisticated theological argument for the being of a people, a Volk, and for how God works in and through creation and culture. (213–14)

In “Widening of Horizons” (chapter 4), German missiologists respond to Hoekendijk, but they do so amidst accelerating historical change. A non-Western world is awakening, political independence movements are arising, and new theologies are emerging in the younger national churches. How the church is to be embodied in this new world seems to require that we jettison Volk. Mission must be extracted from a Western ecclesio-centrism if it was to answer the call to be a “church-for-others.”

German missiologists were receptive to this radical rethinking, but their rank and file were not homogenous. Genischen resisted Hoekendijk's deconstruction of missionary existence and offered a conservative voice for the place of church planting in mission—what he calls the “coming-into-being” of the church. Hoekendijk seemed to have forgotten the church in his eschatological view of Christ breaking into the world, and certain German missiologists saw his failure to offer a viable reformation for mission purposes.

Margull and Hollenweger's responses introduce new themes in German missiology. Margull's emphasis on vulnerability—the vulnerability of God—offers a new perspective on what he labels the experience of harm—“harm done to mission through dialogue and harm done by mission to the religious other.” This theme came initially from Kenneth Cragg's sensitivity to the inter-religious encounter of the gospel and Islam, and the Germans heard it. It provided the basis for a new starting point and a posture of listening as a true church-for-others, an approach that could transcend the barriers of power, politics and culture. In a study of New Testament pluriformity, Hollenweger suggests a church-for-others will begin with pneumatology (the leading of the Spirit) rather than Christology. Flett and Wrogemann reveal the way these emerging ideas would support a new generation's emphasis on hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics and Intercultural Theology

This rebound out of a very dark German period actually nurtured a new voice—a new approach. It will be one “that places the initiative for embodying the faith within the local culture itself” (135). In chapter 5 (“Hermeneutics, Communication, and Translation”), the authors introduce a new generation of missiologists that build on the growing capacity of theology to listen and understand the breadth and depth of inter-religious encounter. There arose a new “hermeneutic of the stranger”—the attempt “to listen for these voices, recognize them in their difference, and seek new community with them” (171). In no way should we hinder the local embodiment of the Word of God.

At the same time, German missiology appeared quite deaf to the call for contextualization in the '70s. Shoki Coe's coining of this missiological orientation would immediately galvanize Anglo-American mission, but the gestation period in Germany extended until the '90s. Flett and Wrogemann help us see how German mission theology was actually realigning itself with particular aspects of Coe's original insight.

The English language approaches (to contextualization) tend to focus on the “contextuality” side of Coe's dynamic. The German concern, by contrast, better aligned with “conscientization,” a trajectory that would lead to the development of a hermeneutics of intercultural engagement. (167)

Coe's “authentic contextuality” would build on the biblical concept of *kenosis*—“a mutual self-emptying for the other that invites participation and seeks the newness of the new creation” (167). This is developed more thoroughly by Sundermeier, who introduces a hermeneutic that is participatory, oriented to communal life, and focuses attention beyond mere words—to symbols, myths, rituals, the human body, medical systems and art. It's a hermeneutic that “opens the self beyond its own egocentrism” to a “hermeneutic of absorption” (168). This is the shift in methodology that Flett and Wrogemann want us to understand, that this German response to non-Western concerns was attempting “to understand each context in its own terms, and to let other voices drive the discussion” (218).

Sundermeier introduces a hermeneutic that is participatory, oriented to communal life, and focuses attention beyond mere words—to symbols, myths, rituals, and art—letting other voices drive the discussion.

One wonders what happens to the transmission of the gospel in this dialogue—in this “convivency” (Sundermeier) that empties itself, listens, and opens itself in mutual relationship. This is certainly a significant shift from a more active proclamation and a more clear response to the gospel. Friedl's study of the complexity of Bible translation in Buddhist Japan tempers our evangelical reaction. He justifies a deceleration in communicating the gospel. He calls us beyond an oversimplified communication studies approach to one that respects the multiple layers of meaning (a hermeneutical task). Specifically, he examines the polyvalent religious meanings latent within Japanese, Hebrew, and Greek culture. Flett and Wrogemann want us to see the way these Germans used the complexity of language to understand the hermeneutical approach in inter-religious encounter, which is relevant to the emergence of any community of faith.

What does a local embodiment of the gospel look like when local institutions and social order are framed by a Hindu belief structure and when the language is infused by that belief? ...a spectrum develops, spanning options from embodying the gospel within certain traditional local religious forms, to a faith parsed through Hindu philosophy, to critiques of these forms as perpetually unjust social structures. (172)

If there is any climax to this crescendo of a new hermeneutical method, it would be the formation of the missiological domain “Intercultural Theology” (chapter 6). The term was

coined in the '70s, when these Germans began to wrestle with hermeneutical questions, but it wasn't until this century that a methodology was proposed. Essentially this is a missionary method, one that "reflects on the missionary/boundary crossing interactions of Christian faith witness" (184). Wrogemann himself has contributed masterfully to this discipline, and his recent three volumes on intercultural theology are quite definitive.⁵ In *Questions of Context*, the authors capture the essence of that comprehensive work, and they weave it into a greater German narrative. Intercultural theology appears to be the fruit of Sundermeier's hermeneutical focus on symbols and mutual conviviality, but additional accents are added to the method (i.e., implicit theology, discourse studies, and culture as both communicative memory and cultural memory). Intercultural theology has become a German way of reintegrating and reframing the different dimensions of contextualization.

For instance, the tendency in missiology—particularly in the Anglo-American experience—has been to separate the domains of "World Christianity" and "World Religions." Meanwhile, the questions we face in the inherent diversity of a global Christianity may resonate with those presented in our encounter with other religious worlds. By contrast, this German stream has fused these two domains in their intercultural theology, since they present a similar hermeneutical challenge.

Contextualization

This review of a century of German mission theology—a chronology of its assertions, disastrous missteps, retractions, and reformulations—can disturb any settled notions of contextualization. Flett and Wrogemann wrote this book to explain the absence of contextualization studies in German mission theology, but their work makes everyone a bit more aware of their place in mission studies. The authors alert us to a more general pattern.

Theories of contextualization are themselves part descriptions of the community out of which they develop: how this community embodies the gospel, the values it promotes, the rituals it accepts as necessary, those it is willing to forego, the authorities it draws on, and how it orders these authorities. (213)

The pattern is evident in early 20th century German missiology, where a "strong account of contextualization was supported by German culture's own self-narrative and resulted in a problematic affinity with the ideology of National Socialism" (213). The pattern—the reality—is a general cultural deafness to the way nationalism or any other ideology can heavily influence mission theory. Post-WWI Germany gave fundamental cultural significance to their own *Volkstrum* (ethnic customs), and this created a totalizing vision that shaped the way German missionaries appreciated and cultivated it in other

peoples. But it made them dull to the weaknesses of this form of contextualization, and a disastrous war would cause them to retract it almost entirely.

Understanding this pattern will loosen an absolute grip on any particular contextualization theory. Peering into German realities should prompt us to reflect. Flett and Wrogemann make sure we in the Anglo-American stream of missiology get the point. They suggest we reflect on some of our own cultural propensities—our rather "mechanical" view of sender/receiver communication, the dominance of Western social science theory, our tendency towards a "technical rationality," and the assumptions of an overly activist missionary mandate.⁶ Listening to Flett and Wrogemann's account of this German story can present some uncomfortable moments. Whether one agrees or not with their assessment of American propensities, the reflexive value is well worth it. It helps us take a step back and reflect on our own views of contextualization. And that level of self-awareness will be crucial as we encounter the hermeneutical challenges of an increasingly pluralistic and reactionary 21st century world. **IJFM**

Endnotes

¹ The Ralph D Winter Lectureship 2021, forthcoming in *IJFM*, 2021.

² Shoki Coe, "In Search of Renewal in Theological Education," *Theological Education* 9 (1973): 233–243.

³ Len Bartlotti, "Reimagining and Re-envisioning People Groups," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, October–December 2020, Volume 56, Issue 4. Reprinted by permission in *IJFM*, 37:3–37:4.

⁴ Ralph D. Winter, *The 25 Unbelievable Years: 1945–1969* (William Carey Publishing, 1970).

⁵ Henning Wrogemann's comprehensive work on Intercultural Theology was translated from German and published in three volumes: *Intercultural Hermeneutics*, Volume One (2016); *Theologies of Mission*, Volume Two (2018); *A Theology of Interreligious Relations*, Volume Three (2019), all as part of the Engagements series of IVP Academic, Downers Grove, IL.

⁶ The authors cite Michael A. Rynkeiwich, "The World in my Parish: Rethinking the Standard Missiological Model," *Missiology*, 30 (2002): 301–322.