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The Church in Mission and the World

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Editorial

Walter McConnell

The church, whether we think of it in its local or universal sense, is the gathered people of God. We are, in New Testament terms, the *ekklēsia*, the people who are "called out" of the world by God and for God. We are, in Old Testament terms, the *qahal*, the "assembly" who unite under God's covenant in worship and service. We are, in missiological terms, the people God sends into the world to bear witness of what he has done and to call others into relationship with him. A people called out of the world to serve the world—this is what John Stott called the church's "double identity."[1] This identity is so important in God's eternal plan that we would all benefit from studying it more deeply. This issue of *Mission Round Table* intends to help us on the way by giving us things to think about, showing us what being the church looks like in various settings, and reminding us that our mission practice should be solidly grounded in a biblical and historical ecclesiology.

The stage is set for us by Ray Porter who contrasts the way early believers understood the church with the reality that whereas OMF (and presumably other mission organizations) perform many "churchly activities," from a practical point of view it does "not really have a working ecclesiology." His article lays some biblical bases for understanding the church, overviews some historical understandings of its nature, questions the concept of a mission agency from Scripture, and proposes some policies that he believes will help mission agencies work with the local church.

In broad brushstrokes, Rose Dowsett paints a backdrop that highlights the influence various evangelical groups in nineteenth century England had upon the young Hudson Taylor. His Methodist heritage, revivalism, and his association with significant members of the growing Open Brethren movement, not to mention his experience serving in China under the China Evangelisation Society, shaped his thinking and practice as he founded the China Inland Mission and have impacted many of the organization's ecclesiastical practices to this day.

As training and the ministry of the word are central to the work of the church, we have two articles that provide models of what this can look like. Drawing on a lifetime of pastoral ministry and Bible teaching, David Burke challenges us to train church leaders in a way that best serves the church in its mission even if that is not the standard method followed in Bible colleges and theological seminaries today. Hans Bär's experience working with animistic Karen people has taught him the need to teach the Bible in a way that addresses worldview issues that affect their understanding and practice of the Christian faith.

Since the church is the gathered people of God, we need the kind of partnership promoted in Thomas McIntyre's article on church planting in southern Taiwan. As he finds, working with others requires humility, "knowing what is essential and what is not," and adopting a model of church that makes sense to the local people. Turning from the relationship of missionaries to the church in their adoptive country, Dick Dowsett addresses some important issues faced by mobilizers and other mission representatives as they interact with home country churches in their desire to best prepare and send people into overseas mission. Many questions can and should be asked as we seek to discover who is responsible for what in mission, and as the Spirit blows in various directions and strengths, we may find that the answers are not as straightforward as we would prefer.

Our final article is a meditation on the church in Antioch sending out two of its most gifted leaders to do mission. As I argue, the text is clear that this church (and perhaps others) was multi-ethnic from its early years and that its worship held open the possibility that the Holy Spirit could move them to set aside members for ministry elsewhere even if he did not indicate precisely where they should go.

I do hope that you will read these articles thoughtfully. As you read, may I encourage you to interact with someone else on your team or field about how ideas or practices mentioned here might be adapted to your situation. That is what being a reflective practitioner is all about. And as you think about these issues, you will possibly recall similar ones from your experience. If so, please let us know what they are and we will see if we can fit them into our pages. The integration of church and mission is so important that we want to consider it again in our next issue.

The church, whether we think of it in its local or universal sense, is the gathered people of God. We are, in New Testament terms, the ekklēsia, *the people who are "called out" of the world by God and for God. We are, in Old Testament terms, the* qahal, *the "assembly" who unite under God's covenant in worship and service. We are, in missiological terms, the people God sends into the world to bear witness of what he has done and to call others into relationship with him. A people called out of the world to serve the world—this is what John Stott called the church's "double identity."*

[1] John Stott, *The Living Church* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2007), 20.

The Church Local, Wider, and Universal:

A Study in Diversity, Unity, and Relationships[1]

Ray Porter



Ray joined OMF in 1972 and served in Indonesia until 1986. After a short absence to lecture in New Testament at Belfast Bible College he was UK East Region Director from 1991 to 2005 when he was seconded to Oak Hill Theological College in London to set up and teach their World Mission Studies programme. He is currently Chair of the OMF UK Board, having also served on the OMF Global Vision Council for its initial three years.

Introduction

If I were writing in 1018 instead of 2018 our discussions would probably be unnecessary. Until 1054 ecclesiology was fairly simple. Until that date one could talk with confidence of "one holy catholic and apostolic church" encompassing all who accepted the Nicea-Chalcedonian doctrines. Donatists and Arians might present some problems, but they were minor issues for the bulk of Christendom. If we were living in the West we would still be talking about such a reality until 1517 when Martin Luther hammered his 95 Theses onto the door of the church at Wittenberg. The issue that we face is a particularly Protestant one in that the Reformation accepted that the church of Jesus Christ could subsist in national and doctrinally distinct parts.[2] With the Magisterial Reformation national churches arose and, with the assertion that all could read and interpret Scripture, more radical denominations began which made nonsense, not only of the idea that there could be one human head to the church, but that a state could enforce what its subjects believe. "*Cuius regio eius religio*"—"To whom the state belongs, to him also the religion"—died and with it any hope of real ecclesiastical visible unity. Doctrinal and cultural distinctions[3] became enshrined in the nature of Protestant Christianity and the tendency has been to divide more rather than unite.

Troeltsch made the sociological distinction between a *church* that is coterminous with its community, a *sect* that is a voluntary association of those who have made a definite commitment of faith, and a *mystical society* that has its focus on "a purely personal and inward experience."[4] In this plethora of religious structures there have been various attempts to rediscover the unity of the church. The World Council of Churches (WCC) is one such attempt that has at its heart a *church* rather than a *sect* identity. The *sect* pattern would be more the hallmark of various evangelical associations such as the World Evangelical Fellowship or the Lausanne Movement that are familiar to us. Whereas historically, the WCC would see practice uniting and doctrine dividing, the evangelical movements would put doctrinal unity as central. For many evangelicals visible unity is not of prime importance because they consider that there is an invisible church that is bound together by the bands of spirituality and that this is more desirable than any visible unity, especially one that fails to separate sheep from goats or wheat from chaff.

OMF and Asian churches

Into this confusing picture comes the mission agency, like OMF. We assert, as do other agencies, that we are not a church even though we often perform churchy activities, such as baptising, dedicating infants, and holding Eucharistic services. Our ethos, function, and certain core doctrinal statements unite us. We are composed of people who are members of *churches* or *sects*.[5] Some of our members are perhaps also part of the *mystical grouping* in that they have really joined an organisation like OMF because of its spirituality.[6] It is not surprising then that after 153 years, we discover that we do not really have a working ecclesiology in the context of the Asian church.[7]



Martin Luther from the Workshop of Lucas Cranach the Elder (Public domain), via Wikimedia Commons

Before I begin to attempt to respond to this situation, we need to consider the churches of Asia. They are as varied as the churches from which OMF members come. Some are associated with Western denominations and have some *church* characteristics even though nowhere in Asia, except perhaps the Philippines and Korea, is there any possibility yet of their being identified with the majority culture.[8] The churches of Asia therefore predominantly conform to the *sect* pattern described by Troeltsch.[9] They are voluntary associations in the midst of cultures that are generally hostile to Christian belief and shaped by religious values that are not Christian. Missionary action has contributed to many of the divisions that are apparent between churches.[10] Not only have we, the mission agencies, established churches that bear our name or identity, but we have also perpetuated tribal and ethnic divisions. Current missiological theories and practices have concentrated on separate people groups and our concerns to contextualise have given a value to existing separate cultures that all militate against the reality of Christian unity.[11]

CIM/OMF has acknowledged its non-denominational character historically by supporting different patterns of church association. In China there was the specific Anglican field in Sichuan with its own CIM bishops. One of these bishops, Frank Houghton, became the fourth General Director of the mission. When the mission moved to the "new fields", North Malaya became the Anglican field although without the benefit of an in-house bishop.[12] Not only were those who already had Anglican orders permitted to exercise their office in that church, but there were also those whose Anglican ordination was performed in Malaya.

In Indonesia the necessity of sponsorship meant that OMF established no church ministry in its own name, but seconded members to a variety of Reformed, Lutheran, Methodist, Mennonite, and other denominations. Many OMF members became recognised ministers of these denominations and some were appointed to congregational or denominational roles. In South Korea the mission also worked with established denominations. In Taiwan for many years there was a similar pattern, but the development of a new field policy that focused on "blue-collar" evangelism ended some of these links.



Saint Paul and the burning of pagan books at Ephesus by Lucio Massari (Public domain), via Wikimedia Commons. It is a faithful reproduction of a two-dimensional, public domain work of art and is thus in the public domain in its country of origin, the United States, and countries where the copyright term is the author's life plus 70 years or less.

Thailand, the Philippines, and Japan show a pattern that could be regarded as the norm for OMF work. In each of these countries, the decision was taken not to work with any existing church denomination, but to plant independent churches.[13] As more churches were formed they were brought together into a denomination that sometimes, as with the Alliance of Bible Christian Communities of the Philippines (ABCOP), brought together churches established by other like-minded missions in the Philippines.

Biblical teaching[14]

In the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek translation of the OT, ἐκκλησία (*ekklēsia*) always refers to gathered assemblies. This is in contrast to συναγωγή which can be used for a non-gathered group. Most interesting is the use of the term in Deuteronomy 4:10, which

> looks back to the day when the people assembled (ἐκκλησιάζω, the cognate verb of ἐκκλησία) at Sinai to hear God speaking the Ten Commandments, and characterises that occasion as "the day of the assembly" (τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς ἐκκλησίας). This Greek phrase is twice repeated in Deuteronomy,[15] both times seemingly in a semi-technical sense to refer to the events of Exodus 19–20. Comparison with the underlying Hebrew text confirms that this phrase carried special significance for the LXX translators; for whereas its two subsequent appearances both translate the Hebrew phrase בְּיוֹם הַקָּהָל, its initial occurrence, in Deuteronomy 4:10, was introduced in the absence of any Hebrew equivalent.[16]

Within the New Testament this prime sense of ἐκκλησία as a gathering of people together continues. This is both in its secular uses in passages like Acts 19:32 and in the Christian context. Flint argues that the term ἐκκλησία is never used of a church that does not assemble together. He suggests that Paul does not address the ἐκκλησία in Rome because it never assembles as a whole in contrast to the church in Corinth or Jerusalem that, whilst regularly meeting as house churches, also gather as a whole church.

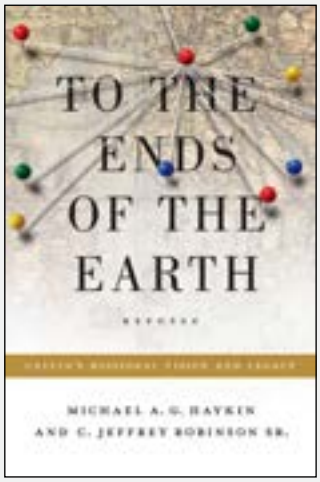
What then shall we say about the use of the word ἐκκλησία for the church universal? Flint argues that this is an extension of the usage that we find in Hebrews 12:18–24 that depicts the whole completed church gathered in heaven. The universal church throughout the world is composed of those who will be together as members of the heavenly completed church. So every individual Christian is part of this body. But such a membership implies membership also of its local manifestation. There are not two churches, but one.

Missionary action has contributed to many of the divisions that are apparent between churches. Not only have we, the mission agencies, established churches that bear our name or identity, but we have also perpetuated tribal and ethnic divisions. Current missiological theories and practices have concentrated on separate people groups and our concerns to contextualise have given a value to existing separate cultures that all militate against the reality of Christian unity.

This concept of the completed people of God is clearly presented in Ephesians and it is probably in that letter that we have the most clearly articulated view of the church as both the bride and body of Christ and at the same time a small group struggling with the realities of life in a pagan, magic-dominated city.[17] The high status of the church as the elected bride of Christ is seen in the midst of the conflict of the present time. In the course of his letter, Paul gives us several important pointers into the nature of the church as an earthly fellowship. It is a body that is created in the cross of Christ that removes the distinctive legal basis of Israel and creates a new humanity in which both Jew and Gentile are united and there is access to the Father through the Spirit (Eph 2:14–22). Unity is emphasised in chapter 4. Paul's ministry, as related in Acts as well as in his other letters, is concerned with the establishment of churches that are racially comprehensive and united not on the basis of a shared culture, language, or previous religious loyalties, but are united around the Messiah.[18] This was the basis on which the Christian church emerged from Judaism and is part of the gospel that is to be proclaimed. It is this unity that proclaims to the watching world that God sent Jesus (John 17:20–23). There is no example in the Book of Acts, except for the Ethiopian eunuch, of people becoming followers of Jesus and not members of a local gathering of believers, distinct from the world around them.[19] This was the logic that led local people in Antioch to invent a new sociological category—Χριστιανός "Christians"—to identify people who were united by belief and not by culture or ethnicity.

To the Ends of the Earth: Calvin's Missional Vision and Legacy

By Michael A. G. Haykin and C. Jeffrey Robinson Sr. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2014).



Drawing on careful historical research to trace the story of evangelical Calvinism in the history of Reformed Protestantism, Haykin and Robinson clear away stereotypes related to the Reformed tradition and highlight the neglected missional vision and legacy of Calvin. The book demonstrates how Calvinist commitment to the gospel of free grace drove evangelism and missions and how Geneva was a center of missionary endeavor and expansion. From training pastors at his Genevan Academy to sending missionaries to the jungles of Brazil, Calvin consistently sought to encourage and equip Christians to take the good news of salvation to the very ends of the earth.

Creedal and confessional statements

The Nicene Creed confesses "One holy catholic and apostolic church" and that remains a good summary of biblical teaching. This gives the vital elements of any definition of the church.

- One – we recognise that there is only one church and that divisions are a denial of that. Unity should be the aim of each individual congregation and of churches ministering in one geographical area.
- Holy – the character of the church underlines the need for true discipleship and behaviour that reflects the character of the Saviour.
- Catholic – we recognise the universality of the church and the fact that it crosses ethnic groups and nations as well as time and space.
- Apostolic – we see this clearly in terms of doctrine, but perhaps it should also be seen as a temporal continuity.[20]

Irenaeus gave an earlier definition which focused on the spiritual nature of the local church: "For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church, and every kind of grace; but the Spirit is truth."[21] The confessional statements of the Reformation gave more attention to the nature of the church, especially at the local level. Whilst these were in reaction to the Roman Catholic Church they also focussed attention on the spiritual life of the congregation. Calvin's marks of the church were: "Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists."[22]

Both of these statements, coming centuries apart, focus on the spiritual nature of the church with Irenaeus noting the role of word and Spirit and Calvin adding the organisational detail necessary to produce such a church. He was also defining a true church over against one that had erred. Whilst Reformed churches were organised on a national basis there was no lack of international co-operation. Refugees from persecution

found warm acceptance in friendlier regimes. Calvin, in particular, made Geneva a missionary sending centre from which people were sent out, not only into the countries of Europe, but also to Brazil.[23] Correspondence and visits meant that no national church was cut off from broader European fellowship. Often the foreign visitors played a full role in the life of the church that they were visiting or with which they found refuge.

Evangelical unity[24]

The unity to be found among the early Reformers did not survive to the second generation. As time passed and a greater variety of views emerged, tensions and divisions increased. Even when the political status of those who did not belong to national churches had been dealt with and the Wesleyan Revival had changed the religious face of Britain and the US, relations between different Protestant and Evangelical Christians were often strained.[25] The foundation of the Evangelical Alliance[26] in London in 1846 sought to establish a form of evangelical unity that would not only be effective for the UK, but also throughout the world. The World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) is now such a body with its national associations and other members including most of the major evangelical mission agencies.[27] The Keswick Convention was another example of an association of Christians united around a particular theme with its strapline "All one in Jesus Christ."[28] One week in the Lake District of England[29] was seen as satisfying the need for Evangelical unity without needing to discuss ecclesiastical issues. Such trans-denominational unity makes many evangelicals unconcerned about ecclesiastical disunity.

Where do we find the mission agency in Scripture?[30]

There is a story, which may be apocryphal, that Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones was once asked to address a gathering of various evangelistic and mission agencies.[31] He began by saying that he had looked for them in Scripture—first in the New Testament and then in the Old—but couldn't find them. He then said that he identified them in Judges 21:25![32] The view that agencies have no biblical mandate is popular in many circles, especially amongst separatist and Reformed groups.[33] Frequently, one hears the complaint that mission agencies were only formed because the church was not active in world mission. If William Carey is regarded as the first missionary of the modern era this is not a true understanding of the ecclesiastical setting from which he came.[34] The Particular Baptist Mission that was formed grew out of the Northampton Baptist Association and opened the way for Baptists in other parts of Britain to join.[35] It was, therefore, a group of churches finding a way of working together in a specific ministry.[36]

It is when we come to the formation of the China Inland Mission in 1865 that we see a different pattern beginning to emerge. There was no association of churches behind the Mission, but the selection of individuals with a variety of ecclesiastical relationships or none.[37] The early days of the Mission, when it was an untried gospel instrument, may have made this lack of church backing inevitable, but it was also in line with the sort of teaching Taylor would have embraced in fellowship with the Plymouth Brethren. He accepted that members of CIM might have different views of ecclesiology whilst agreeing on central evangelical doctrines. But the *Lammermuir* incident—when he (re-) baptised members—showed his own convictions at the time.[38] Despite the lack of fixed church relationships in the selection of members, Taylor was willing to establish churches with a denominational identity in China.

Dr. Ralph Winter sought to find mission agencies in Scripture.[39] He argues that in the New Testament there are two forms of the church: the "modality" and the "sodality".[40] The latter is identified in Paul's missionary band, and it is argued, first, that this was an expression of the universal church that was distinct from the local church, and then that a modern mission agency has the same characteristic. He then attempts to find similar groupings down the ages into which succession he places modern mission agencies.

Winter tries to prove too much from scanty evidence and a selective reading of church history. His assertion that Paul's missionary group was structured on pre-existent Jewish missionaries has no historical basis—indeed the very existence of any Jewish evangelism before Paul has been questioned.[41] Paul's missionary "band" was not a fixed group of people, but rather a changing group relating to the apostle in a variety of ways. Sometimes they would be together in ministry, but very often one or more of them would be sent off to minister elsewhere. When Paul settled in any place for a length of time he related to the church that was either already in existence, as at Rome, or the emerging church that he has founded, as in Ephesus or Corinth. There was also an on-going connection with the churches from which he had been sent out, both Antioch and Jerusalem, to which he reported back and of which he became a fully functioning member when present there, even though there is no record of any practical support or advice from them.[42] With his only recorded supporting church, Philippi, there was a relationship of care and concern, but no reporting back or return visits.

Paul's itinerant missionary work, with its usually short periods in each place and changing personnel, has little in common with the activity of a modern church planting mission agency with its concern to incarnate and contextualize its ministry in a set location and through that to establish an indigenous church. Winter notices that down through the ages there have been groups of Christians associated together

We need to recognise that a mission agency is not a church, but an instrument of unity in bringing together individual Christians in the task of evangelism. The subsidiary role of agencies in the world church needs to be recognised in all relations with churches, strategic planning, and publicity.

for specific purposes, but there is no evidence that they, any more than the Apostle Paul and his companions, ever thought of themselves as distinct church groupings parallel to those of which they were members.

Towards an missiological ecclesiology

OMF and other agencies now look for any joining member to be sent from a local church and often for other local churches,[43] as well individuals to support the missionary.[44] Thus the "homesides" of OMF may have a variety of ecclesiastical associations and assert the centrality and autonomy of the sending church in the process of missionary accountability. We have noted that receiving fields of OMF have adopted differing ways of relating to the churches in the countries in which they work. There are particular issues that need to be addressed in situations where OMF is seeking to evangelise an unreached people group or operating in a country where missionary activity is illegal. Hence, I propose the following polices for consideration by OMF and other agencies as they work in Asia.[45]

1. We need to recognise that a mission agency is not a church, but an instrument of unity in bringing together individual Christians in the task of evangelism. The subsidiary role of agencies in the world church needs to be recognised in all relations with churches, strategic planning, and publicity.[46]

2. Unity is one of the key aspects of the church as presented in Scripture. Mission agencies should therefore be working towards unity in all aspects of their work. This may be demonstrated in various ways.

   • OMF and other agencies should be represented in any evangelical association in the countries where it works as well as formally being part of an international body such as the WEA.[47]

   • Mission agencies should ensure that any church planting plan has as its final stage the establishment of a church that is united across ethnicity and culture. A mono-cultural church should only be found where there are no other cultures around.

3. As interdenominational[48] organizations, mission agencies should not identify themselves wholly with any one denominational grouping, but become an instrument towards unity between denominations and individual churches in any local situation where it is engaged. This would mean that in any country where an agency has established a denomination out of the churches it has founded, the time should arise when the denomination becomes distinct from the agency and the agency is therefore able to form working relationships with other church bodies. This may be worked out practically as individual members are seconded to specific churches.[49] Delicate negotiations may need to take place where churches with which an agency feels able to co-operate do not recognize each other as gospel churches[50] or there are local political or other reasons for the separation of churches.

4. Where there are functioning denominations within any country, an agency's ministry should be in fellowship with them with national input regarding priorities of missionary action. In situations where the agency works only with one denomination in a country, giving a controlling role to the local church could result in missionaries being regarded as no more than the evangelistic/missionary arm of that church. It could lead to the conclusion that missionary/evangelistic work is the responsibility of only the foreign missionary.[51]

5. It should be the responsibility of every agency field to demonstrate how they relate practically to national churches and how such churches play a role in the direction of the work of the mission. Where an agency is working with unreached people groups, there should be consideration of how the results of evangelism may be connected to other church bodies within the country.

6. In countries where there are both "field" (receiving) and "home" (sending) agency entities, there should be serious consideration for the merger of the two. In any case, it is likely that the "homeside" will be the appropriate instrument for defining and negotiating the relationship of the agency to national churches. **MRT**

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[1] The bulk of this paper was initially prepared for the OMF Mission Research Consultation in 2013.

[2] As, for example, Article VI of the Augsberg Confession of 1530 reads: "And to the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike."

[3] It can be argued that some factors in denominational characteristics, even in a mono-ethnic situation, are determined as much by class as by theology.

[4] Ernsth Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, 2 vols., trans. Olive Wyon (New York: Macmillan, 1950) Vol. 2, 993–1013, as summarized in Donald Bloesch, *The Church: Sacraments, Worship, Ministry, Mission* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2002), 190–95. I do not think one has to accept all of Troeltsch's ideas to view this as a useful classification. Whilst using these categories, Bloesch adds a fourth grouping—a *cult*, which he says aims to create a completely new religious identity rather than "restoring pristine forms of piety." Bloesch, *The Church*, 192.

[5] I think we can escape the *cult* categories, although some may feel that over-devotion to our charismatic founder tends in that direction.

[6] I remember being told by one older OMF couple that they didn't have a denomination, but counted the mission as their ecclesiastical and spiritual home.

[7] We are possibly at a better position in respect to sending churches in that we now expect members to be part of churches in their home countries. This was not always true in previous centuries.

[8] The church with which I worked in Indonesia had the inheritance of formerly being the state church of Dutch colonialism and it viewed itself as part of the national establishment with a large church building as its headquarters in the centre of Jakarta.

[9] Possibly the Three Self Patriotic Movement in China would regard itself as a *church* body rather than as a *sect*.

[10] Sometimes this has perpetuated divisions that grow out of particular theological developments in the sending country in Asia so that some churches divide on the basis of whether the Authorised/King James version is the only one to be used.

[11] Particularly the Homogenous Unit Principle. See Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 85–86.

[12] David Huntley, in his unpublished doctoral thesis, wonders whether OMF should have brought Bishop Bevan to Singapore in some role so as to preserve the relationship with the Anglican Church on the same level as in China. Huntley, "The Withdrawal of the China Inland Mission from China and their Redeployment to New Fields in East Asia" (PhD thesis, University of Liverpool, 2002), 131.

[13] The unpublished PhD thesis of Patricia McLean raises several interesting questions about the rightness of this decision in respect of Thailand and the effect it had on both the work of OMF and the Thai churches that were established. Patricia McLean, "Thai Protestant Christianity: A Study of Cultural and Theological Interactions between Western Missionaries (the American Presbyterian Mission and the Overseas Missionary Fellowship) and Indigenous Thai Churches (the Church of Christ in Thailand and the Associated Churches of Thailand-Central)" (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2002).
[14] For a useful and convenient summary of a more general theology of the church in a mission situation, see the master's thesis of one of my students Christopher Flint, "Church and Mosque: A Comparison of a Christian View of Ἐκκλησία and a Muslim View of the Mosque as part of the *Ummah* and an Analysis of the Missiological Implications of these Views" (MTh thesis, Oak Hill College, 2012). Available in the Oak Hill Library at DISS FLI 2012 or https://www.dropbox.com/s/ps6pvjrfy6s1o4k/A (accessed 4 Oct 2018). Quotes in this section are from Flint's work including related footnotes.
[15] Flint adds in footnote 23: "Deuteronomy 9:10 (ἡμέρᾳ ἐκκλησίας) and 18:16 (τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς ἐκκλησίας)."
[16] Flint, "Church and Mosque," 12. He adds the following in footnote 24: "Cf. Deuteronomy 4:10, 9:10, and 18:16 in the Masoretic Text (hereafter, MT) and LXX. By choosing Deuteronomy 4:10, a verse in which considerable emphasis is placed on gathering in order to listen to the voice of God, as the verse to introduce their gloss, τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς ἐκκλησίας, the LXX translators frame the ἐκκλησία of Exodus 19–20 as an assembly convened specifically for the purpose of hearing God's words."
[17] I am persuaded by the thesis of Clinton Arnold that this is the background story of the letter. See Clinton E. Arnold, *Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians* (Cambridge: CUP, 1987).
[18] Whatever the merits of the various forms of the "New Perspectives on Paul," it is right to assert that Christian community is identified by its connection to the Messiah.
[19] There is no mention of a church being formed in Athens, but the believers are listed together, which suggests some mutual recognition and inter-relationship.
[20] There is a difference of understanding between those who see any reformation of the church as a new beginning and those who see an historic continuity even when churches have erred. Note also modern uses of the term in charismatic circles where it refers to missionary work.
[21] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.24.1, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.ix.iv.xxv.html (accessed 7 September 2018).
[22] Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 2, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 4.1.9. Bucer and others added church discipline to these marks of the church.
[23] Information on Calvin from Philip Hughes, "John Calvin Director of Missions," in *The Heritage of John Calvin*, ed. John H. Bratt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 40–54, and R. Pierce Beaver, "The Genevan Mission to Brazil," in *The Heritage of John Calvin*, 55–73. For more on Calvin and mission, see Michael A. G. Haykin and C. Jeffrey Robinson Sr., *To the Ends of the Earth: Calvin's Missional Vision and Legacy* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2014) and David B. Calhoun, "John Calvin: Missionary Hero or Missionary Failure," *Presbyterion: Covenant Seminary Review* 5, no. 1 (Spring 1979): 17.
[24] I have not sought to produce any new definition of evangelical, but accepted that the current doctrinal statement of OMF puts it into the category of an evangelical group. The division of evangelicalism into various "tribes'" (e.g. charismatic, reformed, open) may make it necessary for OMF to further define itself and the range of evangelicalism that it finds acceptable for membership.
[25] The relationship between J. C. Ryle and Charles Haddon Spurgeon is an example of two men who, whilst agreeing on the gospel, viewed their ecclesiastical differences as a barrier to real fellowship.
[26] A brief history of the Evangelical Alliance can be downloaded from https://www.eauk.org/about-us/history (accessed 28 August 2018).
[27] OMF is not a member agency, although OMF members have played important roles in both national and international movements.
[28] Holiness as a second experience distinct from conversion was the classic Keswick doctrine. This is not part of the current Keswick Convention.
[29] There were also other "Keswicks" in different locations around the world.
[30] Attention should be given to the arguments in Michael Stroope, *Transcending Mission* (London: SPCK, 2018) that the term "mission" was not used until the formation of the Society of Jesus.
[31] Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1900–1981) was the influential minister of Westminster Chapel in London for many years. His chief contribution to evangelical life was his expository preaching and reintroduction of the writings of the English puritans to twentieth century Christians.
[32] "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." (ESV)
[33] These would include those who subscribe to the "regulative principle" that one must only do what Scripture commands. The principle contrasts with the Anglican position as contained in Article XXXIV, "that nothing be ordained against God's word."
[34] The idea that Carey is the Father of modern mission reflects a very insular British view and ignores the work of, particularly, German and Dutch missionaries who had been active since the sixteenth century.
[35] There was no Baptist denomination at the time and churches were organized in County Associations with no controlling central organisation. The mission was a necessary structure to enable the church to send missionaries. Grace Baptist Mission, formerly the Strict Baptist Mission, which seconded workers to OMF for Tamil work in Malaya, is in many ways a true successor to Carey's mission and reflects the same ecclesiastical situation in that it unites Grace Baptist churches in mission across associations in different parts of the country.
[36] Even centrally organized churches like the Church of England had earlier seen the need for specific agencies in the formation of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) and The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK).
[37] In the *Hudson Register* (one of the lists of all those joining CIM/OMF) there is often a blank against the denomination column. For instance, Leslie Lyall, who joined the CIM in 1929, has no listed church affiliation and David Adeney, who joined in 1934, is recorded as "(CofE) Baptist".
[38] Taylor later recognized that this action was a mistake.
[39] Ralph D. Winter, "The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, 4th ed., ed. Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey, 2009), 244–53. Winter's argument is used in an article in defence of the UCCF/IFES. Mike Reeves, "What is a Church? What is a CU?," UCCF: The Christian Unions, http://www.uccf.org.uk/about/cu-and-church.htm (accessed 28 August 2018).
[40] See definitions at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sodality (accessed 28 August 2018).
[41] See Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995).
[42] There is a notable absence of any action by the church in Antioch to mediate in the dispute between Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15.
[43] An agency like Crosslinks, with its Anglican roots, seeks to build the support of several churches for its mission partners. The question sometimes arises as to whether there is any specific church that the partner regards as "home".
[44] In some cases in which a denomination organizes mission support centrally, working agreements are established between OMF and the denominational mission. In the UK there have been agreements of joint sending with the Grace Baptist Mission and the Elim church.
[45] There were recommendations to OMF leadership by Brian Michell in his thesis, "The Role of Missionary Partnership and Closure in Indigenous Church Development: A Malaysian Case Study" (DMiss thesis, Asia Graduate School of Theology, 2004).
[46] My experience suggests that OMF speaks less about the role of the church(es) in the countries where it is working than is the case with other missionary agencies.
[47] It may be a point of discussion as to how far OMF might relate to other ecclesiastical bodies that are not wholly evangelical. CIM was present at Edinburgh 1910 but, like most evangelical interdenominational missions, was not part of successor congresses.
[48] Undenominational may sometimes be a more accurate description of perceptions about OMF's ecclesiology, but in so far as OMF is composed of members of churches, interdenominational is not inappropriate.
[49] There is a danger, which was noted in Indonesia, that OMF members so identify with the churches with which they are working that they do not become instruments of unity, but share the prejudices of the group to which they are seconded.
[50] There is an additional complication that some church associations in Asia may be regarded as suspect by sending churches.
[51] This may already occur. Japanese pastors are reported to have said that the missionaries do the evangelism and they pastor the members.

History and Context:
Shaping Mission and Church

Rose Dowsett



Rose joined OMF in 1969, serving in the Philippines until 1977. Since then she has taught missiology and global church history in Glasgow, and exercised leadership and advisory roles in the WEA Missions Commission, Lausanne, Interserve, UCCF, and other mission agencies. Retired since 2008, she continues to research and write books and articles for OMF.

Some broad brushstrokes

The late eighteenth century and the whole of the nineteenth century were marked by tumultuous changes in Europe and in North America. At the time, these were still the heartlands of Protestant Christianity, and the countries within which the so-called modern missionary movement was birthed. As evangelicals, we like to think we are shaped by the Lord and the Bible above all else; but sometimes, more than we easily recognize, both as individuals and as institutions, we are also shaped by where we are in history, our culture, and social and political factors.

This brief paper sketches some of the ways in which Hudson Taylor and the members of the China Inland Mission (CIM) in its early years were shaped by culture—religious and general—of the mid-nineteenth century. In particular, how did this influence the kind of churches that the CIM established? The paper also highlights some of the inevitable tensions between church and interdenominational mission structures.

The shaping of Hudson Taylor

Hudson Taylor grew up in a devout Methodist home, surrounded by prayer, reading of the Bible within the family, and with parents already fascinated by China—a fascination fed by books and pamphlets that were mass produced and widely available. A small town shopkeeper and pharmacist, Hudson Taylor's father was typical of those with roots in a centuries-old agricultural way of life; but the industrial revolution drew huge numbers to the towns and cities of Britain, and to a radically different way of living, a changing social order, and wider horizons. The Napoleonic Wars were recent—emotionally still present—history, and on the European continent Italy, Germany, France, and Scandinavia were all in structural flux. The steam engine, the railways, new factories and goods, and much more, provided a cultural and intellectual climate of constant change. The old and the new, the stable and the unpredictable, rubbed shoulders. Invention, new ventures, new possibilities, innovation, and experiment were in the air Taylor breathed.

While Hudson Taylor was still in his teens, the Methodist church to which the family belonged, split. Since the Reformation of the sixteenth century, Protestantism had divided over and over again. Without the centralized iron grip of the Roman Catholic Church, Protestants found themselves in the maelstrom of different understandings of Scripture and all the consequences of fiercely held differing convictions. Taylor came face to face with the reality of denominational pluralism. Undoubtedly though, from Methodism he imbibed some life-long convictions: nominal faith is not enough; conversion is essential; churches can be birthed through itinerant preaching; women have active roles to play in the church; small discipling groups are key; lay people have been entrusted with ministry by God; and more besides.

The wider evangelical scene

Alongside the depressing pattern of splits and divisions, gospel men and women were also discovering that believers from across denominations could work together in many ways. The many revivals of recent decades were not contained within denominational boundaries. Sometimes they gave rise to new denominations, especially when the older churches were hostile to the "enthusiasm" of the revivals. Methodism was not the only consequence of revival.

In 1843, the Church of Scotland had suffered a difficult split, with a mass

exodus to form the Free Church of Scotland. Some of those who left were, nonetheless, deeply troubled by the disunity in the church when the Lord had prayed so clearly "that they might be one" (John 17:21). Others in England were similarly exercised and this led in 1846 to the formation of the Evangelical Alliance. Initially, it was hoped that this might be an international movement, linked by shared commitment to a common statement of faith and practice but, sadly, the American delegation could not accept a clause against slave-holding. In Britain, it was still too close to the long battle, spearheaded by William Wilberforce, to abolish slavery, but in America there were evangelicals who still had slave labor as well as those who opposed it; it was too divisive an issue for them to sign up to.

All the same, the forming of the Alliance provided (in several nations) an increasingly active mechanism for Bible Christians to work together, whether they were Episcopalian, Baptist, Congregational, Quaker, Presbyterian, or Open Brethren (or, on the European Continent, Lutheran and Mennonite too). It was a new era. It signaled on a nation-wide canvas that inter-denominationalism could work, provided there was a shared commitment to the heart of the gospel and specific goals in focus. It also showed that there were some areas where evangelicals could not work together. It was also in and of itself not claiming to be yet another new denomination. It was possible to establish unity without uniformity.

There had always been some structures outside the normal church organization(s), for instance, the pre-Reformation monastic orders which were independent of the bishops and parish priests. Now numerous voluntary societies sprang to life, in some ways modeled on the old trade guilds, or the more recent trading companies, enabling those with shared purpose to act together. A growing number of trans-denominational voluntary agencies emerged to enable believers of different churches to act together in some cause or other in which they jointly believed: Bible Societies, social amelioration societies, and a host of others. These were an outworking of the profound social conscience of evangelicals (and others too). Alongside a passionate commitment to evangelism was an assumption that authentic Christian discipleship must be holistic. Taylor was to carry this into the life of the CIM, so that medical care, helping opium addicts be delivered, care for orphans, or help in famine relief, and many other initiatives were part and parcel of his understanding of the fullness of gospel ministry. Lord Shaftesbury's high profile work to bring about legislation to promote social justice, as well as the example of Wilberforce in fighting slavery, set a pattern for Taylor when he became a leader in the fight against Britain's involvement in the ignominious opium trade, and enabled him to work with others of different agencies and different ecclesiastical persuasions to bring about a shared vision.

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Revivals, with all their surges of intense spiritual vitality, and deep visitations of the Holy Spirit were key to it all. For Taylor and the early CIM, the revivals of the 1830s and then the widespread visitation by the Holy Spirit in 1859–60, were especially significant, impacting the spirituality of many of the first generation of both members and supporters. (Later, the Moody and Sankey campaigns in Britain were to inspire another generation of candidates, most famously the Cambridge Seven in 1885.) Thousands were brought to repentance and faith, and convicted of the need to commit to holiness of life, emphases which were to mark CIM's message.

Moreover, revivals were not in any way controlled or directed by the normal ecclesiastical structures. Taylor could not help seeing the freedom and potential of these voluntary groups, and when in the early 1860s he could not get any of the main denominations to include China in their sphere for mission, he had a ready-made template for action. If the denominational bodies would not do it, a dedicated voluntary society must be formed—what has often (unfortunately) been called "para-church". This had inevitable inbuilt tensions when the work of that voluntary society began to produce churches. How would they fit into

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the traditional beliefs about church discipline and order?

The link with the Open Brethren

As a young man, first in his hometown of Barnsley, then in Hull while doing some preliminary medical training, and then in London during his surgical training, Hudson Taylor had been much attracted to the Open Brethren. At the time, this was a comparatively new group of independent congregations, comprising often small gatherings of believers committed to very simple forms of worship, a strong emphasis on the Bible and prayer, and with all ministry in the hands of laymen. Answerable to no one but the Lord and his word, they could gather a handful of believers and operate as a church, though they mostly used the term "meeting". The simplicity of Acts 2:42—"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer"—was their guideline.

Taylor learned from them that no approval from an ecclesiastical superstructure was needed to start a church, that it was not necessary to have an ordained minister to celebrate the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and that (especially from the example of George Mueller in Bristol) God could supply all needs in response to believing prayer. They also introduced him to their deep interest in biblical prophecy and its interpretation for their own times. This was to lead many in the CIM to adopt pre-millennialism, in contrast with the post-millennialism that had been most common in Britain up to this time. As they interpreted current events as being signs of the Lord's imminent return, Taylor and the new missionary community saw their role as taking the gospel throughout the vast land of China as widely and speedily as God made possible.

The Brethren were especially supportive of Hudson Taylor in the painful period between his return from China in late 1860 and the formation of the China Inland Mission in 1865. Further, in the early years of the Mission, Brethren were crucial in providing financial and other practical support, as well as a disproportionate number of those eager to serve with the CIM. CIM ethos fit well with Brethren convictions and practice.

Beyond the evangelical community

While revivals, in particular, mostly brought those affected into evangelical faith, this was not the only current in British church life. The Oxford Movement, also known as the Tractarian Movement, first under John Keble and then led by Edward Pusey, attempted to move the Church of England back into many Roman Catholic practices and beliefs. This appealed to many who sought more ritual and greater beauty in church life; sadly, much Protestantism was aesthetically barren, with boring, lengthy sermons. If the "enthusiasm" of the evangelicals was distasteful to you, beautiful music, oratory, color, and restraint could be very attractive. It could, of course, lead to the outright conversion to Roman Catholicism, as in the case of John Henry Newman in 1845.

As the century wore on, this Anglo-Catholic partial re-alignment of the state church unsettled some evangelicals. It also increased the distance for groups such as the CIM from some of the mainstream of British church life. High Church practice elevated the role of the ordained priest, undermined lay leadership in the life of the church (though not in society), and taught that the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper not only could only be celebrated by the priest for legitimacy, but also that those sacraments rather than conversion were the means of salvation.

All of this was the polar opposite of Hudson Taylor's convictions. It helped define the boundaries for those who were welcome to join the CIM, both explicitly and implicitly.

In the same period, the churches were being increasingly rocked by the emergence of evolutionary ideas. The most famous, of course, lay in Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* published in 1859, but there had been several books published before that with similar themes. For evangelicals, this seemed to be incompatible with the historic, traditional, and entirely literal understanding of the opening chapters of Genesis. It was easy to write off everything about evolutionism without addressing the unsettling task of reviewing hermeneutical traditions. No, many evangelicals said, the Bible should be taken completely literally. The gospel is simple, and nothing should be allowed to complicate it. We don't need priests or scholars to explain it; it is accessible to all who read or hear it directly.

This belief would have been shared by all in the early CIM, the more so precisely because few had any formal theological training since Hudson Taylor was recruiting lay people, often those from humble backgrounds and with little formal schooling of any kind. It lay behind the teaching given in China, and affected the emerging churches. As in Britain, so in China, the failure to grapple seriously with the relationship between biblical faith and revelation on the one hand, and science on the other, would lead in time to the rise of liberalism in the churches. It also, for a while, made it harder to persuade more educated people to take the gospel seriously, and the church suffered.

World mission on the radar

William Carey's extended pamphlet, *An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians*

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to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen, was first published in 1792, and was widely read. David Livingstone's remarkable travels across Africa, recorded in the 1857 book *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*, made him a celebrity far beyond the churches. A growing number of journals of explorers and travellers were constantly being printed. It was impossible to ignore the world and its needs, and the opportunity—and the obligation—to take the gospel to those who had had no opportunity to hear about Jesus.

At the same time, the developments that were to lead to the establishment of the British Empire made many British Christians see it as their special responsibility to take not just the Christian message but also a culture and "civilization" shaped by many centuries of Christian tradition to what were assumed to be primitive or benighted cultures (and sometimes they were indeed primitive, sometimes they were not). The Indian Mutiny of 1857–58 seemed to justify this attitude, as the 1900 Boxer Rebellion in China did later. With hindsight, we can see that there were many flaws in British and Western activity, and the assumptions behind it, that led to deep and legitimate grievance, but at the time these events fed the myths, while also encouraging ambivalence in the churches back home towards mission work.

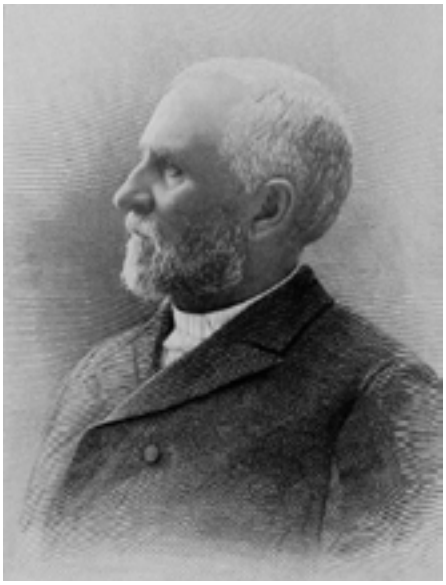
By the time Hudson Taylor was praying about starting the CIM, several British denominations already had their own missionary societies, though mostly these had few serving missionaries, and were mostly focused on Africa, the West Indies, and the Middle East. The largest of these societies was the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the society of the Church of England. From 1841, the policy of CMS was largely shaped by Henry Venn, an evangelical, ordained man. He did not question that the churches planted by CMS should be Anglican, which included establishing an episcopate, but he did believe that African churches must be led by Africans at the earliest possible moment.

Venn was a deep thinker, and his ideas became well known far beyond Anglican circles, and were certainly influential on Hudson Taylor as he thought about the church he longed to see established in China. Venn, along with the American Rufus Anderson, energetically propagated the conviction that mission structures should be temporary, and that native churches needed to become fully indigenous, self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating as soon as possible. In the Anglican world, this must include appointing African bishops from early days. It would be Africans who won Africans.

There was more discussion going on about the why and how of world mission than we sometimes recognize. Particularly in the years Taylor was back in London recuperating, leading up to 1865, it is clear that he was well aware of what was going on through other agencies, and also of the different pressures on British evangelicals.

Taylor was also influenced by his earlier work in China, and his learning from both John Nevius (who suggested similar principles to Venn's) and from Charles Gutzlaff (who was passionate about indigenization).

There was more discussion going on about the why and how of world mission than we sometimes recognize. Particularly in the years Taylor was back in London recuperating, leading up to 1865, it is clear that he was well aware of what was going on through other agencies, and also of the different pressures on British evangelicals. He was constantly meeting Christian leaders, travelled constantly up and down the British Isles, read widely, and corresponded voluminously.



John Nevius (Public domain), via Wikimedia Commons

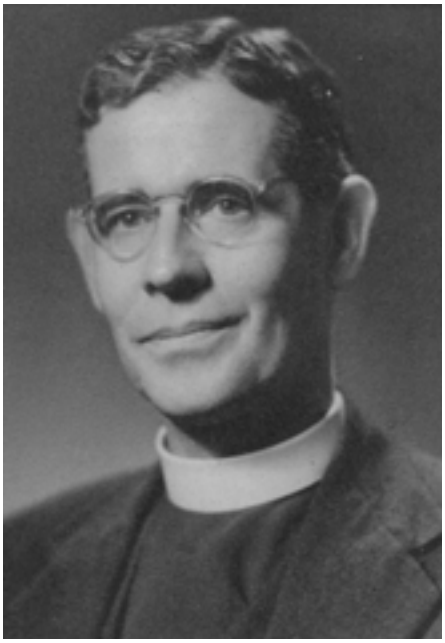
How did all this work out for the CIM?

Taylor recognized that since the Chinese had no background knowledge of the Bible, it would be necessary to spend some time in a given place to instruct those who might come to faith before they would be able to lead others or take responsibility for a church. However, he modified this plan when, by 1865, there were some 2,000 professing converts, mostly clustered around the Treaty Ports, where evangelism had been taking place for some time.

So, the plan was for two missionaries to team up with two native converts, who would then itinerate through a province, preaching, leaving gospel tracts, and looking out for those who might seem receptive of the message. This had been the pattern of the early Methodists, including that of John Wesley himself. They must work strategically, going to the capital city of the province, then from there out to the whole province, working to gather together any converts for more extended teaching. In this way, both itinerant and settled work was needed, but settled work should not precede the itinerant work. It would be the itinerant work that familiarized communities with the preachers, and lead, it was hoped, to acceptance for settled work, which could be based where the response was. And all work must be bathed in prayer, in dependence on the Lord, and in looking to the Holy Spirit to open hearts and minds and bring about new birth.

In 1873, Taylor could write:

> the work is steadily growing, especially in that most important department, *native help*. The helpers



Bishop Frank Houghton

> themselves need much help, much care and instruction; but they are becoming more efficient as well as more numerous, and the future hope for China lies, doubtless, in *them*. I look on foreign missionaries as the scaffolding round a rising building, the sooner it can be dispensed with the better—or rather, the sooner it can be transferred to other places to serve the same temporary purpose.[1]

What about the issue of being interdenominational? Hudson Taylor recognized that members came from different church backgrounds and would often have distinct convictions about church order. So he worked to put like-minded members together wherever possible, leaving them the freedom to organize emerging churches as they wished. If another person went to that place, he might not change the church order already set up, but when the church appointed its own Chinese pastor or group of elders and the missionary stepped back, the church would then be free to choose if it wanted to stay as it was or adopt another form of order.

In practice, most churches became Baptist in relation to baptism, but could be closer to Brethren or Congregational or some other pattern in general church order. Converts were encouraged to read or learn Scripture, to pray, and to find specific roles of service. Taylor did not wish CIM to form its own denomination, but in the event many congregations self-defined as CIM churches. Others joined together to form their own Chinese denominations, or, as other missions moved inland as well, it was policy not to hinder any convert who wished to join one of those churches. When later the Mission drew a number of Anglicans, some of them ordained, Szechuan became an Anglican field, and would later provide a General Director in the person of Bishop Frank Houghton. The same pattern came to be adopted for non-English speakers, especially when associate missions (such as the Scandinavian societies) linked up with the CIM. In other words, there was a level of practicality in reducing potential friction, and always to ensure that the primary task of sharing the gospel widely might not be hindered.

Did the churches become self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating? Some found that easier to achieve than others, just as some missionaries proved to be more paternalistic than others and perhaps too unwilling to hand over leadership to the Chinese. The CIM leadership had one advantage: if they believed that a member was hanging on too long in charge, they could insist that he go to another place instead. In practice, many, especially in the early years, were more than committed to constant pushing of geographical frontiers and pioneering beyond where the established congregations were in place.

And today?

It is interesting that today throughout East Asia there are flourishing Chinese Brethren and Methodist churches, and many small gatherings which reflect Brethren roots. The simplicity of the Brethren order has been especially helpful in times and places of opposition, whether or not believers self-define as Brethren. In most of Asia, in the context of other faiths and ideologies, the emphases inherited from both Methodist and Brethren strands of the church have encouraged personal conversion, lay ministry, the value of small groups for discipling, the importance of not being dependent on external funds, and the need for faithfulness and trust in God whatever the circumstances. That's a precious heritage.

Perhaps we should acknowledge more readily the sovereignty of God in shaping Hudson Taylor and the CIM through so many elements of their context and generation, and the way that this laid foundations for patterns of the gospel in much of China and beyond. And maybe we need to ponder how the shaping of our own contemporary world is impacting the cause of the gospel and the life of the churches today. But that's a topic for another paper! **MRT**

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[1] Howard Taylor and Geraldine Taylor, *Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission: Growth of a Work of God* (London: China Inland Mission, 1913), 232.

Suggested further reading

David W. Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody* (Leicester: IVP, 2005).

A. J. Broomhall, *Hudson Taylor and China's Open Century*, Vols. 1–7 (Sevenoaks: Hodder and Stoughton and Overseas Missionary Fellowship, 1981–9).

Bertil Ekstrom, ed., *The Church in Mission* (Pasadena: William Carey, 2016).

Klaus Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions* (Oxford: Regnum, 1994).

Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (New York: Orbis, 1996).

Tim Grass, *Gathering in His Name: The Story of Open Brethren in Britain and Ireland* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006).

Christopher Wigram, *The Bible and Mission in Faith Perspective* (Netherlands: Boekencentrum, 2007).

C. Peter Williams, *The Ideal of the Self-governing Church: A Study in Victorian Missionary Strategy* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990).

John Wolffe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Wilberforce, More, Chalmers and Finney* (Leicester: IVP, 2006).

Ministry Training for the Majority

David Burke



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I write this article from a comfy office in the theological college where I teach. A recent multi-million dollar building project gives us ample buildings that combine the old and the new in elegant harmony. Our spacious library spills over two floors, we have good IT, and classrooms are fitted with the latest gadgets. Our students typically have a degree and profession when they arrive at college and leave with anything up to a doctorate. Our well-qualified teaching staff is supported by able administrators.

In short, I teach in a typical, western theological college.

Later this year, I will teach in a pop-up college in western Ethiopia. The students will be pastors of churches serving South Sudanese refugees.[1] The pastors and their congregations have lost land, family, and possessions. They are traumatised by war and dislocation and depend on the UN and NGOs for almost everything.

This Ethiopian context is an extreme example, but it is closer to the reality of majority world ministry training than the college where I am employed. What kind of ministry training is suitable for the rest of the world—the growing majority world church outside of the declining western church?[2]

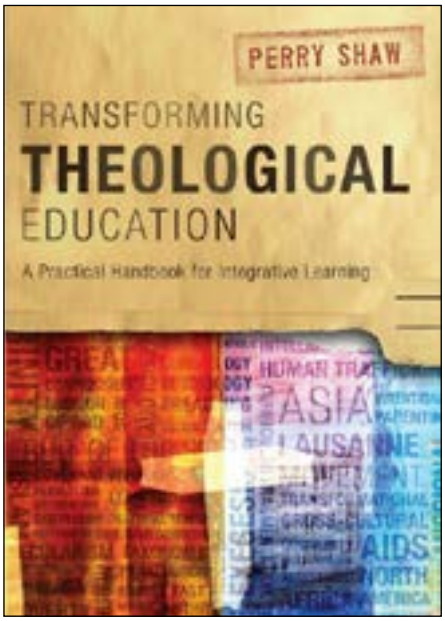
It is tempting to think that the western college is the gold standard of ministry training.[3] In reality, that model may not be fit for purpose even in the West. Perry Shaw is just one among recent writers who are asking whether the traditional seminary is relevant in the post-Christian West, let alone in the rest of the world.[4] The traditional seminary is critiqued as being expensive, taking a lot of time, dislocating students from their ministry contexts, promoting an academic rather than ministry focus,[5] and being unable to train the number of pastors needed in the majority world.[6]

The traditional college-based model of ministry training has another problem identified by Richard Pratt:

> Let me describe a challenge that the body of Christ often faces in areas where there has been little or no educational opportunities for church leaders. Many of these communities have senior, experienced church leaders who have much to offer younger students and pastors. Their strengths, however, are typically much more in the areas of ministry skills and personal development than in theological and biblical content. In fact, senior leaders in these regions are often in as much need of theological and biblical content as their less-experienced counterparts. As a result, these senior leaders often hesitate to form learning communities for less experienced leaders because they feel inadequate to provide the content that is often expected.[7]

Is it time to move on from the comparatively recent phenomena of the detached theological college to something more church-based and missional? The western model has been critiqued from the perspective of ecumenical and mission agendas and is being challenged by a range of alternative educational models.[8] This question is especially potent in majority world contexts that are remote from the context of western churches with traditional seminaries.

A moment's reflection suggests that ministry training should be missional. As Shaw says, "For theological education we must seek a theological answer to the question of purpose: good theology should drive our pedagogy. The Scriptures make clear that the ultimate goal of all we are and do as individuals and as a church is to participate in the *Mission Dei*: more specifically, to work and serve for the extension of the kingdom of God and the proclamation in word and deed of Christ as Lord."[9] Indeed, if ministry training is not



serving the Lord's mission, why are we doing it?

The Lausanne *Cape Town Commitment* linked the themes of ministry training that arises from God's mission and serves the church: "The mission of the Church on earth is to serve the mission of God, and the mission of theological education is to strengthen and accompany the mission of the church."[10]

And so, we ask a key question: what kinds of ministry education will best serve the church of the twenty-first century as it plays its part in the mission of God? The rest of this article will address this question through a series of sub-questions: *Who is teaching what, to whom, why, and how?*[11]

A central conclusion to this discussion is that ministry education should be context-sensitive, mission-driven, and church-centric.

Who is teaching what, to whom, why, and how?

The *Who* question concerns the identity and desired qualities of ministry educators. As several note, the nature of the teacher is vitally important and good teachers will know their material, build good class relationships and embody what they teach.[12]

Increasingly, ministry educators are subject specialists with little educational training and who have little or no exposure to the role for which they are preparing students. The PhD is the typical route to a lectureship or Dean's post, rather than having planted or pastored a church or served in a missionary post.

Clearly, subject specialists should be respected for their scholarship and it is important to have a continuing flow of theological academics who advance scholarship. God's church needs men and women of learning who can discover new wonders about his being and works and express and address these to a changing world.

However, it is concerning if the whole of ministry training is done by silo-specialists, especially if there is little connection to church or mission life. Some colleges address this by insisting that teaching staff have an active church involvement as part of their KPI, or by encouraging teachers to spend part of their study leave immersed in the life of a church or Christian organisation. Another approach, particularly with teachers of pastoral skills, is to recycle teachers between church and college appointments, such that a teacher of ministry skills has a maximum of, say, ten years in a college environment. However it happens, the mission of a college in serving the church is strengthened when teachers are familiar with, committed to, and competent in the tasks for which they are preparing students. As one Principal said to a prospective staff hire who was a reluctant applicant: "We want someone who would rather be doing the job that they are preparing others to do."

While teachers constitute the primary *Who* of ministry education, they are not the only parties. Other partners who have a stake in ministry education (and desirably a voice) are churches and other agencies that send students, provide field training venues, and then receive graduates into their service.[13] How can these extra-college partners, especially the church, become partners in the design and delivery of ministry training?

Who is teaching *What*, to whom, why, and how?

This question concerns the content of ministry training.

Traditional content consists of Bible, theology, church history, and, more recently, practical ministry. Each of these elements have a deserved place in the *What* of ministry training, but the questions of how they are packaged and connected and what perspective they are taught from are pertinent.

For example, what church history is being taught in a particular context? Does it make sense to focus heavily on early and reformation church history in majority world contexts where the past story of the local and regional church shaped the immediate context into which graduates minister?[14] Again, is church history just taught as background to historical theology or as a series of case studies in practical ministry from which students can draw lessons for application in their contexts?[15]

Decisions on *What* will be taught go beyond the formal curriculum. Recognition is needed of the hidden curriculum (which may undermine the intentional curriculum) and the null curriculum.[16] What we don't teach, or barely teach, says much about what we value or devalue. Further, are there ways to recognise non-class activities (e.g., leading chapel or participating in a pastoral care group) as gaining credit towards program requirements?[17]

Curriculum design or revision is a fraught process, for there is simply more to be taught than is possible in the time available. A move away from teaching

However it happens, the mission of a college in serving the church is strengthened when teachers are familiar with, committed to, and competent in the tasks for which they are preparing students. As one Principal said to a prospective staff hire who was a reluctant applicant: "We want someone who would rather be doing the job that they are preparing others to do."

reams of content towards teaching skills, including skills of learning by reflection,[18] can ease the pressure, as can recognition that there are some things that really cannot be well taught in college programs and are best left to post-training apprenticeships.[19]

Who is teaching what, *To Whom*, why, and how?

This question concerns the identity—in church and community contexts—of those being trained for ministry.

The nature of our learners in their contexts should impact what we teach and how we teach it.

What are the entry points of students in terms of home, community, church, and educational backgrounds?[20]

How do people from different cultures learn and how should that impact teaching?[21] What can we learn from literature on different learning styles, multiple intelligences, and gender differences?[22]

The life stage of students is also relevant to pedagogy. Ott gives a useful summary of key principles from present adult education theory (known as andragogy and pioneered by Malcolm Knowles[23]) but also warns that a student entering ministry education may be adult in their wider learning profile, but at a basic learning level in theology.[24]

The point of this is that some attention to the profile of individual students, cohort profiles, and cultural context is important to help ministry education be delivered in a way that connects to students and fosters learning that will transform them and their ministries.

Who is teaching what, to whom, *Why*, and how?

This questions the purposes or outcomes of ministry training.

It is commonplace in education to start with the end product and reverse engineer to develop learning content and design of delivery.[25]

In asking the core questions of ministry education noted above, it is important to begin with questions of purpose and outcomes (the *Why?* question) and work back from them to the contributing questions of *Who* is best placed to teach *What* and *How*. As Shaw says: "Only when all the above questions have been answered are we in a healthy place to build the curriculum. We need to be diligent in keeping 'What?' and 'How?' as the final questions, as curriculum must always remain the servant of the fulfilment of our purpose and not the master of our decision-making processes."[26]

Ministry education is there to serve the mission of the church as it participates in God's great plan of reconciling all things in Christ. That is, ministry education is instrumental, not teleological, in nature. The test of its effectiveness is not in exam results, degrees awarded, or publications, but in how well it serves the church in its mission.

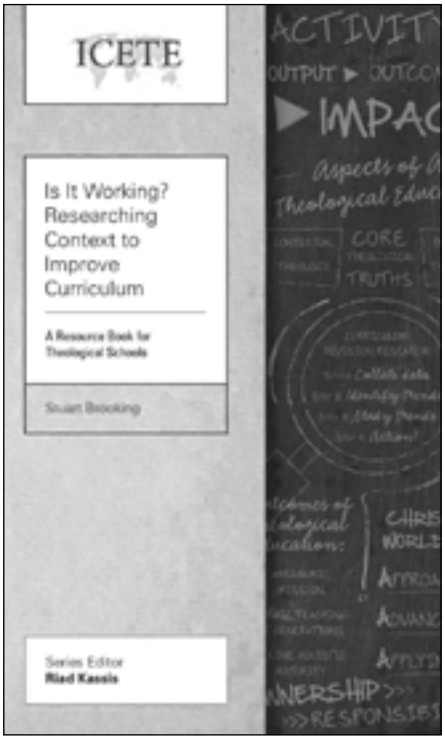
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This sense of purpose prompts a re-think of the balance in the ministry education curriculum. Educators typically speak of the cognitive, affective, and psycho-motor domains which loosely correlate to knowledge, attitudes, and skills, or head, heart, and hands.[27] Traditional curricula are heavy-headed with much emphasis on the text of Scripture and theological tomes! Of course, there is a point in this, for a Christian doctrine of Scripture sees a godly mind of orthodoxy informing a godly heart of right worship and these together shaping godly actions. However, too often, cognitive learning alone becomes the dominant focus in theological college.

A little theological reflection reinforces the nature of learners as unified beings who are called to love God with all of who they are (e.g., Deut 6:5). In particular, the Bible upholds the place of the affections as fundamental to personal being (e.g., Prov 4:23). This is quite a contrast to the Greek-shaped nature of western education with its privileging of cognitive learning. Many majority world cultures emphasise the wholeness of a person in ways far better than western cultures and in a way that better echoes biblical anthropology.

And so we ask, how can ministry education be designed so as to achieve purposes of Christian maturity, godliness of character, Christ-likeness, and such like which are central to the being of church leaders (e.g., 1 Tim 3:1–13) and to their role in the mission of the church? The cognitive and behavioural (or skill) components of ministry education are comparatively easy to achieve but are of little point unless the affective domain has been well addressed.

Perry Shaw suggests a process that asks: "What is the ideal church in our context?" "What are the contextual challenges" that we face? And "What might an ideal Christian leader look like?"[28]



The college where I teach developed the following core headings as graduate attributes.

> Loves God in Christ
> Knows God in Christ
> Knows self in Christ
> Loves people like Christ
> Leads God's church under Christ
> Preaches and teaches Christ from the Scriptures.[29]

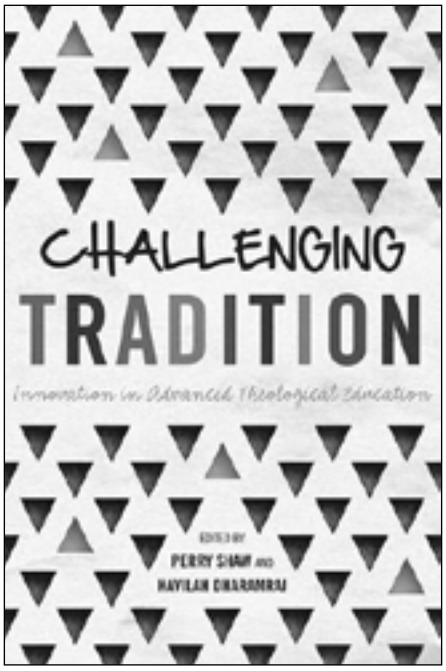
These were detailed into 72 specific descriptors which were used for a ground-up redesign of our programme at the levels of "introduce, develop, and apply."

In designing a graduate profile, the earlier point about the instrumental nature of ministry education needs to be kept central. The end game is the contextualised shape of the mission of God as implemented through local churches, mission agencies, and other Christian bodies. The mission of the Lord should shape the kinds of mission workers that are trained in our schemes of ministry education and that, in turn, should drive the content and means of teaching. The end determines the means in ministry education and the end is in both global and local contexts.

Who is teaching what, to whom, why, and *How*?

The *How* question is the pointy end of education. Teachers want to know how to teach this or that material to these people in this setting. Sometimes that is accompanied by a vague sense of "How can I teach in a way that holds interest?" or "How can I teach in a way that gets through the syllabus in the time available?"

The *How* question is an important one to answer well, for the answer will shape whether learning happens and what kind of learning it is. However, to reiterate what Shaw says: "Only when all the above questions have been answered are we in a healthy place to build the curriculum. We need to be diligent in keeping 'What?' and 'How?' as the final questions as curriculum must always remain the servant of the fulfilment of our purpose and not the master of our decision-making processes."[30]



The way we teach is not neutral. It will either serve the mission of the Lord through his church or it will not. It also expresses and reinforces foundational assumptions about what is important to learn, how the learner is viewed, and why we learn.

Consider a typical "sage on the stage" or "guru in the room" class where students sit at desks and chairs facing the teacher who teaches from an elevated platform by giving a summary of material in books written by western scholars and then assesses the learning by a written exam that asks students to recall and re-present what they heard. Such a class is teacher-centred, privileges cognitive learning, and shows a high value for maintaining a traditional canon of content from generation to generation, irrespective of context.

Consider now another class. Students are seated in an open horseshoe pattern facing a visual display facility. The teacher sits at their level, begins the class with a real-life case study and then asks questions, uses buzz groups, debates, and such like to dig behind the case study to the foundational biblical and theological issues and push forward to multiple ways of addressing the issues posed by the case study in ways that are context-appropriate. At times, a student leads a class discussion or presents a group finding. The class ends with preparing some action steps relevant to the case study and a time of group prayer to embed the learning before the Lord. This second class shows features of being learner-centred and integrative, and promoting active learning that is applied to life and ministry contexts.

It is also worth noting that teaching methods can become a matter of forming an unwelcome apostolic tradition in pedagogy. A teacher may teach in a way that they were taught or according to their preferred (and probably highly academic) learning style. Their students may well copy the master and teach the same way in their ministry contexts. And so, a group of oral culture learners seated on a dirt floor may end up having a lecture which is a poor echo of the original teacher's experience in Cambridge or Deerfield, Illinois!

At a program level, attention can be given to curriculum planning that is context-specific, mission oriented, and integrated.[31] The linear block curriculum can be replaced by spiral or integrative models that can foster more holistic and deeper learning.

At the level of individual lessons, attention to higher purposes and values can help shape "fit-for-purpose" lessons by starting with first principles: Why am I teaching this? What are the learning objectives? What are the most significant points in the lesson? What is the best structure for this lesson for these students in this setting?[32] Once these questions are answered the teacher can select from the variety of specific methods to plan the lesson.[33] One point to remember here is that no one teaching method is the gold standard. The gold standard is to choose and use teaching methods that will help prepare these students for their part in the mission of the church.

In choosing teaching methods, it is important to consider ways of fostering integrated learning (as mentioned above) and avoiding the common silo-split of disciplines where theory and practice are kept well separated. As the saying goes: *theory without practice is empty, practice without theory is blind.* Bernard Ott and Perry Shaw give some good suggestions on how to foster integrated leaning in the classroom.[34] A particular concern is how to foster learning that is actually applied to ministry contexts. Some newer approaches to ministry education attempt this by physically locating at least part of ministry education in field settings.[35] When this happens churches

not only send students to college and receive the end product, but also share in the process of ministry education. That's ministry education from, for, and with the church.

Conclusion

The now-traditional western model of ministry education is said to be in crises in the West and has, perhaps, never well-served the rest of the world. However, if we put the mission of the Lord and his divine agency of the church back at the centre of ministry education, we can be well-placed to design new forms of education that have a mission-fit purpose and which are fit for purpose.[36] **MRT**

For further reading

The following are good starting points on contemporary ministry education with a global perspective:

- Bernhard Ott, *Understanding and Developing Theological Education* (Carlisle: Langham Global Library, 2016).
- Perry Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education* (Carlisle: Langham Global Library, 2014).

For a guide to recent literature on alternate approaches, see my bibliography in:

- Hanna-Ruth van Wingerden, Tim Green, and Graham Aylett, eds., *TEE in Asia: Empowering Churches, Equipping Disciples* (n.p.: Increase Association, 2018)

For a stimulating survey of global innovations in advanced ministry training, see:

- Perry Shaw and Havilah Dharamraj, eds., *Challenging Tradition: Innovation in Advanced Theological Education* (Carlisle: Langham Global Library, 2018).

[1] 400,000 South Sudanese refugees inhabit five refugee camps in western Ethiopia. Within just my denominational tradition, 60 pastors serve churches of between 100 and 300 members. Six of the 60 pastors completed theological training in college and another six started but were disrupted by war and exile. Some have a TEE certificate and the rest have no formal training.

[2] The latest global statistical profile documents the continuing shift of the Christian heartland to the majority world. Todd M. Johnson, Gina A. Zurlo, Albert W. Hickman, and Peter F. Crossing, "Christianity 2018: More African Christians and Counting Martyrs," *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 42, no. 1 (2018): 20–8.

[3] A question outside the scope of this paper is whether ministry training is needed at all. A provocative US study found an inverse relationship between the level of ministry training and the growth (or otherwise) of churches! Christian A. Schwartz, *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches*, 4th ed. (St Charles, IL: ChurchSmart, 2000), 23. I contend that ministry training does not produce a pastor any more than a musical score produces a concert, but that it is not irrelevant to the development of pastors and helps guard against some of the perils of untrained pastors leading churches with large numbers of new believers.

[4] Perry Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education* (Carlisle: Langham Global Library, 2014), 17. An older text which is highly influential in calling for a missional shift in ministry training is Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999). A recent publication calls for a contextual and missional approach and supplies global case studies: Stewart Brooking, ed., *Is it Working? Researching Context to Improve Curriculum* (Carlisle: Langham Global Library, 2018).

[5] Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, vii.

[6] Richard Pratt Jr., "Opportunities and Challenges at the Beginning of the Third Christian Millennium," Presentation at the July 2013 meeting of Asian Theological Association. Pratt estimates that, assuming one pastor for every 100 Christians, 16 million pastors will be needed in just Africa and Asia in 2050, based on present growth projections. Pratt, "Opportunities and Challenges," 4. Participants in a 2016 Bangkok conference were told that there are 2.2 million pastors in the world and only 5% have any formal training.

[7] Pratt, "Opportunities and Challenges," 9.

[8] Bernard Ott, *Understanding and Developing Theological Education* (Carlisle: Langham Global Library, 2016), 18–23, 83–5.

[9] Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, 19.

[10] Lausanne Movement, *The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action* (The Lausanne Movement, 2011), II.F.4, https://www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment#p2-6 (accessed 2 October 2018).

[11] Shaw and Ott avoid a purely pragmatic rush to the *How* question of education. I have used these questions with profit in my educational activities over many years. Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, 19; Ott, *Understanding and Developing Theological Education*, 268-281.

[12] Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, 1, 41, 71–72; Ott, *Understanding and Developing Theological Education*, 281. Shaw gives a help list of the qualities of good teachers on 261–71.

[13] Ott, *Understanding and Developing Theological Education*, 284–6.

[14] Of course, early church history is universally relevant for its story of how the universal church laid foundations in doctrine, organisation, and devotion and the story of the later western evangelical movement is important for giving the missionary background from which most majority world churches were born. However, the problem arises when a traditional western curriculum in church history is taught to the comparative neglect of local and regional church history.

[15] An obvious example of this is to connect classes to the experience of persecution in the early church to the growing number of majority world contexts where persecution is normal.

[16] Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, 7, 81.

[17] Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, 6.

[18] Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, 7.

[19] Ott, *Understanding and Developing Theological Education*, 257. See also David Burke, "Time to Leave the Wilderness? The Teaching of Pastoral Theology in South East Asia," in Alan Harkness, ed., *Tending the Seedbeds: Educational Perspectives on Theological Education in Asia* (Quezon City: Asia Theological Association, 2010), 263–84.

[20] Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, 36.

[21] Ott, *Understanding and Developing Theological Education*, 236.

[22] Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, 231, 236, 238.

[23] Malcolm Knowles, *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species*, 3rd ed. (Houston, TX: Gulf, 1984).

[24] Ott, *Understanding and Developing Theological Education*, 110-13.

[25] Shaw tells the story of how ABTS Beirut re-designed its curriculum by starting with questions of outcomes and then working backwards. I have recently been through a similar process in the college where I teach. This can be a difficult process, but if done well it can result in ministry training that is fit for purpose to serve the church in its mission. Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, 1–11.

[26] Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, 141, cf. 143–4.

[27] These can also be styled the "ABC" of learning: affections, behaviours, and cognitive. Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, 67.

[28] Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, 21–25.

[29] Christ College, "Graduate Attributes," https://christcollege.edu.au/study/graduate-attributes/ (accessed 2 October 2018). Shaw gives the graduate profile from ABTS Lebanon. Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, 31–3.

[30] Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, 41.

[31] Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, 42.

[32] Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, 166–7.

[33] Shaw gives a useful survey of different methods and their (dis)advantages. Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, 183–9.

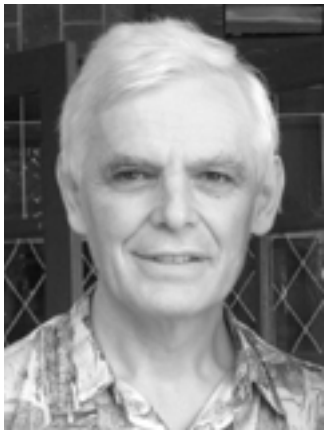
[34] Ott, *Understanding and Developing Theological Education*, 320; Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, 95–103.

[35] Ott, *Understanding and Developing Theological Education*, 108, 131–3. See also Hanna-Ruth van Wingerden, Tim Green, and Graham Aylett, eds., *TEE in Asia: Empowering Churches, Equipping Disciples* (n.p.: Increase Association, 2018).

[36] The following sites give access to some cutting edge thinking about missional and church-centric ministry education: Increase Association: https://www.increaseassociation.org/ (accessed 2 October 2018); Third Millennium Ministries: http://thirdmill.org/ (accessed 2 October 2018); International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE): http://www.icete-edu.org/ (accessed 2 October 2018).

Teaching God's Word to a People from an Animistic Background

Hans Christoph Bär



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"Ideas have consequences," was a key sentence in Dr. Mel Louck's lectures on modern worldview. This is true, not only for western thinking and its theology, but also for the animistic worldview of the Karen people in the mountains of North Thailand. Their ideas about God, good and bad spirits, power, cause of illnesses and accidents, meaning of dreams, or meaning of body and soul have consequences in their lives.

In doing grassroots evangelism, as well as leadership training among the Karen in Chiang Mai and Tak province (Thailand) for over twenty-five years, I have made some observations about the way the Karen's animistic background and worldview affect their understanding when they hear Christians talk about spirits, the power of the Holy Spirit, God the Father, and God's Son, as well as other aspects of essential teaching from the Bible.

In this article, I will endeavor to draw out implications that the animistic context may have on teaching the Bible.

1. Using points of contact: traditional stories, sayings, and poems (*hta*)

Karen mythology has some amazing stories about God (*Y'wa*). One story that the Karen refer to is about the lost book. At the beginning of time, God gave a golden book to the white man, a silver book to a Burman or Thai, and a parchment book to the Karen. While the white man treasured this book and learned from it—and similarly for the Burman or Thai with their silver book—the Karen went to work and left their book unattended. A pig tore it up and chickens ate it.[1] Since the chickens and the pig ate the book, the Karen have used chicken bones and the gall bladder of the pig for divination.

But the Karen were also expecting the white man—who is their youngest brother in their mythology—to come back and bring the Golden Book to them. This story, together with another prophecy that the white man would come back on water,[2] have had a great impact on the Karen in Burma. When the British arrived in Burma on naval ships, and the American Baptist missionaries brought the Bible—the Golden Book—with them, many Karen saw their old prophecies fulfilled. A mass movement happened at that time, the fruit of which can still be seen today.

The first five years of our field service, we lived in the Karen village of Sop Lahn. I went visiting villages with Mr. Dipae. He was a leader and a keen Christian who had learned to read in his advanced age. The people were eager to hear his stories as he compared them with the teaching of the Bible. He could tell the story of the fall of man in Karen terms, since the Karen have a very similar story in their mythology to the Genesis 3 account. He then read the story from the Bible and pointed out that it is God's Word which is true. It is the lost book that has come back.

I once challenged Mr. Dipae to tell a story from their mythology which might not be in agreement with biblical truth so that people could see that there is a difference compared to their mythology. He looked at me and then he said, "You can do that!" This makes sense, if one knows that the highest value in Karen culture is harmony. This value, of course, provides further points of contact with the important theme of reconciliation in the Bible.

One of the main themes in old Karen stories is the *orphan*. He is poor, without advocates and support, but makes his way to success because he learns to overcome obstacles and to rely on his wits. The Karen often identify with the orphan and see themselves in that role. It touches their hearts when they hear how God cares deeply about widows and orphans.



"One of the sayings of the elders is, 'All things in heaven and on earth, O children and grandchildren, *Y'wa* created them. Never forget *Y'wa*, pray to him every day and every night.'"[3] No wonder the Karen love to hear the creation story and they love to pray. When I asked the father of my language helper why so many Karen are open to the gospel, he answered, "The stories the missionaries have come to tell us do not sound foreign to us."

We find the Karen *Y'wa* tradition not only in old stories, but also in many poems they sing or that speak of him. The Karen call the poems *hta*. The *hta* are a unique form of Karen poetry about many areas of life. They are sung on New Years' Day, at weddings, funerals, or on other occasions when rituals are performed. The *hta* are part of the old Karen tradition and as such are to be seen as first class cultural documents.[4]

Even though the Karen's knowledge of stories and *hta* has diminished, it is still an excellent tool to reach out to them with the good news. It also gives us the opportunity to ask the Karen about their knowledge of *hta* which then can lead to interaction, instead of ignoring their knowledge about *Y'wa*. Some Karen teachers[5] and missionaries[6] have collected a great deal of *hta* and have used them successfully. Besides conveying spiritual truth about God they also help us to be accepted by animistic Karen. "In everyday negotiation, appropriate use of proverbial expressions, metaphors, and stories are appreciated as a mark of a leader."[7] Therefore, using *hta* and stories of the *Y'wa* tradition in teaching about God is an excellent tool.

It is likely that in most cultures there are points of contact with the gospel. It is important to get to know them. People will notice that we take them seriously. It gives us opportunities for interaction on a wide range of issues. Values, stories, and poetry/ art may give us a great tool for (pre-) evangelism. But in order to give people a firm foundation for their faith in Christ, more than this is necessary.

2. Teaching God's redemptive plan chronologically using stories from the Bible

Teaching God's redemptive plan chronologically has been a great tool that we have used for the last twenty-five years.

At the end of the seventies and throughout the eighties and nineties, the Karen Christian community grew quickly. In many remote villages, Karen became Christians but they were hard to disciple because there was a lack of roads and teachers.

Therefore, we started teaching Bible courses in Omkoi, a small district town and market place. The courses lasted for two days and nights. It was great to see thirty-five to forty men from different villages come for the teaching. One of the main leaders cautioned my enthusiasm and said, "Usually, Karen come two or three times and then they quit." But this time it was different. Teaching God's redemptive plan chronologically fascinated the Christians. We taught about 150 lessons in four phases to the men. In addition, we used pictures to explain the stories and each village from which people came to learn received a set of pictures so that they could teach others what they had heard.

McIlwain's program "Building on Firm Foundations"[8]—especially phases I and II—are an excellent tool to teach those who are interested in knowing God or have already decided to become Christians. The material has been adapted by Don Schlatter, a missionary with New Tribes Mission who had it translated into Thai. We decided to use this tool and translated it into the Sgaw Karen language.

A year later we taught the material which we had translated into Sgaw Karen in one month. The following year we did two months in a row. We then added phases III and IV over time. Phase III teaches about the Holy Spirit and Acts. We worked out Phase III by ourselves. In Acts, when the story is told about a new church being planted, we point to the NT letters which that church later received and we give a short introduction to it so that the students can connect the different parts of the Bible. Phase IV, which teaches about the church, was done by Don Schlatter. Mainly young people came for these short-term Bible school courses, while the men came several times a year for two days.

The benefits of teaching God's redemptive plan chronologically can be summarized under seven points:[9]

1. It teaches creation with special reference to God's characteristics. Karen like to hear the creation story and McIlwain uses it very well to show who God is. This is an excellent tool to counter wrong images of *Y'wa*. Since Karen Buddhists and Karen animists use *Y'wa* as the word to refer to their images of god, it is essential to build a solid foundation of who God is.

2. The redemptive plan gives a structure that is helpful for understanding God better. The bits and pieces which have been handed down through tradition or some Bible teaching will fit together into a more complete picture about God and his plan.

3. When we teach God's redemptive plan chronologically, the Karen get to know the Bible as one book with one message which helps them to understand that the Bible is the lost book that has been found.

4. It emphasizes grace in contrast to a legalistic view which animists in general are prone to hold.[10] According to the Karen missiologist Saw Hay Moo, one of the main problems in reaching the Karen with the gospel is that they do not have an understanding of sin. "It is a fact that because of the rich religious culture of the Karen, it is not pleasant to

speak about sin.… They may want to hear only positive things about themselves and their culture."[11] He then goes on to say that "The Karen people feel they are righteous on their own right. They may argue that they are moral and upright."[12]

I have not found holiness to be considered a characteristic of *Y'wa*. Could it be that the lack of understanding of "holiness" is the reason that there is no understanding of sin? For a Karen animist, "sin" may have to do mainly with performing a ritual in a wrong way or breaking an ethical taboo which, of course, will have grave consequences for him. This misunderstanding of sin—because there is no divine perfection against which to measure human imperfection—then leads to a lack of understanding of grace. Again, Phase I of McIlwain's chronological teaching is helpful for correcting this misunderstanding, since through all the stories he again and again points to God's holiness, the sinfulness of man, and the judgment of sin by God.

5. It demonstrates that God's redemptive plan is anchored in history and in a country in which we can find the places mentioned until today. In that way, it helps prevent the Karen from viewing Bible stories as mythology on the same level as their tribal tradition.

6. It brings out very clearly that Jesus is the unique Son of God because in Phase I the need of a redeemer is shown very clearly. Then the prophets promise a redeemer. When it comes to the stories of the Gospels, the redeemer, Jesus Christ, is revealed. In no other religion is there such evidence of fulfilled prophecy as in Christianity.

7. It results in a biblical basis of mission. Our age is the age of missions until Jesus returns.

Pathi Dipae of Sop Lahn church (Omkoi) once told me: "We have known that there is God (*Y'wa*) but we did not know him. Now we know him through the missionary's teaching of the Bible."

For the last twenty-five years, we have usually taught the Bible course for



two months of every year. More than 500 young people have come for at least one month. Many have done the whole four-month course within two years. Some of them wanted to learn more and have attended a long-term course in a Bible school afterwards. In many villages, those who have done the courses are now elders, teachers, and leaders of the churches.

But using traditional stories and sayings and teaching Bible stories may not be enough. Animists want to experience power!

3. The relevance of kingdom theology for animists[13]

We need to understand that an animist is looking for power. Therefore, the message about confession of sin and individual conversion may not be well understood nor attractive. A message that is relevant to the animist will also be about Jesus coming into this world to destroy the works of the devil. It is about the truth that God reigns, as David proclaimed, "The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all" (Ps 103:19). Or as John saw: "Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down" (Revelation 12:10).

The kingdom of God has a cosmic dimension which needs to be proclaimed among animists. Already in the Old Testament, we find the word "king" over forty times. There is a clear thread through the Bible that God reigns.[14] The Gospel of Matthew refers to the kingdom of God very frequently, especially in the parables in chapter 13. Besides, Jesus was proclaiming the kingdom of God (Matt 4:23–24) and he says "But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt 12:28). Casting out demons is a sign of the coming of the kingdom of God. David Burnett writes:

We need to understand that an animist is looking for power. Therefore, the message about confession of sin and individual conversion may not be well understood nor attractive. A message that is relevant to the animist will also be about Jesus coming into this world to destroy the works of the devil. It is about the truth that God reigns.

While a theology of conversion focuses on the individual, kingdom theology aims to influence the whole culture. Not only should the individual believer give himself to God, but traditions and laws which have been distorted by the influence of Satan need to be renewed under the authority of Jesus Christ.

> Christians from a background of folk religion need to develop a worldview and theology that acknowledges the demonic, but does not continue to captivate them. They, like all Christians need to have their eyes fixed upon the Lord Jesus Christ who has all power and authority. We all must be aware of the radical nature of the Kingdom of God that manifests not merely the power of God, but the shalom of God that transforms people and societies.[15]

Kingdom theology does this. The young Christians among the Karen usually speak a lot about the devil (*mue-kaw-li*). It is their world of spiritual experience and source of fear. The more mature Christians speak and teach more about God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. They are still aware of the evil spirits, but the devil does not captivate them anymore.

Kingdom theology offers the animist a worldview which he can easily understand. Worship of the highest God who has made heaven and earth belongs to the kingdom of God. Bad or ambivalent spirits belong to the kingdom of Satan. Demon possession, magic, and divination belong to Satan's dominion. But God protects his children from evil spirits. "The devil and fallen angels relate to people by possessing and consuming them. The angels of God, on the other hand, bless people, encourage people to be other-centered, to love, and to know the Truth."[16]

Kingdom theology introduces God's authority and power to the believer and gives him the power to overcome the power of darkness through Jesus Christ.

Kingdom theology does not open a gap between the natural and the supernatural. God controls the physical and the spiritual world.

While a theology of conversion focuses on the individual, kingdom theology aims to influence the whole culture. Not only should the individual believer give himself to God, but traditions and laws which have been distorted by the influence of Satan need to be renewed under the authority of Jesus Christ. The dominion of Christ should be seen in all areas of life, not only in one's personal life.

What excites the animist most is that Christ—the triumphant One—has overcome all dominions and powers, "having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Col 2:14–15).



Conversion therefore is not only to be saved personally, but it is the redemption from all evil powers. There is a danger of triumphalism, but without God's power, the animist cannot be freed from the powers of Satan. Since Christ's triumph has been accomplished through his own suffering on the cross, it is in itself a help to not fall into the trap of triumphalism.

4. How has this worked out in practical terms among the Karen?

From the beginning of the work in the southern Omkoi district, the Karen have seen God at work. In 1975, the headman of Sop Lahn and five other families became Christians. Soon afterwards, the missionary, Jim Morris, went on home assignment. He left them some tapes to listen to. He taught them to pray and told them that if someone gets ill they should pray for healing. When Jim came back, the headman told him that God had healed his wife through their prayer to Christ. From the start, they experienced God's mercy and power without having to sacrifice animals anymore. In 1978, two OMF missionary families—the Mayers and the McIvors—went to live in Sop Lahn village. In the next two years, no one in the village died. This could not be simply explained by the medicine the missionaries had brought with them, but it was clear to the small Christian community that God had answered their prayers.

Until today, when we dispense medicine, we often pray to God to heal the patient. Many have come back to witness that God heard our prayers and answered. Many times, we have been astonished or could hardly believe how God had intervened far beyond our thoughts and faith!

During our time in the village, some Karen came to our house on a Sunday at midday after church and asked us to go with them to the neighbors' house. The youngest son of the late headman was seized by fits, lying unconscious on the floor. The house was full of relatives and neighbors and some elders

of the church. They asked me to pray for this young man. While I prayed he started to hit me with his legs, but he did not regain consciousness. Then an elder prayed. When he had finished the young lad sat up and asked, "What is the matter?" We praised God that the spirits had left him. It was interesting to see that the same thing had happened to his older brother before and that both of them never had any fits afterwards. I could see God's wisdom in how he had acted in that situation. It was obvious that the prayers of the Karen elder were answered. In this way, we could encourage the Karen to pray themselves and that they do not need to depend on the missionaries' prayers.

Looking back, we have learned a great deal from the Karen. Coming from a pietistic background, we learned from the Karen to have faith and expect God to work as he did at the time when the Bible was written. This led me to give greater attention to kingdom theology which provides a good biblical foundation about miracles and wonders, and it is healthy for teaching and practice to come together with the redemptive chronological Bible teaching.

5. Summary

The living God is at work today; he is not *otiose*,[17] but signs and wonders are signs of the coming of his kingdom. Therefore, teaching and practicing "Kingdom of God Theology" is essential in an animistic context. But there is not just one approach to teaching animistic Karen about God. We have looked at three different approaches.

In the first place, we should use the many points of contact which are available in their rich tradition. It helps them to realize that the gospel is not foreign to them but that they may not have understood it yet.

The many shortcomings by teaching from their traditional stories, can be corrected by teaching the redemptive plan of God by means of stories from the Bible. The unfamiliar concept of the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man can be introduced through the many different stories leading to the meaning of the cross, the ultimate sacrifice God has made for us in order to redeem us.

But with any animist, teaching alone is not enough. They need to see the power of the living God as well. When they see that God answers their prayers or when they experience that evil spirits have to leave "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth who came in the flesh," they are drawn to this new way of life. **MRT**

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[1] The story has also been recorded in *hta* form (Karen poem) by Hayama Yoko, *Between Hills and Plains: Power and Practice in Socio-Religious Dynamics among Karen* (Kyoto: Kyoto University Press, 2004), 284.

[2] "Great Ruler, the ancestors of the Karens charged their posterity thus: 'Children and grand-children, if the thing come by land, weep; if by water, laugh. It will not come in our days, but it will in yours. If it come first by water, you will be able to take breath; but if first by land, you will not find a spot to dwell in.'" Francis Mason, *The Karen Apostle*, rev. by H. J. Ripley (Boston: Gould, Kendall, and Lincoln, 1847), 18–19.

[3] Saw Hay Moo, "Doing Theology in the Karen Church: The Gospel as Incarnation (John 1:1–14) within the Karen YWA (God) Tradition" (DMiss thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 2002), 24.

[4] Roland Mischung, *Religion und Wirklichkeitsvorstellungen in einem Karen-Dorf Nordwest-Thailands* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1984), 243.

[5] Rev. Tun Meh, the former principal of Karen Baptist Theological Seminary (KBTS), Insein, Yangon, has collected many *hta* in two books called "Remember".

[6] E.g. Ed Hudspith, retired missionary of KBC. Keith Hale (WEC) has produced several CDs with *hta* which give short explanations on it. He recently has published an evangelistic booklet based on *hta*.

[7] Hayama, *Between Hills and Plains*, 282.

[8] Trevor McIlwain, *Building on Firm Foundations*, Vol. 1–4 (Sandford, FL: New Tribes Mission, 1987–1988).

[9] Cf. Hans-Christoph Bär, *Heilsgeschichtlicher Bibelunterricht: McIlwains Programm 'Building on Firm Foundations' im Einsatz unter den Karen im Bezirk Omkoi (Nordthailand)* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 1998), 1289.

[10] Bär, *Heilsgeschichtlicher Bibelunterricht*, 113.

[11] Saw, "Doing Theology," 187.

[12] Saw, "Doing Theology," 188.

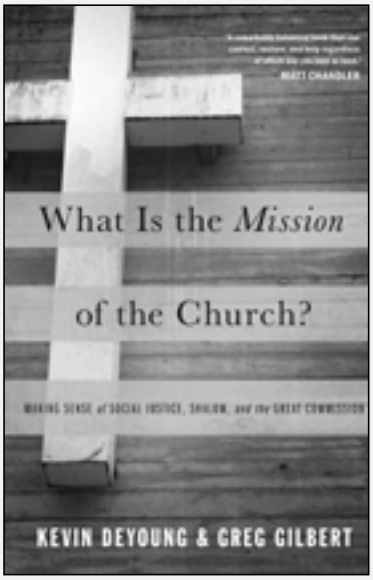
[13] See Gailyn van Rheenen, *Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 127–42.

[14] Exodus 19:5–6; Deuteronomy 7:6–8; Judges 8:22–23; 1 Samuel 8:1–8; Isaiah 52:7; Daniel 2:44; 7:13–18.

[15] David G. Burnett, "Spiritual Conflict and Folk Religion," https://www.lausanne.org/content/folk-religion# (accessed 31 Oct 2018).

[16] Ellis Potter, *Three Theories of Everything* (n.p.: Destinee Media, 2012), 95.

[17] "having leisure or ease, unoccupied, idle, not busy."



What Is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission

Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert
(Wheaton: Crossway, 2011)

Pulling together biblical, theological, and pastoral perspectives, this book provides help for readers seeking clarity about the church's mission against the backdrop of varying perspectives that have been offered on what her mission encompasses. Discussions range from the issue of taking a too narrow or too wide consideration of the gospel to the church's motivation for doing good works. The book explores the what, why, and how of the church's mission to challenge readers to move beyond merely grasping ideas to work out practical ways to obey the Great Commission through biblically informed action.

Let the Nations Be Partners!
Pioneering and Partnering in the Plan of God

Thomas McIntyre



Thomas is a missionary with OMF International in Taiwan. He is a graduate of Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando and is ordained in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. He and his wife, Jennifer, with their two children, are church planting in one of the most unreached areas of Taiwan.

"Yuque A-yi, I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen!" At 60 years of age, she came out of the water slowly, but up she came. "Don't slip," I said as she climbed out of the large orange recycle bin filled with chilly water. Our small congregation at the Sanhe Gospel Center burst into song and clapped. A new life in Christ! As we presented Yuque A-yi with her baptism certificate and listened to her testimony of leaving ancestors and idols behind to become a Christ-follower, we couldn't help but remember that this day would never have been possible without our partners.

It was only five years ago that my wife and I started a new church planting work in Zhongpu, Chiayi County, an area of south Taiwan that's only 0.3% Christian. Upon graduation from Taiwanese language school, we were ready to conquer the world for Jesus. My prayer for Taiwan could have been described as the famous hymn says, "May His beauty rest upon me as I seek the lost to win, and may they forget the channel, seeing only Him."[1] The problem was, in rural Taiwan, everyone kept remembering the channel. I was a tall, white foreigner with a hairy body in a sea full of Asians. To make matters worse, while we had learned Taiwanese, the young families primarily speak Mandarin. Practically, this meant that I spoke in one language and they often answered in another—all the while laughing at me! I quickly realized how little of the culture I truly understood, and that often the only Christian these people knew was me. To them, Jesus was probably an American, and he was the Son of "Amen"—because, for some reason Christians always say "Amen." "So that's your god's name, right?" I would hear. The barriers to the gospel, it seemed, were insurmountable.

Not long after that I decided to study Mandarin part-time at a local university. To surround myself with the Chinese language, we started attending a church in the neighboring city. By that point we were desperate for help. Hearts were hard, the work was slow, and discouragement had already set in. The work, it seemed, was impossible to do alone. I'll never forget when the mission director of the church asked if he could meet with us, because they were looking at several opportunities to get involved in local mission. We invited him and the lead pastor out to our small center on the edge of the city to meet over tea. As we shared our vision of reaching



Baptist church partners

working-class people with the gospel and planting an indigenous church, they not only sensed our passion, but our desperation for local help. When we got the news that the church had decided to partner with us, they made a point of saying that of all the ministries they observed, we were by far the most "pitiful." We lacked workers, fluent language, and cultural experience. But what we lacked, God had now provided in Chiayi Baptist Church.

Our weekly seekers' Bible study quickly went from my wife and I being solely responsible for the teaching to having seasoned elders and deacons leading the discussions. Yuque A-yi quickly spoke up during a spirited discussion. "I just don't know how I can believe in Christ if I can't worship my ancestors." I had tried to answer this question before, explaining that the most filial way to honor one's ancestors was to worship the One who created our ancestors. But this dilemma was never something I had personally experienced. Ancestor worship did not run in the family of a boy from Tennessee! No matter what I shared, it seemed to fall on deaf ears, until our partners spoke up. "Actually, Yuque, let me tell you my story," the deacon said. He then shared his testimony of how God had helped him overcome ancestor worship. As he shared, others from Chiayi Baptist had their own stories to tell. Week after week, our local partners pointed this little old lady to Scripture, prayed for her, encouraged her, and reasoned with her. I'll never forget when she came back to our Bible study so excited to announce that she had not worshipped her ancestors or idols over the weekend, and that nothing bad had happened to her as a result. She was in awe. We were in awe. It was a courageous step of faith, and her life would be changed forever.

As a result of the church partnership, our weekly Sunday park ministry also suddenly had helpers. Normally, I would play the guitar as we sang Christian songs, then tell a Bible story, while my wife would evangelize, organize the children's craft, and talk



Acting out Bible stories in the park

with the parents. At first, the Baptist Christians were hesitant to do this type of work. Relational evangelism in a public park was not something that they were accustomed to. But as time passed, we began to encourage them to sing with us, help act out some of the Bible stories, and play with the families. Before long, they had built up the courage to share the stories all by themselves and even share their faith—and they enjoyed it. Years later, we realized that not only had they been helping us, but we had helped them by modeling relational and creative evangelism. One Baptist worker even shared a testimony during his church's worship service of how the OMF missionaries had impacted his desire to reach out to his own people. The partnership had become mutually beneficial.

Now, Chiayi Baptist sends us two seminary graduates to preach at our Sunday services, and we are discussing and praying over our long-term plan to possibly hand over our work to them in the future. These seminary graduates are getting invaluable practice in preaching and evangelism that will prepare them for whatever God has in store for their future, while we are receiving local help that keeps our church as indigenous as possible.

As I've had time to reflect on all that has happened, I've realized that God has called us to Taiwan not only to reach working-class people in Zhongpu, but also to mobilize a local church to do the work with us. It's a ministry of both pioneering *and* partnering in God's great plan to redeem a people for himself from the working-class in Taiwan. Some have asked what they might be able to do to have a similar partnership in their context. Of course, there is so much that God in his providence has worked out for us, we could never take credit for any of it. But I have identified three key traits that I do think can be beneficial for anyone looking to build church partnerships.

The first key trait that helped us along the way was humility. This was something that I lacked when I first got started in pioneering church planting ministry. But God has a way of taking care of that quickly. When I realized that I could not do this without his help or the help of locals, my heart was truly humbled. And I've come to believe that humility is not only foundational for our spiritual lives; it's the foundation for developing healthy church partnerships. Practically, what does this mean? It means asking questions. Even if you think you know all the answers, keep asking questions, and you might be surprised what you learn. I would often sit down with Pastor Li of the Baptist church and pour out my heart to him, describing the challenges and frustrations of ministry. "Pastor Li, what would you do in this situation? How would you answer this objection to Christianity? Would you baptize this person yet? When would you start serving communion to a new church?" I began to see that by asking questions, not only did I give the pastor face, but it displayed a humility that built a lasting

Humility is not only foundational for our spiritual lives; it's the foundation for developing healthy church partnerships.

Often, missionaries come to the field with impressive theological credentials and creative ideas, ready to train the locals in the newest, trendy methods for church planting and growth. But deep impact rarely happens without trust. And trust is rarely built without humility.

friendship of trust. Often, missionaries come to the field with impressive theological credentials and creative ideas, ready to train the locals in the newest, trendy methods for church planting and growth. But deep impact rarely happens without trust. And trust is rarely built without humility.

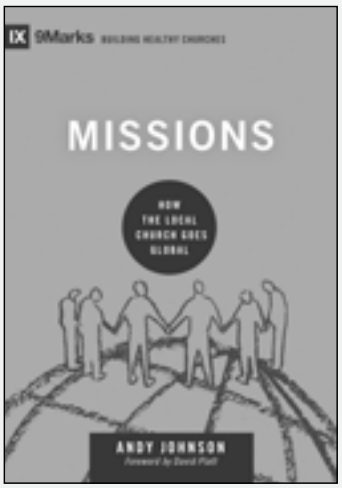
The second key trait that has helped us along the way was knowing what is essential and what is not. I'm ordained in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, and our motto is "In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, liberty. In all things, charity." That's a good motto for partnership, too. If you want to partner with a church, you need to know what is worth fighting for and what isn't. If our partnering church believes you need to be ordained to administer the sacraments, then we go along with that, even if we're not convinced that is entirely true. It's a non-essential. Just as we must contextualize to working-class people, we must also contextualize to the local church if partnerships are to succeed.

The third key trait that has helped us along the way was our model. We began our work thinking we would have a house church. But we quickly realized that Taiwanese people did not see this as a legitimate model, so much so that it was a stumbling block for them. "Where's your church? What? You meet in a house? Are you a cult?" some would ask. They understandably would think this because the existing church in Taiwan has buildings, a cross on a steeple, and an ordained pastor. For us, these were non-essentials, so we simply adjusted our model so that it corresponded to what was expected locally. The last thing we wanted to do was create even *more* barriers to the gospel. This not only helped our evangelism and church planting work, but it also helped us in establishing a solid partnership with a local church. Rightly or wrongly, we were now seen as a legitimate church with a facility, a Sunday service, and in need of a local seminary-trained leader. Once the barrier of our house-church model was removed, we began to see God grow both the church and the partnership. We also noticed that by adopting a model that was similar to the existing Taiwanese church, families that moved away from our ministry area due to a change in occupation would *all* quickly get plugged into a local church in their new context. This was not always the case with ministries that used radically different models of church from what the locals expected church to be.

As our church continues to grow, I consider it the highlight of my life to be a small part of what God is doing in East Asia. Pioneering work is rewarding. But partnering is even more so. In my career, I might be able to reach a handful of people for Christ, if the Lord wills. But with partners, as a local church is mobilized to reach their own people, the vision of an indigenous biblical church movement seems suddenly alive. My prayer for Taiwan and for everyone working in East Asia is that we fall on our knees, lift our hands in the air, and cry out with one voice, "Let the nations be partners!" **MRT**

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[1] From Kate B. Wilkinson, "May the Mind of Christ My Savior" (1925), public domain.



Missions: How the Local Church Goes Global

9Marks: Building Healthy Churches

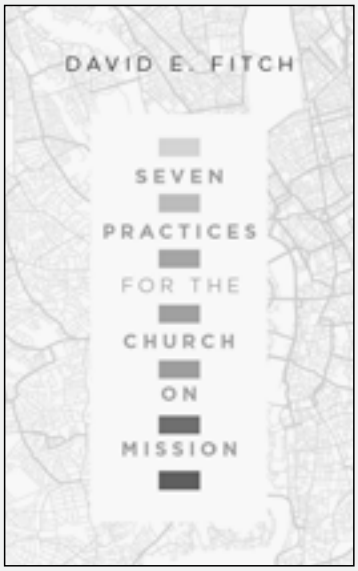
Andy Johnson (Wheaton: Crossway, 2017)

Considering the common setting of a church mission committee struggling to define its mission emphasis and put it into action, this book addresses the question of how the local church can do mission well. Johnson combines biblical principles with practical examples and gives advice for developing and evaluating a mission strategy. The book navigates through commonly encountered issues such as pitfalls in partnerships in missionary support and the growing trend of short-term trips. It also evaluates growing areas of opportunity for international churches in global cities and local churches in reaching internationals at home.

Seven Practices for the Church on Mission

David E. Fitch (Downers Grove: IVP, 2018)

This book builds a framework of discipleship and mission based on seven key practices that Jesus gave to his followers—the Lord's Supper, reconciliation, proclaiming the gospel, being with the "least of these", being with children, five-fold ministry gifting, and kingdom prayer. Combining theological reflection with pastoral guidance, Fitch calls the church to practice these disciplines so that they become God's faithful presence to the world and agents of transformation in the neighborhood.



OMF Mobilisation and the Church

Dick Dowsett



Dick joined OMF in 1968 working first in the Philippines and since 1978 involved in mobilisation, expository ministry, and cross-cultural evangelism with student groups and churches in many parts of the world. Notionally retired from OMF in 2008, he continues in this ministry, though at a slower pace!

I joined OMF at the end of 1968, initially seconded to student ministry in the Philippines, and later appointed to mobilisation, coupled with Bible exposition and evangelism. Since 1984, this ministry has been exercised in a wide range of different cultures. The ecclesiology of OMF has evolved as different ideas have surfaced and come to dominate in the cultural and theological melange of our beloved and sometimes infuriating mission family. Many, though not all, of the dominant ideas have come from those who speak English easily and are least good at godly compromise.

The default position we OMFers have arrived at is that a missionary candidate should be sent out by the local church of which they are a member. Candidates' calls should be confirmed by the leaders of their churches who should then take on the responsibility of fully financing them throughout their missionary service. On this model, OMF is reduced to an agency facilitating the sending of missionaries, and less and less a fellowship of sent-out ones. These present day convictions raise several issues for those involved in mobilisation.

The New Testament does not give a detailed blueprint for the church. If it did, we would have great difficulty in justifying the vast number of different evangelical denominations in the world. In New Testament times, the church was finding its feet. The Epistles are written to answer specific problems in fledgling communities of young believers. Acts of the Apostles tells us what happened under the leading of the Spirit, but is mostly descriptive rather than prescriptive.

In modern missiology, an idea is too often "baptised" by having an example from Acts appended to it, with no appreciation of the fact that the illustration is far from a New Testament norm. Let me explore several examples.

Who determines the call?

Acts 13:1–3 is widely read as though the cosmopolitan small group of prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch are the equivalent of the pastor and elders of a local church today. The conclusion reached is that this is precisely what we should expect for every missionary call today. But there is no other example in Acts of such a group in a church confirming two men's calling or any teaching in the Epistles that this should be normative. Paul's vision of a call to Macedonia was weighed by his travel companions (missionary colleagues?) before they set sail, but that is hardly a local church decision. Paul clearly consulted believers in Lystra about the suitability of Timothy as a missionary candidate before recruiting him, and demanded a painful cultural adjustment. It is sensible to get references from believers who know a candidate well, but even this is not taught as a norm.

Who should pay?

The present widely-held conviction that the church that sends missionaries out should be the church that pays for their support, has no biblical warrant at all. Paul tells us that the only church that regularly supported him was the church he planted in Philippi. He raised support from the church in Rome, in another country far from Antioch, to further his ministry in Spain. He trusted God for support from many places, though not from the church which first sent him out. He may well have received some support from Antioch, but the New Testament has not revealed that to us. When support was not forthcoming, he worked for his living, making tents, though that greatly increased the pressure on him as he continued his extensive ministry at the same time. Sending church support was not regarded as the *sine qua non* of his going or the confirmation of his call.

Of course, the New Testament reminds us of the Old Testament principle that the labourer deserves his pay, but it seems to be saying that those receiving the ministry should be giving support—a dignity often denied to new converts who, despite the increasing general prosperity of East Asia, are still regarded in many sending countries as necessarily the objects of our charity.

Who calls the shots?

Voluntary societies—of which CIM is a typical example from the Victorian era—have always been regarded with suspicion by many major Christian denominations. Less hierarchical denominations have found it easier to live with the idea of people from many churches mobilising together for a specific work of God in another part of the world where they would adjust in godly compromise to work with emerging churches with a different church polity from their own. During my lifetime, a theology of the local church has been developed that more or less disapproves of para-church structures like OMF. Indeed, in some circles, "para-church" is dismissed as a departure from the biblical norm. But is it?

There is an extraordinary mobility in New Testament church life, remarkably similar to the way many committed Christians behave in our unnervingly mobile twenty-first century. We first meet Saul, later Paul, based in Jerusalem. Converted on the road to Damascus, he was initially discipled in the church there before fleeing to Jerusalem where he joined the apostles in the church there before having to flee via Caesarea home to Tarsus from whence he was recruited to share in the ministry of Barnabas in Antioch. After a year's ministry in Antioch, Paul and Barnabas both moved to Jerusalem, bringing famine relief for the believers there before returning to the newly planted church in Antioch. While they were there, a group of spiritual men were guided by the Spirit of God to send them on for new outreach. Later Paul returned to Antioch to report on what the Lord had done. Would he have called that his home church, where he had his "church membership"? That is a question that is open to debate. In contrast, Aquila and Priscilla seemed to behave like snails, carrying their "church" on their backs wherever they went. They appear to have been responsible for house churches in significant cities in Greece, Turkey, and Italy, "called" by such diverse factors as ethnic cleansing and a missionary request. We know nothing of a "sending church". Indeed, examples in Acts and the pleas of Paul for churches to care for others abroad suggest that the New Testament Church was far from enthusiastic about the call to world mission.

It is clear that the New Testament taught that believers should meet together, submit to the apostles' doctrine, pray and break bread together, and make disciples. Leaders were appointed to minister God's word and exercise servant leadership. It is also clear that New Testament missionaries were highly mobile without being criticised for committing themselves to different communities of believers and teams of them in one place after another. They proved the wonderful fact that has always helped me in my far-flung ministry: Christians have "family in Christ" and real "belongingness" wherever they go. Mobile people belong to the church where they are: the church is both local and global.

In many situations today there are many different gatherings calling themselves the local church. In one place there can be several different varieties of Presbyterian, Baptist, independent, ethnic, and youth churches, to say nothing of Methodists, Episcopalians, huge varieties of charismatic, Reformed, and Brethren churches. As an international mobiliser, I have adjusted to work in all of them. And it sometimes required a lot of adjustment! Most of these gatherings reckon they embody all that is necessary to qualify as a biblical church. My observation is, if I may say so as one who feels a deep love for almost all of them, they are all lacking elements of the wonderful vision of the church as it should be as described by Paul in Ephesians. In some respects, like OMF, they are groupings of relatively like-minded Christians sharing a vision and working together to achieve a goal–para-church organisations, expressions of the church in action–but lacking many elements of what the church in its fullness ought to be.

In a shopping culture that is almost global, Christian believers shop around for a church that fits what they want in the same way that missionary candidates shop around for an agency that will serve their purposes. I once asked a church leader in East Malaysia for whom I was working what were the main distinctives of his church. He replied, "Firstly, we believe in noisy worship." And they really did! Their outreach, in which I shared, was warm, exciting, and occasionally bizarre. "I want you to bring us the word of God," he told me, "because we are lacking that." Modern Protestantism is so fragmented, catering in separated assemblies for different convictions, preferences, gifts, and cultures. As a result, all our twenty-first century churches are lacking this or that. It is tragic, but it is also the situation in which we are called to find the next generation of missionaries for Asia. We work with the churches as they are, not as we might wish them to be. This raises many questions for the thinking mobiliser.

With the rise of emphasis on the authority of the local church has come the insistence that the sending church's leaders should oversee and direct the missionary's work and activity. But who should have authority over the work of a missionary in a foreign country? *I believe this should normally, if not absolutely always, be the church leaders in the place where the missionary is working.*

The role of local church leaders

In our mobilising countries there are often those with some understanding of the Asian church. There are Asian nationals but they are usually serving in separate ethnic congregations. There are serving or retired missionaries but they are scattered among a variety of churches. *So how can we expect the average local church leader to understand what is involved in missionary service in Japan?* How can they evaluate whether their members could adjust and serve well there? We OMFers, though we sometimes find ourselves thinking like an Asian, make plenty of mistakes in candidate selection. So what hope do we have if we give the final word about who goes and who stays to those with little or no understanding and experience of Asia and no regular contact with those who have?

With the rise of emphasis on the authority of the local church has come the insistence that the sending church's leaders should oversee and direct the missionary's work and activity. But *who should have authority over the work of a missionary in a foreign country?* Is it the sending church or the mission agency? I believe this should normally, if not absolutely always, be the church leaders in the place where the missionary is working. I have worked in churches in several countries where the "real leadership", those who call the shots, are sitting in sending countries with all their limitations of understanding. The frustration of that type of situation led to the founding of the CIM!

Many of our young churches see full-time Christian ministry modelled, but have no one to model for them how to live as authentic gospel believers in the workplace. Our leadership has acknowledged this need. We mobilisers need to run with it, changing some of our work style.

I am not suggesting a return to the old ways of working. We in OMF have too often acted without proper accountability. We have to acknowledge that sending churches are able to ask the searching questions that expose our OMF weaknesses, our OMF wrong decisions, and our OMF sins. I am, however, suggesting a more realistic and equal partnership that faces up to all parties' inadequacies and limitations, and our different contributions and need of inter-dependency. I am advocating an enthusiastic embracing of the variety of New Testament missionary relationships.

Finding a supporting church

In a world where everyone is highly mobile, candidates move many times: for university, for work experience, for Bible training, and for so much else that we now require of new missionaries. They end up belonging briefly to several different churches. Those raised in stable believing families may have an original home church to which they return from time to time, a community that owns them as theirs to support.



But such people are increasingly rare and we are seeing many new candidates who were converted during their most mobile years. *Which local church should the mobiliser approach for significant partnership?*

Years ago, a Malaysian shared with me her burden for China and her desire to serve with us. She had lived in Britain for ten years or more, studying and working, and was in active ministry with more than one church standing behind her. Not being a British citizen, she was told to return to her home church in Malaysia to raise her support. She returned to a church that had completely forgotten her, had suffered from a disastrous split, and lost its way. Support was out of the question, so this woman had no part in the urgent evangelisation of China's billions. Yet Paul was supported by a church in northern Greece where he was not a citizen!

Who should pay for what?

In my early years in OMF, it was estimated that the average OMF support figure could be raised from three German tithes, 10 British tithes and 100 Filipino tithes. Against this backdrop, OMF gradually developed its emphasis that the sending church should be the one that supported fully. Since those days, church membership in Britain and, indeed, most of Europe has declined appallingly. More than half our congregations have less than fifty members who pay the pastor, maintain the building, finance the church's local outreach, and everything else. Expecting full support from such a church is not an act of faith but of unreasonable exploitation.

I used to work quite often for OMF Canada. Thinking about candidates needing a financially supporting church, a mission leader commented to me: "From now on we just need to

target the mega-churches." But what do mega-church members understand about pioneer outreach or working in a relatively isolated environment? A friend from a mega-church in Singapore became increasingly frustrated as he tried to implement mega-church activities in a struggling Chinese/Scottish congregation. He moved on. As I write, UK missionaries and retirees are rejoicing in 100% remittances. So should we question our emphasis on requiring full support from the sending church? I know that those who contribute to my support are scattered believers in a number of countries, and others, including some of my prayer partners, who give to OMF rather than specifically to me. My home churches both in England and in Scotland have been wonderful to us, but have never been able to cover the whole of our life and ministry expenditure. The church has, but not the local church, not even just the church in my country. *So should we reconsider where we expect missionary support to come from, or even whether most of our workers should earn their living working professionally in East Asia?*

No OMFer doubts that there is still plenty of pioneering to be done in places around East Asia. However, as a mobiliser I am convinced that I need to look for highly motivated Christians living out their faith in their professions. I long to send more of those to Asia. They will need prayer support, probably more so than the missionary preachers, but will mostly be able to live on their salaries. Many of our young churches see full-time Christian ministry modelled, but have no one to model for them how to live as authentic gospel believers in the workplace. Our leadership has acknowledged this need. We mobilisers need to run with it, changing some of our work style. We have rightly focused on being part of the church, but been weak in our focus on being the church in the world.

Positive lessons

As I have written of the struggles, frustrations, and questions of a mobiliser, some may find this too negative, so let me conclude with a few positive reflections.

The beauty of God's church

Undoubtedly, there remains much in churches and in OMF that is profoundly what it should not be, but our Lord, the friend of sinners, is wonderfully committed to work through us even as he patiently works on us in forgiving grace. The church is not perfect, but in our broken, fragmented world it is a wonderful sign of the gospel: walls being broken down, people being restored, communities of interdependence being established. It is God's church, the bride of Christ, a community where the Holy Spirit is "at home". Its future hope is glorious. I once heard John Stott say that the believer who did not identify with the church was an obscenity. The same might be said of a mission agency. First John is forthright: if we do not love God's family, our love of the Lord is highly questionable. I love my home church, not because it is perfect, but because it is my family. There is love, a degree of acceptance, support, teaching, and teamwork. It's not perfect: we are a work of God in progress.

As OMFers, we cannot act as though we are the only ones on the block. We do not even know everything about East Asia. We greatly need input from the many gifted Asian Christians and their churches. We also greatly need input from our home churches. Both feature hugely in God's plan and the future of the whole church, as, at least for now, does OMF. We are designed to need each other, to bless each other, and to learn to work together, not by swinging between extremes but by realistically facing up to the strengths and weaknesses of us all.

The dynamic flexibility of the Holy Spirit

Systematic theology has an inbuilt tendency to want to tidy up what we learn from the Bible. Often this has meant excising those parts of Scripture that do not fit our framework. Pragmatic missiology often hangs a whole theory of working on a few random biblical examples. Both can be uncomfortably dogmatic. God, however, has not revealed everything to us: we see only as in a reflection in a mirror, we know in part. The Scriptures are often too untidy, especially for the Western-trained mind. They give us boundaries within which to work, not detailed blueprints for how to run a mission. In that area, I have learnt that I should be more experimental, flexible but not reckless, keeping close to the Lord who frequently refuses to conform to our sacred patterns of working. We need guidelines, not rigid systems as we seek to keep in step with what God is doing. New Testament mobilisation sometimes originated in the church, was sometimes confirmed by the church, and was sometimes opposed by the church. Mission was directed by church initiative, missionary initiative, aggressive opposition, response compelled by the commands of Scripture, and highly personal calls and visions. The Holy Spirit mobilises and provides in ways of his choosing. It is our job, sanely and thoughtfully, to get on with what he is doing, both through the churches and sometimes despite them. **MRT**

The Scriptures are often too untidy, especially for the Western-trained mind. They give us boundaries within which to work, not detailed blueprints for how to run a mission. In that area, I have learnt that I should be more experimental, flexible but not reckless, keeping close to the Lord who frequently refuses to conform to our sacred patterns of working.

A Meditation on the Church in Antioch and Mission:

Acts 12:25–13:5

Walter McConnell



Walter directs OMF International's Mission Research Department. An American, he has previously served in Taiwan as a church planter and theological educator, taught Old Testament at Singapore Bible College where he also directed the Ichthus Centre for Biblical and Theological Research, and served as pastor at the Belfast Chinese Christian Church.

Many things come to mind when one hears the word "mission". Some think of the "untold millions" who are still untold and who are dying without a savior. Others recall missionaries they have known or seen who have impressed them with their vision and their work in some remote part of the world. Still more think about going on a short trip to a less developed country to pass tracts, perform mime, teach English, or care for children. And, of course, the maps in our Bibles bring Paul's missionary journeys to mind and the Great Commission reminds us that Jesus wanted all of his disciples to make disciples of all nations.

As we think about mission and the place of our local church in God's plan to reconcile the nations to himself, we need to turn to the Bible as God's main means of informing us of his will and our responsibilities. An important passage that relates some key truths about how God's Spirit worked in one early congregation is Acts 12:25–13:5. In this passage, God prompts the church in Antioch to join him in reaching others for Christ by setting aside two of their most trusted leaders—Barnabas and Saul—for a new work to which he was calling them. Thinking through this passage will help us better understand how God sends out workers in the context of a local church and its worship.

Church leadership in Antioch (12:25–13:1)

We begin with Acts 12:25 which is a summary statement recording that Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch from Jerusalem. According to Acts 11:27–30, the apostles had gone to Jerusalem as part of a famine relief project. This trip is about as close as the Bible gets to recording what we might call a "short-term missions" trip. But this was in no way an exploratory journey for the apostles to discover their call or see how they might fit in. Barnabas and Saul were sent to Jerusalem after God used the prophet Agabus to inform the church in Antioch that a famine would hit a broad section of the world and would put the church in Jerusalem under severe economic pressure.

When God showed the believers in Antioch the needs that were beyond them, they took action. As others had done from the beginning of the church, everyone in the congregation determined to help out according to their ability. The wealthy gave more and the poorer gave less. But everyone joined together to help meet the need that was presented to them.

Interestingly, the word translated "help" or "relief" here is *diakonia*, the word commonly translated "service" in the Bible and that gives us our English word "deacon," a word used in many churches today to refer to a church office for practical service. The beginning of this office of service can be traced to Acts 6:1 which tells of certain Hellenistic or Greek-speaking Jewish Christians who lived in Jerusalem complaining that the widows they looked after were not receiving anything in the daily serving of food. Their complaints led to seven men being set aside to serve as deacons who would meet the physical needs of others so that the apostles would

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be free to focus on the preaching of God's word and prayer. Preaching, prayer, and serving are all needed in the church and they are all holy tasks when performed for our holy God.

In the same way that serving the saints was important in Acts 6, it remained so in Acts 11 when believers from the distant city of Antioch reached out to their brothers in Jerusalem in order to bring them "help" or "relief" or "service." This is a great model for us today. The church in Antioch was open to the leading of God to help other Christians in need. Its members were willing to dig into their pockets, or moneybags, or whatever they carried in those days, and give according to their ability, or perhaps more literally, according to their prosperity or abundance.

In like manner, churches from all over the world frequently move into action when they hear about needs due to earthquakes and typhoons and famines and other natural and man-made disasters. Helping others as God leads is a healthy thing, a *normal* thing for Christians to do. The church in Antioch joined in doing this. Do we? Is this part of our service to the Lord? Does it impact our mission policy? It should.

Acts 13 begins with Barnabas and Saul returning from Jerusalem where they went as part of their service of God. The chapter tells us that they were part of a longer list of men who served the church in Antioch. There was Barnabas who was well known for his gift of encouragement, but who also had an incredible gift of finding quality men of God and freeing them to minister to God's people in ways that surpassed his own ability. Barnabas had personally introduced Saul to the apostles in Jerusalem and went to Tarsus to find Saul and bring him to help the church in Antioch. Barnabas would later select his cousin John Mark to join him and Saul on their first missionary journey. Though Barnabas and Paul would go separate ways over John Mark, the Holy Spirit would later use him to write the Gospel of Mark.

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Then there was Saul, the superbly trained Pharisee from Tarsus in Asia Minor. Somewhere between 14 and 17 years earlier, while walking from Jerusalem to Damascus to arrest any Christians he might find there, he was given a vision of Christ that shattered his outlook on life, changing him from one who persecuted the saints into one who boldly taught the faith he had once hated.



Paul and Barnabas at Lystra by Jacob Pynas[1]

Three more names are added to the more famous ones. The first is Simeon, called "Niger". This second name—a Latin word meaning "Black"—may indicate that he was a black African. He at least had a dark complexion. And though it cannot be proven, many people throughout church history have thought that he was none other than Simon of Cyrene, the man forced to carry Jesus' cross when he was on his way to be crucified.

Lucius is clearly from Africa as his home was Cyrene, the area just south of Greece now known as Libya. The area had been long settled by Greeks and was home to so many Romans and Jews that there is no way to know what his ethnicity was, only his place of origin.

The last church leader who had found his way to Antioch was Manaen. The main information we are given about him was that "he had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch" (Acts 13:1, NIV), that is, he was probably a childhood friend of Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great. This Herod is best known for imprisoning and executing John the Baptist and questioning Jesus just before his crucifixion. Now, while Herod was known for cruelty, his friend Manaen became a prophet and teacher in the church.

Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and Saul served the church in Antioch as "prophets and teachers." This incredible group was called by God with their different backgrounds, cultures, outlooks, gifts, and abilities so that the church in Antioch could grow in numbers and in spiritual maturity. Their existence should move us to be on the lookout for others like them. If workers like these were necessary in the first century, they are equally necessary today.

The Holy Spirit sets apart Barnabas and Saul (13:2)

While Acts 13:1 gives us a brief introduction to the five prominent leaders in the church in Antioch, verse 2 narrows our view to only two of them as we read that the Holy Spirit informed the church to "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Incredibly, God wanted to take two of the most gifted leaders in Antioch and send them away. Though their teaching ministry in Antioch had influenced "great numbers of people" (Acts 11:26), it had come to an end.

How would the members of the church in Antioch feel to learn that the Holy Spirit was sending Barnabas and Saul away? How would churches today feel if God wanted to send away some of their best leaders? Would they question the wisdom behind such a move? Would they say, "Please God, don't send Saul and Barnabas away. Our church needs them. We have learned so much from them and know that they could teach us much more. Can't they stay right here and help build up our church?"

And how would Barnabas and Saul feel to know that the Holy Spirit was calling them on to a new work? How willing would they have been to leave a fruitful ministry in order to start something new? Would they be willing to leave the security of a city and a congregation that they knew in order to go to who knows where? To answer these questions, we need to pay close attention to the narrative to see the way in which the church in Antioch and the early missionaries understood and reacted to the Spirit's call.

The setting of the call: ministering to the Lord and fasting

The Holy Spirit revealed his will while the church in Antioch was "worshipping the Lord and fasting" (Acts 13:2). Clearly, their worship or service gave the Holy Spirit an opportunity to speak to them. And though we don't know if they were holding a formal worship service, meeting to pray for their needs and for the world, or engaging in more general ministry like caring for the poor or providing food for widows—and the Greek word used here for ministering can include any of these—it's clear that worship opened them up to the Spirit's leading. Since the Bible tells us they were fasting, it is likely that the church had set aside a special period for praying and listening to God. And it was during that time that the Holy Spirit told the church to set Barnabas and Saul apart.

When the Holy Spirit leads, there is neither an overemphasis on a person's individual feelings, nor an unhealthy "rule from above" that dictates what someone must do. God spoke to the church and *to the individuals so that everyone was clear about God's will.*

Exactly how he spoke is not recorded. He may have spoken through one of the local prophets or through some other means. But no matter how he spoke, the passage lets us know that God often speaks to us when we are ready to listen. Being in proper fellowship with God by regularly ministering to him, serving him, and worshipping him, opens us up to hear when he reveals his specific will. Had the church in Antioch not been in proper fellowship with God, they would undoubtedly have missed his message for them.

God spoke to the church in the context of worship and fasting. And after they received his message, they again took time to pray and fast (Acts 13:3). This period of prayer and fasting probably had a twofold purpose. First, it assured them that the instruction they had received really came from God so they were willing to send Barnabas and Saul away. Second, the fasting and prayer helped to prepare them to obey God's instruction. It was not going to be easy for the church to give up two beloved leaders, and it was not going to be easy for Saul or Barnabas to go away. They all needed strength from the Lord, strength that they could receive only through prayer and fasting.

The recipients of the call: both Barnabas and Saul and the whole church

The place of prayer and fasting in the worship of the church in Antioch is important in this passage and it was an important part of their involvement in God's mission. God's Spirit told the church in Antioch to set apart Barnabas and Saul for a special work that he had for them while they were engaged in prayer. Crucially, the Spirit spoke both to the individuals involved and to the church and its leaders. God revealed his will to everyone. No one in the church declared that God had given them a vision that Barnabas and Saul were to obey without questions. Neither did the Apostles announce that God told them to become missionaries. Verses 2 and 4 show how God revealed his will to both the church and to the individuals involved.

In verse 2, the Holy Spirit spoke to the *church*. "The Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" And in verse 4, Barnabas and Saul were "sent on their way by the Holy Spirit." When the Holy Spirit leads, there is neither an overemphasis on a person's individual feelings, nor an unhealthy "rule from above" that dictates what someone must do. God spoke to the church *and* to the individuals so that everyone was clear about God's will.

This is important because in our day we find that many Christians assert that God told them to do this or that, to go here or to go there, and expect that everyone else will accept what they say and send them wherever they want to go. The picture of God's direction given in Acts 13 is that when God wants someone to do something, he informs *the individual* and he informs the person's *church*. I think that the apostles would be surprised to hear how some people today talk about how God has led them to do something or told them to go somewhere while their home church and Christian friends are left totally in the dark or feel greatly surprised. How can we think that God will give us special directions about what he wants us to do without informing our church

leaders or other Christian brothers and sisters to whom we are responsible?

As we consider our place in world missions today—whether as individuals who might be ready and able to be sent out or as a church that wants to help send people out—the story of God's work in Antioch should challenge us to be sure that our call or someone else's call into missions is truly of the Lord. We may need a period of prayer and fasting to discern how God is leading. If so, call a special meeting for prayer and fasting, and bring the matter before the Lord. While not everyone who does this will be called into missions, those who are called often respond after a time of prayer. And those who are sent should only be sent after a time of concerted prayer.

The nature of the call: uncertain with regard to where or how

Acts 13 is clear that God informed both Barnabas and Saul and the church in Antioch that he wanted the apostles to engage in evangelism overseas. Even so, it seems clear that he gave them no direct instructions about where they should go. In our age, when people often feel that they need a specific "call" to a place or people and churches and mission agencies want to be sure that potential missionaries feel "called" to a country or people before they go, this New Testament record seems strange. But there is nothing in the Bible that indicates that a missionary "call" to a specific people or place exists.[2] And though Paul's Macedonian vision is often cited as "proof" of this need, it must be remembered that the vision was God's means of leading a career missionary to one location instead of another in the middle of a missionary journey. The biblical evidence seems to indicate that being willing to take the gospel to others is more important than certainty about where to go.

So, when Barnabas and Saul set out from Antioch they knew that God had a special job for them to do even though he hadn't spelled out exactly where they would do it. But any uncertainty about their destination didn't stop them from setting out any more than it stopped Abraham when he set out from Ur and Haran. Similarly, the uncertainty about the apostles' destination did not stop the church in Antioch from sending them out. Verse 3 says that, "Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." Since the apostles and the church knew they were sent, they went in faith. And in response to their faith, the Holy Spirit guided them along the way. Since they were "sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia" (Acts 13:4). Although no overall plan was in hand when they left, God rewarded their faith and used their faithful preaching of the gospel to bring people to him.

As we consider our place in world missions—whether as individuals or local church bodies—we need to learn from the apostles and the church in Antioch to express faith in our faithful God. We need to look at the world around us to see where there are needs and respond to those needs. We need to believe that God will let us know whom he has called to be missionaries and evangelists. We need to believe that God will inform us about where he wants us to work, and about the kind of ministry we should engage in. Then, we need to step out in faith, believing that the one who calls us is faithful and that he will direct us, provide for our needs, and use our preaching of the gospel to bring others to Christ.

The church in Antioch started to get involved in missions because they were in proper fellowship with God that was characterized by worship and service, prayer and fasting. We should do the same and ask God how he wants to use us so that his word and will might be known and obeyed in all the world today. **MRT**

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[1] Jacob Pynas, *Paul and Barnabas at Lystra.* 1592/3. Oil on wood, 48.3 x 73.3 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. From: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, https://www.metmuseum.org (accessed 22 Oct 2018).

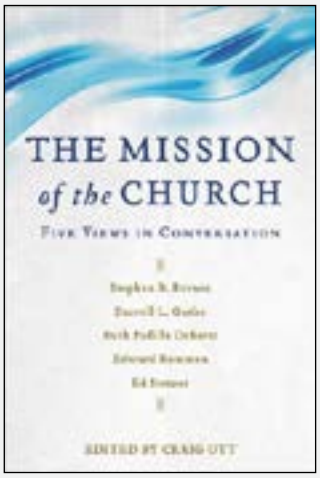
[2] For more thoughts on the "missionary call," see my article "A Biblical and Practical Appraisal of the Missionary Call," *Mission Round Table* 2, no.1 (April 2006): 29–33 or "The Missionary Call: A Biblical and Practical Appraisal," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 43 (April 2007): 210–217.

Chris Wright on Being the Church

https://youtu.be/2KT8aM_8O54

Listen to this presentation by Chris Wright that uses the Old Testament as a template to draw out lessons on the community we are meant to be. He examines Abraham's community as well as aspects of The Nicene Creed to show what it means to be a community of blessing, faith, and obedience. The presentation was given at the 2013 Lausanne Global Leadership Forum in Bangalore, India.

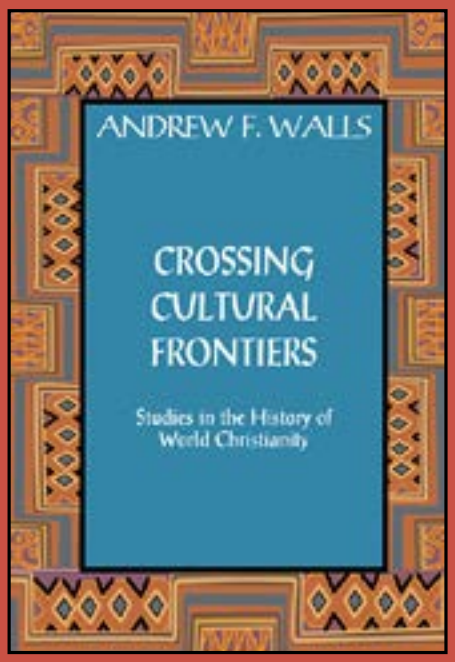




The Mission of the Church: Five Views in Conversation

Craig Ott, ed. Contributions by Stephen Bevans, Darrell Guder, Ruth Padilla DeBorst, Edward Rommen, and Ed Steamer (Ada, MI: Baker, 2016)

In this book, Ott facilitates an ecumenical conversation among five leading voices representing different Christian traditions—Stephen Bevans, Darrell Guder, Ruth Padilla DeBorst, Edward Rommen, and Ed Stetzer—on the mission of the church. Essays from the five contributors present their perspectives with a depth of historical background on the missional nature and purpose of the church. Each of the contributors also presents responses to the other four perspectives. The breadth of insights will stimulate readers to think more deeply regarding the relationship between the global church and the mission of God.



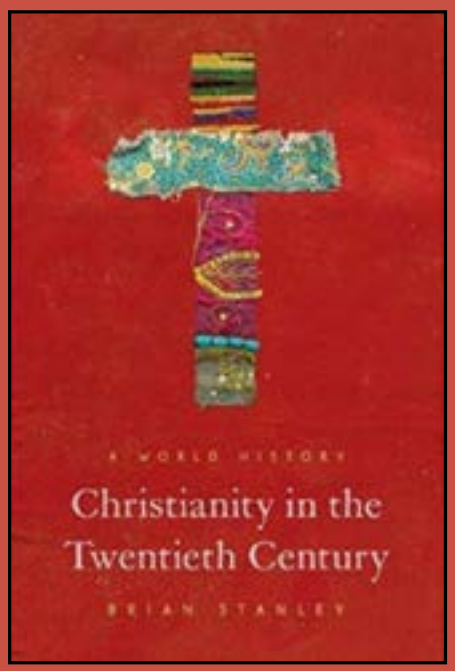
Crossing Cultural Frontiers: Studies in the History of World Christianity

By Andrew F. Walls. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2017. ISBN 978-1-62698-258-1. 284pp.

Reviewed by Rose Dowsett

This is the third collection of published essays from the pen of Professor Andrew Walls (Edinburgh and Aberdeen). Each volume is a goldmine, and this is no exception. His earlier collections, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (1996) and *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (2002), have been warmly appreciated in the global south as well as in the north, such is the incisive wisdom of this godly scholar.

The new collection contains sixteen essays (many originally given as addresses) arranged in three sections, a short introduction, and a tantalizingly brief conclusion. All revolve around the central thesis that "World Christianity is normative Christianity." Part one presents *The Transmission of Christian Faith*; part two, *Africa in Christian Thought and History*; and part three, *The Missionary Movement and the West.* Part two may at first seem of less interest to those whose main mission focus is Asia, but in fact it is packed full of observations applicable anywhere. Walls is a profoundly biblical scholar whose writing is refreshingly easy to read. This book will richly reward your attention.



Christianity in the Twentieth Century: A World History

By Brian Stanley. Oxford: Princeton University, 2018. ISBN 978-0-691-15710-8. 504pp.

Reviewed by Rose Dowsett

Few people could even attempt this project, surveying the Christian story for the whole world, and through a complex century. Brian Stanley, professor of world Christianity at the University of Edinburgh, is well qualified for this monumental task. He explores the fundamental question, "How did the churches of today get to be the way it is?" by looking at fifteen themes. Each theme has an overview introduction, and two case studies drawn from different parts of the world and from different strands of the church. Among the themes are Christianity and nationalism; persecution; migration; ecumenism; living in the Islamic world; patterns of conversion; the impact of Pentecostalism; contemporary mission; and more. A big book, but wise and immensely helpful.