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Make Disciples of All



A Guide to Resources on World Mission

Charles R. Taber

Note: Several books I will mention are being reviewed as such in this issue. I will therefore just mention them and mark the titles with an asterisk ().*

Missiology is the rigorous and systematic study of mission, which in turn (see editorial in this issue) designates all the efforts the church and its members make to participate in the plan of God to restore the universe to his rule. The literature of missiology can be defined narrowly, as a self-conscious effort to study mission; or broadly, to include all kinds of writings that incidentally to their main purposes impinge on mission. In this guide I will use the narrower definition but alert the reader to the fact that there is a fairly vast body of literature in theology, philosophy, history, the social sciences, and biblical studies (and in fiction, for that matter) that contrib-

utes to missiological understanding in a tangential but not negligible way. This is especially true of that part of missiology which examines the mission of the church to the Western world, which missiology narrowly defined has until recently largely neglected because of erroneous assumptions about "Christendom."

Fortunately, this oversight is being increasingly addressed by groups such as The Gospel and Our Culture Network on both sides of the Atlantic and by the recently concluded project *A Missiology of Western Culture*. But the literature from these two sources remains small. In the meantime, many writers, from Langdon Gilkey (*How the Church Can Minister to the World Without Losing Itself*, Harper & Row, 1964) to Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon (*Resident Aliens*, Abingdon, 1989) and Lesslie Newbigin (numerous titles, including

Truth to Tell, Eerdmans, 1991), have provided us with the makings of a lively discussion on the subject. An early title from The Gospel and Our Culture Network is **The Church Between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America*, edited by George R. Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder (Eerdmans, 1996). A second title from this source, published too recently to be reviewed in this issue, is *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, edited by Darrell L. Guder (Eerdmans, 1998). Guder and co-authors Lois Barrett, Inagrace T. Dietterich, George R. Hunsberger, Alan J. Roxburgh, and Craig Van Gelder, with the help of several study groups around the continent (including one at Emmanuel School of Religion), have written a highly stimulating series of chapters: "Missional Church: From Sending to Being Sent"; "Missional Context:

Understanding North American Culture”; “Missional Challenge: Understanding the Church in North America”; “Missional Vocation: Called and Sent to Represent the Reign of God”; “Missional Witness: The Church as Apostle to the World”; “Missional Community: Cultivating Communities of the Holy Spirit”; “Missional Leadership: Equipping God’s People for Mission”; “Missional Structures: The Particular Community”; “Missional Connectedness: The Community of Communities in Mission.” Though the last chapter is the weakest, the book as a whole makes great progress beyond prior efforts.

The attentive reader will notice that I cite authors from many Christian traditions, from the Anabaptist to the Roman Catholic. That is because it is my observation that, especially in missiology, confessional and interdenominational controversies are at a minimum and there is a maximum of convergence on the ultimate goal: to make Jesus Christ known and to extend the rule of God to all peoples and to all the world. There are indeed vigorous differences of opinion among missiologists, but surprisingly few merely reflect historic battles between denominations, and there is constant cross-fertilization between missiologists of all stripes. In my personal experience, bodies such as the American Society of Missiology and the International Association for Mission Studies are among the most truly ecumenical (in the best sense—I almost said the Campbellian sense!) organizations in the world.

Two major works cover missiology most fundamentally: David J. Bosch’s monumental *Transforming Mission* (Orbis, 1991) and Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmüller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* (Orbis, 1984).

Biblical Foundations covers with admirable breadth, depth, and balance the foundations for mission in the Old Testament (part 1) and the New Testament (part 2). Here are excellent treatments of Jesus and the early church, Paul, Mark, Matthew, Luke-Acts, John, and the rest. Part 3 offers a synthesis.

Bosch’s masterpiece gives the most comprehensive treatment available to the field of missiology. It begins with several chapters of solid biblical investigation (though Mark, John, and the general Epistles are not covered). In part 2, Bosch surveys the history of missiological thought, making use of the concept of *paradigms* (borrowed from Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* via the work of Hans Kung). He describes successively the missionary paradigms of the Eastern church, the medieval Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant Reformation, and the period of the Enlightenment (which is, of course, the period of the modern Protestant missionary movement). Finally, part 3 suggests that in the present time of confusion and questioning, at least thirteen paradigms are being proposed by one or another Christian group.

Closely connected with the Bosch book is *Classic Texts in Mission and World Christianity*, edited by Norman E. Thomas (Orbis, 1995), which is in fact subtitled *A Reader’s Companion to David Bosch’s Transforming Mission*. Here are found larger excerpts from writings quoted or mentioned by Bosch, together with additional relevant texts of great significance.

Two useful reference works are *World Christian Encyclopedia*, edited by David B. Barrett (Oxford University Press, 1982), now dated but still unparalleled, and *Dictionary of Mission: Theology, History, Perspectives*, edited by Stephen B. Bevans

and Richard H. Bliese (Orbis, 1997). The first is heavily oriented toward the geographic dimension of missional reality; the second, which is a translation and revision of a slightly earlier work published in German under the editorship of Karl Muller and Theo Sundermeir, is topically organized, from “The Absoluteness of Christianity” to “Youth Mission.” A few of the articles, especially those unrevised in the translation, are mediocre, but many are invaluable.

At this point I would like to mention one of the earliest missiological efforts to come from outside the West: *Upon the Earth* (McGraw-Hill, 1962) by D. T. Niles, the outstanding Sri Lankan evangelist and ecumenical leader who coined this definition of evangelism: “It’s one beggar telling another beggar where he found bread.” In his book Niles explores a number of missiological themes with an exceptional degree of insight, fire, and balance.

History of missions is at present very unevenly served. Global histories are represented only by the six volumes of Kenneth Scott Latourette’s classic, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity* (1933–44; reprint, Zondervan, 1970), and the only one-volume work, *A History of Christian Missions* by Stephen Neill (Pelican, 1964; rev. ed., 1986). Both of these are badly dated and offer little by way of in-depth critique. But they remain valuable as accounts of “just the facts.” A history of a very different kind, done from a powerfully insightful perspective, is Andrew F. Walls, **The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (Orbis, 1996).

Mission in Asia is excellently described in Samuel Moffett’s *A History of Christianity in Asia*, of which unfortunately only the first

volume has appeared (HarperSanFrancisco, 1992); the second is in preparation. Mission in Latin America is best covered, though with a marked bias toward liberation theology, in *A History of the Church in Latin America* by Enrique Dussel, translated and revised by Alan Neely (Eerdmans, 1981). As for Africa, the best book, for dates specified, is by Adrian Hastings: *The Church in Africa 1450–1950* (Oxford University Press, 1994). Books by Elizabeth Isichei (*A History of Christianity in Africa*, Eerdmans, 1995) and Mark Shaw (*The Kingdom of God in Africa*, Baker, 1996) are useful but marred by numerous errors of detail. There is a good history of missions in the Pacific islands by Charles Forman: *The Island Churches of the South Pacific* (Orbis, 1982).

Theology of mission is reasonably well represented, in addition to the magisterial Bosch book, by the now dated work *Mission Theology* by Roger Bassham (William Carey Library, 1979). Bassham covers the history of mission theology in Roman Catholic, ecumenical, and evangelical circles, focusing on his understanding of a growing convergence between these strands. The late Orlando E. Costas, in several books but especially in *Christ Outside the Gate* (Orbis, 1982), offers a profound and stimulating perspective by a radically evangelical Puerto Rican. Kosuke Koyama, also a prolific author, offers his best work in *Mount Fuji and Mount Sinai* (Orbis, 1984). This work, subtitled *A Critique of Idols*, examines the history of Koyama's native Japan but along the way makes profound observations about what he observes in the West (he has taught in New Zealand and the U.S., as well as in Thailand). Finally, *The Transfiguration of Mission*, edited by Wilbert R. Shenk

(Herald, 1993), offers a thoughtful look at mission through the pens of a number of Mennonite scholars.

Church growth theory had its birth in the work of the late Donald A. McGavran in India. Out of his many writings, two best represent his thinking: *The Bridges of God* (Friendship, 1955) and *Understanding Church Growth* (Eerdmans, 1970, 1980, 1990 [this last revision edited by C. Peter Wagner]). McGavran and his colleagues Alan Tippett, C. Peter Wagner, Charles H. Kraft, and others have been most prolific, but the two books mentioned contain the substance of church growth thought: the primacy of numerical increase as the goal and criterion of mission, the controversial distinction between “discipling” and “perfecting,” the concept of people group/homogeneous unit, the fierce pragmatism, the heavy reliance on a certain understanding of the social sciences, the rather superficial handling of Scripture, and the scorning of theology. It is interesting to observe that since McGavran's death, the other original pioneers, even Wagner, have moved on to other foci of interest, such as “signs and wonders.” Meanwhile, church growth thought has been taken up largely by denominational leaders in the United States who are in a panic about declining membership. In their hands, this emphasis has led to “church marketing,” trenchantly critiqued by Philip D. Kenneson and James L. Street in *Selling Out the Church* (Abingdon, 1997). A strong but discriminating critique of church growth theory when it was at its height is found in Wilbert R. Shenk, ed., *Exploring Church Growth* (Eerdmans, 1983).

The literature regarding culture, cultural encounter, and inculturation is substantial. I will cite only a few volumes that I consider especially significant. Jacob A. Loewen's

Culture and Human Values (William Carey Library, 1975) reprises the best of his many articles originally published in the journal *Practical Anthropology*. *Readings in Missionary Anthropology*, edited by William A. Smalley (William Carey Library, 1974), contains other excellent articles from the same journal (which existed from 1953 to 1972). Charles H. Kraft's *Christianity in Culture* (Orbis, 1979) and **Anthropology for Christian Witness* (Orbis, 1996) are quite exhaustive in covering the cultural waterfront. Louis J. Luzbetak's *The Church and Cultures* (Orbis, 1988) is a magisterial work by a Roman Catholic with extensive missionary experience and scholarly expertise. Luzbetak moves helpfully in the ground where anthropology, theology, and missiology converge. An extraordinary field-based book is *Christianity Rediscovered* by Vincent J. Donovan (Orbis, 1982). Donovan, a Holy Ghost missionary priest in Tanzania, was led by his experience among the Maasai to reconsider many of his preconceptions. My own book *The World Is Too Much with Us* (Mercer University Press, 1991) is an attempt to analyze how missionaries of the modern Protestant missionary movement (about the last two centuries) understood and dealt with the cultures they encountered.

The specific questions of inculturation/contextualization, while covered in the titles listed above, are dealt with most specifically in the following works: Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message* (Orbis, 1989); Aylward Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation* (Orbis, 1988); Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Orbis, 1985); and Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Orbis, 1992).

From the voluminous corpus of writings that treat the relationship of the gospel with “the other religions,”

I have chosen a representative few, ranging across the spectrum from the exclusive position to the most radically inclusive. At the radical left are the writings of Paul J. Knitter, of which *No Other Name?* (Orbis, 1985) is representative. Knitter takes the stance that all religions are equal purveyors of salvation for their devotees. Presenting a strong critique of this position, arguing that the different religions are each seeking after a different goal so that what *Christians* call salvation is not even relevant to them, are two books: Joseph DiNoia, *The Diversity of Religions* (Catholic University of America, 1992) and Mark S. Heim, *Salvations* (Orbis, 1995). Among evangelicals, Clark Pinnock takes a modified exclusive position in *A Wideness in God's Mercy* (Zondervan, 1992). Finally, a world authority on the religions, especially Islam, who takes a strong Christian and missiological stance is Kenneth Cragg. Among his many writings I cite only *The Christ and the Faiths* (SPCK, 1986).

Two books merit special attention because they deal so well with topics generally ignored. First is Dana L. Robert's *American Women in Mission* (Mercer University Press, 1996); I will say only that this book makes earlier works by Pierce Beaver and Ruth Tucker more or less obsolete. A forthcoming book by Angelyn Dries will correct the same oversight in Roman Catholic circles. The second book I want to highlight is Jonathan J. Bonk's *Missions and Money* (Orbis, 1991), one of those works that make one acutely uncomfortable and offer no real "solution" to the problem they describe but are nevertheless indispensable. For, whether we affluent Americans like it or not, our money is indeed a major problem for our relations with third-world people and for the clear

communication of the gospel, and there *is* no magic solution: we can serve in the third world only by the grace of God, since it seems to be as difficult for a rich person to be a missionary to poor people as it is for that same rich person to enter the kingdom of God.

A topic often but mistakenly overlooked in missiology is spirituality: the inner spiritual vitality and focus that make missionary life and work possible and efficacious. Here the best book I know of is Anthony J. Gittins, *Bread for the Journey* (Orbis, 1993). Gittins is a Roman Catholic priest with anthropological and theological training and rich missionary experience. He does an excellent job of bringing together theological, cultural, missiological, and sacramental themes into a powerful synthesis.

I now want to mention two series of books in missiology that merit the reader's attention. The first, published by Orbis for the American Society of Missiology, is the ASM Series. Since 1975, twenty-five titles have been published on diverse themes ranging from mission history in Korea to "Missiological Education for the 21st Century." Among the books listed above, the ones by Forman, Knitter, Luzbetak, Sanneh, Bonk, Bosch, Gittins, Thomas, and Bevens and Bliese are in this series.

Loosely tied in with the *A Missiology of Western Culture* project is a series of essays being published by Trinity Press International under the editorial supervision of Alan Neeley, H. Wayne Pipkin, and Wilbert R. Shenk: *Christian Mission and Modern Culture*. In this series, titles have appeared from the following authors: David J. Bosch, Wilbert R. Shenk, J. Andrew Kirk, Lesslie Newbigin, Douglas John Hall, Lamin Sanneh, Judith Gundry-Volf and Miroslav Volf, *Alan J.

Roxburgh, Kenneth Cragg, and Bert Hoedemaker; books by Philip D. Kenneson and Charles R. Taber, among others, are forthcoming.

There are three areas of missiology I have made no attempt to cover: missionary biography, because I am not knowledgeable about it; monographs regarding work in a specific field, because the field is too vast; and "how-to" books, because it is my conviction that methods and techniques are both highly specific to contexts and of short duration.

I want to close this all too brief look at the missiological literature by mentioning five journals in the field, noting the strengths of each one.

Evangelical Missions Quarterly (EMIS, publishers). Much practical material for missionaries

International Bulletin of Missionary Research (Overseas Ministries Study Center). Substantive articles in all branches of missiology, book reviews, listings of dissertations, annual statistical summary of Christianity in the world

International Review of Mission (Conference on World Mission and Evangelism of the WCC). Articles from around the world, book reviews, exhaustive bibliographic listings

Missiology (American Society of Missiology). Articles, book reviews, selected bibliographies, recommended books for limited budgets

Missionalia (South African Missiological Society). Articles, book reviews, extensive abstracting of global missiological periodicals

Mission Studies (International Association for Mission Studies). Articles from all over the world, reports of ongoing research

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