

# Anabaptist Witness

*A Global Anabaptist and Mennonite Dialogue on  
Key Issues Facing the Church in Mission*

VOLUME 3    APRIL 2016    ISSUE 1

# Anabaptist Witness

*A Global Anabaptist and Mennonite Dialogue on Key Issues Facing the Church in Mission*

## Co-Editors

Jamie Pitts, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary  
Jamie Ross, Mennonite Mission Network

## Editorial Staff

**BOOK REVIEW EDITORS** Steve Heinrichs & Isaac S. Villegas  
**MARKETING COORDINATORS** Carmen Andres  
Matthew J. Krabill  
**PROOFREADERS** Jinah Im  
Heidi King  
**VISUALS EDITOR** SaeJin Lee  
**WEB EDITOR** Gregory Rabus

## Editorial Committee

Carmen Andres, Communications Consultant  
Steve Heinrichs, Mennonite Church Canada Indigenous Relations  
Matthew J. Krabill, Fuller Theological Seminary  
SaeJin Lee, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary  
Gregory Rabus, Church Planter, Conference of South German Mennonite Churches; Mannheim, Germany  
Isaac S. Villegas, Pastor of Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship; North Carolina, US

## About

*Anabaptist Witness* is published twice a year (April and October), and is indexed in the ATLA Religion Database® (ATLA RDB®), www: <http://www.atla.com>. It is a publication of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Mennonite Church Canada, and Mennonite Mission Network. The views expressed in *Anabaptist Witness* are those of the contributing writers and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the partnering organizations.

## Subscriptions, Additional Copies, and Change of Address

The annual subscription rate is \$20 (US) plus shipping. Subscribers will receive an invoice to send with remittance to Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. Single or additional copies of *Anabaptist Witness* are available for purchase through Amazon.com. Change of address or questions about purchasing the journal may be directed to the co-editors at the addresses below or by sending an e-mail to [subscriptions@anabaptistwitness.org](mailto:subscriptions@anabaptistwitness.org).

## Editorial Correspondence

The co-editors make a public call for submissions for each issue of the journal, soliciting contributions that facilitate meaningful exchange among peoples from around the world, across professions, and from a variety of genres (sermons, photo-essays, interviews, biographies, poems, academic papers, etc.). All submissions to *Anabaptist Witness* undergo a double-blind peer review process. For full details of the current call for submissions, visit [www.anabaptistwitness.org](http://www.anabaptistwitness.org). Questions or comments about the journal's print or online content may be directed to the co-editors:

Jamie Pitts  
[JPitts@AMBS.edu](mailto:JPitts@AMBS.edu)

Jamie Ross  
[JamieR@MMNWorld.net](mailto:JamieR@MMNWorld.net)

## Copyright

Unless otherwise noted, all content in *Anabaptist Witness* is licensed by contributors under the Creative Commons copyright license Attributions-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (cbd, CC BY-ND 4.0). Under this license, readers may distribute journal content in any medium or format for any purpose, so long as the content is not adapted and so long as attribution is given to the contributor. For more information, see <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/4.0/>.

ISSN 2374-2534 (print)  
ISSN 2374-2542 (online)



[www.anabaptistwitness.org](http://www.anabaptistwitness.org)

*Anabaptist Witness*

Cover: Design by SaeJin Lee. Original image, "He Fed Her Cherries From The Table" © Lotus Carroll. Licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary  
3003 Benham Avenue  
Elkhart, IN 46517 USA





# Anabaptist Witness

*A global Anabaptist and Mennonite dialogue on key issues facing the church in mission*

---

VOLUME 3

APRIL 2016

NUMBER 1

---

9 Editorial  
*Jamie Pitts*

## ARTICLES

---

13 Keeping Good News and Good Works Together  
*Ronald J. Sider and Heidi Rolland Unruh*

23 Christian Peacemaker Teams:  
Uniting Word and Deed through “Being-With”  
*Sarah Thompson*

27 Consideraciones Misionológicas Según Mateo 9:35–38  
*José Luis Oyanguren*

33 병역거부자 이상민씨와의 “평범한” 찻시간: 복음과 평화에 대한 진솔한 대화  
이상민, 김성한씨와의 인터뷰: 이세진 진행

45 Living Vulnerability: Indigenous Perspectives on Evangelism  
An Interview with Patricia Vickers and Randy Woodley  
*Steve Heinrichs*

57 Evangelism or Social Justice: Reconsidering the Case in Africa  
*Jim Harries*

71 Journeying with Jesus towards the Indivisible Gospel:  
Evangelism and Social Justice Entwined  
*Robert Thiessen*

77 A Theology of Mission for Colonized Gentrifying Spaces  
*Tommy Airey*

- 87 Mentoring Marginal Men in Tower Hill, Kingston, Jamaica:  
Nascent Hoop Dreams and Nagging Regrets  
*Timothy Paul Erdel and Robby Christopher Prenkert*
- 105 Queenie Dreams of Peace in Mindanao  
*Jonathan Cranston*
- 111 That You May Know One Another: The Qur'an in Christian Worship  
*Chad Martin*
- 117 Let Us Be Reminded Who We Are and What We Are Called to Do:  
The Theological Mandate of Anabaptist Witness  
*Richard Showalter*
- 121 Siguiendo los pasos de Jesús  
*Ofelia García y Victor Pedroza*
- 127 Ensemble, pour le partenariat dans l'Évangile  
*John Fumana*

## REVIEWS

---

- 133 Todd M. Johnson and Cindy M. Wu, *Our Global Families: Christians Embracing Common Identity in a Changing World*  
*Reviewed by Maria Hosler Byler*
- 135 Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement, Volume II: Modern Christianity from 1454–1800*  
*Reviewed by Mary Raber*
- 137 Janel Kragt Bakker, *Sister Churches: American Congregations and Their Partners Abroad*  
*Reviewed by Martin Rhodes*
- 139 Steven P. Miller, *The Age of Evangelicalism: America's Born-Again Years*  
*Reviewed by Aaron Griffith*
- 141 Berry Friesen and John K. Stone, *If Not Empire, What?: A Survey of the Bible*  
*Reviewed by Karin Holsinger Sherman*

- 144** Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Eduardo Mendieta, eds., *Decolonizing Epistemologies: Latina/o Theology and Philosophy*  
*Reviewed by Melanie Kampen*
- 146** Beth Baron, *The Orphan Scandal: Christian Missionaries and the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood*  
*Reviewed by Alain Epp Weaver*
- 150** John E. Sharp, *My Calling to Fulfill: The Orie O. Miller Story*  
*Reviewed by Wilbert R. Shenk*





# Editorial

Over the past one hundred years, a breach has opened and gradually widened within the theology and practice of Christian mission. On one side of that breach are those who maintain that the primary, or even sole, provenance of mission is evangelism, understood as verbal proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ that seeks the conversion of its hearers. On the other side of the breach are those who contend that mission is largely or exclusively a task of seeking social justice. These Christians tend to see conversion as at most a possible by-product of the church's pursuit of justice; at times they reject the language of "mission" altogether, associating it with conversion-oriented evangelism.

Numerous efforts have been made during the past century to heal this missiological breach. Proposals employ terms such as "whole gospel," "holistic gospel," "integral mission," and "full mission." They insist that the church's "two mandates"—to pursue sociocultural flourishing (Gen 1:26–31) and to make disciples (Matt 28:18–20)—must be held together, as must "good news and good works" and "being, doing, and telling." Anabaptist and Mennonite missiologists have been leading participants in the healing work.<sup>1</sup>

In their 2004 book, *Introducing World Missions*, A. Scott Moreau, Gary Corwin, and Gary B. McGhee tell the story of the "cracks in the unity of the mission movement" that developed in the early twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> The cracks multiplied with the emergence of the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy in the United States, affecting missionary endeavors around the world. After showing the aftermath of those cracks—including especially an ascendant conservative evangelical mission from the mid-twentieth century—the authors examine recent trends and conclude, "It seems almost certain that theological tensions will increase in the coming years."<sup>3</sup> The breach, in other words, may

---

1 See, for example, Samuel Escobar and John Driver, *Christian Mission and Social Justice* (Scottsdale, PA, and Kitchener, ON: Herald, 1978); Ronald J. Sider, *Good News and Good Works: A Theology for the Whole Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1993). Recent general works on the topic include Dean Flemming, *Recovering the Full Mission of God: A Biblical Perspective on Being, Doing, and Telling* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013); C. René Padilla, *¿Qué es la misión integral?*, 2nd ed. (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Kairos, 2009); and Brian Woolnough and Wonsuk Ma, eds., *Holistic Mission: God's Plan for God's People* (Oxford: Regnum, 2010).

2 Moreau, Corwin, and McGhee, *Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 143.

3 *Ibid.*, 311.

only get larger.

The contributors in this issue of *Anabaptist Witness* address this situation by responding to the question, “What is mission?” Most of their responses revolve around an affirmation of the holistic character of the gospel and mission: the gospel speaks to our material and spiritual conditions, so mission should too. Yet evidence of the breach is present in these pages. While some contributors hew closely to an evangelical understanding of holistic mission, in which proclamation aimed at conversion to Christianity is viewed as essential, others largely construe holistic mission in progressive sociopolitical terms. Common use of “holistic” language does not prevent the appearance of deep divisions. With that in mind, perhaps one way forward is to question the categories (“holistic,” “evangelism,” “justice”) employed in these discussions—a strategy taken by some of our contributors.

The issue opens with a lucid evangelical statement of holistic mission by Ronald J. Sider and Heidi Rolland Unruh. The authors suggest, on historical and theological grounds, that Anabaptists should be leaders in holistic mission; they then explore reasons that many American Mennonites seem hesitant to embrace evangelism. This essay first appeared in an edited volume titled *Fully Engaged: Missional Church in an Anabaptist Voice*, edited by Stanley W. Green and James R. Krabill.<sup>4</sup> We are grateful to the authors, editors, and publisher for allowing us to reprint it here.

Picking up on a challenge in Sider and Rolland Unruh’s essay to Christian Peacemaker Teams, CPT executive director Sarah Thompson discusses how that organization unites word and deed through a ministry of presence. This ministry requires the transformation of its participants and calls institutional churches to repentance for their complicity in injustice and violence. Although Thompson describes CPT workers as being on a “faith journey,” this journey is not necessarily grounded in the Christian tradition. She calls on diverse readers to join and support CPT in their opposition to violence and oppression.

José Luis Oyanguren, a missionary in the Argentine Chaco, then outlines a missiology rooted in Jesus’s ministry, and specifically in a study of Matt 9:35–38. Oyanguren describes Jesus’s mission practice as, among other things, oriented toward the periphery, dialogical, liberative, and ecumenical. English-language translations of this piece as well as others in Spanish, French, and Korean are on our website, [www.anabaptistwitness.org](http://www.anabaptistwitness.org).

In the following piece, *Anabaptist Witness* visuals editor SaeJin Lee inter-

---

<sup>4</sup> Sider and Rolland Unruh, “Keeping Good News and Good Works Together,” in *Fully Engaged: Missional Church in an Anabaptist Voice*, eds. Stanley W. Green and James R. Krabill (Harrisonburg, VA, and Kitchener, ON: Herald, 2015), 47–56.

views South Korean conscientious objector SangMin Lee. Lee considers how his conscientious objection could be considered a form of Christian witness and argues for the priority of embodied witness and the need to be reserved with judgments about others' salvation. Near the end of the interview, SeongHan Kim joins the conversation to shed light on the history of Korean Christian peace witness and to assess the character of North American Mennonite peace witness.

Next, *Anabaptist Witness* book review co-editor Steve Heinrichs interviews Patricia Vickers, a psychotherapist and member of the Tsimshian Nation in British Columbia, Canada, and Randy Woodley, a missiologist and Keetoowah Cherokee (legal descendant) in Oregon, USA. Vickers and Woodley reflect on indigenous American encounters with Christian mission, and challenge dualistic approaches to mission—including those claiming to be holistic.

British missionary Jim Harries, who lives and works in Kenya, furthers that challenge in the following piece. Deploying postcolonial theory, Harries argues that the “evangelism and social justice” debate is captive to Western categories that leave Western domination unquestioned. Harries calls instead for a vulnerable approach to mission that eschews Western funding and prioritizes indigenous language and concepts.

In the next five pieces, the authors reflect on the nature of mission in relation to specific events and ministry settings. Robert Thiessen writes of his “journeying with Jesus toward the indivisible gospel” while working with the Mixtec people in southern Mexico. Through a critical examination of gentrification in Detroit, Tommy Airey outlines a theology of evangelism centered on marginalized persons, justice, and reconciliation. Timothy Paul Erdel and Robby Christopher Prekert review a basketball ministry with marginalized men in Kingston, Jamaica. Writing from the Philippines, Jonathan Cranston describes peacebuilding efforts in Mindanao through the story of Queenie Liwat. Finally, Chad Martin considers how the use of the Qur’an in Christian sermons can illuminate the unity of evangelism and social justice.

The Mennonite World Conference Mission Commission, the Global Mission Fellowship, and the Global Anabaptist Service Network gathered in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in July 2015 to address the relationship between mission and service. Given the relevance of this conversation to the present issue, we are pleased to present the texts of the three plenary presentations—by Richard Showalter, Ofelia García and Victor Pedroza, and John Fumana, respectively. These are followed by several book reviews that further shed light on our theme.

Although the contributors to this issue of *Anabaptist Witness* do not offer a

unified answer to our question, an emerging consensus may be tentatively identified: Christian mission involves all of life, and it requires vulnerability with those encountered on the way. If mission is to be vulnerable as well as holistic, then perhaps the hoped-for healing of the breach will generate a theology and practice of mission we have not yet imagined. The work lies before us.

Jamie Pitts, Co-Editor

# Keeping Good News and Good Works Together<sup>1</sup>

RONALD J. SIDER AND HEIDI ROLLAND UNRUH<sup>2</sup>

We believe Christ our Lord longs for his community of disciples to weave together a seamless garment of active peacemaking, authentic compassion, and pursuit of justice together with winsome, passionate evangelism. And we believe Anabaptists ought to be the leaders in that kind of holistic mission.

## **Anabaptists Should be Leaders in Holistic Mission**

The first reason for this is how holistic mission is rooted in Anabaptist history. When our movement began in the sixteenth century, early Anabaptists combined evangelism, peacemaking, and a concern for economic justice. Our spiritual forebears lived and preached peace, rejecting the sword and modeling economic sharing. They also sent passionate evangelists all over Europe, inviting people to a vibrant personal faith in Christ and baptizing those who embraced their message. Early Anabaptists were so eager to proclaim the good news about Jesus that their persecutors would forcibly prevent them from speaking.

Second, understanding Jesus' gospel as the good news of the kingdom—beyond solely the forgiveness of individual sins—is a central theological foundation for holistic mission. Jesus' in-breaking kingdom brings not only a new forgiven relationship with God but also transformed socioeconomic relationships in Jesus' new messianic community—and this transformation spills over and improves surrounding society. Mennonites have had this understanding of the gospel for many decades in a way that has been deeper and more widespread than in many other parts of the Christian church.

Third, there is a deep longing in our world for an end to the pervasive vio-

---

1 Reprinted from *Fully Engaged: Missional Church in an Anabaptist Voice*. © 2015 by Herald Press, Harrisonburg, VA 22802. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

2 *Ronald J. Sider is an ordained Mennonite Minister, a member of Oxford Circle Mennonite Church in Philadelphia, and senior distinguished professor of theology, holistic ministry, and public policy at Palmer Seminary at Eastern University. He is the founder and president emeritus of Evangelicals for Social Action and has published thirty-five books. Heidi Rolland Unruh is a consultant equipping churches and non-profits to develop more effective holistic community outreach. Heidi is the author of several books, including Churches that Make a Difference. She and her family are affiliated with First Mennonite Church in Hutchinson, Kansas.*

lence and injustice that devastates so many lives. Our Anabaptist understanding of Christ as the Prince of Peace who calls everyone to peace and justice speaks to that longing. That message is intertwined with the good news that when persons place their faith in Christ, his Spirit lives in them and empowers them to become self-sacrificial agents of change. Thus holistic mission offers a transformative and appealing hope in a violent, unjust world.

Finally, we Anabaptists say we want to imitate the biblical Christ. We look to the stories of what Jesus did and taught as a model for what it means to live as a follower of Jesus. And the Gospels show Jesus loving the whole person, body and soul. He healed sick bodies, called people to compassion, challenged prevailing ideas about violence, confronted the unjust acquisition of wealth, and offered forgiveness of sins. He sent out his disciples to share in his work: “Cure the sick who are there, *and* say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you’” (Luke 10:9, emphasis ours).

### **Why Are So Many Mennonites Hesitant about Evangelism?**

Why then are so many Mennonites today—particularly in white, middle-class churches—so hesitant to practice evangelism?<sup>3</sup> Why do only half of Mennonites speak regularly about their faith to people outside their church and family? Why are only 2 percent of Mennonites new believers, versus those born to Mennonite families or denominational transfers?<sup>4</sup> Again, there are many reasons.

Centuries of persecution have certainly helped to make us the “quiet in the land”—people who just want to be left alone to follow Jesus. The stream of Mennonites who immigrated to Russia made a pact with Catherine the Great to abstain from proselytizing in return for land and security. While Mennonites living in the West today rarely face persecution or overt restrictions on evangelism, hesitancy to verbally share our faith has become embedded in our identity.

Secondly, Mennonites react against the imperialist, destructive way evangelism has sometimes been practiced. Historically, Christian mission too often went hand in hand with colonization and suppression of indigenous cultures.

---

3 We note that Mennonites in predominantly non-Anglo churches are more likely to practice vibrant evangelism. For example, in a national survey of Mennonites, respondents in the “racial/ethnic” category were three times more likely to regularly invite non-Christians to church activities than other Mennonites. See Conrad Kanagy, *Road Signs for the Journey: A Profile of Mennonite Church USA* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2007), 72–73.

4 *Ibid.*, chapter 3.

Evangelism was used as an instrument of coercion rather than liberation. Today, we observe some Christians engaging in aggressive techniques to “win souls” while ignoring the rest of people’s lives, tangling up gospel proclamation with a political agenda, or manipulating converts for financial gain. Because we value peace and justice, Mennonites tend to toss out the evangelism baby with the dirty bathwater that has too often accompanied it.

A third factor is cultural assimilation. Many Mennonites living in the West like to think of themselves as distinct, but research shows that our worldview and lifestyle largely mirror the secular culture around us.<sup>5</sup> Our culture tells us that religion is a private matter and that sharing personal faith is inherently offensive. Social justice is trendy; talking about Jesus is not.

Finally, some Mennonites have embraced a theological stance that undermines the call and commitment to evangelism. This group is relatively small when compared to the whole Mennonite body, and our official theological statements are still those of historic Christianity. But there is an influential minority of Mennonites who question traditional claims about the deity of Christ, his bodily resurrection, and his uniqueness as the way to salvation. Their focus is on peace and justice. They advocate choosing a nonviolent lifestyle and working toward ending war and injustice in the name of Christ. But this group is disconnected from the calling of Christ to “Go and make disciples of all nations.” Their sense of mission is vital, but incomplete.

The following story illuminates the problem. I (Ron) spoke a few years ago to the seniors at Taylor University, an evangelical school in Indiana. One senior introduced herself to me as a Mennonite, the daughter of missionary parents. She told me that as a junior, she had done a semester in Israel. She was thrilled to visit all the places where Jesus walked, but slowly became aware that her class was meeting almost exclusively with Israelis. They were not engaging with the Palestinians. Then she met the Christian Peacemaker Teams in Hebron. She was delighted with what they were doing. In fact, she said, she believed she had found her calling for life. The next fall, she had attended Christian Peacemaker Teams’ national conference. Sadly, she told me how terribly disappointed she was because the conference had very little about Jesus and nothing about inviting others to follow him.

Let us be clear. CPT is a very important movement. We want it to multiply exponentially in size and impact. We have respect and gratitude for the teams who courageously embody their faith by demonstrating the power of nonviolent action. But we also believe it is a loss when Christian activists who seek peace

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

and justice do not also embrace publicly the power of personal transformation through Christ. What might have happened if top Mennonite leaders had dared to wholeheartedly endorse CPT while helping CPT to integrate word and deed in their witness to Christ?<sup>6</sup>

## Keeping Evangelism, Peacemaking, and the Work for Justice Together

The central tenets of historic Christianity are an essential foundation for evangelism. We believe they also provide crucial grounding for peacemaking and work for justice.

In Jesus' day, messianic pretenders got crucified. The only conceivable conclusion on the day after Jesus' crucifixion was that the Nazarene prophet of peace and justice was a fraudulent failure. Yet when Thomas met the risen Jesus, he said, "My Lord and my God!" The early church, comprised overwhelmingly of strict Jewish monotheists, dared to call a backwater carpenter not just Messiah but Lord—*kurios*, the Greek word used in the translation of the Hebrew word *Yahweh*. It was only because they met the risen Jesus that they dared to believe again that his kingdom of peace and justice was actually breaking into history.

If Jesus is only another great prophet, then there is little compelling reason to go around the block and the world inviting others to believe in him. But if the carpenter from Nazareth is both true God and true man, then we have an urgent incentive to tell others. If his resurrection on the third day was a powerful demonstration of his claim to be the Son of God, then believing that he is the only way to salvation is not presumptuous.

In fact, the deity and resurrection of Jesus is central to peacemaking. Loving one's enemies, daring to forgive and confront rather than kill even the worst tyrants, laying down one's life to overcome evil with good, is a very difficult path to walk. While Christians are not the only ones who choose this path, knowing that the God-man Jesus modeled this by suffering for our sake offers a powerful motive and guide. The one who calls us to sacrificial love for enemies is the Creator-of-the-universe-made-flesh who offered forgiveness even to his murderers.

---

<sup>6</sup> We realize that verbal witness to Christ is not possible or appropriate in every context where CPT and other Christian groups are involved. What we yearn for is more intentional grounding of the work of peacemaking in God's unique work of reconciliation through Christ, and the passionate desire to plant seeds of this reconciliation throughout the world.



Furthermore, it is Jesus' resurrection as the guarantee of our resurrection at his second coming that gives us the courage to risk death to love enemies. Death does not mark the end for those who believe in Christ. Knowing that we will be raised with him to live forever powerfully emboldens us to stand up for peace and justice in this violent world.

As noted earlier, Jesus' gospel of the kingdom leads inevitably to combining word and deed. The prophets had predicted that the future Messiah would bring forgiveness of sins as well as peace and justice. Jesus claimed to be that long-expected Messiah. Central to his ministry was the message, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near" (Matt 4:17). Jesus described God as a father who longs to forgive prodigal daughters and sons. Equally central was the claim that the messianic time of peace and justice was actually breaking into the present in Jesus and his new community. He validated his messianic claim by pointing to both his restorative deeds and his transformative preaching (Matt 11:2–6). And he sent out his disciples to do the same as they preached and lived the gospel of the kingdom.<sup>7</sup> As followers of Jesus, we cannot pray, "Your kingdom come" (Matt 6:10) and then do only evangelism—or only social action.

Other significant theological themes also provide a foundation for holistic mission. Since God created persons with both a physical and a spiritual dimension, God values both social action that secures material necessities and evangelism that leads to spiritual renewal. Since Scripture condemns sin that is both personal (e.g., lying and adultery) and social (e.g., political corruption and economic oppression), righteousness demands both discipleship that transforms personal character and advocacy that creates more just, peaceful social structures. Since biblical eschatology indicates that at the end of history this broken world will not be destroyed but renewed, Christians anticipate that Christ's return will herald a restored creation where the best of human civilization will be taken up into the New Jerusalem. We trust that both evangelism and social action have eternal consequences. Thus by leading people to Christ and improving society, we work toward that partial transformation that Christ will complete at his return.<sup>8</sup>

---

7 See Ronald J. Sider, *Good News and Good Works: A Theology for the Whole Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999), especially chapters 3 and 4.

8 For a fuller statement of these points, see Sider, *Good News and Good Works*; see also Ronald J. Sider, Philip Olson, and Heidi Rolland Unruh, *Churches That Make a Difference: Reaching Your Community with Good News and Good Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002) for descriptions of how this theology looks in practice.

## **Evangelism and Social Action Are Inseparably Connected, but Not Identical**

Our Anabaptist faith leads us to see evangelism and social action as essential and intertwined—but not identical. Social action is that set of activities whose primary purpose is improving the physical, socioeconomic, and political well-being of people through relief, development, structural change, and the reduction of violence. Evangelism is that set of activities whose primary intention is to invite non-Christians to embrace Jesus' gospel of the kingdom, believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, undergo baptism, join Jesus' new redeemed community, and experience daily personal fellowship with the Holy Spirit, with the joyful anticipation of eternal life with God.

We can and must look beyond an individualistic approach to mission that only values counting souls. But in a similar way we should not neglect the spiritual needs of individuals. Persons can be regenerated only through the saving work of Christ. We cannot evangelize social structures—e.g., corporations, governments, and economic systems—though we ought to work to change them. In addition to advocating for reform, we can pray against evil spiritual forces that twist social structures away from the good that God intends. We can prophetically envision their transformation when Christ reigns victorious over all injustice. We can also seek opportunities to share Christ with people in positions of influence in these structures, as well as the people negatively affected by them.

Defining evangelism and social action as distinct though overlapping areas of focus is important if we are to fulfill the full scope of our mission. Though evangelism has socially beneficial consequences, we cannot claim that just telling people about Christ constitutes social action. This gives Christians an excuse to neglect the deliberate, costly acts of service, organizing, advocacy, and peacemaking required to truly love our neighbor. Conversely, if everything Christians are sent into the world to do is called evangelism, then people may focus exclusively on social action and peacemaking while claiming to be sharing the gospel—though they never invite a single person to accept Christ. The special task of communicating the gospel with the prayer that others will accept Christ and become his followers tends to get lost.

Can our good deeds attract people to Christ? Is the Holy Spirit active in drawing hearts to God even before we say a word? Certainly. But at some point, to be faithful to the Lord of the harvest, Christians must explicitly speak the good news. We must give attention to telling our faith story, inviting people into our church or spiritual community, offering to study the Bible together, to pray intercessory prayer, and to do other activity intended to encourage individ-

uals to accept and follow Christ. This doesn't mean pushing the gospel message on people who don't want to hear it or pressuring people before they are ready to accept it. We must listen before we speak, look for appropriate times and ways to share, respect people's right to reject our message, and depend on the Holy Spirit to do the convicting and converting. We can admit to not having all the answers. But we need to recognize that our love for our neighbor is incomplete unless we share Christ in word as well as in deed.<sup>9</sup>

While good news and good works are not identical, they are inseparably connected and mutually reinforcing.<sup>10</sup> In practice, evangelism has a social action dimension and social action has an evangelistic dimension. Biblical evangelism calls on people to embrace Christ, not just as a Savior who forgives sins, but also as Lord of every area of life including one's politics and economics. That means helping converts to repent of perpetuating systems of injustice and violence, as well as individual moral failings. Holy Spirit-transformed persons begin to live differently, and their transformed lives slowly make whole societies more just and peaceful. We see this in the example of the corrupt official Zacchaeus, who was so overjoyed by his encounter with Jesus that he made restitution to those he had defrauded and pledged generous support to the poor (Luke 19:2–10).

Biblical evangelism also draws people into a community of faith that engages their gifts in social action. Furthermore, just being the church—if our communal life truly follows Jesus' way—develops models of mutual caring and sharing that the broader society frequently is inspired to imitate. One example among many is the manner in which Christians have led the way in starting hospitals for the sick and schools for poor children.

Social action and peacemaking can also foster evangelism. Good works point to the goodness of the kingdom that is fully realized only in Christ. When people see Christians working to end violence and overcome poverty, they become more open to the gospel. If we communicate that we do these things because of the love of Jesus, others may be more ready to hear about who this Jesus really is. Our actions make our words more credible and compelling.

Bernard Sejour's story demonstrates this powerful link. As a Haitian, Bernard wanted to make a difference for his country, so he became a human rights worker. He met Anna, a Mennonite Central Committee worker serving in his organization. He noticed something different about Anna and learned she

---

<sup>9</sup> Sider, *Good News and Good Works*, chapter 9 and appendix.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, chapter 10; see also Sider et al., *Churches That Make a Difference*, chapters 1–5.

was a Mennonite. Forced to flee to the United States because of his activism, Bernard tracked down other Mennonites, who explained the gospel more fully to him. He gained pastoral training at a Mennonite college and planted a church for Haitians in Philadelphia—right before the massive earthquake that hit Haiti in 2010. A grant from MCC helped Bernard to offer case management for newly arriving Haitians who had lost everything. His work helping immigrants access legal and social services has also given him opportunity to form relationships that lead to invitations to his church community, which is intentionally welcoming to “whoever wants to know who Jesus is.”

### **Let’s End the Scandal!**

Our dream for the Mennonite church is that every congregation would continually be engaging non-Christians “to know who Jesus is,” inviting them to accept him as Savior and Lord, and throwing their arms around these new Christians, helping them to become the whole persons God desires. And every Mennonite congregation would also be actively engaged in ending poverty, correcting injustice, and reducing violence in our world. Think of the impact if this is what non-Christians experienced with their local Mennonite congregation. Think of the impact if everyone connected with agencies like Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite Disaster Service, and Mennonite Economic Development Associates were daily praying for the right opportunity to gently, winsomely tell of their love for Christ and share the gospel. Think of the impact if everyone connected with agencies like Mennonite Mission Network and Eastern Mennonite Missions were regularly asking for divine guidance on how their church planting activities can promote peace and justice.

Let’s end the scandal where some of our churches primarily do evangelism, others primarily do peace and justice, and far too many do neither. Let’s love whole persons the way Jesus did.

## Principles for keeping word and deed together

### *Love*

Both evangelism and social action should be motivated and guided by love, which always seeks what is best for the other person, even at a cost. We do not engage in evangelism or social action to enlarge our own, or our congregation's, "empires" (Mark 12:29–31; 1 Cor 13:1–3; John 3:16–18).

### *Holism*

We minister to whole persons, recognizing that people are more than just souls or bodies. People need both spiritual salvation and tangible acts of mercy and justice. We also are all called to repent of both personal sins and participation in systemic evils (Ps 107:5–9; Matt 9:35; 3 John 1:2).

### *Relationships*

Making the good news real requires incarnational involvement. Both good news and good works are most effective, and have the most integrity, in the context of authentic, bridge-building relationships that reflect the reconciling work of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5:18; Col 1:15–22; Eph 2:13–19).

### *Respect*

We affirm the dignity and worth of each individual regardless of religious or economic status, grounded in the imago Dei (image of God). This includes respecting each person's God-given right to religious freedom, so our ministry methods are never coercive or manipulative (Gen 1:27; Prov 14:31; James 2:1–5).

### *Special concern for those who are poor and marginalized*

In both evangelism and social action, we can emulate God's attentive care for those who are poor and vulnerable throughout Scripture, and Jesus' intentional ministry of reaching out to those on the margins of society (Deut 15:4–11; Luke 4:18–19; 7:18–22; 1 Cor 1:26).



# Christian Peacemaker Teams:

## Uniting Word and Deed through “Being-With”

SARAH THOMPSON<sup>1</sup>

The dominant paradigm through which Mennonites perceive Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) is that we are people who “get in the way” between two warring parties. Expanding and challenging that perception, former CPTer Sheila Provencher offers that “CPT was and is in Iraq to work.... But above all, we are there to listen. To just ‘be-with.’ And we all agree—it is worth our lives.”<sup>2</sup>

Over the past decades, CPT has intentionally moved away from the “getting in the way” paradigm, but Mennonite perception of our work has yet to catch up. Today, the invitation to potential CPTers is to stake your life on the spiritual practice of “being with.” We understand this practice as being with yourself and with others: on your work team, your family, your enemies, or your global neighbors. We develop your stamina for difficult conversations. This practice requires you to sit in devastating contexts, and insists that you cultivate an analysis of power relations. Our new mission statement, adopted in 2012, reflects this new paradigm: Building partnerships to transform violence and oppression. In other words, in order to deal with evil we seek to build strategic and powerful partnerships alongside those whom we are with.

This commitment to *being-with* transforms personal character and results in advocacy that creates social justice. Our evangelism—if I can use that word—happens inside the structures of the current church, mosque, and temple, rather than being focused on non-Christians. For a more extensive read on the “creative missiological tension within CPT,” see Alain Epp-Weaver’s excellent review of CPT primary source materials.<sup>3</sup> In that piece, Epp-Weaver notes that with an approach that advocates interposition between two armed parties, “missional agency is located primarily in the self-sacrificial (even heroic)

---

<sup>1</sup> Sarah Thompson is executive director of Christian Peacemaker Teams.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Kathleen Kern, *In Harm's Way: A History of Christian Peacemaker Teams* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009), 497.

<sup>3</sup> Alain Epp Weaver, “‘Getting in the Way’ or ‘Being-With’: Missiologies in Tension in the Work of Christian Peacemaker Teams,” *Mission Focus: Annual Review* 19 (2011): 260–77.

activity of the CPTers. While Provencher might not reject this vision of CPT's work, her statement above voices a concern about the limits of action and positively values the... 'being-with' of accompaniment: in this missiology...the missional agency shifts...from the CPTer towards the people amongst whom CPTers live."<sup>4</sup> As CPTers, we are invited to open ourselves to transformation by the light of God in those we accompany.

We invite people to be formed by disciplined engagement in the rigorous contexts we find ourselves. This is a project of repentance, repentance for many of the situations that religious institutions—particularly the Christian church—helped to cause. Over the course of our institutional life we have developed some expertise in dismantling the oppression the church still continues to uphold. This is a gift to the church, allowing for grassroots expressions of faith to replace Christendom.

We are who we are because of nearly thirty years of peacemaking in the field alongside those most impacted by imperial, racist, heteronormative, and sexist violence, regardless of their religious tradition or perspectives on faith. "By accompanying communities marginalized and uprooted by systems of power, CPTers, in the words of Wendy Lehman, sample 'the frustration and powerlessness one feels in the face of (seemingly) overwhelming force.'"<sup>5</sup> Faith-rootedness does make a difference in this work, but we observe that faith that produces peace is not limited to those who believe in Jesus Christ as the Messiah and their Lord.

In their article, "Keeping Good News and Good Works Together," Ronald Sider and Heidi Rolland Unruh ask, "What might have happened if top Mennonite leaders had dared to wholeheartedly endorse CPT...?"<sup>6</sup> Indeed, here is the larger question for the Mennonite church, leaders and lay people alike. At our steering committee meetings, representatives of our sponsors (of which the Mennonite Church USA is one) consult and discuss with us to discern how best to follow our divinely inspired mission. From the beginning we have been sponsored by multiple denominations. As we have a multi-faith peacemaker corps, discussions are underway about sponsorship from organizations with diverse faith affiliations. The invitation for deep endorsement and participation

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 262.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 269. Lehman is quoted by Tricia Gates Brown, *Getting in the Way: Stories from Christian Peacemaker Teams* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 2005), 99.

<sup>6</sup> Ronald J. Sider and Heidi Rolland Unruh, "Keeping Good News and Good Works Together," *Fully Engaged: Missional Church in an Anabaptist Voice*, eds. Stanley W. Green and James R. Krabill (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald, 2015), 50. This essay is reproduced elsewhere in this journal.



by Mennonites remains strong.

I invite each Anabaptist church to support one person to be a CPTer. It is in the material context of walking Palestinian children to school, standing alongside Colombian farmers, examining the Doctrine of Discovery, or participating in a co-existence workshop in Iraqi Kurdistan that we can have these important and protracted conversations.

Sider and Unruh state, “If Jesus is only another great prophet, there is little compelling reason to go around the block or the world inviting others to believe in him.”<sup>7</sup> Jesus’ tactics for nonviolent direct action, community building, inclusion, faith renewal, and enemy love have unique and important aspects to them. Carol Rose, who served as our co-director and then director from 2004 to 2012, loves to tell the story of Jesus and the Syrophenician woman (Matthew 15:21–28). For Rose, this story gives us a way to understand our being-with task of openness to transformation by the other, even those we have been taught to hate and despise, as Jews were taught to hate Syrophenicians.

Without a particular type of belief, there can still be a lot of motivation for gutsy peacemaking contained in examination of the tactics of the social movement we call Christianity.. We stand on the shoulders of ancient and modern prophets who challenged the church. We seek to honor them with our work together today. Each CPTer is on a faith journey, and our organization aims to be a container for each of us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. We definitely haven’t gotten through the arguing and grumbling part, but folks are shining like stars (Philippians 2:12b–15).

Sider and Unruh request a more intentional grounding. Structures for our grounded intentionality include organization-wide training in the history of religious peacemaking, taking a deep look at our traditional texts, naming what is life-giving and what isn’t, together in community. Intentionality includes team discussions. We know we need to share this world with people who hold different and similar truth claims, so we are giving careful thought to what that means on the scale of CPT as an organization. CPTers are not reducible to a lowest denominator of belief; we do not feign that we all believe the same thing! We wrestle with the differences in our conceptual frameworks. These frameworks tend to be quite influenced by personality, material reality, and family systems. They tend to vary more in between people of the “same” faith background than between two given people of “different” faith traditions. We have valuable conflict and dialogue about what shared power and access means. As an organization we are currently Christian-identified but have a multi-faith

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 51.

membership.

For some CPTers, the deity and resurrection of Jesus is central to their peacemaking. Those CPTers that believe differently do not try to take that away from them. Everyone is invited to draw upon whatever is most central to their being in our shared work of being-with. People are deeply motivated for many reasons to love enemies, lay down their life, and work in an intense team environment to create space for peace. We respect all paths to these practices. We continue to fulfill our mission of building partnerships to transform violence and oppression. Come join us.

# Consideraciones misionológicas según Mateo 9:35–38

JOSÉ LUIS OYANGUREN<sup>1</sup>

## Introducción

Miraremos este pasaje del evangelio según Mateo para intentar descubrir algunos principios de la misionología de Jesús plasmados dicho evangelio, a fin de que pueda servir de guía para que la iglesia contemporánea pueda cumplir su misión, desde una perspectiva más bíblica y cristológica, ya que las demandas del mundo nos exigen una “conversión en el camino,” redescubriendo a Jesús de Nazaret en los desafíos que las necesidades concretas de la gente nos presentan, esperanzados en la renovación que el Espíritu puede darnos. Entonces, veremos algunos puntos destacados de la misionología de Jesús en Mateo 9:35–38.

## Características de la misionología de Jesús

### *La misionología de Jesús fue centrifuga, cercana y periférica*

Aunque es un solo apartado marcamos estas tres características que emergen del 9:35<sup>a</sup>. Las acciones de Jesús fueron hacia afuera. El texto dice que Jesús recorría toda aldea y ciudad. No esperó que la gente viniera a Él, aunque la necesidad de la propia gente muchas veces provocó esta realidad, pero no fue la norma de su ministerio terrenal. No se atrincheró dentro del templo en la gran ciudad, convocando a las multitudes a un “congreso para conseguir poder espiritual.” Jesús estuvo donde la gente estaba. Es imposible responder con el evangelio a personas de las que desconocemos su situación integral; sus viviendas, su historia y problemáticas, etc. Muchas veces nuestra proclama del evangelio es impertinente por las formas y no por el contenido. William Reyburn escribiendo sobre el tema de la identificación del misionero relata un hecho de su propia experiencia con los kakas de Camerún, cuando comió del propio plato de ellos. Él dijo: “una cazuela de orugas es más convincente que todas las metáforas vacías de amor, las cuales muchos misioneros son tan propensos a emplear con los paganos.”<sup>2</sup>

---

1 José Oyanguren es misionero entre indígenas tobas/qom de Chaco, Argentina, de la Iglesia Menonita, Bragado, Argentina, en co-participación con Mennonite Mission Network.

2 William Reyburn, “La identificación en la tarea misionera,” en *Misión Mundial: un análisis del movimiento cristiano mundial*, tomo 3, *Consideraciones transculturales*, 2<sup>a</sup> ed., coord. Jonatán P. Lewis (Miami: Editorial Unilit, 1990), 23.

Otro grupo misionero que trabaja con indígenas en Argentina tomó una filosofía ministerial que enfoca al misionero como “huésped”<sup>3</sup> Esto significa llegar, ser invitado, escuchar, esperar y compartir. En cierta ocasión, algunos misioneros extranjeros se sorprendieron porque un misionero nacional trabajaba con otras etnias de su mismo país y había aprendido ocho idiomas. Al indagar sobre cómo había alcanzado tal logro y esperando una respuesta que tratara sobre alguna estrategia lingüística avanzada, el interrogado contestó: “*solamente fui donde estaba la gente.*”<sup>4</sup>

Todas las aldeas que Jesús recorría eran de Galilea. Jesús comenzó su ministerio por su propia región, Jerusalén y Samaria, zonas olvidadas y despreciadas de Israel, marcando así su perspectiva teológica. En el hecho de que considerase a las masas marginadas, pobres y excluidas, porque no es incidental que los acontecimientos históricos en la vida de Jesús se dieran de esta forma, hay plasmado un pensamiento divino. Orlando Costas dice que “*es especialmente significativo que Jesús escoge Galilea, una encrucijada racial y cultural como base para la misión.*”<sup>5</sup> Esto no significa que las demás clases sociales no necesiten del evangelio sino que Jesús impartió de esta manera una misionología en la que predominantemente se escoge, como base teológica, a los necesitados, pobres y aislados de los sistemas oficiales.

### *La misionología de Jesús fue continuadora y dialógica*

Algo muy significativo es que Jesús va a las instituciones existentes de su tiempo, las sinagogas de los judíos, y no establece otro centro de enseñanza a algunos metros de las mismas. Jesús de alguna manera no trae una enseñanza extraña sino que propone una renovación de lo existente, desde adentro. Jesús también era un estricto conocedor de las creencias judías, aunque reconocemos que su ascendencia era de esta religión, pero esto nos da pistas para una misionología actual, que tome en cuenta las creencias de los pueblos en los cuales la iglesia quiere misionar y no tome una postura facilista de condenar a priori, sin ahondar en sus significados o simbolismos. Debemos entender que las distintas culturas no pueden romper totalmente con su historia y cosmovisión. Esto no quiere decir que el evangelio no traiga cambios y, de hecho, aún hay choques de prácticas y pensamientos, pero sí quiere decir que la buena noticia

---

3 Willis Horst, Ute Müller Eckhardt y Paul Frank, *Misión sin conquista: acompañamiento de comunidades indígenas autóctonas como práctica misionera alternativa* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Kairos, 2009), 98.

4 Gastón Salamanca, *Adquisición de segunda lengua* (Lima: SIL, 2004), 36.

5 Orlando Costas, citado en Samuel Escobar, *De la misión a la teología* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Kairos, 1998), 39.

del Reino es más redentora que condenatoria. Hesselgrave dice que *“el misionero puede adoptar provisoriamente la cosmovisión de su oyente no creyente y reformular el mensaje desde el punto de vista de ellos de modo que pueda tener significado.”*<sup>6</sup>

Aunque no es nada fácil esta postura, hasta podría ser imposible en su cabalidad, vale la pena el esfuerzo por entender al otro, de manera que el evangelio pueda ser algo nuevo dentro de las estructuras mentales de los oyentes. Que un grupo animista oiga del Espíritu Santo no tiene el mismo significado que para una cultura occidental. El misionólogo Charles Kraft opina que *“no sólo es necesaria una traducción bíblica de equivalencia dinámica, sino también una evangelización de equivalencias dinámicas que traduzca eventos, prácticas religiosas, sistemas de normas, etc.”*<sup>7</sup> De esta manera, el evangelio no produce un vacío en la cultura sino que trata de lo que la antropología llama “sustitutos funcionales.”<sup>8</sup> Por ejemplo, en algunas culturas indígenas de América, eran comunes las fiestas sociales, las cuales tenían la función de reforzar los lazos intra e interclánicos, fomentar las expresiones artísticas, la solidaridad grupal, etc. Cuando el cristianismo llega, si tales eventos no continúan, por decisión de los nativos o los misioneros, queda un vacío, un quiebre en la armonía cultural. Pero no ocurriría eso si las fiestas cristianas, con danza, cantos, etc. reemplazaran las funciones de las primeras.

Cuando Jesús se presenta ante los judíos reclamando ser el mesías, ellos entendieron bien de qué hablaba. Jesús, como cordero de Dios, era comprensible en el sistema de sacrificios judíos. Jesús en cierta manera hace una reinterpretación de la tradición del pueblo al cual misionaba. Debemos entender que Dios no llega a un pueblo con la llegada del misionero, Dios ha estado tratando desde mucho antes con esa gente, por eso su misionología también era dialógica, no decía que hubiera venido a anular la ley, sino para darle cumplimiento. *“El término utilizado para cumplimiento es plerosai que significa completar en su plenitud, implicando un progreso; es no guardar una cosa en el mismo estado de antes.”*<sup>9</sup> Que Jesús pudiera decir *“oísteis que fue dicho”* (Mateo 5:21–48) significa que era conocedor de la historia teológica del pueblo. Pablo también afirma en su

---

6 David Hesselgrave, “La cosmovisión y la contextualización,” en *Misión Mundial: un análisis del movimiento cristiano mundial*, tomo 3, *Consideraciones transculturales*, 2ª ed., coord. Jonatán P. Lewis (Miami: Editorial Unilit, 1990), 102.

7 Charles Kraft, *El cristianismo desde una perspectiva transcultural: un estudio sobre teología bíblica dinámica* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1981), 165.

8 Wilmar Stahl, *Culturas en interacción: una antropología vivida en el Chaco paraguayo* (Asunción: Editorial El Lector, 2007), 27.

9 Francisco Lacueva, *Curso de formación teológica evangélica*, tomo 10, *Ética cristiana* (Barcelona: Editorial CLIE, 1989), 77.

mensaje a los de Listra que aunque Dios permitió que cada pueblo anduviera en sus propios caminos, eso no significa que no tuvieran testimonio de Él. Pablo había aprendido muy bien de su maestro y lo demuestra en su diálogo con los atenienses demostrando que también conocía el pensamiento griego. Nos detendremos en el texto de Hechos 17:22–34 y destacaremos algunos puntos:

- Pablo comienza el diálogo afirmando la actitud religiosa de los atenienses. No empieza censurando todo lo que ellos piensan, sino elogiando lo que han estado elaborando teológicamente desde su historia.
- Pablo inicia la interlocución desde el lugar psico-socio-espiritual donde ellos están. Se había detenido a mirar sus altares. En cierta manera, se saca sus calzados en la tierra santa de los atenienses.
- En una acción muy inteligente y redentora, Pablo reenfoca la adoración que ellos están ejerciendo al dios no conocido, argumentando estratégicamente que él conoce a ese dios. Dios viene a tomar el lugar de su dios. Aquí es donde nace la continuidad teológica, aunque no quiere decir que no necesite reformularse.
- Después, Pablo inicia la proclamación de la palabra, como dice el texto de Mateo que también Jesús hizo al enseñar y predicar. Pablo rescata lo positivo de algunos proverbios de filósofos nativos y los utiliza para reforzar una nueva verdad teológica.

### *La misionología de Jesús fue liberadora*

El texto dice que Jesús sanaba toda enfermedad y toda dolencia. En la época de Jesús los judíos tenían el firme pensamiento de que *“las enfermedades eran causadas por los pecados de la persona afectada o por los demonios.”*<sup>10</sup> *“El NT considera la enfermedad como contraria a la voluntad creadora de Dios, ve en acción en ella el poder demoníaco, y rastrea una conexión general entre pecado y enfermedad.”*<sup>11</sup> Por lo que una sanación representaba, para la mentalidad judía del primer siglo, mucho más que una restauración física, era una reivindicación de toda la persona en sí misma, en su aspecto físico, social y espiritual. El dogma de la retribución era normal en el pensamiento judío, pecado y enfermedad iban en caminos paralelos muy contiguos, y por eso la enfermedad se tornaba un mal que afectaba a todo el ser de la persona y, muchas vec-

---

<sup>10</sup> Fred H. Wright, *Usos y costumbres de las tierras bíblicas* (Grand Rapids, MI: Editorial Portavoz, 1981), p. 149.

<sup>11</sup> Gerhard Kittel y Gerhard Friedrich (editores en alemán) con Geoffrey W. Bromiley (traductor al inglés), *Compendio del diccionario teológico del Nuevo Testamento* (Grand Rapids, MI: Ediciones Desafío, 2003), 505.

es, perdón y sanidad se tomaban de la mano. Las palabras utilizadas para dolencia y enfermedad son: *malakia* y *nosos*. “*Malakia está relacionada a delicadeza, debilidad, enfermedad. Sólo se halla en Mateo 4:23, 9:35 y 10:1.*”<sup>12</sup>

El diccionario médico dice que “*malakia significa blandura, debilidad, impotencia.*”<sup>13</sup>

“*Nosos está relacionado con el término latino nocere que significa dañar, injuriar, de aquí enfermedad.*”<sup>14</sup> Vemos que estas dos palabras designan un estado no deseado por las personas y con influencia de factores externos a ellos. Hay enfermedad y dolor, sintomatología biológica y emocional, imposibilidades físicas y sociales. Ante todo esto, Jesús irrumpe con su poder que corta el círculo vicioso de marginación y aislamiento. Como en Mateo 11:22–29, en donde Jesús demuestra que con su ministerio se ha inaugurado una nueva era, la cual se caracteriza por “*atar al hombre fuerte*” y brindar liberación. Las sanaciones son evidencias que el reino de las tinieblas ha comenzado a caer. Como observa Boff: “*Mateo nos presenta a Jesús como el nuevo Moisés, en donde el mesías traería al igual que Moisés un paradigma de liberación, caracterizado por señales y prodigios. Jesús es el nuevo libertador del pueblo hebreo.*”<sup>15</sup>

### *La misionología de Jesús fue identificatoria*

La motivación de Jesús para identificarse con aquellos que están enfermos, dolidos, afligidos, extenuados, maltratados por las circunstancias de la vida la cual pareciera no ser digna de ser vivida, se desprende de su compasión. Jesús se movía por compasión, pero no son las circunstancias ajenas las que determinan ese deseo de entrar en acción, para erradicar las causas de tales circunstancias, sino una virtud interna, cultivada por una espiritualidad a tono con el amor de Dios. Jesús se colocó las sandalias de sus congéneres para entender realmente sus vivencias y poder sentir sus vicisitudes cotidianas. Todas las características de la misionología de Jesús se conjugan e interrelacionan entre sí. Fue a sus aldeas, dialogó y enseñó, porque se identificaba con ellos; sanó y trajo nueva vida por su compasión y esta misma compasión, le llevó a invitar a otros para cooperar en la erradicación de los males que “despellejan” la vida humana. En su misionología cada virtud no solo tiene un efecto en cadena, sino que también

---

12 W. E. Vine, *Diccionario expositivo de palabras de la Biblia* (Miami: Editorial Caribe, 2003), 294.

13 Clínica Universidad de Navarra, *Diccionario médico*, <http://www.cun.es/diccionario-medico>.

14 Vine, *Diccionario expositivo*, 317.

15 Leonardo Boff, *Jesucristo el liberador: ensayo de Cristología crítica para nuestro tiempo*, Santander: Editorial Sal Terrae, 1985), 138.

se afectan mutua y orgánicamente. Lo graficamos de la siguiente manera:

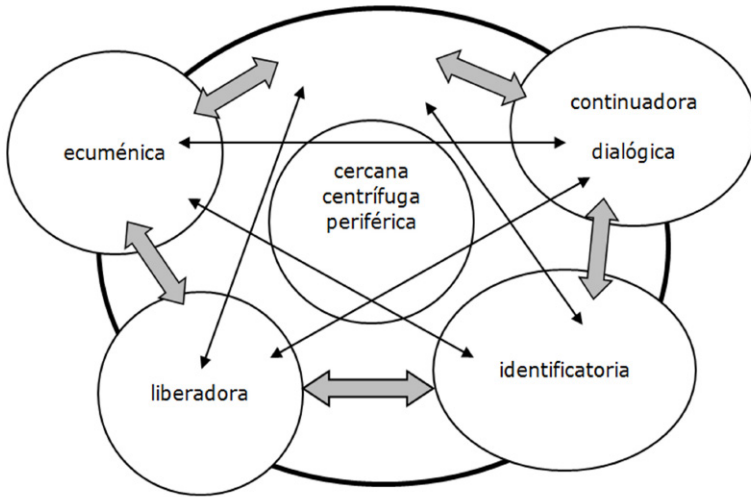


Gráfico N° 1 La misionología de Jesús

*La misionología de Jesús fue ecuménica*

Jesús no tuvo ninguna intención de querer abarcar toda la tarea en su persona. No tuvo el más mínimo pensamiento de imponer un movimiento monolítico de avanzada en desprecio de los demás. En cierta oportunidad los discípulos encuentran a algunas personas desconocidas echando fuera a los demonios, pero les generó desconfianza y celos porque no eran del grupo íntimo (Marcos 9:38–41, Lucas 9:49–50). Entonces avisan a Jesús esperando una respuesta de acuerdo a sus expectativas, pero Jesús responde de una manera diferente. Para Jesús había otros que estaban en la verdad y era legítimo que hicieran obras buenas; también pertenecían al macro grupo de Jesús. No daba lugar a que se instaure esa estrechez mental exclusivista. En el texto de Mateo, Jesús insta a sus discípulos a que rogasen a Dios que enviara obreros. Había lugar para otros, con diversos dones y maneras de actuar, pero con un mismo objetivo, el Reino de Dios en medio de la diversidad y pluralidad.

**Conclusión**

Hemos visto parte de la misionología de Jesús en este texto. No es exhaustiva pero sí iluminadora. Una vez más Jesús de Nazaret se torna desafiante para la cristiandad y se pone como ejemplo insoslayable de la práctica de nuestra fe. Sigámosle a Él.



# 병역거부자 이상민씨와의 “평범한” 티타임:

복음과 평화에 대한 진솔한 대화

이상민, 김성한씨와의 인터뷰: 진행 이세진<sup>1</sup>

이세진: 미국에 머무는 시간도 길지 않은데 이렇게 시간 내주셔서 감사합니다.

이상민: 아닙니다. 좋은 경험을 많이 하면서 감사한 시간을 보내고 있습니다. 오히려 제가 감사합니다.

세진: 저희 편집부에서 몇 가지 질문을 준비해왔습니다. 첫 번째 질문을 드릴게요. 형제님께서 병역거부를 실천하셨는데요. 병역 거부가 복음 증거, 혹은 복음의 한 부분이라고 생각하시나요?

상민: 저는 우리가 어떤 문제를 해결할 때 힘을 쓰지 않는 것, 폭력을 쓰지 않고, 누군가를 강제하지 않으면서 무언가를 나눈다는 것은 기독교의 중요한 가치라고 생각해요. 제가 성경을 공부 하면서 동의한 부분은 신이 인간에게 겸손의 본을 보이셨다는 점이에요. 전지전능한 신이 인간의 몸을 입고 성육신하셨다는 것 자체가 제가 미처 헤아릴 수 없는 겸손이라고 느껴요. 특히 성경 본문 중, 예수께서 잡히시던 밤에 베드로가 병사의 귀를 찢던 장면이 있는데요. 예수께서 베드로에게 “그러지 말아라. 내가 당장에라도 하늘 아버지께 요청해서 군사들을 부르면 다 제압할 수 있는 것인데 네가 그렇게 행동한다면 어떻게 말씀이 이루어지겠느냐”라고 대답하시던 부분이 저에게 큰 통찰을 주었습니다.<sup>2</sup> 능히 행할 능력이 있지만 그렇게 하지 않으시고, 자신을 희생하며 겸손함의 본을 보이셨다는 점 말입니다.

지금 한국은 한중일간의 군비경쟁이 굉장히 심해요. 하지만 과연 우리가

---

1 이상민은 2007년부터 양심에 따른 병역거부를 고민하다가 긴 고민 끝에 2014년 4월부터 2015년 7월까지 1년 3개월의 수감생활을 마치고 지금은 서울의 자전거 삶에 미케닉으로 일하고 있다.

김성한은 한국기독교학생회 IVF 간사로 미디어 사역부와 인디밴드 코드셋으로 활동했다. 2013년부터 2015년까지 미국 인디애나주 고센에서 살면서 Trinity Evangelical Divinity School에서 공부했으며, 현재는 한국 기독교의 민족복음화운동에 대한 논문을 쓰고 있다.

이세진은 아나뱃티스트 위트네스(*Anabaptist Witness*)의 디자이너와 편집위원이며 하이블리 에비뉴 메노나이트 교회 (Hively Avenue Mennonite Church)의 일원이다.

이상민과 김성한의 관계는 (최소) 2008년으로 거슬러 올라가며 은혜와 평화교회 (Grace&Peace Mennonite Church)에 함께 출석했다. 이 인터뷰는 김성한이 한국으로 돌아가기 전 형기를 마친 이상민의 고센 방문으로 이루어졌다.

2 마 25: 53.

서로의 몸집을 키워서 해결할 수 있는 부분인지 의문이 듭니다. 언제까지 서로의 힘을 더 키워야 하는가의 문제에서 함부로 확답할 수는 없지만 저는 다른 길을 걷기를 바랬습니다. 예수께서 어떤 다른 길을 말씀하신 것이 아닐까 생각해 보았습니다. 그래서 군사적 방식에 참여하지 않고 비폭력의 삶을 사는 것이 복음의 중요한 부분이라고 생각하게 되었습니다.

세진: 네. 잘 알겠습니다. 두 번째 질문 여쭙 보겠습니다. 형제님처럼 비폭력의 삶이 복음과 예수님을 따르는 삶의 한 부분이라고 생각하는 기독교인이 있을 수 있지만, 한편으로 다른 이들을 전도하고 개종할 수 있도록 돕는 것이야말로 참 복음 전도라고 생각하는 분들도 있을 것으로 생각합니다. 이러한 분들에게 어떻게 대답하시겠어요?

상민: 그러한 질문은 예전에도 상당히 많이 받았어요. 그 질문에 대해서는 아시시의 성 프란체스코(Francis of Assisi)의 말을 인용하곤 합니다. 프란체스코는 우리가 어떻게 전도하면 되겠냐는 질문에 “쉬지 말고 전도하라. 항상 전도하라.”라고 말했습니다. “단, 꼭 필요할 때만 말을 사용해라”라고 덧붙였습니다. 저에게 참 깊은 통찰을 주었던 것 같아요.

그 이야기를 들었을 때, ‘아! 복음이라는 것은 정말 어마어마하고 인간의 짧은 혀로 다 설명할 수 없는 것이구나. 쉽게 고백하기도 어려운 것인데, 우리가 말로만 한다고 그게 중요한 것일까? 오히려 복음을 우리 삶 속에 녹여내고, 주변에 좋은 영향력을 끼치는 것이 더 중요한 것이 아닌가’라는 생각을 하게 되었어요. (웃음) 지금도 활동하고 있는데, 우리 학교에도 ‘전도 폭발’이라는 단체가 있어요. 굉장히 열심이 있는 단체인데….

세진: 전도폭발이요? 이름이 참 재미있네요. 전도와 폭발이라….

상민: 네, 전도폭발. 빵 터지죠! 하하. (웃음) 이 단체가 굉장히 체계적으로 훈련하고 열심히 활동해요. 저에게도 접근해서 이야기한 적이 있었어요. 사실 그분들과 좋은 이야기를 많이 나누었어요. 그런데 마지막 질문에서 제 마음이 걸렸어요. “당신은 구원의 확신이 있느냐?” 라고 물어보는데, 제가 답변하기를 “그것은 사실 대답하기가 굉장히 조심스럽고 쉽게 말할 수 있는 게 아닌 것 같다”라고 했죠.

구원은, 글썄요…: 구원은 완성되어 가는 것이고, “예, 아니요”로 쉽게 단정될 수 없는 것 같다고 생각을 합니다. 바울 또한 구원에 대해서 항상 두려워하고 떨리는 마음이 있다고 성경에 고백한 바가 있는데….<sup>3</sup> ‘어떻게 사람이 구원에 대해서 그렇게 쉽게 논할 수 있냐?’ 라고 제가 질문을 했던 적이 있어요.

이 질문에 대한 저의 답도 비슷한 것 같아요. 구원과 상관있는 행동과 구

원과 상관 없는 행동을 배제한 채, 말이나 고백으로만 구원을 결정하는 모습을 보면 아쉽습니다. 또 조금 고립된 것 같다는 느낌을 많이 받아요. 그래서 고백과 행동은 절대로 따로 분리해서 이해하면 안 되고, 반드시 같이 가야 하는 것으로 생각해요. 행동으로 보이는 것과 신앙을 고백하는 것은 절대 분리할 수 없지요. 그래서 야고보 또한 그것이 분리되는 신앙은 죽은 것이라고 말했다고 생각해요.<sup>4</sup>

세진: 형제님께서 나누신 것을 듣고 부가적인 질문이 생각났는데요. 방금 구원은 우리가 확실할 수 없는, 단순한 고백으로만 확실할 수 없는 참 조심스러운 것이라고 말씀하셨잖아요? 상민 형제님에게 구원이 스스로 확신하기 어려운 것이라면, “어떻게 병역거부를 하고 평화의 삶을 사는 것이 구원의 일부분이라고 너는 확신하느냐?”라는 질문에 대해 어떻게 답하시겠어요?

상민: 음... 이런 질문인 거죠? “너는 옳게 행동하고 있는거냐? 너의 행동에 확신이 있느냐?”

세진: 네, 그렇죠.

상민: 음... 병역거부를 선택한 저 자신도 사실 함부로 말할 수 없다고 느끼는 것이...

(**굉장히 조심스럽게**) 사람이 어떤 형태로든, 크든 작든 간에, 자신의 삶에 확신을 갖고 움직이고 신념을 갖고 최선을 다하듯이, 저도 마찬가지로 인 것 같아요.

‘병역거부만이 옳은 길이야’라고 저는 결코 함부로 말하지 못하겠어요. 하지만 다양한 신앙의 표현이 있고 또 그 표현에 따르는 신앙의 열매가 있듯이, 그 열매를 통해서 그 사람의 신앙을 어느 정도 판별할 수 있다고 생각을 합니다. 그리고 확신을 가지고 실천을 옮기는 그 과정이 정말 중요한 것이 아닌가 생각해요. 단순히 나의 방법만이 구원에 이르는 확실한 길이라고 주장하기보다는 말이죠. 그래서 누가 저에게 만약 너의 행동이 맞는 것이냐고 질문했을 때, 저는 이렇게 대답할 수 있을 것 같아요. 지금의 저의 판단과 저의 상황에서는 이것이 저의 최선이라고 생각을 합니다. 다른 분들의 상황과 판단과는 다를 수 있겠지만요.

세진: 최선이라는 말이 공감이 되네요. 저희가 삶을 살면서 어떤 부분에 완전한 확신이 있어서 행동하기보다는 최선을 다한다는 것이죠.

상민: 그렇죠. 구원에 이르는 길로 조금씩 나아가고 있다? 글썽 이것은 제가 감리교 배경을 갖고 있어서 하는 표현일 수도 있어요.

---

4 약 2: 14-26.

세진: 아, 감리교 배경이세요?

상민: 제가 성결교 바탕이에요. 성결교도 웨슬리안 배경이잖아요?

세진: 네. 그러면 세 번째 질문으로 넘어가겠습니다. 이 질문 또한 어떻게 보면 두 번째 질문과 비슷한 것 같아요.

형제님께서서는 마태복음 마지막 장에 나오는 예수님의 말씀을 어떻게 이해하시나요?: “그러므로 너희는 가서 모든 민족을 제자로 삼아 아버지와 아들과 성령의 이름으로 세례를 베풀고 내가 너희에게 분부한 모든 것을 가르쳐 지키게 하라. 볼지어다 내가 세상 끝날까지 너희와 항상 함께 있으리라.” 사회적 평화를 위한 노력이나 증인의 삶을 사는 것도 예수님의 ‘지상 명령’의 한 부분이라고 생각하시나요?

상민: 네. 저는 당연하다고 생각합니다. 아까도 나왔듯이 성 프란체스코가 하신 말씀을 본받아 어떤 형태로든 우리가 믿는 신념을 따라 움직이고 사는 것이 예수그리스도를 증거하는 가장 효과적인 방법이라고 생각합니다. 사람이 자신의 믿음대로 행동하여 사는 것만큼 강력한 힘은 없다고 생각해요. 앞서 ‘전도폭발’에 나오는 질문을 던지는 분에게 제가 가진 아쉬운 점은 예수님의 지상명령과 같은 성경의 내용을 약간 문자 주의적으로 해석한다는 느낌이 있는 것이죠. 우리가 본을 보이고 선한영향력을 끼치고 가르치는 것도 어떻게 보면 제자도의 삶을 살아내는 한 형태로 볼 수도 있거든요. 하지만 ‘제자도 운동’이라는 프로그램을 만들어서 교회 안에서만 고착되고, 구역, 셀 등의 우리만의 세상을 만들어서 우리끼리만 행복한 착각 속에 빠지는 것이 아닌가 하는 아쉬움이 있어요.

세진: 그럼 오히려 반대로 사회정의에는 모든 것을 걸지만 예수를 삶의 주나 구세주로 고백하지 않고, 존경할만한 인물, 윤리적 선생으로만 생각하는 성향은 어떻게 해석될 수 있을까요?

상민: 로마서 5-6장에 나오는 구원에 관한 이야기와 연결되는 것 같은데... 글썄요. 제가 정의하기에는 뭔가 부담스럽네요. (웃음) 물론, 제 나름대로 정리된 생각은 있지만, 분명히 바울은 예수를 접하지 못하였지만 죽은 이들에게 어떤 또 다른 길이 있을 것이라고 이야기했어요. 그리고 베드로 전서인가요? 예수께서 음부에 내려가서 죽은 자들을 위해 빈다는 내용이 있는 것으로 기억하고 있어요. 그래서 저는 예수에 관한 직접적인 고백이 없으므로 저 사람은 죽으면 이렇게 혹은 저렇게 될꺼야라고 말하는 것은 좀 무례한 태도 같다고 여겨져요.

세진: 구원이 무엇인지, 어떻게 정의되는지에 따라서 다를 수 있겠네요.

상민: 네. 그렇기도 하죠. 어떻게 보면... 저는 그런 질문이 같은 크리스천을

부끄럽게 만든다고 느껴 저요. 그래서 주변 크리스천 친구들이 이런 부분을 논쟁하는 모습을 보면 “그럼 너는? 너는 너의 구원을 확실할 수 있어? 죽어 봐야 알 수 있는 것 아니야?” 라고 묻고 싶은 마음이 목까지 차올라요. (웃음) “너는 예수를 너의 주로 고백하지만, 그만한 열매가 네 삶에 있느냐?” 혹은 “네가 하나님을 ‘주여 주여’ 고백하는데, 막상 그분 앞에 섰을 때 하나님이 너를 모른다고 하신다면, 그것을 감당할 자신이 있느냐?” 라고 되묻고 싶은 마음이 사실 제 안에 있죠. 쉽게 판단할 수 없다고 생각해요. 확신이 있는 사람임에도 선한 것을 끊임없이 지키려고 하는 분들의 노력이 매우 귀하다고 생각해요.

세진: (침묵) 형제님이 생각하는 구원은 무엇인가요?

상민: 제가 생각하는 구원은... 저도 잘 모르겠어요. 구원에 관한 정말 다양한 이론과 다양한 형태의 이야기를 들었는데... 결국 제가 생각하는 완전한 구원은 제가 동의한 성경의 가치가 이 땅에서 실현되는 것, 하나님의 통치가 이 땅에 임하는 것이라고 말하고 싶네요. 제가 제일 좋아하는 성경 구절은 주기도문에 있는 “나라이 임하옵시며,” “Thy Kingdom come”인데요.<sup>5</sup> 저는 이것을 바라고 있고, 이것이 가장 궁극적인 구원이 아닌가라고 생각해요. 그것을 이루고자 끊임없이 노력해야 하지 않느냐고 생각합니다.

세진: 네. 감사합니다. 네 번째 질문입니다. 한국 기독교의 현재 부르심은 무엇이며, 또 그것을 위해 아나뱃티스트 신앙이 나눌 수 있는 부분은 무엇일까요? 그런데 그 질문에 대답하기 전에, 우선 형제님은 자신을 아나뱃티스트라고 생각하시나요?

상민: 이 부분이 사실 좀 힘든 질문이에요. 저는 아나뱃티스트의 배경을 가진 것이 아니라, 병역거부에 도움을 얻기 위해 아나뱃티스트/메노나이트 교회를 찾은 사람이기 때문입니다. 또한 이 부분은 저 자신의 태도의 문제인데요. 제가 저 자신을 정의하고 정의 받는 데에 조금 민감해요. 그래서 누군가는 “너는 아나뱃티스트다”라고 할 수도 있고, 또 다른 누군가는 “아니다”라고도 할 수 있는데, 제 대답은 (조심스럽게) “사실 나도 잘 모르겠다”라고 말할 것 같아요.

세진: (웃음) 아까 구원에 관한 질문과 뭔가 좀 비슷하네요.

상민: 네. 저는 애매한 것보다는 뭔가 확실한 것에 저 자신을 투자하는 것 같아요. 구원이 무엇인지 잘 모르겠고, 내가 메노나이트인가 하는 것은 잘 모르겠지만 제가 옳다고 확신하는 일은 해야 된다고 생각하는 편입니다. 그런 점은 메노나이트 신앙으로부터 많은 영향과 도움을 받았습시다. 그런 측면에

---

5 마 6: 10.

서 봤을 때 아나뱃티스트다 라고 볼 수 있는 것 같네요. 멤버십이나 또 다른 부분에는 좀 약할 수 있지만요.

그 전에 질문하신 네 번째 질문은 제가 병역거부자라서 하신 것 같은데요. 저는 어떤 형태로든 사회의 소수자가 된 경험이 있어서 다양한 소수자의 시각에 대해 공감하는 것 같아요. 그리고 관념적인 평화가 아니라 정말 실제적인 평화를 위해 한국교회가 많은 노력을 해야 하는 것이 아닌가 하는 마음이 있어요. 한국에서는 교회가 오히려 혐오를 부추기고 있는 측면이 많아요. 동성애에 대한 태도도 그렇고, 다른 종교에 대해서도 그렇고, 북한에 대해서도 그렇고... 그런데 이것이 올바른 교회의 역할인가 생각할 때, 솔직히 절망을 느끼는 부분이 있어요. 어떻게 교회라는 단체, ‘몸’이 혐오와 분노와 갈등을 부추기는 행동을 할 수 있는지요. 어떻게 사랑할 것인지, 품을 것인지, 용서할 것인지에 조금 더 한국교회가 집중해야 하는 것이 아닐까. 집중해야만 하지 않느냐고 조금 더 강하게 이야기하고 싶어요. 한국에 아나뱃티스트에 대하여 공부하고 알아보려는 움직임들이 많이 있는데, 그런 사람들이 아나뱃티스트의 신앙과 전통과 유산을 나눔으로써 한국교회의 약한 측면을 조금 더 보강할 수 있지 않을까하고 기대합니다.

세진: 마지막 질문입니다. 형제님의 병역거부 경험을 한국 기독교 역사 속 박해라는 큰 맥락의 한 부분으로 이해하시는지요? 예를 들어 19세기 초의 가톨릭 순교자나 20세기 민중 신학 운동의 박해 경험처럼요.

상민: 글썄요. 허허 (웃음). 제가 쉽게 답할 수 없는 것 같아요. 제가 신학을 공부한 사람도 아니고요. 조금 다르다고 생각해요. 한국 기독교의 지금 상황에서 병역거부는 하나의 사고라고 봐요.

세진: 어떤 사고요?

상민: 어떤 사고냐 하면 ‘배달 사고’ 인 것이죠. 기독교가 전달되는 과정에서 기독교의 중요한 유산이 전달되지 않아서 이런 비극이 일어난 것 같다고 느껴요. 평화적인 삶은 분명히 기독교가 가진 고귀한 유산에 당연히 포함되어야 하는 부분인데, 그것이 전달되면서 빠진 것이므로 순교나 박해라고 보기에는 좀 무리가 있는 것 같아요. 배달 사고고, 비극이라고 저는 느껴요. 병역거부와 같은 평화적 실천은 2000년 넘는 기독교 역사 속에서, 또 한국기독교 안에서 갑자기 툭 튀어나온 것이 아니에요. 그 긴 역사 속에서 분명히 고귀하게 전달되어 내려오던 것인데, 그런 실천을 보고 “저것 참 이상하다.” 라고 말하는 것은 분명히 사고라고 저는 생각해요. 사실 저는 이런 식으로 제 행동을 강하게 변호하고 싶은 마음이 있어요. 제가 어딘가에서 그냥 툭 튀어나온 것이 아니라는 거죠. 사실 메노나이트나 평화적 배경이 없는 사람이 신앙을 가지고 병역거부를 했다는 것 자체가 신앙이 가지고 있는 한 측면을



나타낸 것이 아니냐고 반문하고 싶은 것이죠. 이러한 실천은 기독교 역사 속에 없었던 것이 아니고, 오히려 이러한 가치를 말하지 않고 침묵하는 것이 더 큰 문제 일 수 있다고 말하고 싶어요. 이것은 명백한 배달 사고인 것 같아요.

세진: 그럼 배달 사고는 언제부터 일어났나요?

상민: 그건 콘스탄틴 (Constantine)까지 올라가야겠지요?

세진: 그렇죠. 그럼, 한국에서는 언제부터죠? 처음 한국에 기독교가 들어왔을 때로 올라가야 하나요? 이 질문은 한국 기독교 안에서 평화적 실천이 슬그머니 빠졌던 점을 지적하는 질문인 것 같거든요.

상민: 제 개인적인 생각에는 교회가 정권과 손을 잡으려고 한 시점이 제일 컸다고 봐요. 군사 쿠데타를 일으킨 사람을 위해서 기도하고, 그 사람을 예호수야 장군 같이 묘사했던 점이죠. 알게 모르게 한국 기독교 선배들이 강한 힘에 대한 전망을 갖고 있지 않았나 생각합니다.

신앙이 국내에 소개되는 과정에서 나를 로컬라이징(localizing)한다고 생각해요. 예를 들면 헨리 나우웬 (Henri Nouwen)이 동성애적 성적 지향이 있다는 것은 상당히 오랜 시간 동안 한국에서 알려지지 않았고 최근에 와서 조금씩 소개된 바가 있죠. 존 스토틀 (John Stott)가 병역거부자라는 사실도 그분의 책을 번역한 분들이나 그분을 아는 분들은 당연히 알았을 텐데요. 또 예수원의 아처 토레이 3세 신부님(Reuben Archer Torrey III, 대천덕 신부)도 병역거부를 하셨다는 이력이 그분의 삶과 이야기가 소개될 때 같이 소개될 법도 한데 그런 사실이 불편하니까 일부러 가려지지 않았나 하는 생각이 듭니다.

그 첫 단추가 어디서 꼬였나 하는 부분을 정확히는 잘 모르겠고요. 이것은 성한이형 분야 같은데요. 이승만까지 가야하지 않나요?

김성한: 배달사고가?

상민: 네.

성한: 그런데 배달 사고라고 만약에 틀을 잡는다면, 나는 사실 앞의 질문으로 다시 돌아간다고 봐. 나를 가장 불편하게 만드는 질문들이 사실은 내 안의 무언가를 건드리는 것이라고 생각해. 아까 말했던 사람들의 질문 중 “네가 병역 거부를 한 동기가 정말 온전히 신앙에서 나온 것이냐, 아니냐?”라는 질문은 굉장히 무례하게 여겨질 수 있어. 하지만 반대로 우리가 가장 많이 씩씩해야 하는 우리 안의 어떤 부분을 건드리지 않나 생각해.

세진: 그래서 불편한 거죠.

성한: 그렇지. 예를 들어, 상민이가 아까 ‘배달 사고’ 라고 말했는데, 그 주장은 어떤 형태로든 예수의 가르침의 중심이나 원형이 있었을 것이라고 간주하

는 거잖아? 그리고 우리의 구미에 맞게, 그게 콘스탄틴 (Constantine)이 되었던 이승만이 되었던, 그 원형을 왜곡시켰다고 하는 거고, 우리는 지금 그 왜곡에 대해 반응하고 있는 것이라고 생각하는 거잖아.

그러면, 예수가 가졌던 복음의 원형이라고 하는 것으로 돌아가 보자는 거지. 그럼 아까 말한 대로 마태복음 28장 19~20절이 말하는 제자도로 돌아가겠지. 물론 우리는 총체적인 의미에서의 ‘제자도’와 ‘선교,’ 즉 평화도 포함된, 모든 것을 가르쳐 지키고 행하게 하는 복음으로 돌아가는 건데….

내가 기독교 평화주의 전통에서 갖는 어떤 긴장은 뭐냐면, 예수를 구원의 중요한 핵심으로 고백하는 것에 대해서 조심스러워진다는 점이지. 왜냐하면, 그 고백이 누군가는 밀어낸다고 생각하기 때문인 거야. 그래서 긴장이 생기는 거지.

상민: 그렇죠.

성한: 나는 그 긴장을 부인하지 않아. 그리고 그 긴장은 있을 수밖에 없는데, 내가 두려운 것은 무엇이나 하면 주라고 고백하지 않으면서 어떻게 그 사람을 우리가 따라갈 수 있냐는 거야.

그런 면에서 나는 너에게 따지듯이 질문했던 사람들의 질문이 거친 질문일 수 있지만, 그 사람들이 느끼는 본능적인 어떤 부분이 있다고 생각해. 우리가 자연스럽게 삶을 통해서 복음을 증거하는 것도 맞고, 다른 이들에게 복음을 강조하지 않는 것도 맞는데, 나는 우리의 내적인 태도가 우리 다음 세대 사람들과 또 주변의 다른 사람들에게 어떻게 전달될 수 있는 것인가 하는 의문이 들어. 과연 우리는 충분한 내공을 가지고 우리 자녀들을, 혹은 교회 공동체 안에서 서로를 교육하고 일으켜주고 있는가. 그 부분에서 우리에게 많은 도전이 놓여있다고 생각해. 지금 현재 북미 메노나이트 교회 안에서도….

세진: 맞아요.

성한: 왜냐하면 외부적인 도전이 없어지고 나서부터, 예를 들면 이제 징집이 없어지고 나니까 평화라는 것이 붕 떠버리는 거야. 어찌 보면 외부에 반응하는 평화, 소극적인 평화는 있었을지 모르지만, 적극적인 평화의 모습은 없어 버리게 되는 거지. 그래서 평화를 중심으로 한 예수의 제자도가 지금 북미 메노나이트 교회 안에서는 굉장히 공허하게 되어버린 상황인 거지.

세진: 아니면 예수와는 상관없는 평화가 생기기도 하는 거죠. 그런 부분도 많이 보여요.

성한: 그렇지. 오히려 이제, 평화 전통으로서의 틀만 남아있고 예수는 없어져 버리는 거지.

세진: 맞아요. 그래서 아까 제가 그 질문을 한 거예요. 구원에 대해서….



성한: 그래서 되게 두리몽실해지고, 하나님을 굳이 들먹이지 않아도 되는 휴머니즘에 기초한 평화주의로 얼마든지 가도 전혀 문제가 되지 않는 지점까지 가기도 하는 거지. 스펙트럼처럼 쪽 펼쳐져 있는 건데 그중에서 우리가 굳이, “예수님 얘기가 중요하다”라고 말을 한다면, ‘그게 어떤 의미인가?’ 라는 의문이 들어. “지금 당장 고백해봐!” 라고 다그치고 싶어서가 아니라, 어쨌든 그 중심으로 우리의 생각과 대화들이 이루어지고 실천이 이루어져야 하지 않나 싶어.

그래서 아까 말한 배달 사고든 하나님의 통치든 (“thy kingdom come”) 하는 말이 이 맥락 안에 있다고 생각해. 그런데 우리가 그런 맥락을 놓치면, 지금의 내 현실에서 기독교인이라는 정체성을 붙잡고는 있어야 하는 것 같으면서도, 자꾸만 선택적으로 가져다 쓰게 될수 밖에 없는 것 같아. 내 필요와 상황에 따라... 사실 이게 나의 고민이야. 우리가 어떻게 비폭력적인 방식으로 여전히 예수가 주라는 고백을 할 수 있을까? 그런데 그것은 1~3세기의 기독교인들이 취했던 태도인 거잖아? 시저(Cesar)가 왕이 아니다. 하지만 그 사실을 증거하는 모습은 힘이나 무기를 들지 않고... 내가 죽더라도...

세진: 그래서 죽었죠.

성한: 그렇지. 하지만 그들이 한 고백의 대상과 내용은 분명하지 않았나 생각해. 그러나 우리가 그 고백을 희미하게 만들면, 그다음 얘기는 산으로 가 버린다고 생각해.

상민: 갑자기 ‘난 망했어’라는 생각이 드네요.

세진: 왜요?

성한: 그게... ‘나도 잘 모르겠다,’ ‘고민이 된다.’ 이런 대답이 실존적인 대답으로는 맞는 것 같은데... 그렇지. 나도 구원에 대해 다 모르지. 나도 구원에 대한 두려움이 있지.

하지만 상민이가 아까 말했던 것처럼, 그 두려움 속에서 여전히 우리가 최선을 다하며 바른 선택을 하려고 노력하고, 그러면서 구원을 이루어 가는 것이 아닐까라는 생각이 들어. 물론 폭력적이지 않은 방식으로...

(성한 퇴장)

상민: 맞아요. 사실 제가 실존적으로 가지고 있는 신앙의 신비함과 구원에 관한 고민도 저의 행동과 크게 연관되어 있어요. 그래서 제가 확실하다고 여기는 부분에 더 매달리는 것 같아요... 그렇네요. 아까 복음/구원의 원형에 대해서는 뭔가 모호하게 대답해놓고 뒤에서 배달 사고였다는 표현을 쓴 것은 모순이라고 느껴지기도 하네요. 하지만 한국 기독교 역사 안에서 배달 사고와 더불어 어떤 치우침이 있었다는 생각은 들어요.

세진: 평화에 관한 부분이 슬며시 빠졌다는 점인가요?

상민: 네, 저는 그 시점이 앞서 말한 대로 한국의 국부라고 불리는 이승만까지 올라갈 수 있다고 생각해요.

세진: 형제님이 하신 말씀을 들으면서 제가 느낀 점은 형제님에게는 구원과 복음에 대한 고민이 있었지만, 그러한 고민을 계속하는 과정 안에서 병역거부를 선택하신 것 같아요.

상민: 그래서 제가 한때 즐겨 쓴 표현이 예수를 믿는 것보다, 어쩌면 예수에 동의하는 사람일지도 모른다고 생각했어요. 하나님 나라와 구원, 이 부분은 잘은 모르겠는데... 예수라는 사람이 말한 가치와 그가 보인 본보기들이 나를 감동하게 했고, 나에게는 그것이 유일한 답처럼 느껴 졌고, 그분의 통치 방식이 세상에 널리 퍼지는 것이 저에게는 구원처럼 다가왔던 거죠. 그래서 지저스 팔로워(Jesus follower)란 표현도 잘 와 닿았던 것 같아요. (침묵) 음... 이 질문을 내주신 분은 저의 답을 듣고 굉장히 실망하실 것 같네요...

세진: 응? 아니요... 저는 그렇게 생각하지 않아요. 저는 오히려, 아까 성한 간사남께서 말씀하셨듯이, 미국에서 징집이 없어지고 나서 미국 메노나이트 안에 평화 실천이 오히려 붕 떠버리는 현상을 많이 보거든요. 그러면서 형제님의 이야기가 북미 메노나이트 안에 퍼졌을 때, 과거를 그리워하며 형제님의 이야기를 너무 신성화하는 것은 아니냐는 우려를 개인적으로 했었어요. 형제님의 결정을 제가 존중하지 않아서가 아니라, 북미에서 형제님의 이야기를 접한 분들이 자신들의 옛날을 그리워하는 데에서만 멈추고, 지금 현재 자신들의 자리에서의 평화 실천에 대한 신앙고백의 필요와 실질적 실천에 소홀히 해서는 안 될 텐데라는 고민을 솔직히 했거든요.

상민: 그 부분에서는 오히려 반대로 나와 이제는 상관 없다고 느꼈던 것들이 어쩌면 가장 밀접하게 연관된 것인 경우가 많다고 생각해요. 미국에서 징집이 없어졌다고 하더라도 이제 결국 군대에 물리는 사람들은, 유색인종인들이나 저소득층 사람들인 경우가 많아졌어요. 그런 어려운 환경에서 군대를 선택했던 사람들이 한국에 오면서 주한미군범죄가 많이 늘어나고 있고요. 굳이 그렇게 연결하면 안 되겠지만요.

세진: 일리가 아예 없지 않죠.

상민: 세계대전 당시와 그 이후에 메노나이트가 열심히 평화 운동을 펼쳐서 병역거부를 공식적으로 인정을 받게 되었고, 이제 징집은 없어지게 되었지만, 군대제도는 여전히 진행되고 있고, 미국땅과 멀리 떨어진 동양의 한 작은 나라에서는 현재도 미군 부대가 자리를 잡고 있고, 또 그 때문에 여러 가지 어려운 문제들이 아직도 일어나고 있는 것은 아닌가라고 조심스럽게 묻고 싶기

도 하네요. ‘아직 끝나지 않았다. 폭력은…: 어떤 형태로든….’

세진: 형제님이 복음이나 구원의 확신에 대한 고민을 갖고 계신 점에 대해 약간 부끄러워하시는 점이 이해가 되지만, 저는 오히려 형제님께서 그런 고민 중에 병역 거부의 길을 선택하셨다는 것에 많은 감동을 받아요. 제가 형제님을 대했을 때의 느낌은…: 뭐랄까, 굉장히 사람다운 분인 것 같아요. 나쁜 뜻으로 하는 말이 아니라. 어찌 보면 지극히 평범한 사람이 정말 자신의 최선을 다해 진실하게 고민을 해서 내린 결정이라는 느낌이 많이 들어요. 그래서 저는 형제님의 그런 “평범함”이 다른 분들에게 좋은 영향력으로 전해졌으면 좋겠다는 기대를 하게 되네요. 이 형제가 스스로 확신에 차서 이 일을 실천한 게 아니라, 자신 나름대로 고민을 해서 한 결정인데, 여기까지 왔다. 그래서 형제님의 이야기를 전해듣는 우리도 우리의 “평범한” 삶의 자리에서 어떤 고민을 하고, 어떤 최선의 결정과 고백을 할 것인가 하는 질문을 진솔하게 전해주셨다고 생각해요. 그러니 이 인터뷰, 그리 걱정하지 않으셔도 될 거라는 마음이 드네요. (웃음).

상민: 항상 망설이고, 항상 고민하는 게, 어쩌면 저를 표현하는 특징인 것 같아요.

세진: 어떤 확신이 와서 결정을 한 게 아니라, 어떻게 어떻게 씨름하다 보니 여기까지 왔는데, 돌아보니 내 자신이 가장 약했을 때 내가 봐도 말도 안 되는 결정을 실천한 모습을 보는 것….

상민: 그래서 다들 “돌아보면 은혜다”라는 말을 하는 것 같네요.

세진: 네, 맞아요.

상민: 맞아요. 저도 그렇네요. 은혜인지 사고인지는 잘 모르겠지만, 돌아보면 일단 놀라운 거죠.

세진: 네. 아무튼, 정말 감사합니다.

상민: 아니요. 제가 감사합니다.



# Living Vulnerability:

## Indigenous Perspectives on Evangelism

AN INTERVIEW WITH PATRICIA VICKERS AND RANDY WOODLEY

BY STEVE HEINRICHS<sup>1</sup>

**Steve Heinrichs:** *The word “evangelism” conjures up many different images and feelings and definitions. When I say the word, what kinds of things come into your mind—images, a gut response, a traditional teaching, or a story?*

**Patricia Vickers:** My initial response is that there is no difference between evangelism and “missionization.” I look to the past and what missionization meant on the Northwest coast. There were ceremonial masks that were burned and my great-grandfather burned his regalia and ceremonial paraphernalia because that’s what he was told he needed to do in order to accept the teachings of Christ. There was a great misunderstanding that took place. At the same time, I look at evangelism and I say, why are you concerned about that? Or even social justice for that matter? What’s of concern is that you and I live out

---

<sup>1</sup> *Patricia Vickers is from the Tsimshian Nation of the Eagle Tribe, Village of Gitxaala. A mother of four and grandmother of four, Patricia is an artist, writer, and psycho-therapist who enjoys singing and dancing. Patricia did her doctoral work on ancestral teachings and she is currently the Director of Mental Wellness at the First Nations Health Authority, British Columbia, Canada.*

*Randy Woodley was raised near Detroit, Michigan, and is a legal descendent of the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma. Randy and his wife, Edith, maintain Eloheh Farm and Eloheh Village (“eloheh” is a Cherokee Indian word meaning harmony) for Indigenous Leadership, a permaculture, regenerative teaching farm and community in Newberg, Oregon. The director of Intercultural and Indigenous studies and Distinguished Professor of Faith and Culture at George Fox Evangelical Seminary, Randy is currently working on a book on missions. His most recent work is Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision (Eerdmans, 2012).*

*Steve Heinrichs, a white settler and the director of Indigenous relations for Mennonite Church Canada connected with Patricia and Randy to talk about evangelism. What follows is an excerpt of their conversation.*

what we believe and our identification with mystery. I can't articulate it clearly other than to say that in ceremony—regardless of where it is happening—when we're in the ceremony we experience something that is beyond words, because words are a mere symbol or sign, trying to describe that which we experience. Identification is being in that space of unity with a greater force, a force that no one person can say they truly know. So I spend most of my day working to remember that place and to go into it—but not to be so heavenly minded that I'm no earthly good. So I'm still present with you in this conversation but the prayer is that wisdom be able to speak through us. So what does that mean? It means that my identification isn't in what job I hold or what work I'm doing—or the evangelism I want to carry out—it simply means I'm present as we go on this journey together; present with my life experiences and my limitations. So again, where is there evangelism in that or a concern for it? You simply live.

**Randy Woodley:** When you say “evangelism,” the first thing I thought about was the way I was taught when I first started following Jesus, back on October 23, 1975. That was a good decision; the best decision I ever made. But the church trained me to be what I would call a “flaming evangelist,” but not a good Indian. So, all the American Indian posters that I had on my walls, the Awkwesasne Notes that I was reading, and my long hair and braids...well all that, I was told, had to go: “Don't go on that road no more. Go on the evangelism road.” So I got myself a suit and a bunch of those white-man ties; and I was preaching at Jesus festivals; and I was in an evangelism internship in North Carolina at the Heritage School of Evangelism, where I won the evangelism award; and I was witnessing on the streets and setting up summer evangelism programs; and I was on the streets at least one night a week until 2 or 3 am passing out tracts to prostitutes and pimps and everyone else. I was a flaming evangelist. I took Evangelism Explosion in the Billy Graham School, I took the Glad Tidings School of evangelism training, and all the rest of those methods. I did all that because I thought that is what I was supposed to do if I loved Jesus. Yet, I always had this weird feeling deep in the pit of my stomach, that I was maybe not doing the wrong thing, *but I was doing the right thing the wrong way.*

So I had to wrestle with that for many, many years. And I had to come to terms with who I was as a Native person and how my own family history fit into all of that. And hanging out with different Indigenous traditional people helped a lot because I began to see the truth in a lot of our Indian ways and to see Jesus in all these things.

I think it was in 1989 that I was given a dream. At that time I was a

commissioned missionary with the American Baptist Churches in Anadarko, Oklahoma, “the Indian capital of the nation” they call it—there are seventeen tribes in a forty-mile radius. By then I was convinced I had been going about things in the wrong way. I had been—well, really—a missionary oppressor for two years in Alaska. After that, I went to seminary and I felt I had to figure out a way to do this ministry in a good way. So I did that by surrounding myself with a group of elders and I hit the ground running. We were still leading people to Jesus but it was different. We were involved in lots of social action, like homeless ministry, teen pregnancy ministry, food pantry, after-school tutoring, and other important ministries. There was also extreme racism in that county. For example, the community was 57 percent people of color, and only 3 percent of these were in the work force of the top three employers and, of course, the jails were full of mostly brown people. So we started something called “Christians for Justice” where we began to take on those employers like the city and the county, the police force and the electric co-op in order to protest the existence of racial discrimination. By holding a national press conference we showed the very visible symbols of racism like the “Redskin Theater” and “Step N’ Fetch It” convenience store. We resisted all the ways that racism was so embedded there in the culture. It was really at Eastern Baptist Seminary that I changed drastically. People like Ron Sider, Tony Campolo, Manfred Brauch, and Samuel Escobar were really incredible at modeling holistic ministry for me.

But I don’t look at it as “evangelism *and* social justice,” because that’s the dualistic approach that’s inherent in the western mind. What they were trying to do in the Gospels is to share the message of Jesus. It had to do with living, loving, learning and then along the way you share what’s important to you because that’s what’s important in your life. It wasn’t a separation where we said, “Now we’re going to go evangelize *and* now we’re going to do social gospel.” Those are all categories of the western mind. We have been tricked by Enlightenment-bound dualism that separates all of life into little categories. We need to come back to living a whole life and forget about those categories. They can be useful for a short period of time, but we can’t live in those false realities, we have to come back together...putting Humpty Dumpty back together again. That’s the main task of the church...to learn how to live in wholeness and put Humpty Dumpty back together again. I try my best to not live two lives. I’m the same person at work and the same person on the farm and the same person when I go speak somewhere, so I never have to look behind me and think, “What did I say there?” I can just be who I am.

**SH:** *Sometimes in these conversations around evangelism and social justice we*

*don't name what we actually think the Gospel is. How do you understand the Gospel? What is it?*

**PV:** I appreciated what you said Randy about dualism; how with dualism, we need to ask where your responsibility lies when you are living that life. It's easier to live in an illusion; I'm not responsible as long as I'm living that duality, whatever that duality is. The identification I spoke of earlier requires that one takes responsibility for my actions. And so when you choose not to live in duality there is a vulnerability that exists. Embracing that vulnerability is a crucial part of it all, meaning I make mistakes. So when I leave the ceremony, I've received a blessing and I am to live and walk in that blessing. I'm accountable to the Creator; I'm accountable to my understanding. Now, I'm not a theologian. But the teachings of Christ are sacred words; they actually have life in them. So when I speak anything that's of any value or worth to somebody, words that can awaken their hearts, it's because it is coming from that eternal place, it's coming from that mystery, it's coming from, let's use your words—that gospel. That's my understanding of gospel.

What helped me to heal in a deeper place is the sweat ceremony. I'm from the coast where purification happens through an individual going out to purify. So the community sweat lodge is a different way, but a way that has helped me to be able to go really deeply into where I've needed to go and where I've needed to be. The fasting lodge has also helped me to heal, to inquire into self, to see, and to relax.

**RW:** The vulnerability issue I think is central to this conversation. The sweat—that's a very vulnerable place. I've seen a lot of people share things they'd never share anywhere else because for whatever reasons it's just a good place. In Cherokee, we call it *osi* "the good house." It creates a vulnerability that's cleansing. And the funny thing is, I've been in sweats maybe thirty years and in different tribes all over and never heard anybody say "Now what you share in the sweat, stays in the sweat," but every time I get in that kind of environment in the western world, someone says, "Do we all make an agreement that nothing we say in this room will leave the room?" You don't need to say that in the sweat because it's sacred. You wouldn't walk out and share somebody's heart and sacredness in a way that dishonored them.

The thing that marks the Western church—and I've been around it for over half a century—is hubris; there's a deep-seated pride and an overwhelming desire to control. And the cure for that is vulnerability. A significant conversion for me was when I came to understand that Creator—Jesus—is the most vulnerable being in the universe. That changed my theology completely. If



God is love, and love means being vulnerable (and it must include this), then God must be the most vulnerable being there is. And Jesus' life was certainly vulnerable; the gospel stories show him taking chances, and that's one of the things that should be in the DNA of the church. And yet, one of the first things that happens when I share in church contexts, people routinely come up to me and say, "Thank you for being so honest, so vulnerable and open." Like, it doesn't normally happen...like it's a new way to be when that [vulnerability] is the norm with Creator. We live in a culture that doesn't value vulnerability. So, although Indigenous peoples don't have a corner on vulnerability, my sense is that if Western people want to convert, and get closer to Jesus, they're going to need to become more vulnerable, because that's who God is.

**PV:** I think the way most people look at vulnerability is in terms of "weakness." And that's frightening. But vulnerability is more along the lines of intentional nakedness, and that takes courage and strength, yet not a strength that I can claim. It just comes when one is willing to be honest. There's almost a protection that comes when one chooses to stand in vulnerability, which doesn't mean that I won't be slandered or suffering won't come my way, but there is a covering that comes. That happens in the sweat. It also happens in the Eucharist. The Anglicans were the ones that came into my father's village. And so I grew up hearing these amazing prayers of contrition. By the time I was seventeen, I would go to the traditional service because all the old people were there. And there was something about those old people—their lived experience and their humility—and I would just find myself overwhelmed and crying while listening to the prayers. And you weren't supposed to do that in the Anglican church. They didn't expect you to be emotional.

When one is willing to be honest and vulnerable, then it is possible to enter into the sacred space where a deep awakening is possible. That's what makes one stronger, seeing from the spiritual awakening. One is changed. When I come out of ceremony the awakening creates a new pathway.

**RW:** I see something similar happening in Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings. The Church we had in Carson City—the missionaries had built us a big old stone building right on the Indian boarding school—when I first got there, there were only two Indians there, and both had worked at the old Residential Boarding School. Folks said "No Indians will enter that church unless they're being married or buried." But over the years we built trust in the community, and we had 60 or 70 people attending—it was an Indian mega-church! [*Laughs*] But when we had talking circles and sweats, people would come from the whole community. On special occasions we'd have

over a hundred for a talking circle time. Well, on Saturday nights, they would have over a hundred people for the AA gatherings. And I remember being brought to tears by the honesty in those circles and thinking, "If only people in the church could be this way, God would really be there."

**SH:** *In Canada, many settler churches have been brought to a profoundly vulnerable place through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools. Indigenous survivors have unveiled a Christianity that embraced colonial, religious supremacist ways; a Christianity that championed genocidal missional activities that sought to suppress Indigenous spiritualities and assimilate and break native communities in an effort to "save" pagan peoples. It's a dominant form of Christianity that continues in many ways. Some of these survivors are Christian. Many are not. Yet their collective witness has been gospel to us—leading the settler church out of the darkness and into the light. Often, the church positions itself as the one that bears or offers "good news," but in the TRC, the gospel is being offered by many who don't name Jesus as savior—they are bringing us to places of liberation. How might this inform a discussion on evangelism?*

**RW:** So how does it feel to get that "good news"? To realize that Jesus has been here [Turtle Island] all along, and that finally the settler church has something to learn? The dilemma is starting to unravel. In broad strokes: Europeans came to this continent with the message of the gospel, but not with the lives to match it. They came to a people who did not have the message of the gospel, but whose lives lived the gospel. And you people are finally starting to realize that. We've been waiting for over 500 years for some of you to listen!

**SH:** *But do we have to frame it in Christian terms? Do we have to insist that the healing words and ways that survivors are leading us into should be understood as, "This is Jesus." For example, Murray Sinclair, the lead commissioner of the TRC is Midewiwin (traditional Medicine Society of the Anishinaabe). I don't think he wants me mapping Jesus onto his work and to the gifts that he and others are offering. It's coming out of the roots and goodness of his spiritual tradition.*

**RW:** So the gospel that you and other settlers are hearing—that is freeing is it not? It reminds you of who Jesus is, right? The values that are promoted amongst these Indigenous communities—this vulnerability, peace, humility and truthfulness—are the same things that Jesus taught. But if you don't recognize what is being offered as coming from Jesus—as a Christian—then in some ways we would be doing what the first Europeans did to the natives. In other words, everyone gets to understand these spiritual truths in the way they understand it. You are not required to understand it in the Midewiwin way, or the Stomp Dance way or the Sun Dance way. You can see the beauty of it from

your own traditions, and your own ways, and you can definitely learn from the other ways as they stand on their own. But if Indigenous peoples are forcing you to understand it just according to their own ways, then we're guilty of the same thing that the Europeans did to us (and continue to do). The problem when the Europeans came is that they believed they had all of Jesus and the natives had nothing of Jesus. But if the church believes that Jesus is the Creator, then they have to affirm that Jesus has been here all along, in the Sun Dance, the Stomp Dance, the Midewiwin Lodge. It's not the task of the church to change those ways but rather to accept them as truth where they are. John 14:6 says Jesus is *the* truth, eh? Then all truth points to or reflects him regardless of where it's found or what we call it.

**PV:** What's the seed of the conflict that you (Steve) and other settlers are wrestling with?

**SH:** *I think it's the fear of Christian imposition. We've now seen how our faith was imposed upon the most vulnerable—more than 150,000 Indigenous children. We've seen the destructive spiritual violence that our churches have wrought. And we're afraid to do it again by saying, "Thank you survivors for showing us who the real Jesus is." Many of these survivors, I believe, don't want us to map Jesus on to this. In other words, we don't respect Indigenous spiritualities in their own right...we say, "Thank you Jesus! There you are at work again." And thus we commit the sin and violence of religious supremacy again.*

**PV:** It sounds like the fear is coming out of a conditioned mind, to see Christ in a certain way, with parameters, as to who he is and who he is not. And that entitles one to make judgments and to categorize because—what, you have the Bible? But Christ wasn't forced on the children. It wasn't the teachings of Christ that were forced on children. It was this collective conditioning. I think it comes back to our concern with dualism...conforming to certain beliefs about who Jesus is...but we don't know the fullness of the Creator now, and we will not know in eternity.

It's one of the reasons why I don't call myself a Christian—because "Christianity," from collective conditioning, a collective distortion of love, constructed collective illusion was imposed on children, my grandmother and my father.

**RW:** The church has to crawl out of the 500-year-old snakeskin that it's been in called Euro-centric theology. The Western church can't accept a lot of these things because their own theology continues to trip them up, because they think that European theology is the only theology. This is all related to white supremacy. Religious supremacy is inextricably bound to the white western European nations who produced it, and it resulted in the Doctrine of Discov-

ery—which is not just a religious doctrine, but a white supremacist Christian doctrine. None of those things can be separated. The history shows that they all worked in tandem. The white church felt like it deserved not only the land, the resources, the people and the power, but also the very gospel—*we know who knows God and who doesn't*. Now it's time for the church to come clean; to air their dirty laundry. Unless we wash and wash that dirty laundry and hang all that out to dry...we're not going anywhere. The western white church must learn to live with the fact they propagated a racist theology that was and is seen as normal. And I'm not saying all the missionaries and the pastors were terrible people, but that was the worldview and the religious system they were embedded in. They couldn't help but practice systemic racism. My concern is that the settler church today isn't digging deep enough and scratching hard enough to shed that old snakeskin, to see the gospel that is right in front of them. That will only come about through vulnerability, truth-telling, being confronted by the victims and realizing they don't have an adequate response because there is no sane response. Individually, this reconciliation can happen and it does. The problem is the larger church, the denominations, the ministries at the systemic level. They need to be dismantled, and control needs to be given up. But control is the *modus operandi* of the western church, so it's not easy—but it is the right thing to do if one claims to follow Jesus.

There are some good things that have taken place between the Western church and Indigenous peoples. But almost never have there been mutual and true partnerships. So we don't have much to reconcile back to...because that implies there was a relationship to begin with. And that means we need to talk about reparations and restitution and restoration. And it's the church, not the government, that bears especial responsibility because it was the church's Doctrine of Discovery that propelled colonization. That religious doctrine bore the progeny of Manifest Destiny—White Supremacy and, here in the States, American Exceptionalism—that really continues to dismantle Indigenous lives and lands.

PV: On the West Coast, when there is a conflict, we say there is spiritual unbalance. If we are to restore balance, there needs to be an acknowledgement of wrongdoing. Let me share an example: There was a group of seven young people who had vandalized a school where I was called in to help. So I called four hereditary chiefs together and asked how we could do this in a way that followed ancestral law. And the first thing they did was identify the nature of the wrongdoing; next they looked at the families of those who were involved, especially the father's sides, since that side was to step forward to take care of the damages; and then there was to be dialogue between the offended party

and the offenders, asking, "What will restore balance again?" The school said, "Simply an apology." But in ancestral law it was to hold a dinner, an apology from both the children and from the fathers, and they were to donate—each from their own pocket—the money that it took to repair the school. And then the question was, "Is this enough for those who have been offended?" And it is enough when the offended says yes, *and in this particular case it was more than what they were hoping for*. Then there is a public acknowledgement of restitution, and a feasting that takes place. When you get to that place, it is more about celebration. Balance has been restored. It's not about shaming or guilt.

Reconciliation—from an ancestral law perspective—begins first with people getting right as individuals. Never mind everyone else. You take care of your fears. You go into a fast or ceremony, so that you can walk in light and peace. My heart needs to be right. So that rather than living in duality, I can live the same in ceremony as I do out of it. That's what I understand the teachings of the many Indigenous ceremonies and communities that I've been a part of to be about. And it's how I understand what the teachings of Christ are about.

**SH:** *What are some Indigenous visions of what the Great Commission is all about? What do you make of it?*

**PV:** I don't think it's a big deal. I think back to being ten years old. My father was an alcoholic and my mother trained as a missionary at Prairie Bible Institute. It must have been a Sunday in the early afternoon, and I was the only one in the living room and the television was on and I was sitting there on the floor and listening to the preacher saying something that was really important about Jesus. Then I saw all these black hands and arms going up into the air and with open hands and the camera showing their pink palms and I sat there crying and I thought, "Wow, I want to be like that." I'm not like Billy Graham, but it just moved me really deeply. Something in this moment captured hope in the midst of oppression, in the midst of violence. I think that I wasn't really listening to what he was saying, but I was feeling what he was saying and entering into that space where people's lives were being awakened. I think that there's this thing that happens within the institution of the church and it comes back to what I said earlier, it's about being conditioned to think in a specific way. People generally grow up in that institution and they don't question how they are conditioned to think and whether or not it's an accurate representation of Christ's teachings. So I think that's our responsibility as we mature, it's to do that—to continuously do the fasting, to do the prayers, to go away to the spaces where I'm not distracted so I can be in a right relationship with the most important being. Then I can listen and be a part of a conversation, with whomever. And

there are some things that will concern you, but they don't concern me because I'm not called to do whatever it is. It's about this personal relationship and a practice within the relationship that I'm called to do certain things around purification that also come from my culture.

**RW:** The theology of the Western church fundamentally misunderstands the gospel. And so when it uses phrases like “the Great Commission” it already begins on the wrong foot. It begins with a misunderstanding of what the Great Commission is about. The Western church doesn't understand what salvation is. They don't get it. They think it's going out and telling people something and having them agree with what they said. I'm a missiologist by profession, and I'm writing a new book where I'm trying to lay this out for Western people. This all goes back to the problem of dualism.

Though there is no “Great Commission,” there is a “Great Commandment” and it's pretty straightforward: love Creator, Great Mystery, with everything you have (integrity of heart, mind, soul and strength, with vulnerability, persistence, patience, kindness, and all those things); and the second most important thing is just like the first. Note that in Matthew 22 it doesn't say here's one commandment, and here's number two. It says the second is just like the first, love your neighbor the way you love yourself. You want to see yourself be taken care, you want to feed yourself, you don't want to be hungry, you want to be in a relationship, you want to have people to love and that love you— well, treat your neighbour just like that and just with the same integrity. And what does that look like? Consider the Zacchaeus story. When Jesus comes to Zacchaeus's house he tells him—after Zacchaeus has promised to give back what he's stolen from the poor, and more—“now you have salvation.”

Or consider Jesus' inaugural sermon word in Luke 4, where he draws from Isaiah 58, which is all about justice. “This is the kind of fasting I want, free those who are wrongly in prison, lighten the burden for those who work for you—worker's rights—let the oppressed go free, remove the chains that bind people.” Now those stories are certainly appropriate to the church of the Indigenious people. Share your food with the hungry, give shelter to the homeless, give clothes to those that need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help. Then your salvation will come like the dawn and your wounds will quickly heal.” We should probably stop using the word “salvation” and instead use the word that it comes out of, which is “healing.” We will take that message that we have and that life that we live and we will do these kinds of things. And that is how healing will come to others and in coming to others, it will also come to us. That's what the Great Commission is about. It's not about going out and saying here's the message, but [rather] going out and living, being

and allowing—we can use this language—Christ to live through us as we go out and we live the life of Christ. And by the way, I come from Stomp Dance religion people. I wasn't raised traditional, but I came into it later. And we are not against preaching. In stomp they actually have someone who's called the preacher; as I've observed, he's usually the Stomp Dance chief or vice chief who gets up and exhorts with great passion and conviction, encouraging people to walk in the Harmony Way. Our way is called the White Path. It has to do with purity and not race or anything like that. And to live in harmony when we see each other and to help us and others in that journey, we have preachers. I know other Indigenous practices do as well in various ways. But it's not about whether or not we are sharing the message; it's about the message that we share.





# Evangelism or Social Justice: Reconsidering the Case in Africa

JIM HARRIES<sup>1</sup>

## *Preliminary Note:*

Reference to *Africa* here should be taken as being to sub-Saharan Africa. For the purposes of this essay, *Africans* are those people who are original residents of sub-Saharan Africa. Such reference should be taken as being to those within the area of the author's knowledge and comprehension. Clearly the author neither knows nor understands all of Africa or all Africans.

My use of the term "outsider" is usually with reference to a Westerner in Africa, but may also imply any foreigner in a community with which he is not familiar. I assume that other parts of the majority world have similar issues to those being faced as a result of outside intervention into Africa.

In this article, I assume that encouraging "economic development" is a perceived significant means of bringing about social justice.<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

Western Anabaptists concerned for global-wide mission and development face a dilemma. On the one hand the primacy of the importance of proclaiming the spiritual message of salvation seems to be abundantly clear in the Scriptures. On the other hand—it can seem very wrong to be pre-occupied in declaring such a message in contexts of major injustice. It would seem one ought to resolve or at least address injustice or poverty before or while sharing the Gospel.

---

*1 Jim Harries, who is from a Baptist church background in the UK, serves in Bible teaching in Western Kenya oriented to indigenous churches and the use of local languages. As well as a PhD in theology, he holds master's degrees in development and in biblical interpretation. Jim has lived in Africa since 1988. He is the chairman of the Alliance for Vulnerable Mission and an adjunct Professor of Religion for Global University.*

*2 While it is true that some Western Anabaptists may be more concerned for solidarity with the poor than they are for "economic development" in the classic sense, I think it is very difficult for Westerners not to get involved with "poor people" economically. Once they are so involved, then their economic involvement can in turn easily dominate their role, especially as perceived by the indigenous people they are reaching, but even by fellow Westerners. The practice of vulnerable mission endeavors to form and maintain key relationships between missionary and some indigenous people that are clearly not economically motivated.*

This article complicates this apparently simple picture on two fronts. It asks whether an outsider to Africa whose words and activities are backed with foreign money can be so sure that they are hearing and being heard, and that it is not their money that is both distorting their message while attracting those interested in wealth. Secondly, it points to issues in language use, understanding and translation: is clear communication even possible if the assumptions underlying the different parties' uses of the language concerned are so vastly unlike as to be mutually incompatible?

This article advocates for a recognition of the legitimacy of indigenous Christian agency. It suggests that outside intervention should not be hegemonic. It suggests that profound contribution to extant debates pertaining to indigenous contexts should be engaged in local languages presupposing local categories of thought by at least some of the Western missionary/development force. Outsider Anabaptist missionaries can most helpfully move in this direction through themselves using indigenous languages and relying on locally available resources. I believe that doing so would be being true to the Anabaptist tradition of identifying with marginalized people (as Anabaptists' own history is one of marginalization) and focusing on the great commission.<sup>3</sup>

### **Why Are Outsiders in Charge?**

Discussions on evangelism and social justice by Western missionary organizations and development agencies presuppose the making of a choice. The question of which of these should be the priority being addressed by outsiders (in our case to Africa) seems to presuppose that they have a directing role or even are in charge of evangelism and social justice in Africa. Why are outsiders in charge?

Human society tends to be complicated and integrated. People who live together for generations and who share a common language and history determine their actions, behaviors, and responses, in complex ways according to certain concerns. This kind of complexity is reflected in the way they use their language to express themselves. Outsiders are unlikely to grasp the contextual complexity of what is going on. The understanding that says that language learning is a process of picking up rules of grammar and substituting different sounds to those one would use in one's own tongue is unfortunately inadequate. In reality, accurate learning of a language is learning in totality how people integrate with one another in the full complexity of human society, in engage-

---

<sup>3</sup> David A. Shank, *Mission from the Margins: Selected Writings from the Life and Ministry of David A. Shank*, edited by James R. Krabill (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2010), 272, 275.

ment with its environment, throughout the full life-cycle. That is no mean task. Until it has been very well achieved, missing pieces of understanding can throw an outsider way off the scent of what is going on. An outsider being able even to begin to achieve something like a native comprehension assumes an achievement of a level of acceptance, and willingness of a local community to allow the outsider into their confidence. Racially related differences such as of skin color and other features can so mark out an outsider as to make the above level of integration extremely difficult. Non-racially related features can do the same, such as the nature of someone's hand movements or facial expression, their failure to pick up certain clues in communication, or their particular family background or connections.

I would like to ask: why does a community such as the above give an outsider a choice of how they should lead them? Given the kind of complexity that I mention above, does a choice like the above as envisaged by an outsider actually exist for them? Who gets to define what goes on in a community? Is it an outsider? Is it then entirely in the outsider's terms according to the categories decided by the said outsider? Can the community even comprehend the categories that the outsider uses in the first place? In our case, how does the community understand what is "evangelism" and what is "social justice"? Even if they have an inkling about them, can African people or others from the majority world grasp the depth and breadth with which Westerners understand these categories in protracted deliberations arising from particular visions for their future?

When the outsider has to lead in the process of either evangelism or development of indigenous people, something seems to be wrong. Now of course if indigenous people are not Christ-believers, then Christians have been commissioned to share the Gospel with them (Matthew 28:19). Then the outsider might be the one to take the initiative in Gospel outreach. But have outsiders been similarly commissioned to make others wealthy (i.e., to encourage their economic development)? Westerners may feel guilty about their own wealth, which they may seem not to be able to do without. Is that sufficient cause for converting "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19) into "go and spread your consumerist habits so as to relieve your guilt."<sup>4</sup>

Why are outsiders making decisions and dictating their terms to indigenous African people? There is at least one very good reason for this. It is very hard for anyone to stand up to a person who is offering to give them great

---

<sup>4</sup> For more on aid to the poor as a means of relieving guilt, see David Chilton, *Productive Christians in an Age of Guilt Manipulators: A Biblical Response to Ronald J. Sider* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1981).

wealth. It is especially difficult for the "poor" to make such a stand, and even more especially difficult for the poor in countries where corruption is rife.<sup>5</sup> Is someone who is being approached by an outsider whose brother works hard fulltime for a month to earn as little as \$40.00 going to insist that the gospel come without money attached? Even if the person themselves should want to take such a stand, will they be able to resist the enormous extended family pressure to capitulate to the accepting of a gift that amounts to, say, ten years' wages? We must consider this in the light of Jesus' warning that "we cannot serve two masters" (Matthew 6:24). Are outsiders, by offering "development" or social justice (that needs foreign money, as it inevitably does) as an alternative to the Gospel, seducing African Christians into implicitly contravening Jesus teaching in Matthew 6:24?

The last sentence above may only be touching the tip of an iceberg. All things being equal, some African people are likely to realize that development/"social justice" can be financially more lucrative than merely the "gospel" or evangelism. What then if the same Africans have difficulty distinguishing the material from the spiritual, or the secular from the religious? If so (see later in this article) then we are not giving them alternatives—Gospel or money. Instead, we are telling them that there is a gospel with more money, and there is a gospel with less money. If the gospel with more money, i.e., the one that comes with a commitment to the bringing about of social justice, is preferred, could that be the prosperity gospel, the gospel of covetousness, that may according to Ephesians 5:5 be a gospel that is idolatry?

Why is the West still "doing" development for Africa? I can come up with at least two prominent answers to this question. One is that it is because they cannot do it for themselves. Then we ought to ask how come in Africa, mostly well over one hundred years after the arrival of the white man, despite endless efforts at educating and giving a leg-up to local people, they still do not "develop themselves" without outside help and expertise? Two may be that even though they could do development for themselves they prefer not to do so because someone else doing it for them comes with extra subsidy.

If it is the former, what is being missed, and are we so sure that we are teaching people all that they need for kinds of development that enable social justice to take place?<sup>6</sup> If it is the latter, and our very offers of help are preventing

---

5 I.e., the poor living in societies that use the patron-client system.

6 With respect to this point, see especially Jim Harries, *Secularism and Africa: In the Light of the Intercultural Christ* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2015) and Jim Harries, *New Foundations for Africa: Beyond Religious and Secular Deceptions* (Bonn: Verlag fuer Kultur und Wissenschaft, forthcoming).

people from "doing their own thing" in probably a better way, then it may be time to do some serious re-evaluation.

I suggest that there is something wrong with the process that outsiders these days engage in. That something wrong seems to be closely connected to the relationship between the gospel and development. It could be exactly that instead of being presented as it is, the gospel is *all too frequently* presented as a way to prosperity under a guise of social justice. Could it even be that indigent people who are trying to identify the true gospel are defeated because of the enormous pressure they are under from outsiders to comply with the "gospel of money and prosperity"? Could it be that genuine believers are having to avoid those presenting "social justice" and may be being forced into the hands of those perceived at least by Westerners to have unorthodox teachings, just to avoid corruption?<sup>7</sup>

We asked in this section: why are outsiders in charge? More profoundly, why are North-Atlantic Christians discussing the appropriateness or otherwise of evangelism as against social action for Christian communities in the global South? A helpful answer to consider I believe is that the reason they are doing this is because the West continues to have inordinate power over Southern contexts, like those in Africa. That includes the power of Western churches over African churches. This power extends to the holding of financial purse-strings, and apparently to seeking to determine the parameters of debate pertaining to the African church, that is in English and rooted in Western ways of thinking, which says that a critical issue in ministry among the poor is getting the right balance between evangelism and social justice.<sup>8</sup>

## African Ways to Say No

Having re-evaluated the appropriateness of outside determination of African Christian contexts (and other African contexts), I want to consider the nature

---

<sup>7</sup> From personal observation, churches in Africa that are dependent on outside funding can as a result be weakened. Incoming funds tend to attract people interested in money, and to result in corruption. Yet if these outsider-dependent churches are advocating correct doctrine, then someone leaving them so as to avoid corruption may be moving in the direction of unorthodoxy.

<sup>8</sup> I would add that having power may not itself be the main issue here. People have always had different degrees of power over one another. The issue is perhaps having power that does not come hand in hand with responsibility, and thus with vulnerability to the context over which one has power. A parent who has power over their children is also responsible for them. Sometimes outsiders coming to Africa have considerable power arising particularly from their resources, but because they can at any time simply back down and leave they do not need to be fully responsible.

of indigenous responses to such wielding of power.

I have already mentioned above that an initiative that comes into a poor community with outside funding is hard to refuse. This should give us cause for concern. Inter-cultural communication is not only about language, meaning, or the development of appropriate relationships. It is also about power. Given the power imbalance between outside bodies seeking to promote evangelism or social action and indigenous populations being targeted: how can the latter actually say either "yes" or "no"? Do the latter have a choice?<sup>9</sup>

Indigenous people can say "no." They can direct outside interventions to follow their own interests in subtle ways that are not necessarily reflected at board meetings or in public (in the West) debates. One clear strategy that tempers outside domination is to take the money in apparent agreement, but *implicitly* on one's own terms. That is, to do what is necessary to enable the money to flow, then to use it in ways that make sense indigenously rather than according to the foreign logic apparently being imposed. Endless outside projects into Africa and the majority world as a whole are, I suggest, handled in this way at least to a degree. For the West, these projects may sometimes be considered to "fail." For local people, they have acquired the funds without excessive compromise to their freedom or way of life.<sup>10</sup>

"No" is not a much loved word in Africa. African people concerned for inter-subjective harmony prefer to agree with one another rather than to say "no" to one another.<sup>11</sup> Mutual verbal agreement may be more important than co-operation in the said project. The question "should we do x and y together" is very likely to meet a verbal and emotive "yes" response. No is not said verbally, because it is not desired relationally. No can be said through action. That is, according to the way that action, or lack of action, follows supposed agreement. This is a critical and vital point to grasp, but I suggest is also just the tip of yet another large iceberg that I now want to examine in more detail. *Evangelism* as conceptualized in the West may be accepted in principle, but not in practice. *Action for social justice* the same.

A running issue throughout this article is the question of which implicit

---

9 For more on this, see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271–313.

10 David Maranz, *African Friends and Money Matters: Observations from Africa* (Dallas, TX: SIL International, 2001), 150–1 explains this in some detail with one or two examples.

11 I say this on the basis of personal experience, but see also Maranz, *African Friends*, 162–9.

translation of a term I am referring to. Certainly African Christians familiar with English are likely to be doing *evangelism* as they know it. Just as certainly, they are likely to be seeking for *social justice*, as they know it. But are they even comprehending evangelism as envisioned in the West, or social justice as envisaged in the West? If what is happening in or is envisaged by the West are different things to what is happening or being envisaged in Africa, then why are we using the same words to describe both? They cannot help but be different, as the way they are perceived or done is bound to be influenced by the cultural understanding of the group concerned with practicing them. The same words are used to describe both when English is the language in use by both. This is one thing that makes the use of English in considering African issues particularly difficult. It underlines the incongruity of contemporary practices being explored in this article.

### Saying "Yes" or "No" to Outside Domination?

In order to respond in favor to one or the other of evangelism or social justice, presumably one needs some understanding of just what the two alternatives are and what they mean or imply. We could say that evangelism is the religious approach, whereas social justice is a more secular approach. How will such a contrast be understood in Africa?

Brent Nongbri may be able to help us here. For many Western people it is self-evident, says Nongbri, that "religion is...a universal feature of human cultures, and the individual World Religions are culturally specific examples of this general phenomenon of religion."<sup>12</sup> Nongbri's extensive research has found that this is actually not the case. "The isolation of something called 'religion' as a sphere of life ideally separated from politics, economics and science [the stuff of social justice!] is not a universal feature" Nongbri tells us.<sup>13</sup> Historically, and contemporarily, it appears that many people do not make a distinction between the religious and the secular. What will such people make of our debate between evangelism and social action?

It seems that the understanding that there is something called "religion" arose in post-1500s Europe.<sup>14</sup> European languages, including certainly English, has terms like "religion" and "secular" that seem to define this distinction. For other people around the world such a distinction may be no more than a

---

<sup>12</sup> Brent Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (London: Yale University Press, 2013), 24.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>14</sup> William T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 80.



"thin veneer";<sup>15</sup> they quite likely make no such basic distinction. If they make no such basic distinction, then how if at all, do they differentiate between evangelism and social action?

Richard Madsen has told us of Asian people, that apparent secular beliefs have been a creation of Western scholars.<sup>16</sup> I suggest that does not only apply to Asia. How, though, can Western intellectuals "create" a belief on behalf of other people? A critical way in which this can happen is through choice of language. English has terms such as "secular" and "religious" that are widely used in its discourse. Non-western people reading such discourse, even if the above distinction for them is lacking, will acquire some understanding of those terms. They will need to respond to those terms in some way in discussion. Often they are guided as to the way in which they are required to respond. They may have read many books from the West. They may well have been educated using a Western curriculum. They may well use the terms when communicating in English. They will really have little choice if the debate is about those terms. They will use the terms according to their own understanding. Their Western readers not having grasped such might in turn easily re-apply a Western understanding, and re-interpret what they read or hear according to their own presuppositions. Hence Western scholars can receive frequent re-affirmation for something that does not actually, for the indigenous people, exist. Nongbri points out that there are neither terms that translate religions or secularism in most languages, nor concepts that represent them.<sup>17</sup> Other scholars are saying the same thing. Do non-Western people like Africans even have terms in their languages that distinguish evangelism and social action in the way that Westerners perceive them?

Nongbri looks at the difference between description and re-description.<sup>18</sup> We can put it this way: African people may very accurately describe a situation using English terms in the way they understand them. Their description may be accurate and true, for them. Unfortunately (or fortunately) the fact that they use English means that their speaking or writing can become available to a wider set of listeners. (If they use a language other than English, then the key issue here is how a translator will render that language into English

---

15 Nongbri, *Before Religion*, 7.

16 Richard Madsen, "Secularism, Religious Change, and Social Conflict in Asia," in *Rethinking Secularism*, eds. Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 254.

17 Nongbri, *Before Religion*, 2.

18 Brent Nongbri, "Dislodging 'Embedded' Religion: A Brief Note on a Scholarly Trope," *Numen* 55 (2008): 443.



terms, like evangelism and discipleship or religion and secularism, for the sake of a native-English readership.) Those other scholars will *re-describe*. That is to say, it will be easy for them to apply their own meanings and implications into words used by Africans according to their African understandings. Such re-describing of the categories they use being different from the original will be at least inaccurate, or perhaps, plain wrong. When many scholars coming from the same background make the same kind of error, then they have invented something that is not there.

What does a world in which religion and secularism, or evangelism and social justice, are not clearly distinguished, look like? Nongbri explains that "we may very well be actively presenting back to ourselves the taxonomies that help to establish our own contingent and inevitably provincial social world as if their components were self-evident, natural, universal and necessary."<sup>19</sup> The same applies, I suggest, to our look at the contemporary world beyond the West. Thus we relieve ourselves "from having to do the much harder (but perhaps more necessary) task of re-imagining—outside of the framework of religion—how humans...might" actually interact in the majority world.<sup>20</sup> My aim in this article is not to articulate what that looks like. It is merely to point out that it is something that is different—and that the difference may be important.

The choice the West might see between evangelism and social justice is not the same as the choices others are seeing. That includes those "others" from Africa and the majority world who are good at English. Should it be evangelism or social action? Neither. Should it be some combination of evangelism and social justice? No, not that either: that is still incorrectly assuming that "evangelism" and "social justice" are some kind of universal culturally-neutral norms. What should it be? The right course of action, actually, because it must be devised using indigenous categories unfamiliar to them, must be one that outsiders will not understand. It may be as "beyond" the Westerner to understand as the contrast between evangelism and social justice<sup>21</sup> is beyond the understanding of many Africans.

## Biblical Models

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 455. Nongbri's comments are made with reference to the ancient world. I find that a lot of what he says is just as applicable to parts of the non-western world in contemporary times.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. Nongbri's reference is to the ancient world. I have here substituted "majority world," on the assumption that much of the majority world still functions in some similar ways to the ancient world.

<sup>21</sup> As understood in the West.

Scholars consider that in biblical times, the modern distinction between religion and secularism was not yet known.<sup>22</sup> We should not expect to find a sharp distinction between evangelism and social justice in the Bible. Most scholars of the Bible may well agree that we do not see such. At the same time, the Bible is frequently used to justify either an "evangelism" option, or a "social justice" option, or some combination of the two in the West's approach to Africa.

In discussing the Bible perhaps we ought to make overt reference to the language (as well as the version) of the Bible we are using. Native English speakers accustomed to a dualistic distinction between evangelism and social justice will generally, or at least commonly, read the same back into their Bibles. African readers will find and read their own particular assumptions back into their Bible. A Bible translated into a language uses pre-existing words that people already know. As a result content from those words is transported into the Bible. Reading of an indigenous language Bible from a basis of indigenous presuppositions will reveal indigenous content. From the above we should realize that because of implicit translations in and out of English being based on vernacular understandings, an African person will find their own "culture" being expressed even if they read the Bible in English.

Given the above, or despite the above, I think we can still say something about biblical teaching regarding evangelism and social justice issues. First I think we can fairly boldly say that biblical characters almost invariably did *not* relate to people while having big external backing for projects they were initiating. Neither Paul, nor Jesus, nor Elijah, nor even Moses operated with foreign funds to back their words and actions.<sup>23</sup> This means that their audience did not need to feel obliged to agree with them in order to ensure an incoming flow of funds from them.

Differences in languages/cultures did arise. A major one the New Testament points to is the issue of circumcision. For the Jews this appears to have been a presupposed absolute necessity. For the Gentiles any prospect that they might be circumcised could have been quite horrifying. The solution the New Testament comes up with is neither that Jews cease circumcising, nor that the Gentiles all be circumcised. It is rather that those who needed circumcision could be circumcised and those who did not need not. Note that whereas from the Western dualistic perspective, i.e., that which draws a clear line between

---

<sup>22</sup> The distinction arose around 1600. See Cavanaugh, *Myth of Religious Violence*, 74.

<sup>23</sup> With the possible exception of Paul's collection for Jerusalem, for a discussion on which see Dieter Georgi, *Remembering the Poor: The history of Paul's Collection for Jerusalem* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992).

evangelism and social justice (religion and secularism, etc.), circumcision or its absence hardly seems a big issue to write home about. For people who did not draw such distinctions, it might have been.

Many scholars would these days agree that the Bible needs to be interpreted contextually. This strongly implies that certain contextual differences between people reading the Bible, such as that of circumcision or not circumcision, should be permitted. The original biblical record pertains directly to people who lived in the Mediterranean basin, and little further.<sup>24</sup> The people receiving the Gospel in the New Testament record had intermingled, traded, and even intermarried for centuries. They were not as foreign to one another as are Europeans vis-à-vis many Africans today.<sup>25</sup> It seems we ought, on contrasting Europeans and Africans, to expect differences on a scale essentially unheard of in the biblical record. We should not, it seems to me, expect others to simply grasp Western approaches to mission, like the contrast between evangelism and social justice. If we cannot expect them to "grasp" such, then presumably neither should we impose such.

### The Appropriate Response

I want to draw further on Nongbri in our search for what should be an appropriate approach to missions' intervention in the light of the above. Nongbri's 2008 paper considers an approach to scholarship whereby academics who realize that "religion" is a new phenomenon (since 1600) talk of *embedded religion*. They by this means try to get away from the error of assuming that as religion is understood now, so it was then. To an extent, Nongbri tells us, they succeed. But he also points to a problem that arises in the process. That is, scholars who used the term "embedded religion" still considered that which was embedded to be the same "religion" that Nongbri is suggesting actually was not there at all. In other words, authors who talked of embedded religion are having their cake and eating it.<sup>26</sup> Use of the rhetoric "embedded religion" saves authors from the very essential task of re-imagining things outside of the framework of religion

---

24 I do not mean to imply by this either that it is therefore irrelevant outside of that context, or that interpretation needs to be a complex process involving particular historical awareness. Rather, I am simply pointing out that biblical actors did not face the breadth of cultural difference that contemporary missionaries can be up against.

25 Scientific estimate suggests that separation between African and European populations could have happened as long as 100,000 years ago (<http://www.pnas.org/content/94/15/7719.full>), allowing, presumably, for a lot of cultural distance to arise.

26 Nongbri, "Dislodging 'Embedded' Religion," 452.

altogether.<sup>27</sup> While Nongbri concedes that "there is no simple way out of this problem,"<sup>28</sup> so considering religion to be embedded does not necessarily help. Nongbri might have added that "correct" understanding of what is foreign has to be found in that very foreign thing, i.e., in that context. As for Nongbri, embedded "religion," so for our case embedded notions of the separation between evangelism and social justice. I suggest, drawing on Nongbri, that the "formula" that is to be found that will helpfully address a given context must be found through the engaging of the Gospel with that context, and not simply by extrapolating out from the West.

I suggest that we run the same danger as above with respect to questions of evangelism and social justice. Even if we say "neither" is fully appropriate, it is something else that is needed: Western missionaries and development workers will still continue to think on the same axis, of evangelism versus social justice. They will endeavor to embed their thinking into African reality—a process that does not avoid the main problem; that the categories they have in mind are simply not there.

This is where I go back to section one of this article. In the first section I asked: why are outsiders in charge in the first place, and why are they being consulted in the making of key decisions? Similarly, why are discussions pertaining to people's futures conducted in languages that are impregnated with numerous unfamiliar categories including those never known to humankind until recent centuries, languages that are incomprehensible to them?<sup>29</sup> Even if people are to learn something in foreign languages (Isaiah 28:14), I suggest that they should not be denied the opportunity to make sense of the details of their lives in a language that they understand and that tallies with their way(s) of life.

I will not be so bold as to say there is no place for donor-funded intervention on the side of the West to Africa. I have pointed to many issues of power, but I leave open the possibility that someone will find a way to help the poor using foreign funded projects. I would suggest though that there *is* a place for intervention that is not outside funded. Issues that arise from a chronic power imbalance are not resolved by the choice of either evangelism or the pursuance of social justice. An individual organization, church, or person may not be able to resolve global power imbalances. But they just might with careful thought and humility be a part of a few intercultural relationships that are genuinely *not*

---

27 Ibid., 455.

28 Ibid., 458.

29 For example, the assumption that there is something called "religion," and a particular distinction between evangelism and social action.

based on Africa's awe for the West arising from its money. People who so relate will *begin* to be equipped, I believe, to consider issues *related to* the question of evangelism and social justice through indigenous eyes.

Another facilitator of the kind of sensitivity in relationship I am advocating for above would be use of the appropriate language. A big problem with the use of English in Africa, for native English speakers, is that in their "native" use of the language they carry many, let us say, "culturally related presuppositions." We have looked primarily at just one—the assumption that there is a distinction between religion and not-religion (i.e., secularism). Someone talking on the basis of such an assumption can quickly get to the place where they are at cross-purposes with someone who is not. If the language in use assumes the difference and it is the language of the outsider, it becomes particularly difficult for the outsider to hear what is actually going on among indigenous people who do not assume the difference. Should the outsider allow the boot to be on the other foot, so to speak, and accept to use the language of the indigenous people, they will stand a much better chance of being enlightened.

This article does not claim to *answer* the question of the preference to be given to either evangelism or to social justice. I hope some of the reasons for not so giving an answer are clear in the above. There is no right answer to what is, in a sense, a wrong question.

The practice of mission that I am advocating, whereby some Western missionaries operate on the basis of local resources using local languages, is what we call *vulnerable mission*. The case for vulnerable mission has been made and is being made much more widely than only in this article and as a means to resolve many other issues loosely related to the choice between evangelism and social justice. Other material produced by the Alliance for Vulnerable Mission can be accessed at [vulnerablemission.org](http://vulnerablemission.org). Use of local languages and resources is a means of depowering the foreign missionary, while enabling understanding. Insights from such "vulnerable missionaries" could throw light on other questions on mission, justice, development and beyond. In another sense, vulnerable mission is itself the answer to the issue addressed in this article. I advocate that the practice of vulnerable mission be encouraged.

## Summary and Conclusion

Because the West's agenda regarding the choice between evangelism and social justice is presented to Africa with the force of money behind it, and in languages whose cultural foundations are not African, the discussion regarding the right choice between them is typically Western and not African. The poor who are the targeted recipients are easily left with little choice but to respond "yes" to what is offered, even if they then say "no" through their actions or in-

actions. Any apparent enlightenment arising from an intercultural context in which even an original description that was accurate is re-interpreted inaccurately because of the use of wrong presuppositions, is a mirage. In other words, try as one might to do otherwise, deep profound lasting sustainable relevance to a context needs to arise from within that context. Outside inputs must be appropriated in order to speak clearly. Even biblical models of working seemingly do not involve intercultural imposition of outside ideas and practices, but internally driven life transformation. The question of what is appropriate for Africa, between evangelism and social justice, seems to be irresolvable because it presupposes an absent distinction between "religion" and "secularism." Approaches to mission and development vulnerable to local contexts are preferable to parameters of thinking that are designed by "outsiders."

The Gospel reaches the heart. Unfortunately, it's likely that Western Anabaptists' promotion of social justice could quickly become much about the pocket. This would be particularly sad given Anabaptists' reputation for empathetic grass-roots engagements. Evangelism is not done by heartless, bodiless robots. It is done by real people who need to be committed to all of Christ's commands including that of loving one another. At the same time, evangelism, "priority," social justice, church, people, love, and all other terms or categories that one might evoke in a discussion about evangelism and social justice using English, will not mean for Africans that which native English speakers might imagine. For love to be expressed in a comprehensible imitate-able and sustainable way, it should not draw on outside resources that will lead to dependency. It should be practiced through engagement in local languages. Such engagement will reveal just how different pursuance of "social justice" may be to that classically envisioned from the West.

# Journeying with Jesus towards the Indivisible Gospel:

## Evangelism and Social Justice Entwined

ROBERT THIESSEN<sup>1</sup>

I have been living in cross-cultural ministry situations for most of my adult life, close to thirty years now. During this period there have been many issues that practitioners and armchair critics and scholars alike have argued about. Some seem inconsequential and others deeply affect the Kingdom of God. Perhaps the most significant tension has been in what is usually categorized as “evangelistic gospel” versus “social gospel,” with attempts to harmonize them “holistically.” It seems to me that the debate has largely waned while the reality of differences among practitioners has remained.

I write this essay from the perspective of having started as “evangelistic” and now struggling to be “holistic.” Without downplaying the significant differences in how Christ followers understand what our Master calls us to, I recognize that all these terms have a wide range of meaning to their users, and some of our difficulties are often semantic.

I also write this essay as a musing more than as an argument or defense. I have been blessed to be around many types of missionaries, of cultures, and of worldviews. I have grown. I am less sure of some things and even more certain about others. I value further learning and want to dialogue and partner with other practitioners from across the spectrum of Kingdom workers. So when I tell the following story and some of its outworking, it is more to invite reciprocal stories from people engaged in cross-cultural ministry than to argue with them.

Anne and I, in the early nineties, were living among the Mixtecs of southern Mexico in the isolated Sierra Madre Mountains, when we had an encounter with another young Canadian couple. We met them in the large market town one passed through to get to Yuvinani, the village we called home. They

---

<sup>1</sup> *Robert Thiessen, of southern Ontario, Canada, lives with his wife, Anne, and two children (Ruth and Philip) among Mixtec indigenous people in the states of Guerrero and Oaxaca, Mexico. He serves with MBMission, Abbotsford, BC, Canada (North American Brethren Church), and is also associated with Moravians in North Carolina, and the Unity of the Brethren in Texas.*

worked with one of the most respected Mennonite agencies that does “social justice ministry.” They were from Ontario (my province), they were our age, and it seemed like we could become friends, especially as we were involved in similar work. This is not an area of Mexico that attracts outsiders, and even fewer yet that care to make the effort to work with the indigenous people. After the first few minutes of excited greetings and inquiries of origin, talk naturally turned to what each of us was doing in southern Mexico (they were engaging a different group). They explained about helping to build latrines, teaching to boil water and researching ways to store cattle feed for the long dry winters. Then we described living in Yuvinani, learning the difficult tonal language, and sharing stories from God’s Word.

In just seconds this couple’s demeanor changed drastically, and the wife’s face turned deep red, and she angrily spit out: “How dare you try to change these people’s ancient spirituality!” After a very uncomfortable minute we were able to talk a bit about the issue, but it was clear we were no longer welcome, and we excused ourselves and walked away, puzzled and feeling a sense of loss.

We have returned to this conversation and its implications, time and again, during the past years as experience and thought have matured us.

Anne and I met in Honduras in the late eighties, both preparing to live cross-culturally among unreached peoples (distinct ethnic groups with no Christians). We agreed that we wanted to proclaim the Gospel. We understood that to mean: good news that God has come among us, he is good, he loves us, he wants a relationship with us, he is not the one putting up barriers to a relationship, and he is providing the means to restore relationships. We wanted to talk about how Jesus reveals his father in unique ways that are meant to be rest for the weary and burdened.

We knew how much this truth mattered in our own lives, and how God was changing and growing us as we walked with him. We enjoyed living among people different than the cultures we grew up in, and we seemed to be reasonably capable of undertaking this life-long endeavor.

We are both from movements that are clearly evangelical. Anne had the advantage of growing up in the middle of a “church planting movement” in Honduras. Her father pioneered the training of mature men in their own homes in ways that they could easily pass on to others. I had the blessing of being discipled, over a three-year apprenticeship in Honduras, through bi-vocational leadership training. My mentor trained local church leaders both as pastor/elders and as tradesmen. He taught guitar building, and I introduced artisan wood-turning for the tourist shops.

During this time neither of us had much direct contact with “social justice



ministries.” Coming from a Mennonite Brethren background, I would have described us as “Evangelical Anabaptists.”

Of course we were aware of Christian agencies with goals other than or beyond sharing the gospel. Anne had graduated from Wheaton College, and I had been around Mennonite Central Committee, and other groups. Honduras certainly had its share of such NGOs.

And we had witnessed the practical outworking of the gospel message. We had seen people’s lives change for the better in physical ways we hadn’t directly addressed. We had helped many people with their physical needs, and even devoted time and finances when it seemed appropriate. It’s just that we saw that as an outworking of the first; a lesser, or younger, sister to evangelism. I think back then we thought of our efforts as a means to gain trust so that we could get to the “real” work. And if we had to choose, of course we preferred proclaiming. The term “holistic” was starting to be popular in the eighties, and we embraced some aspects of the idea, but we still had few other ways to think about this.

In 1992 we arrived in Mexico, looking for an unreached people group among the indigenous of the southern regions. There were hundreds of groups, with millions of people among them. We ended up living among the Metlatonoc Mixtec people of Guerrero (a group that in the late nineties was deemed to be the poorest of all Mexico), spending our first years concentrating on language learning and acculturation. We were hosted for a couple years by the only evangelical church in the entire area of eighty thousand people. However, we also migrated for five years back and forth to the agriculture fields of Sinaloa in northwest Mexico, where the Mixtecs worked seasonally to gain much desired hard cash.

This concentration on language learning, understanding worldview and adapting our lives to flourish among them helped us avoid some common pitfalls such as imposing our leadership or starting programs that created dependency. Looking back, I am very thankful that our evangelical mentors understood Christ’s incarnation deeply enough to encourage us to take significant time to live among the Mixtecs before getting to the “real” work. In fact, we had been trained to think of this whole period as just as much proclamation as any subsequent part might be. The Brewsters, in their LAMP (Language Acquisition Made Practical) approach, talk about “Language Learning as Ministry”, and “Community is My Classroom.” They helped many evangelicals take their first steps towards “holistic” ministry, without most of them realizing it.

During this beginning period of intense learning, we were predisposed to withhold judgment about Mixtec life and worldview, realizing that we would

only have done so with far too little understanding for our assessments to be either correct or helpful. Of course, we wrestled with this, struggling to sort out what from our own background was real, true, and necessary for other cultures. Physical or comfort aspects of our culture were relatively easy to hold lightly, but ideas, especially spiritual ones, were harder to let go.

We were raised, as evangelicals, to think of Truth as immutable, applicable for all people at all times. Evangelicals also had a hard time distinguishing between Truth and our perception of truth. Later, we came to see the application of this idea as a product of the modern era rather than as anything inherently Biblical. But for those first years of adapting, this was perhaps the most significant life-changing part of our journey. At some points, as we examined previously unassailable tenets of our worldview, it seemed that we had been raised in a “house of cards” whose shaky foundations now seemed in danger of bringing down everything with them.

Among our new Mixtec friends, where so much was different from what we were used to, we had the opportunity to ponder and pray about what truth they needed to hear, and how we might be the bearers of it. We processed together what really mattered here, for people who had no Bible (in their own language), no Judeo-Christian underpinnings, and no sweep of history leading to great blessings of power and wealth.

We learned that the few believers had come to faith through a message so astoundingly simple that it made all the typical fine-tuned pre-packaged Gospel presentations irrelevant. We saw that they made decisions as a group, and we wondered how our “privatized” Gospel could fit that quality. We quickly realized that the distinctions between physical and spiritual were so blurry for them that our prayers and pills were insufficient in times of sickness and calamity. How do you ask “why” questions about a Bible story when your listeners have no practice holding intellectual discussions? What is “quiet time” and “devotions” for people who almost never do anything alone and have no written message from God (and can’t read anyway)? How do you have an orderly prayer time when there is no such thing as “thinking quietly in your head”?

As part of our language and culture learning, in our second year among them (when we had enough of the language to even undertake such a thing), we spent a few weeks interviewing all the believers, asking them what difference it made to them now that they were on the Jesus path. In addition to repeated comments about the men not beating their wives and daughters, they also were adamant that they no longer lived in fear of the spirits.

Mixtecs are what Westerners refer to as animists: people who entwine spiritual and physical forces such that everything that is tangible is rooted in the

unseen. These forces (what we would call "spiritual forces") can range from benign to evil, discreet to generic, personal to simple energy, etc. The Mixtecs' cosmology has numerous spirits, with the Rain God dominating. All of them are at the best, capricious, and at worst, malevolent. The Mixtecs understand the hardships of their world as direct actions of these gods, and any small favor they have received is only due to the strict observance of whatever ritual or sacrifice they think will placate the gods' wrath.

So the Mixtecs live in continuous fear. This is probably the greatest influence on their entire life. A snake slithers across a perilous path, and they are sure that soon someone will get sick. An owl hoots twice as it flies near a particular tree, and everyone wonders who will die next. After thousands of years of living this way, the ill omens and the talismans to counteract them are endless. And fear is pervasive.

Knowing this gave great weight to the new believers' testimony that now they don't fear the spirits. Why not? Because, simply, Jesus is bigger than any of the others. They didn't come to this conclusion through in-depth studies of the triune God, or his omnipotence, or perusing the Bible. They hadn't gone to a place of dis-believing in the spirits; they just knew that Jesus would protect them. They believed the simple stories they'd heard about Jesus calming the seas and driving out the demons. When they turned to Jesus, he changed both their physical lives and their spiritual lives, because to them, there is no difference.

I highlight this because it sheds light on my conversation with the Canadian couple, and leads to the question I muse about now.

I remember asking the woman, "Do you know any indigenous people? Have you spent time getting to know what they really feel and think?" From what I could gather, the couple had only ever made contact with indigenous people in the market town, and in Spanish. They didn't understand the most basic felt-needs and spiritual reality that the people lived with constantly. They had little awareness of the indigenous people's spiritual need.

Over the decades I have sometimes wondered where this couple ended up, and if their understanding of God's truth had changed. Were they, too, on a journey, undoing western assumptions that had kept them from coming closer to the indigenous people? Did they ever get to the place of feeling their indigenous friends' great fear of the spirit world? Did they grow into any perception that Jesus was the answer to the Mixtecs deepest needs, spiritual as well as physical?

I think that back then we—both couples—ignored parts of the reality of the human condition, each bound by different aspects of our Western tradition.

I haven't had enough opportunities to dialogue with others who started out differently—to hear their story. I hope that some will respond.

I am grateful to our Mixtec hosts for walking with us on our journey toward understanding what is real and what matters to God. While acknowledging how much we still don't get, and how easy it remains to be prejudiced, I know that alongside them we have grown, and we now recognize that Jesus is beyond our divisions. He affects our lives in both physical and spiritual ways, and, really, there is no line between the two, but as the Mixtecs believe, they are entwined.

# A Theology of Mission for Colonized Gentrifying Spaces

TOMMY AIREY<sup>1</sup>

*While we do our good works let us not forget that the real solution lies in a world in which charity will have become unnecessary.*

- Chinua Achebe

The social project named by literary critic bell hooks “imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy” has been founded on land grabs around the globe for more than 500 years. These interlocking systems of social, political, and economic oppression have worked ominously to seize property, disregarding “no vacancy” signs all over the planet. A more contemporary manifestation of this core strategy is the modern phenomenon of urban gentrification, “redevelopment” strategies dating back to at least the 1960s. Its latest iteration is rapidly spreading to inner-city cores all over North America, from New Orleans to Brooklyn, and San Francisco to Detroit.

One community’s ceiling is another community’s floor: as neighborhoods become gutted, blighted and burned out, property values drop and, eventually, “investors” scoop up land to “develop.” Sometimes, though, neighborhoods are *targeted* by banks and land developers *before* blight sets in. None of this “just happens.”<sup>2</sup>

As it was with land grabs in the “new world” since 1492, so today we, unfortunately, rarely find churches and Christian leaders committed both to evangelism *and* to the cultivation of sensitivity and social analysis. Before good news is proclaimed, root causes must be named in the midst of this opportunity-for-some-and-devastation-for-many situation. Drawing on the legacy of the African-American Civil Rights Movement and late twentieth- and early

---

<sup>1</sup> Tommy Airey lives in Detroit, Michigan, and serves as Mission Advocate with Bartimaeus Cooperative Ministries.

<sup>2</sup> Roberta Gratz, “Who Killed Public Housing in New Orleans?” *The Nation*, June 22–29, 2015.

twenty-first-century Anabaptism,<sup>3</sup> I will home in on Detroit, Michigan, where my wife and I are currently sojourning, as a case study to carve out a starting line for evangelism in gentrifying spaces within North America: a mission primarily committed to (1) those surviving on the *margins*, (2) a pursuit of *justice* over charity and (3) race and class *reconciliation* as the ultimate goal.

### **Detroit: A History of Colonizing and Gentrifying**

Since 1701, Detroit has been characterized, even named, by global trade (*detroit* in French, means “the strait”), a city located on a body of water connecting major Great Lakes shipping routes. European settlers stole both the name (*Wawatonong* in Ojibwa means “where the river goes around”) and the land from the indigenous through force and intimidation.<sup>4</sup>

In the early twentieth century, Detroit became home to the American automobile industry and its population grew to more than two million by the 1950s. A decade later, aided by billions of federal dollars in the form of interstate highways and FHA loans and the promise of safer, less crowded neighborhoods, European-Americans, by the hundreds of thousands, began fleeing the city for the surrounding suburbs. Race and economics fueled this “white flight.”<sup>5</sup>

Today, Detroit is 83 percent African-American with an official unemployment rate of 15 percent (down from 25 percent just 5 years ago). The state government took over the reins of the city until the spring of 2015, replacing the duly elected mayor, city-council and school board with an Emergency Manager with dictatorial powers. Democracy hardly exists here.

Detroit was colonized and then abandoned by white, mostly “Christian,” settlers, backed by a church that has overwhelmingly justified the project. Its many beautiful church buildings were funded by capital “earned” through massive resource extraction and labor exploitation. Yet the faith communities who inhabit these structures by and large do not speak to the socio-political realities. As Wendell Berry wrote, “No wonder so many sermons are devoted

---

3 I am working here with the understanding of “Anabaptist mission” envisioned by the Mennonite Board of Missions in “A Theology of Mission in Outline” (introduced to me at Fuller Seminary by Wilbert Shenk), and incarnated by the Canadian Mennonite Elaine Enns and her partner, the Southern Californian Mennonite convert Ched Myers.

4 Thanks to Jim Perkinson, professor of Ecumenical Theological Seminary in Detroit, for consistently reminding audiences of Detroit’s indigenous namesake.

5 Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Classics, 2013).

exclusively to 'spiritual' subjects. If one is living by the tithes of history's most destructive economy, then the disembodiment of the soul becomes the chief of worldly conveniences."<sup>6</sup>

Ultimately, according to Scott Martelle in *Detroit: A Biography*, a few basic factors have led to Detroit's rusting demise: "divestment and abandonment propelled by corporate decisions framed and added by government policies, from housing to free trade, with an overlay of stubbornly persistent racism."<sup>7</sup>

In the past decade, residents of the city have been decimated by racist predatory subprime loans (with skyrocketing interest rates) leading to mortgage foreclosures, in addition to increased unemployment, scores of school closures and decrepit infrastructure. To add insult to injury, not only have city leaders voted to raise residential water rates (already twice the national average) and ramp up water shut-offs for all those who are 2 months or \$150 behind on payments, but also there are tens of thousands of homes that face tax foreclosure—all of this without consideration as to whether households have small children, elderly residents or residents with medical conditions. Forty percent of Detroiters live below the poverty level. They, quite simply, can't keep up.

To make matters even more painful, a gentrification invasion is sweeping the city. Young, resourced, upwardly-mobile white folks are moving in, gobbling up properties and pricing renters (i.e., poor black families) out of neighborhoods that many have lived in for decades while significantly changing the look and culture of the place for those fortunate enough to stay. This opportunism is masked with labels like "development" and "entrepreneurship" and "what's best for Detroit."<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, gentrification doesn't just happen. It is typical for black homeowners to pay interest on bank loans starting at 10.5 percent, adjusting to 17.75 percent. To add insult to injury, it was just reported that city officials took government funds allocated for "mortgage relief" and diverted the monies towards

---

6 Wendell Berry, *What Are People For?: Essays* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2010), 272.

7 Scott Martelle, *Detroit: A Biography* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2012), xv.

8 Tom Walsh, "Pistons' Superagent to Seek Illitch Partnership," *Detroit Free Press*, June 8, 2015, <http://www.freep.com/story/money/business/columnists/tom-walsh/2015/06/06/gores-tellem-illitches-red-wings-pistons/28595777/>. The recent words of Detroit Pistons owner Tom Gores exemplify the kind of language used by the investor class, masking opportunism with a perceived altruism, "rallying around the city of Detroit and the state of Michigan" and "the opportunity to impact the Detroit community."

“blight removal.”<sup>9</sup> Such structural decisions made by political and corporate elites (and many go unnoticed) represent the “principalities and powers” of gentrification.

### Coming to Detroit: The World’s Largest Urban Farm

Enter Hantz Farms,<sup>10</sup> a corporate sponsored<sup>11</sup> business enterprise on Detroit’s eastside that refers to itself as “Detroit’s saving grace.”<sup>12</sup> Hantz Farms is committed to cleaning up abandoned properties and replacing them with acres of oak and poplar saplings. The CEO is Michael Score, a Mennonite pastor with a degree in crop and soil sciences, a resident of virtually all-white Ypsilanti Township thirty miles to the west.

Score’s journey to Hantz Farms comes with a testimony: part-Christian, part-capitalist. After a stint with Mennonite Central Committee in the Democratic Republic of Congo and then a time of service in Kentucky, he became frustrated working on eastside Detroit gardening projects with formerly homeless and addicted men, many of whom bought drugs with the money they made. He went on a prayer walk and heard the voice of God: “Mike, you need to work with people where they’re at and with what they have.”<sup>13</sup>

In 2008, Score was introduced to businessman John Hantz, worth more than \$100 million, living in a 14,500-square-foot estate in Indian Village neighborhood of Detroit. During his daily commute to the suburbs, Hantz dreamed up a large urban farm on Detroit’s eastside, originating precisely where Score prayed years earlier. In December 2012, the Detroit city council held a long public meeting on Hantz’ plan to purchase 180 properties at \$300 a piece. 125 community members spoke out against it while 9 were in favor. The

---

9 Brian Lewis and Jeff Green, “TARP Funds Demolish Homes in Detroit to Lift Prices: Mortgages,” *BloombergBusiness*, March 3, 2014, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-03-03/tarp-funds-demolish-homes-in-detroit-to-lift-prices-mortgages>.

10 What follows on Hantz is a short summary of what I covered in an article for *The Mennonite* in May 2015: Tommy Airey, “White Supremacy and Class Privilege in Detroit,” *The Mennonite*, May 27, 2015, <https://themennonite.org/feature/white-supremacy-and-class-privilege-in-detroit/>.

11 The Hantz Farms website lists Carhartt, Credit Union One, Agribank, Fifth Third Bank, Parjana, Alta Equipment Company, Detroit Bike City, Hellebuyck’s Power Equipment Center as sponsors (<http://www.hantzfarmsdetroit.com>).

12 [www.hantzfarmsdetroit.com/introduction.html](http://www.hantzfarmsdetroit.com/introduction.html)

13 Anna Grof, “Detroit Mennonite Runs Largest Urban Farm,” *The Mennonite*, June 2013, 34, <https://themennonite.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/1606web.pdf>.



council voted 5-4 in favor of Hantz and Score.<sup>14</sup>

So far, Hantz Farms has poured more than \$4 million into the project and has removed 55 abandoned residences and cleared brush to host two annual volunteer days in the Spring. More than 3,000 people have flocked to Hantz farms to plant more than 20,000 saplings. This is a mission based on “free market” principles. According to Hantz, “Detroit cannot create value until we create scarcity. Large-scale farming could begin to take land out of circulation in a positive way.”<sup>15</sup>

In late 2014, a week before Christmas, Score introduced me to new jargon during our conversation on Hantz farms property: psychic income.<sup>16</sup> He claimed that his boss had already made good on his initial investment, cashing in on free advertising when media outlets reported on the opposition to the project. After reading about the new Eastside farm, numerous customers flocked to the financial services wing of the Hantz business.

The neighborhood is cleaner and safer. Score created five jobs. Property values are increasing (for the few who can afford housing). Hantz is even selling some of the land he bought at auction to neighbors as side plots. But he’s being selective and the development seems to fall along race and class lines.<sup>17</sup> Alternative block clubs are being created to target poor black residents for removal.<sup>18</sup> Young white entrepreneurs from Brooklyn have moved in to start businesses like Sister Pie and the Red Hook.

---

14 Ibid.

15 Matthew Dolan, “New Detroit Farm Plan Taking Root,” *The Wall Street Journal*, July 6, 2012, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304898704577479090390757800>.

16 Psychic income traditionally refers to non-monetary or non-material satisfaction one gets from doing their job. Score stretched the definition to mean ways of making money when one is not even trying to.

17 This was related to me in an interview with a white resident new to an eastside neighborhood adjacent to Hantz Farms. After he bought a fixer-upper for \$500 at auction, Hantz sold three side plots to him (for \$1000 profit). Unfortunately, after this resident told some of his black neighbors that Hantz was willing to do business, Hantz refused to sell them land. This neighbor told me he got “caught up in the struggle [against gentrification] by being offended by it.”

18 Bill Wylie-Kellermann, “Gentrification: Can We Have a Real Conversation?” in *On The Edge* (Spring 2015): 5–6. Detroit has introduced a new word to the gentrification lexicon: blexting. Residents can take photos of rundown homes and text them to the Detroit Blight Task Force headed by Quicken Loans billionaire Dan Gilbert.

With the onset of mortgage and tax foreclosures, water shut-offs<sup>19</sup> and/or increasing rents, far too many long-time residents will lose their homes, resulting in, what one Eastside community organizer referred to as “an inter-generational trail of tears.” Their parents and grandparents were driven east by freeway-construction-*eminent-domain*-destruction of the Black Bottom neighborhood adjacent to downtown in the 1950s and 60s.<sup>20</sup>

Unfortunately, the Hantz Farms “mission” simply follows the current neo-liberal narrative that blends personal responsibility with austerity economics: decreased social spending, trickle-down development investment and charitable handouts coming from outsiders, who are overwhelmingly white and wealthy.

### Towards A Theology of Mission For Gentrifying Spaces

What Detroit desperately needs is what is needed all over the globe: a theology and practice of mission that organizes *resistance and alternatives to*, rather than *reproducing*, the crises of “imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy.” Such a mission would prioritize society’s most vulnerable, recognize racial politics, and pursue systemic justice.

First, a theology of mission for gentrifying spaces *starts with the needs of the most vulnerable*: poor people of color who stayed and paid and didn’t walk away from their neighborhoods when so many exited for the suburbs. Authentic Christian communities, according to the late 1970’s era Mennonite Board of Missions resource “Theology of Mission in Outline,” are those called to be “a sign and instrument of redemption”; but they “impede God’s mission when they promote ethnocentrism, secular power patterns, conquest or cultural enslavement.” First and foremost, we follow Jesus who “continued the Jubilee paradigm lifting up the weak and poor, healing the sick and releasing the prisoner, pronouncing judgment on the rich and powerful.”<sup>21</sup>

In his classic text, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, Howard Thurman, who spent most of his years in inner-city contexts (Washington D.C., Boston, and San

---

19 Elected and appointed city leaders refuse to pursue an Environmental Protection Agency (1972) and city council (2006) commissioned “affordability plan” (no resident ought to pay more than 2.5 percent of income on water) and have significantly increased rates two years in a row. The city has contracted out a wrecking company to shut-off water to residents over \$150 delinquent on their bills.

20 John Gallagher, “When Detroit Paved Over Paradise: The Story of I-375,” *Detroit Free Press*, December 15, 2013, A1, A5.

21 Mennonite Board of Missions, “A Theology of Mission in Outline (Mennonite Board of Missions),” *Mission Focus* 6, no. 5 (May 1978): 9–13 (points 2, 4, and 33).

Francisco), called Christian theologians to give preference to those "with their backs against the wall."<sup>22</sup> When Martin Luther King, Jr., who carried Thurman's text in his coat pocket nearly everywhere he traveled, animated the story of the rich man and Lazarus, he did not condemn the rich man because of his possessions. Instead, King proclaimed, "His sin was his refusal to use his wealth to bridge the gulf between the extremes of superfluous, inordinate wealth and abject, deadening poverty."<sup>23</sup>

In the late 1980s and early 90s, Mennonite activist and biblical animator Ched Myers called First World Christians to the practice of taking "the perspective of the periphery." All of us with race and class privilege in North America, especially those of us called to mission in gentrified spaces, are doing what Myers calls "theology in Pharaoh's household." The vital combination of both *repentance* (turning from imperial seductions) and *resistance* (taking concrete stands to impede imperial progress) seeks what is best for poor and marginalized people by listening to them. These practices also call us to cede power, control, and vision over to them.<sup>24</sup>

In Detroit, in the wake of state takeover of city council, the school board and Belle Isle (a historic park in the city), poor people of color have suffered massive job loss (after the 2007 recession), pay cuts, slashed pensions, skyrocketing medical bills, bloated heating bills, the highest water rates in the state, predatory lending, over-inflated property taxes, auto insurance more than double that of the suburbs, abysmal schools, pitiful public transportation, and meager access to nutritious food. These are some of the aspects of the continuation of de facto systemic racism in the United States today. To "save Detroit," white Christians ought to set themselves to the task of saving themselves by listening to the plight of the poor, researching the political and economic roots of these devastating issues, and then creatively naming them.

Second, a theology of mission within gentrifying spaces *starts with justice without neglecting works of mercy*—not vice versa. Anyone looking to save neighborhoods while bearing the Christian label "is confronted with the challenge of power whenever it aligns itself with oppressive social, economic or political

---

<sup>22</sup> Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1981 [1949]), 7.

<sup>23</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., "The Impassable Gulf (The Parable of Dives and Lazarus)," sermon at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, October 2, 1955, [http://okra.stanford.edu/transcription/document\\_images/Vol06Scans/2Oct1955TheImpassableGulf-TheParableofDivesandLazarus.pdf](http://okra.stanford.edu/transcription/document_images/Vol06Scans/2Oct1955TheImpassableGulf-TheParableofDivesandLazarus.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> Ched Myers, *Binding The Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988).

power interests.”<sup>25</sup>

Dr. King, whose own legacy was remodeled by corporations and foundations “to fit a market-friendly format,”<sup>26</sup> clearly delineated the fatal flaws of the capitalism, an ideology that necessitated poverty in order to create wealthy elites. When he animated the parable of the Good Samaritan, exactly a year before his assassination, he challenged the American church to go beyond charity: “On the one hand we are called to play the good Samaritan on life’s roadside; but that will be only an initial act.... True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.”<sup>27</sup>

White Christians in gentrifying neighborhoods are commissioned to utilize a both/and litmus test in mission: works of mercy are good (and needed), but all of us are called to struggle for just policies. This requires commitment to social analysis *and* organizing at the local level. Far too many Christian leaders that I dialogue with refer to an either/or sense of call or giftedness: “some people are called to engage systems, but I feel called to treat symptoms,” they say. In Detroit, there are scores of corporate-funded foundations and non-profits “doing good things” in the city that often intensify gentrification’s negative effects. Unfortunately, these are fully committed to the political, economic and social status quo.

Lastly, a theology of mission within gentrifying spaces *focuses on a robust pursuit of race and class reconciliation as the ultimate goal*. Our projects must focus on the challenge of “extending God’s rule by overcoming all sin and ‘the dividing wall of hostility’—racism, sexism, tribalism, nationalism—and binding together as one new people individuals from many peoples.”<sup>28</sup>

Restorative justice practitioner and author Elaine Enns, studying the historic relationship between Canadian Mennonite and First Nations populations, posits that the goal of healing the trauma brought upon by colonization is what she calls “restorative solidarity,” a combination of inner work, critical historical awareness and empathy that results in a deep understanding of “how our story is connected to theirs, such that our mutual healing and wholeness is, in fact,

---

25 Mennonite Board of Missions, "Theology of Mission," 9-13 (point 25).

26 See Arundhati Roy, *Capitalism: A Ghost Story* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014), 38-39.

27 King, “Beyond Vietnam—A Time to Break the Silence,” sermon at Riverside Church, New York City, April 4, 1967, <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkatimetobreaksilence.htm>.

28 Mennonite Board of Missions, "Theology of Mission," 9-13 (point 22).

intertwined.”<sup>29</sup>

Canada, just recently completing a four-year truth and reconciliation process, is far ahead of the States in this regard. However, as Enns models, a theology of mission must require that we challenge the church’s historic ignorance and arrogance where so much more is expected. Honest post-colonial conversations have much to teach us in neighborhoods where gentrification is beginning to germinate.

White Christians can advocate for the tireless work of John Conyers, the African-American who has represented Detroit in Congress for more than three decades. Every year, he introduces a bill at the start of the session calling for a robust study of slavery and its lingering effects as well as recommendations for “appropriate remedies.”<sup>30</sup> Every year, it gets voted down. A truth and reconciliation commission is unlikely to be achieved at the national level, but a Detroit-wide TRC could very well be utilized as a compelling experiment in truth if white Christians could help facilitate a space where Detroiters could tell stories of discrimination and displacement.<sup>31</sup> Only this kind of conversation will begin to take real steps towards forgiveness, healing and reconciliation.

In 1968, Dr. King gave a rousing speech at Grosse Pointe High School, just a few miles to the east of where Score and I stood on Hantz property. Before he was interrupted twice by white protestors, King proclaimed:

Every city in our country has this kind of dualism, this schizophrenia, split at so many parts, and so every city ends up being two cities rather than one. There are two Americas. One America is beautiful for situation.... This other America has a daily ugliness about it that transforms the buoyancy of hope into the fatigue of despair.<sup>32</sup>

Fifty years later, Detroit’s socially bifurcated reality has intensified as white gentrifiers carve out spaces from the neighborhoods of resilient, long-time black residents of the city. And so it goes everywhere else. There are not just “Two Detroits.” There are “Two New Orleans.” And “Two Baltimores.” And on and on and on.

---

29 Elaine Enns, “Facing History with Courage,” *Canadian Mennonite* 19, no. 5 (February 2015): 4–9.

30 Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case For Reparations,” *The Atlantic*, June 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>.

31 In the wake of the devastating massacre of November 3, 1979, the city of Greensboro, North Carolina pioneered this work in the United States. See [www.greensborotrc.org](http://www.greensborotrc.org).

32 King, “The Other America,” speech at Gross Pointe High School, March 14, 1968, <http://www.gphistorical.org/mlk/mlkspeech/>.

The division of Western cities into rich and poor, black and white has become inevitable partially because the verbal proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ and the pursuit of social justice have become isolated from one another in the minds and hearts of North American Christians for centuries.

The continuation of this race and class dualism calls for a theology of mission that emulsifies “evangelism” and “social justice,” buttressed by lessons from the African-American Civil Rights Movement and late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century Anabaptism. These beckon us to a mission primarily committed to (1) the needs of those surviving on the *margins*, (2) a pursuit of *justice* over charity, and (3) race and class *reconciliation* as the ultimate goal. These voices proclaim that faithful mission is a daily reminder that gentrification (like colonization) never “just happens.” Like Christian mission everywhere, we are called to expose and heal the wounds that gentrification complicates.

# Mentoring Marginal Men in Tower Hill, Kingston, Jamaica: Nascent Hoop Dreams and Nagging Regrets

TIMOTHY PAUL ERDEL AND ROBBY CHRISTOPHER PRENKERT<sup>1</sup>

## Fractured Families and Marginal Men<sup>2</sup>

When our family moved to Kingston, Jamaica, in 1987, I (Tim) used to walk my young daughters, Sarah Beth and Rachel, up West Avenue from the Jamaica Theological Seminary (JTS) and Caribbean Graduate School of Theology (CGST) campus<sup>3</sup> to Sunday school at Grace Missionary Church (GMC), a

---

1 Timothy Paul Erdel and Robby Christopher Prenkert teach at Bethel College, Mishawaka, Indiana.

2 “Fractured Families and Marginal Men” draws on language used by Jamaican scholars who discuss sociological issues in Jamaica, e.g., Errol Miller, *Marginalization of the Black Male: Insights from the Development of the Teaching Profession* (Kingston, Jamaica: ISER, 1986); and id., *Men at Risk* (Kingston, Jamaica: Jamaica Publishing House, 1991).

There are numerous similar studies of family life and male marginality in the West Indies Collection, Zenas Gerig Library, Jamaica Theological Seminary and Caribbean School of Theology, Kingston, Jamaica, as well as in the West Indies and Special Collections, the Library, the University of West Indies, Mona. For a preliminary discussion of such literature, see Timothy Paul Erdel, “From the Colonial Christ and Babylonian Captivity to *Dread Jesus*: Documenting World Christianity on a Shoestring Budget,” in *Summary of the Proceedings: Fifty-fourth Annual Conference of the American Theological Library Association: Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California, June 21–24, 2000*, edited by Margret Tacke Collins (Chicago: American Theological Library Association, 2000), 83–95, especially 83–87.

Cf. the early writings of leading Jamaican scholar, Orlando Patterson, John Cowles Professor of Sociology at Harvard University, whose first novel, *The Children of Sisyphus* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965)—with multiple subsequent printings and editions, including a new ed. with an introduction by Kwame Dawes, *Caribbean Modern Classics* (Leeds, England: Peepal Tree Press, 2011)—focused on the tangled, problematic lives of the poor in Jamaican “shantytowns” and “garrison communities.” Patterson has since turned his attention to social issues in US culture, see, e.g., Patterson, ed., *The Cultural Matrix: Understanding Black Youth*, with Ethan Fosse (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

3 Cf. Roger Ringenberg, “A History of Jamaica Theological Seminary: 1960–1992” (D.Miss. project, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1992), as well as such serial

congregation of perhaps 200 members in Constant Spring, a generally middle class neighborhood, though the GMC property line also literally borders an impoverished, troubled community known as Grants Pen.<sup>4</sup>

On Mother's Day in 1988 my daughters and I experienced our first "open Sunday school" in Jamaica, a program designed to show to parents what their children had been learning, as well as a device for drawing adults to the Sunday school hour who might not otherwise come to church. At the end of the time, mothers were recognized and honored. The event proved so successful that the enthusiastic Jamaican Sunday school superintendent decided to organize a similar program for Father's Day. On Father's Day, there was a decent though smaller turnout of adults to see that program. When the children finished, the superintendent asked all the fathers who had come to stand so that they could be acknowledged. One father stood. I was that father.<sup>5</sup>

The most important sociological fact about Jamaican family life, especially among persons of African descent, is the absence of fathers. The situation has grown worse over the decades, not better. Thus, the landmark study by British socio-anthropologist Edith Clarke, *My Mother Who Fathered Me*,<sup>6</sup> first published in 1957, has been replicated many times by Caribbean scholars and

---

publications as *JTS Quest* ([1975, 1976 distinctly titled forerunners], 1977-), *BINAH* (1996-1997, then merged with *CJET*), *Caribbean Journal of Evangelical Theology* (1997-), and more recently, *Caribbean Challenge*, n.s. (2009-).

4 My son, Matthew, was just one year old when we first arrived, and it was all we could do to keep him contented during the meandering worship service which followed Sunday school, since the latter could run on into the early afternoon. So my wife, Sally, would wait an hour or more later before bringing him up the street to GMC as well.

5 There was a sad echo of this on Father's Day in 2001, when I was stunned to be named "Father of the Year" at Grace Missionary Church, the third of three persons so honored that day. The first was Courtney Richards (more on him in what follows), a Jamaican celibate bachelor, though at least a mentor to countless young men without fathers. The second was Zenas Gerig, a career missionary and founder or co-founder of some thirty institutions or organizations in Jamaica, the Caribbean, and beyond, including Jamaica Theological Seminary and the Caribbean Graduate School of Theology. So, while not technically a Jamaican, and though he was formally retired back in the United States, Zenas had at least invested his adult life in Jamaica, training numerous young persons for ministry. But it was eight years since I had even lived as a resident in Jamaica (not since 1993), and I was just there for a month to teach a course at CGST and then deliver the joint commencement address for JTS and CGST. *None of us were biological fathers of Jamaican children.*

6 Edith Clarke, *My Mother Who Fathered Me* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1957). See also, among many others, Madeline Kerr, *Personality and Conflict in Jamaica* (London: Collins, 1952); Judith Blake, *Family Structure in Jamaica* (New York: The Free



its themes explored repeatedly by Jamaican authors.<sup>7</sup> By 1995 Jamaican government statistics indicated that 86 percent of the children born on the island lacked a father of record, a figure that had reached an astounding 93 percent in Kingston, the capital.<sup>8</sup> The phenomenon of “barrel children”<sup>9</sup> and the rise of street gangs and of deadly posse gunmen<sup>10</sup> are among the fruits of fractured families and myriad related social problems whose origins stretch back to slav-

---

Press of Glencoe, 1961); M. G. Smith, *West Indian Family Structure* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962) and id., *The Plural Society in the British West Indies* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1965); A. S. Phillips, *Adolescence in Jamaica* (Kingston, Jamaica: Jamaica Publishing House, 1973); Adam Kuper, *Changing Jamaica* (Kingston, Jamaica: Kingston Publishers); and Leon A. Dundas, “The Morality and Marital Status of the Caribbean Common-Law Union” (M.A. thesis, Caribbean Graduate School of Theology, 1990).

7 See, e.g., the trajectory of tragic futility that unfolds in the recent novel by Diana McCaulay, *Dog-Heart* (Leeds, England: Peepal Tree Press, 2010). Note that the middle-class protagonist, Sahara, who tries to compassionately intervene in the life of Dexter (a young boy from “Jacobs Pen” [cf. Grants Pen above] who is already headed toward a life of crime), and Dexter’s mother, Arleen, are both single parents.

8 This information was disseminated on a CVM-TV (Kingston, Jamaica) news report, which included an interview with and commentary by a former faculty colleague at the Caribbean Graduate School of Theology, Jamaican psychologist Barry Davidson, May 16, 1995.

What began primarily as characteristic of the bottom end of the social scale has percolated upward through the class system until the pattern of fatherless children now touches nearly every segment of society, a phenomenon some sociologists call “lower-class values stretch.”

9 Brook Larmer with Moses Knolly, “The ‘Barrel Children,’” *Newsweek*, February 19, 1996, 45. Mothers migrate in search of employment and a better life for their families, leaving their children behind in the care of relatives or acquaintances; but children must often fend for themselves. The mothers then fulfill their maternal duties by sending back an occasional (sometimes annual) barrel of goods. A significant number of those children have become victims, not only of neglect, but of outright abuse. There is a whole post-graduate program headed by Betty Ann Blaine at the Caribbean Graduate School of Theology with a focus on meeting the needs of such children.

The plight, disappearance, and death of barrel children is now also memorialized in a large, deeply disturbing “Crying Monument” in downtown Kingston, Jamaica. See Patrina Pink, “‘Save Our Children’: Crying Monument Reminds Nation of Lost Generation,” *The Gleaner* (Kingston, Jamaica), May 2, 2011, accessed from the Internet, November 3, 2015, at <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20110502/lead/lead8.html>.

10 Laurie Gunst, *Born Fi’ Dead: A Journey through the Jamaican Posse Underworld* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1995). Originally armed from abroad during the East-West Cold War (see below), gunmen have served variously as political party militia, as “hit men” in the United States for the mafia, as the “soldiers” for “dons” of garrison

ery.<sup>11</sup>

Men and boys of African descent have a particularly difficult time in Jamaican society. Systemic issues related to the so-called problem of “male marginality” have multiple roots: slavery itself;<sup>12</sup> British colonial social structures—especially *after* the abolition of slavery—socio-political patterns that fostered a stratified society bordering on apartheid;<sup>13</sup> sharp *class* divisions sometimes based upon *gender* among persons of African descent; compulsory scholastic examinations from an early age that, based upon differing rates of socio-psychological development in boys and girls, tend to discriminate against young boys and push them toward the streets at an early age;<sup>14</sup> resulting in what some

---

communities in Kingston, Jamaica, as violent enforcers for the Colombian cartel of drug traffickers, as common criminals, and so forth.

11 Cf. James G. Friesen, E. James Wilder, Anne M. Bierling, Rick Koepcke, and Maribeth Poole, *The Life Model: Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You: The Essentials of Christian Living*, 2000 rev. ed. (Pasadena, CA: Shepherd’s House, 2010), which was strongly recommended by James D. Fisher, a former visiting professor of psychology at CGST, for its spiritual and psychological insights into the types of psychological wounds endemic in Jamaica; cf. also the work of David E. Carlson, a long-time visiting professor of counseling psychology in Jamaica and the recipient of an honorary doctorate from CGST in 1998, *Counseling and Self-Esteem*, Resources for Christian Counseling, ed. Gary R. Collins, vol. 13 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988).

12 Over the years, a million or more slaves were shipped to an island the size of Connecticut. To gain some perspective on this number, it is commonly estimated that some 500,000 African slaves were taken from their homeland to the rest of North America. Perhaps 200,000 slaves brought to Jamaica were transferred to smaller islands, but most who were left to labor in Jamaica died under horrible working conditions. The average life-span for a Jamaican slave was approximately 26 years. At the time of emancipation in 1834 (though slavery was not legally abolished until 1838), there were only 320,000 slaves left on the island, and that despite intensive breeding programs. Cf. Katrin Norris, *Jamaica: The Search for Identity* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), and Philip Sherlock and Hazel Bennett, *The Story of the Jamaican People* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers; Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, with the Creative Production and Training Centre, 1998).

13 It was no accident, but presumably a deeply felt cultural affinity that prompted Jamaica to lead the way in calling other nations to boycott South Africa as a means of ending Apartheid. The British had an empire, and they imported ethnic groups from around the world—Chinese, East Indians, Lebanese, Syrians, among others—to serve as buffer classes (along with Jews, mulattos, and women) against justifiably angry Afro-Jamaican males, who were deliberately kept at the bottom of the sharply divided social scale in post-emancipation Jamaica.

14 Typically some three-quarters of the children taking the Common Entrance Exam (since 2000 or so replaced by the Grade Six Achievement Test, see “New Test of

scholars now argue is a thoroughly a "feminized" school system in which, until very recently, less than one percent of the male population received a university education; business and economic structures strongly favoring European, Asian, or mixed-race minorities (or males from smaller islands); informal marketplaces dominated by women; and matriarchal family life—tendencies with roots running all the way back to slavery, but which phenomena have been aggravated by various forms of oppression within Jamaica since then.<sup>15</sup> It is no accident that the best known religious body indigenous to Jamaica, Rastafarianism, with its reggae music, religious use of *ganja* as a sacrament, and rhetoric of righteous judgment upon "Babylon" (Europe and North America), is one appealing particularly to Afro-Jamaican males, as it arose from and speaks squarely to their tragic historical situation and their deepest psycho-social needs, beginning with a basic affirmation of their human dignity within a socio-historical context that repeated denigrated or denied it.<sup>16</sup>

These factors are compounded by numerous other social and economic pressures that give rise to neo-colonial forms of oppression, many from off the island, that frequently threaten to unravel the fabric of Jamaican society.<sup>17</sup> One

---

Ability for High School Entry in the Caribbean," by Corinne Barnes, on the Internet at [http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/know\\_sharing/grassroots\\_stories/caribbean\\_2.shtml](http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/know_sharing/grassroots_stories/caribbean_2.shtml), accessed on February 23, 2011) in Jamaica would fail, a disproportionate percentage of them male, all but ending effective education beyond grade school level. Those who would pass could be allotted a precious space at a school virtually anywhere on the island, regardless of their own geographical location or of the school(s) attended by siblings, depending upon their selection in a selective "draft" system that distributes scholarships according to test rank, a situation that exacerbated the challenges faced by the vast number of persons in the lower classes, who would have far fewer resources with which to prepare for the exam or to navigate the system, and who may even lack the means necessary to even accept an offer of admission if it entails attendance across the island.

15 Errol Miller, *Marginalization of Male*; id., *Jamaican Society and High Schooling* (Kingston, Jamaica: ISER, 1990); and Miller, *Men at Risk*.

Jamaican society is a vivid illustration of the fact that matriarchy rooted in the tragedies of slavery, colonialism, and similarly oppressive social structures is not a particularly good cure for the evils of traditional patriarchy. The present authors would commend biblical egalitarianism instead. But that is a subject for another day.

16 Nathaniel Samuel Murrell, William David Spencer, and Adrian Anthony McFarlene, eds., *Chanting Down Babylon: The Rastafari Reader*, consulting ed., Clinton Chisholm (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), and William David Spencer, *Dread Jesus* (London: SPCK, 1999).

17 For an overview of the appallingly unjust economic pressures from abroad and their effects on ordinary Jamaicans, see the searing 2001 documentary film, *Life and*

recalls the sad quip about global economics, “When the United States catches a cold Majority World countries suffer pneumonia.” The backwash from turbulent economic waters further north can easily swamp a Caribbean island. Or again, when Jamaica became a political pawn in the East-West Cold War, a people who traditionally eschewed handguns were suddenly flooded with high caliber small arms as the two leading political parties, the People’s National Party (PNP) and the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP), became proxies for Communist and Capitalist aspirations in the West Indies. Kingston became known in the late 1970s and early 1980s as “the Beirut of the Caribbean,” a tragic but accurate commentary on the widespread, vicious political violence prevailing in both cities at that time.<sup>18</sup>

*The Alienation of Afro-Jamaican Males from the Jamaican Church*

Roman Catholicism first arrived in Jamaica when Columbus landed there on May 4, 1494. Anglicanism was added to the mix after Cromwell’s conquest of the island in 1655. Other established Protestant denominations made their presence felt by means of missionary outreach, especially during the nineteenth century; and they were followed by waves of evangelicals and Pentecostals in the twentieth century, though by then all sorts of indigenous Christian groups were springing up as well,<sup>19</sup> until Christianity had become in some respects fairly ubiquitous throughout the island. The frequent claim that there are more churches per square mile in Jamaica than in any other country on earth is probably a bit of an exaggeration—there is, after all, Vatican City.

But most congregations struggle to attract a significant percentage of Afro-Jamaican male members, who frequently drift away during their teen years and return, if at all, only much later in life. Church, like school, is not a place

---

*Debt*, directed by Stephanie Black, with a script adapted from the award winning essay by Jamaica Kincaid, “A Small Place” (originally about Antigua), and distributed by New Yorker Films. *Life and Debt* has won awards in at least eight different international film festivals.

18 One side of this complicated political story is told by former Prime Minister and Jamaica Labour Party leader Edward Seaga in *My Life and Leadership*, vol. 1: *Clash of Ideologies, 1930–1980* (Oxford, England: Macmillan Education, 2009). (Vol. 2: *Hard Road to Travel, 1980–2008* would appear the next year.)

19 Cf., e.g., the astounding ministry of a former African-American slave and self-styled Anabaptist, George Liele (ca. 1750–1828), who voluntarily indentured himself once more as a slave in order to enter Jamaica as a missionary (before William Carey ever sailed from England to India), see Timothy Paul Erdel, “I Wish I Had Been There: ‘Negro Slavery’s Prophet of Deliverance,’” *Mennonite Historical Bulletin*, July 2001, 8–9.

where young (or even many middle-aged) Afro-Jamaican men go.<sup>20</sup> Many churches are, somewhat paradoxically, rigorously patriarchal in preaching and teaching, with a tiny minority of males holding the office of bishop, priest, pastor, or elder, but thoroughly matriarchal in form and function, with women dominating actual church life and practical ministries.

*R.E.N.E.W.E.D. Ministries and Hoosier Hysteria*

R.E.N.E.W.E.D.<sup>21</sup> Ministries was founded in 1996 when Dennis Engbrecht, Senior Vice President at Bethel College, Mishawaka, Indiana, joined together with the dynamic, charismatic Courtney Richards, Jamaican evangelist, educator, and counselor,<sup>22</sup> to establish and fund a ministry that would reach out to marginal young Afro-Jamaican men without fathers.<sup>23</sup> Although the mission is egalitarian by conviction, its primary focus has been the fatherless men of African descent who form the very bottom strata of Jamaican society. Its ministries have since been extended to young women and to other Caribbean islands as personnel and resources have allowed. In fact, ministry outreach has spread not only from Jamaica across the West Indies, but to additional countries such as Nepal, Northern Ireland, Kenya, Uganda, and South Africa. But the fatherless Afro-Jamaican males were the primary ministry target from the beginning, and remain so.

In the providence of God, it so happened that there was a significant addition to popular sports culture in Jamaica during the same time period that R.E.N.E.W.E.D. Ministries was being founded. For the mission emerged in

---

20 E.g., Samuel Vassel, "Understanding and Addressing the Absence of Men from the Jamaican Church" (D.Min. dissertation, Columbia Theological Seminary [Decatur, Georgia] with the United Theological College of the West Indies [Kingston, Jamaica], 1997).

21 "R.E.N.E.W.E.D. (beyond the obvious connotation of "renewal") is a somewhat extended and ambitious acronym for: "Reaching/Evangelizing/Nurturing/Encouraging/Worshipping/Educating/Discipling."

22 Courtney Richards had just resigned from his position as Dean of Students at Bethel College in order to return to ministry in Jamaica, where he also accepted an appointment at JTS.

23 They were joined by other persons, especially from the Missionary Church who were also affiliated with Bethel College, Mishawaka, Indiana, who were aware of the deep needs of young, Afro-Jamaican males as a distinct people group, and who were also frustrated by the decision of World Partners, the official mission of the Missionary Church, that Jamaica was thoroughly evangelized and therefore no longer in need of missionary endeavor.

the midst of “Hoosier Hysteria,”<sup>24</sup> that is, in a state bathed in basketball and on a campus that happened also to boast the dominant small college men’s basketball program in North America during that same decade, recording six national championships and two near misses<sup>25</sup> over a nine year time-span, a school (officially NAIA II/NCCAA I) with a proud tradition, especially during that magical decade, of competing successfully against elite teams from virtually every level of collegiate competition (NCAA I-II-III, NAIA I-II, and NCCAA I-II).<sup>26</sup> The sharp-shooting co-captain of Bethel’s first national championship team, Robby Prenekert, and his wife, Jeanie, were recruited by

---

24 Though the authors recognize that by this time traditional “Hoosier Hysteria” was on the wane, see Timothy Paul Erdel, “Who Killed ‘Hoosier Hysteria’?: 1911–1997, RIP,” a guest lecture presented in conjunction with the screening of the movie *Hoosiers* (1986, directed by David Anspaugh, written by Angelo Pizzo) in the course “Film,” The Language Company/South Bend English Institute, Indiana University South Bend, South Bend, Indiana, October 29, 2009, in which at least five possible causal factors were discussed for the demise of “Hoosier Hysteria”: 1) the introduction of *class basketball*; 2) the massive *consolidation of schools and school districts*, killing traditional small town rivalries; 3) growing *competition* from multiple sources—from other sports in schools that formerly just offered one or two other athletic options, from other types and levels of competition (AAU teams for players and college and professional teams for fans), from the media (television, Internet, video games, and so forth), and from still other travel and entertainment options made possible by improved modes of transportation and communication; 4) the phenomenon of *couch potatoes*—the physical lethargy that sets in when children no longer work or play outdoors all day when not in school, but sit watching or listening to electronic media or playing electronic games; and 5) a *combination* of these and still other factors (such as the cultural phenomenon of the enthusiasm for “March Madness” transferring from the ISHAA, where it originated, to the NCAA tournaments, and also to the indirect impact of Title IX, though a very good thing in itself, on male sports).

25 See, e.g., Timothy Paul Erdel, “A Bump in the Road: 1995–1996: Near Perfection Falls Short,” in *Band of Brothers: 2006–2007 Bethel College Basketball*, compiled by Chris Hess with Mike Lightfoot, Pete Morey, and others (Mishawaka, Ind.: Bethel College Athletic Department with Evangel Press, 2006), 12–13, which recounts the journey of what may have been Bethel’s greatest team, but which was upset in the second round of the NAIA II men’s basketball national tournament.

The bitterest near miss was probably Bethel’s double-overtime 111–109 loss to Cornerstone University in the 1999 NAIA II men’s basketball national championship game, when an apparently game-winning three-point shot was disallowed near the end of the second overtime. A knowledgeable observer from Texas called it, “the greatest game of college basketball ever played,” a nearly mythical clash with seemingly endless human interest side stories. One measure of the focused intensity during that contest was that the two teams together buried 56 of 60 pressure-packed free throws.

26 See, e.g., the team histories and program statistics in Andrew Bowen, comp.,

Courtney Richards to join with him as the first team of missionaries to go out under R.E.N.E.W.E.D. ministries.<sup>27</sup>

### Jamaican Hoop Dreams

Jamaican popular sports culture traditionally focused on track and field,<sup>28</sup> cricket, boxing, horse racing, soccer, netball (for women), table tennis, badminton, tennis, swimming, and “karting,”<sup>29</sup> or such games as dominoes and pool, with very little attention to or interest in basketball.<sup>30</sup> That all changed through a curious sequence of circumstances. After Hurricane Gilbert decimated the island on 12 September 1988, the state-owned Jamaican Broadcasting Corporation (JBC), which at that time held a monopoly on local television broadcasting, began relaying CNN news coverage almost non-stop, so that those Jamaicans who still had access to electric power and who could afford televisions could follow CNN’s nearly around-the-clock coverage of both the damage caused by Gilbert and the various international relief efforts on behalf of Jamaica. As CNN’s regular programming ultimately covered more than just the ongoing crisis in Jamaica, this move opened a window onto a world of broadcasting beyond the somewhat narrow confines of JBC, and soon created

---

*Bethel College Basketball: 2015–2016 Then, Now, Always*, with Robby Lightfoot and others (Mishawaka, Ind.: Bethel College Athletic Department with Duley Press, 2015), a media guide of some 150 pages (without counting the generous section of unnumbered advertising pages).

27 Courtney Richards had served as a spiritual mentor to Robby Prenkert, i.e., when Courtney was a student dean and Robby was an undergraduate English major at Bethel College, then later as a senior colleague in mission.

28 E.g., a long history of excellence in the sprints on the international level reached a phenomenal peak when tiny Jamaica completely dominated the shorter races during the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, bringing home six gold medals, three silver medals, and two bronze medals, eclipsing better known athletes from the United States, while directly challenging the combined achievements of the rest of the world. The surge of national pride that swept through Jamaica was well-captured in a brilliantly colorful commemorative issue of the nation’s leading newspaper, *The Sunday Gleaner* (Kingston, Jamaica), August 24, 2008. This overwhelming success was more-or-less duplicated at the 2012 Olympics in London, with Jamaica taking home four gold, four silver, and four bronze medals.

29 “Karting” fueled the idea, along with Jamaican success in track, of developing and entering a Jamaican bobsled team in the Winter Olympics, which led in turn to the popular Hollywood comedy, *Cool Runnings*, directed by Jon Turteltaub (1993).

30 Jamaica was unlike Trinidad and Tobago, which had developed a thriving basketball culture subsequent to the introduction of round ball by American military servicemen during World War II.



a popular demand for other types of television programs, entertainment formerly restricted solely to persons wealthy enough to own a satellite dish. Thus, a second, private station soon developed in Kingston (CVM TV); and, in the scramble between JBC and CVM to find programming that would appeal broadly to Jamaicans, NBA games were at first occasionally and then regularly aired.<sup>31</sup> While the high percentage of athletes of African descent was presumably a matter of general interest, there was a special focus upon games involving Patrick Ewing from the New York Knicks, since he was born in Kingston. Soon boys and young men on the street began to develop their own hoop dreams.<sup>32</sup> So this sudden, unprecedented surge of Jamaican interest in basketball more-or-less coincided with the founding of R.E.N.E.W.E.D. Ministries.

What follows, as the shifts in tone and perspective should make obvious, is a personal memoir of sorts about Robby's experience as a young R.E.N.E.W.E.D. Ministries missionary engaged in discipleship and sports ministries reaching out to fatherless young gang members, an experience filled with endless ironies and enduring regrets.

---

31 The NBA itself was beginning to aggressively market its television coverage internationally at that time, and presumably offered games as a loss-leader inducement to cash-strapped Jamaica, hoping to build a viewing audience that would later demand the broadcasts at full price.

During roughly the same time-span, the NFL once provided a feed of the first half of a Super Bowl to Jamaica, but that one short snapshot of America's second game meant little to people on the island. American football has remained an alien sport.

32 This is a rather different slant on the history of basketball in Jamaica from that told in the "official" online history presented by the Jamaica Basketball Association (JBA). That history rightly credits the Chinese community with introducing basketball to Jamaica in the 1940s, and correctly suggests there was some (sputtering) support for basketball on the school level during subsequent decades, with occasional spikes of interest when Jamaica hosted or unexpectedly did well in international competitions, especially after selected Jamaican players began to win scholarships to university and collegiate programs in the United States, which players would in turn form the nucleus of suddenly competitive national teams—at least competitive against other teams from the Caribbean basin, if not on a grander scale. The JBA essay does identify the tremendous rise in popular enthusiasm for the sport during the mid to late 1990s, with a dramatic proliferation of leagues on every level; but it fails to recognize the role of popular mass media in fueling the athletics hopes and dreams of young males highlighted in this paper. See Enid Sterling-Angus, "The History of Jamaica Basketball," published online April 27, 2005 at <http://www.jamaicans.com/culture/sports/jamaicabball.shtml>, also available as "Jamaica Basketball Association" at the Jamaica Basketball Association website (last updated in 2008). [http://www.basketballjamaica.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=13&Itemid=1](http://www.basketballjamaica.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=13&Itemid=1). See also <http://www.latinbasket.com/Jamaica/basketball.asp> (all three sites were accessed 15 February 2011).



*Of Dreams and Regrets**Summer 1993*

The early August Kingston sun has baked the city to a dull and dusty brown, and though each afternoon threatening clouds appear over the hills, not a drop of rain has fallen since our arrival a week ago. On this Sunday afternoon I sit on Mrs. Simpson's veranda, staring out on the parched front lawn, as Jeanie takes an afternoon nap and Courtney watches soccer highlights on the television inside.

We have come with the Rev. Courtney Richards, friend and mentor, to his Jamaican homeland to "check things out." We spend the week exploring the possibilities for his more permanent return home, and with his encouragement, we try to figure out whether God is calling us to partner with him in a ministry to the young men of Jamaica. I want to know if the kind of short-term ministry I had done on two trips to the Dominican Republic with my college basketball team can be effectively duplicated in Jamaica over a longer term. After a week on the island I have yet to see a basketball hoop.

I am a twenty-three year old graduate student; I have not gone more than two days without playing basketball in fifteen years. The people we talk to, including pastors and denominational leaders, know little of basketball. And while conversations focus on how desperately everyone wants Courtney—beloved, magnetic, natural evangelist/comedian that he is—to come home to Jamaica, to pastor a church, and to train people in the art of mentoring and disciple-making, I want to know if anyone thinks a basketball ministry has any chance of working here.

The somber afternoon clouds take the edge off the tropical heat. Bored with the novel I'm reading and certain that it definitely looks like rain falling in the hills, I wander barefoot into Mrs. Simpson's small, walled front yard, toward the gate. The first few drops splash on my face; I silently wish to be christened by my first Jamaican downpour.

That's when I hear an old familiar pulsing—music to my Hoosier ears. No, not rumbles of thunder nor the patter of bigger raindrops on the street, but an even lovelier music: the "poom-poom-poom" of basketball on pavement. I make my way through the front gate and stand on the sidewalk staring gape-jawed down the road at three boys—all gangling arms and spindly legs—chattering and laughing, dribbling what turns out to be an oversized and over-inflated soccer ball.

The boys—two eleven year olds and a twelve year old—tell me they had removed the spokes from an old bike tire and fashioned themselves a backyard

basketball hoop. They were playing ball until an especially violent slam dunk left them hoopless.

I will never see these boys again, but I never forget them.

In the few days before we fly back to Indiana we meet with Pastor Sam White and Pastor Luke Simpson, both of whom say that young men in neighborhoods surrounding their churches have created makeshift basketball hoops out of anything they can find, and that if you travel the side streets of Kingston's poorer neighborhoods, you won't look long before you see boys playing basketball in the streets. Though football (soccer, that is) is still number one, they tell me that basketball has just recently exploded in popularity, in some part due to the national TV coverage of the Chicago Bulls' run to the NBA finals earlier that year. They have given me the eyes to see Kingston's "basketball courts," and in the final days of our visit I find them everywhere—rusty iron rebar bent into something barely resembling a circle and attached sometimes to an undersized scrap of plywood and hung from a concrete wall, sometimes nailed directly to a telephone pole. I hadn't noticed them.

I never see a full basketball court on my first trip to Jamaica. But I visit two Missionary Church Association congregations—one on the edge of a poor neighborhood called Grant's Pen, the other in the heart of one called Olympic Gardens—with ample room on their properties for full-sized asphalt courts. Through the help of a short term work team from Bethel College and a fair amount of fundraising and generous financial and volunteer labor support from both American and Jamaican Churches, regulation basketball courts, with regulation basketball hoops, will be built by the spring of 1997, and finished shortly after Jeanie and I move to Kingston in July of that same year.

Between July 1997 and July 1999, I spend countless late afternoon weekdays and Saturday mornings playing basketball with children and young men on the dusty asphalt in a Kingston ghetto. Though I have played basketball at a fairly high level in college, I never had a black teammate in my career. For these two years, I will be the only white person on the court every day. I will find myself in an over-populated concrete jungle trying to share the gospel and mentor children and young men without fathers—barrel children, gang members, confessed killers, self-described *rude bwoys*, and *ginnals*.<sup>33</sup> I will be a long way from home, but for two years my dream of marrying hoops with the hope of the gospel will be my reality.

---

<sup>33</sup> *Rude bwoy* is a slang term for a juvenile delinquent or criminal. A *ginnal* is a con man or a trickster.

*Summer 1997*

One sultry late afternoon in Kingston, I am coaching the Thunder basketball club through an intra-squad scrimmage at Tower Hill Missionary Church. We have lived in Kingston a year now, and the young men who come to play ball at the church nearly every day are my friends. I have accommodated myself to the endless banter of Jamaican street basketball, most of which, I have learned, is a good-natured part of the game and culture. Though not my style, I have learned to laugh along and on occasion play along with a bit of my own corn-fed trash-talk.

But on this day, in addition to the usual *chatta* among competing teammates, I notice something more bothersome. Phillip, having been manhandled in the low-post by the thicker and stronger Bullah, throws a razor sharp elbow that catches Bullah on the chin. A glancing blow, really, but it is done purposely, and Bullah knows it. The next trip down court Bullah returns the favor, elbowing Phillip, not viciously, not hard, but clearly on purpose, as if to send a message.

I should stop this immediately; blow my whistle; have everyone take a water break.

For some reason, I don't.

As the players transition into the other half-court, Phillip takes a violent swing with his fist, clocking Bullah in the back of his head. The game stops, and players from both sides fade into the background, passive observers as the brawl erupts. Bullah returns the sucker punch with a wicked round house into Phillip's face. He marches after Phillip, whose incomprehensible stutter-screaming has a sinister edge of rage and fear. They dance their way off the court where Phillip snatches up a five-foot dried out tree branch an inch and half thick lying nearby and proceeds to break it into three or four pieces over Bullah's ducking head. Left with a few inches of stick, Phillip—wild eyed—stabs the air with the dagger-like piece remaining in his hand, before Bullah has a chance to pick up two large stones, which he will use on Phillip should he need to.

I find myself between them, half-crazed, shouting, "Enough! Enough!" still stunned that no one else has intervened to stop what looks to me like an explosion of deadly rage. Instead, their teammates scatter, some to the water cooler for a drink, others to grab a seat on the retaining wall near the sanctuary, watching. I hear laughter from the children playing on the monkey bars nearby, and then I notice they are not the only ones who laugh.

This I do not understand. Each time I have witnessed a fight in Jamaica—and there have been too many—a crowd gathers at a not so-safe distance to

watch and laugh.

I am not laughing. I am furious. Furious that our team has so quickly dissolved into two individuals who want to kill one another with crude weapons and a bunch of unwilling-to-intervene observers, laughing. All that goes through my mind is, “How have I so failed to reach them?”

On my drive home and in the days after, I blame myself, disgusted that I have not been proactive enough in modeling and teaching peace, that I intervened far too late, that I watched the thing escalate and did not respond with grace. I do not question that I did respond to the explosion of the fight, and I do not wonder about my involuntary reaction of placing myself in between the two enraged combatants.

Many years later, I will, instead of cursing my failure to act, wonder how I was not paralyzed by fear in moments like these and others I experienced. That I did not hesitate to place my body in harm’s way, between two large and angry men armed with crude weapons, ready to kill one another.

This fact—that I will in the future be shocked by my fearlessness back then—will make me sad.

Phillip and Bullah both apologize to me separately at the next practice. Phillip suspends himself from the team for a week. Bullah promises that nothing like this will ever happen again. Both seem genuinely ashamed. I try to use the incident to teach about reconciliation and forgiveness, and about our responsibilities to our brothers, and several of the other players agree that the right thing to do should anything like this happen again is to help break up the fight. Through this ordeal and its aftermath, it dawns on me that my approval matters a great deal to them, and that disappointing me is painful. I do not know what I am to do with this knowledge—with this manipulative power I could wield. And I do not know what I am to do with the feeling that I believe I could and should have prevented all of this.

A few weeks later after practice, I announce that I will be leaving the island for a month and half, returning home to raise support for a second year in Jamaica. I try to emphasize that I will be back in forty days or so, and encourage them to press on with training for the final games of the regular season and the playoffs that will likely begin before I, their coach, return. They wipe sweat from faces hardened by too many years of poverty and violence, by the pain of abandonment and neglect, by disappointment.

And also tears.

## §

These tears are a haunting affirmation. I feel loved and hopeful that I have reached them in some small way, that I have a chance to continue reaching

them with the transforming message of the gospel in deeper ways down the road. The younger children have more questions. “You’re coming back, Coach?” they ask over and over. “Yes, I’m coming back,” I reassure them.

“You carry back something for me, Coach?” they ask again and again.

The children cry, too—though others tease them for it.

At home I tell Jeanie how much we will be missed during our weeks away and how I had to reassure the children that Miss Jeanie will be back and how some of the guys from the team tried hard to hide their tears from their coach. It is something to know we will be missed, and in part this makes having left families and friends and good jobs in America for the burden God laid on our hearts for Jamaica all the more worth it.

But later I come to a more layered interpretation and appreciation of those tears. Courtney suggests to me that those tears are not merely inspired by a sadness and fear that Miss Jeanie and Coach will not come back. They do not cry just because they will miss us the few weeks we are away. Rather, those tears remember fathers they never knew who have abandoned them and mothers who have “gone a-foreign” with the promise to return and to bring them to New York or Miami or London and a better life when there is money. Those tears tell a story of the past. Those tears say, “We have been left behind before.”

One year later we move back to Indiana permanently.

### *The Present*

Now when I recall things that I did and places I went in these supposedly dangerous and depressed neighborhoods—places both the tourist books and middle-class Jamaicans insist are off limits to outsiders—and I am unsettled by how fearless I once was. In my more cynical moments, I chalk that fearlessness up to ignorance. Had I known more, had I read what I’ve now read and seen the documentaries I’ve now seen, would I have been more cautious, or would I have been completely paralyzed by fear?

I do not know.

I cannot recall ever feeling afraid during my time in Jamaica. One time I boasted of this to Courtney, saying flippantly, “I guess perfect love casts out all fear.”

He said, “Are you saying you love perfectly?”

Ouch.

“No,” I said, appropriately rebuked. “No, I mean I just don’t think about being afraid. I love these guys, and I love this place.”

### *Spring 1999*

One Saturday morning I arrive at the Tower Hill basketball court for practice

with the Thunder. I am, as always, the first to arrive, so I do what I always do. I saunter out of my pickup with a basketball and shoot jumpers. The clang of the hoop and pounding of the ball on pavement sounds the alarm—it's time for basketball practice to start. Which means in half an hour or so most of the rest of the Tower Hill Thunder will show up—two thirds of them being either brothers or cousins who live in “yards” across the street from the church.

This day a twelve-year-old boy aptly named “Grinney” greets me first with a “Mornin’ coach” and his infectious smile. But then, in an uncharacteristically serious tone, he says, “Coach, dem kill a mon last night.”

He leads me to midcourt to show me the dark blood stains near the sideline. “Who?” I ask, meaning, who killed someone—fearing by “dem” he means some regular to the basketball court.

“Mi no know,” he says, his grin ominously absent. “Some mon on a bike, not from here. Dem stab ‘im up.”

A man killed on this holy ground, and this boy telling me so matter-of-factly. I have no words. His smile returns; he pokes the ball from my hip where I have it propped under my arm, and playfully dribbles between his legs, making fancy spin moves, grinning with his whole face.

I want to know who killed the man, and I want to know who the murdered man was. But Grinney doesn't know. And life goes on; Grinney wants to play basketball; so we play.

Later on, the older guys on the team do not seem overly troubled that their court has been desecrated by bloodshed, and the best I can tell is that the dead man was from “down so,” meaning he was from Binns Road and that apparently someone from “over so,” meaning Balcombe Drive, got him. Nobody names any names and nobody claims to have known either person. Instead they rehearse the NBA playoff action from the night before.

I watch the local news later that same night. Nothing. Plenty of highlights of the Bulls victory. No report about a murder on our basketball court. I buy a Sunday paper the next day. Nothing. Big picture of Michael Jordan on the sports page.

My friends in Tower Hill accept this thing so nonchalantly. Sure, when I ask them about gunfire in the night, they say they hear shots most nights, but mostly they think those are not shootouts but just the people “over so” and “down so” firing into the air to make the others “over so” and “down so” know, just in case, that it would not be a good idea to find yourself in the others' territory.

I wonder if any of them have fired any shots like those.

In our own middle class neighborhood “up so,” we hear plenty of gunfire,

typically in the wee hours of the night, occasionally very close by, most often, I suspect, from the gully that runs past our townhouse on the seminary campus.

Many years later I will remember these gunshots, I will remember about that murdered man, I will remember about the times I rather feebly intervened in the fisticuffs that that erupted and could have so easily turned deadly. I will be more frightened remembering these things than I ever was when I found myself in the midst of them.

I will regret. I will wonder and worry if I am incapable of recapturing my courage, and more heartbreakingly, my love; even if that courage, even if that love were quite likely mixed up with starry-eyed innocence and hoop dreams.

### *Today*

Perhaps I could say I think about my time in Jamaica and my regrets often, but often is a relative term. Occasionally I think about them. I think about what I did for two years. I think about how many days I drove alone to Tower Hill with a bag of basketballs, a sack of corned-beef sandwiches, a five-gallon jug of Kool-Aid, and hope. It troubles me, a bit, that I don't think about those days more often. It troubles me more that when I do think about them I am astonished by the courage of the young man that lived them, because the young man that lived them had more courage and more faith, more hope and more love—even if less self-knowledge—than I fear I will ever have again.

We left Jamaica almost seventeen years ago. Seventeen years' worth of reading, conversations, prayer, and writing—writing this, even—and I am still left wondering if I will ever truly understand my experiences mentoring marginal men with hoop dreams on the dusty asphalt of Tower Hill, Kingston, Jamaica. I never regret that we tried to marry Christian evangelical missions with basketball or doubt that somehow God found ways to redeem the work of this fool, done with passion and in His name. But there does remain a double-edged nagging sadness I feel: I wish I'd been a better coach, a more faithful friend, a more knowledgeable and sensitive mentor to them then; and I wish I could recapture that former wild hope and fearless love today.





# Queenie Dreams of Peace in Mindanao

JONATHAN CRANSTON<sup>1</sup>

Queenie Liwat grew up listening for gunfire. In her hometown of Banisilan, North Cotabato, she and her friends learned from an early age how to survive in a warzone. “Whenever there are gunshots, even if we are afraid, we have to be brave and alert, or else we will die like the others. There’s only two things you can do: hide and wait for death or fight back waiting for death.” She was eight years old when she first witnessed combat on the outskirts of her town. “We were at first delighted to see the planes above us. But we stopped playing when we heard the sound of [bombs] and can feel the earth shaking.” The kids ran to get a clearer view of the action taking place on the next hillside over. “We can see some men crawling that look like ants...and smoke too. What I felt at that time is a mixture of fear and anger and pity of the people on the other side.” In her grandfather’s basement there was a sandbagged hiding place. “My uncles would explain to us that we’ll be safe inside in case gunshots will be everywhere.”

Feuds between tribes, families, and political factions, along with the ongoing war between Moro rebels and the government of the Philippines, force the citizens of Banisilan to remain forever on guard, ready to fight or flee. Much of the tribal animosity has its roots in the centuries-long pattern of migration into Mindanao by Filipinos from the islands to the north. First Spanish and then American colonizers, and finally the Manila-based government of the Republic of the Philippines all encouraged Christianized Filipinos from Luzon and the Visayan Islands to relocate to Mindanao where good farmland was plentiful and, from a Western perspective, underexploited by the Muslim Moros and non-Islamized indigenous tribes who dwelt there. (Today, members of the non-Islamized tribes are known collectively as Lumads.)

Colonial and Filipino administrators aimed to make Mindanao more productive and to introduce its peoples to modern ways and codes of law. They also calculated that by planting colonies of loyal and relatively westernized Filipinos in Mindanao, they might strengthen the authority that the central government in Manila could exercise over the large southern island, whose

---

<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Cranston is staff writer for PeaceBuilders Community, Inc. (PCBI), Mindanao, Philippines. An earlier version of this article appeared on <http://peacebuilderscommunity.org>.

indigenous residents had proved less manageable. Accordingly, deeds to plots of rich Mindanaoan land were for decades awarded to Visayan and Luzonian families willing to homestead in the hinterlands. The authorities billed Mindanao as “The Land of Promise”—a slogan you still hear occasionally.

Naturally, the native inhabitants of Mindanao considered their ancestral territory neither underused nor up-for-grabs. Many Christian Filipino homesteaders who migrated to Mindanao hoping to lift their families from poverty found instead a violent death at the hands of Moro warriors and hill tribesmen whose territorial claims were based on oral traditions and ancestral custom rather than on land titles awarded by government. They scoffed at the title deeds the Christian settlers showed them. The saying became “You keep the title; we’ll keep the land.” The Christians, with the weight of the government on their side, matched atrocity for atrocity. In the 1970s, as Moro Nationalist armies engaged the Philippine military in large-scale war, Christian, Muslim, and Lumad civilian militias patrolled their own respective turfs. The government supplied arms to Christian paramilitary organizations such as the Ilaga, who became infamous for massacring Muslim villagers and mutilating the dead. Horrific acts on both sides of the conflict planted bitter hatreds that one generation passed to the next and fresh outrages reinforced. Since the 70’s, the war has repeatedly flared up and died down again. Some Moro rebels have signed peace agreements with the government, while others continue to fight. And, all the while, a robust communist insurgency occasions many additional armed encounters in the Mindanaoan back country, as leftist guerillas recruit among the disenfranchised Lumads. For hundreds of thousands of Mindanaoans, like the Christian, Muslim, and Lumad residents of Queenie’s hometown, there is no closure to the conflicts. Old wounds and contesting land ownership claims continue to pit neighbor against neighbor.

In a town where any day may bring a firefight, Queenie’s father is a man of peace. Jovito Liwat Jr. is a pastor and farmer with mixed Moro, Lumad, and Migrant ancestry. During Queenie’s childhood, their home was the only one she knew of where no guns were kept, and the Liwat children were forbidden from handling and practicing with guns as their cousins did. Jovito befriended his Muslim farmhands and would give them extra financial help when he could.

When Queenie graduated high school, she left North Cotabato to attend university in neighboring Bukidnon Province. There she befriended Clay and June Rojo, directors of the Bukidnon branch of PeaceBuilders Community, Inc. (PBCI), a Mennonite peace and justice consultancy founded by Mennonite Church Canada Witness workers Rev. Dann and Joji Pantoja. Queenie

began to assist the Rojos as they conducted Peace and Reconciliation (PAR) outreaches in provincial towns and villages that had requested these conflict transformation workshops. Before long, Queenie was a dedicated PAR volunteer, cheerfully riding for hours through the choking dust of Bukidnon's back roads in the jolting bed of the Rojos' half-cab. In remote tribal outposts she saw long-held hatreds melt away during dialogue sessions between formerly mortal enemies. She thought about the lethal bitterness between the factions in her own hometown and wondered whether Banisilan's opposing parties could ever be brought to sit down together.

In October of 2014 Queenie was back in Banisilan spending some days with her family. As she traded news with the town's vice mayor, a Liwat family friend, he asked what was keeping her busy over in the neighboring province. She told him about the conflict transformation work in Bukidnon and how she had become an apostle of Peace And Reconciliation as she watched grim animosities defused in that province. The vice mayor agreed that Banisilan dearly needed such a dialogue, and he began plotting with Queenie how to make it happen. Jovito Liwat's friendships on all sides of the conflict enabled him to summon elders and leaders of the warring communities to a meeting. Queenie asked the Rojos to come to Banisilan and conduct a PAR workshop, even though North Cotabato is outside of their designated mission field in the Bukidnon uplands.



Photo 1: Queenie Liwat and Pastor Clay Rojo prepare to conduct a Peace And Reconciliation workshop in Banisilan, North Cotabato. *Photo courtesy of the author.*

As the scheduled meeting of the adversaries approached, the trauma of Queenie's childhood and adolescence welled back up in her. She remembered how each time she saw the army trucks rolling and the soldiers in battle gear it meant early curfews for everyone and sleepless nights for family members who had to keep watch. High school proms were held as early as 1:00 pm so that everyone could be at home behind locked doors before dark, and they were subdued events with none of the exuberant dance music so essential to Filipino parties. Noise levels had to be kept low so that everyone could listen for approaching gunfire. As Queenie helped the Rojos make the final preparations for the workshop, she offered silent prayers for the safety of these missionaries who had come to Banisilan at her urging.

On the morning of November 27, 2014 the Muslim, Lumad and Christian community leaders assembled for the first seminar of the PAR curriculum—Rev. Dann Pantoja's adaptation of Anabaptist principles to the culturally and religiously diverse atmosphere of the Philippines. PAR introduces peace theology according to the "Four Harmonies": "harmony with the Creator—spiritual transformation; harmony with our being—psycho-social transformation; harmony with others—socio-political transformation; harmony with the Creation—economic-ecological transformation." The program points all conflicting factions toward the basic values for which all can agree to work. That morning, as the Rojos began their presentation, the atmosphere in the meeting hall was, as Queenie puts it, "quite reserved." It had been decades since the opposed parties in Banisilan's conflicts had met, shared a meal, and talked with one another. But, as the day's program went forward, the Muslim imams and *ustads* (religious instructors), the Evangelical pastors, the Catholic priest, and the Lumad spiritual leaders took part with growing enthusiasm. They heard one another's historical narratives and grievances. It was clear that everyone was thoroughly weary of war. Queenie believes that God prepared the hearts of the leaders and made them receptive that day. Their discussions gave birth to the Banisilan Religious Affairs Society (BRAS) composed of leaders from all sides and sponsored by the Banisilan local government.

Now the elders of the town's ethnic and religious factions are building mutual trust and have a regular forum for discussing the grievances of one group against another. The future peace of Banisilan depends on this sort of regular communication. In the past, what Queenie calls "incomplete news drifting around the town," has occasioned bloodshed time and again. Last month, PBCI returned to Banisilan to give a follow-up PAR seminar to the BRAS membership. This time the Pantojas accompanied Queenie and the Ro-

jos to the Banisilan municipal offices where thirty religious leaders gathered for another session of dialogue. These people are not exactly friends with one another yet. Rev. Dann sensed that some fear and tension were still present as they interacted. Yet they continue to prove willing to gather together and pursue reconciliation. A year ago most people would have judged this kind of respectful cooperation impossible.



Photo 2: Rev. Dann Pantoja (center) with a few of Banisilan's religious leaders. *Photo courtesy of the author.*

The wounds left in Queenie's heart and mind during her childhood in the warzone are finally mending now, as she participates in the dialogues in Banisilan. She once harbored intense anger towards Muslims. "I became prejudiced to them. I labeled them as heartless straightaway without researching about their thoughts and identity. It was only during the PAR [workshops] that I heard the accounts regarding their culture, and their own side of the story." She has let go of her anger now, and realizes that the Muslims have no more desire for war than do the Christians. "The fear and trauma of war are felt both by the innocent Moros and migrants."



# That You May Know One Another: The Qur'an in Christian Worship

CHAD MARTIN<sup>1</sup>

In the fall of 2015 when Republican presidential candidates were elbowing for media attention, Ben Carson stated that he did not think Islam is consistent with the US Constitution.<sup>2</sup> Fellow candidate Donald Trump later called for a “total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States.”<sup>3</sup> National polls show that nearly half of all Americans would be reluctant to elect a Muslim president and about the same number think Islam is more likely to encourage violence than other religions.<sup>4</sup>

Part of my pastoral calling in such a context is assisting my congregation in encountering Muslim holy texts. My reflections here are rooted in this calling and I contend Christians in the US must deepen their understanding of these texts as a counterpoint to such Islamophobia.<sup>5</sup> These reflections focus on my own experience of preaching on texts from the Qur'an and the Hadiths (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) in recent years. And they invite readers to consider how practicing and proclaiming a form of Christianity that has reverence and respect for Islam and its holy texts is both a form of evangelical witness and of social justice. At the heart of these reflections I contend that both are two sides of the same coin, joined at the root as faithful responses to transformational

---

1 Chad Martin is associate pastor at Community Mennonite Church of Lancaster in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

2 Quoted in Sam Sanders, “Ben Carson Wouldn't Vote For A Muslim President; He's Not Alone,” on National Public Radio (Sept. 21, 2015). Available online at: <http://www.npr.org/sections/itsallpolitics/2015/09/21/442308328/republican-rhetoric-highlights-americas-negative-relationship-with-muslims>. Accessed Sept. 23, 2015.

3 As quoted in Russell Berman, “Donald Trump's Call to Ban Muslim Immigrants,” at *The Atlantic* (Dec. 7, 2015). Available online at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/12/donald-trumps-call-to-ban-muslim-immigrants/419298/>. Accessed Jan. 29, 2016.

4 Sanders, “Muslim President.”

5 The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) agrees that helping American learn about the Qur'an is a key step to overcoming Islamophobia. See [www.explorethequran.com](http://www.explorethequran.com) for information on the Council's ongoing campaign to give away one million copies of the Qur'an to American civic leaders and ordinary citizens. Accessed Sept. 30, 2015.

worship.

§

On the first Sunday of September in 2013 my sermon included the following passage from the Qur'an: "O Humankind! We have created you of a male and a female, and fashioned you into nations and tribes, so that you may know each other... not despise each other" (Surah 49:13).<sup>6</sup>

The reading of the Qur'an in our worship service explicitly invited a reverence and attention mirroring that given to the Bible on Sunday mornings. That morning I had two strong motivations for such a provocative act in worship. First, the US was on the brink of taking broad military action in Syria. From the vantage point of that Sunday morning, despite the objections of congress and most American citizens, it looked like the President was about to launch an invasion.<sup>7</sup> I believed God's nonviolent mission in the world called us to speak out against this prospect. President Obama himself had quoted the same verse from the Qur'an during the conclusion of his famous speech in Cairo addressed to Muslims of the Middle East in 2009.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the President's own words could be a prophetic voice calling a stop to military force.

Second, I discovered that a Muslim scholar, A. Rashied Omar, specifically drew on these two texts—Surah 49:13 and Hebrews 13:1–6—to call Muslims and Christians to practice hospitality toward each other.<sup>9</sup> Here was an example of a Muslim scholar studying Christian scripture carefully enough to expound upon it in a peer-reviewed theology journal. Could I treat his holy text with as much care as he treated mine? Furthermore, Omar flipped on its head the notion that Islam teaches violence. Instead he urged Christian readers to notice how violence can be read into our own sacred texts: "The meaning of the text,' he contends, 'is often as moral as its reader. If the reader is intolerant, hateful, or oppressive, so will be the interpretation of the text.'"<sup>10</sup> It was a timely ob-

---

6 Translation by A. Rashied Omar in "Embracing the 'Other' as an Extension of the Self: Muslim Reflections on the Epistle to the Hebrews 13:2," *Anglican Theological Review* 91, no. 3 (Summer 2009).

7 See Peter Baker and Jonathan Weisman, "Obama Seeks Approval by Congress for Strike in Syria," in *The New York Times* (Aug. 31, 2013). Available online at: [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/01/world/middleeast/syria.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/01/world/middleeast/syria.html?_r=0). Accessed Jan. 29, 2016.

8 Barack Obama, "Text: Obama's Speech in Cairo," reprinted in *The New York Times* (June 4, 2009). Available online at: [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/04/us/politics/04obama.text.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/04/us/politics/04obama.text.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0). Accessed August 30, 2013.

9 Omar, "Embracing the 'Other,'" 441.

10 Omar, "Embracing the 'Other,'" 436, quoting Khalid Abou El Fadl.



servation as our country was poised for war with yet another predominantly Muslim country. That Sunday a reading from the Qur'an bolstered the call to faithful action instead of military force. And it deepened the call to practice hospitality to real Muslim neighbors in our community in face of the same threat.

Another Sunday while preaching on the Greatest Commandment of Jesus I included another saying from the Prophet Muhammad: "None of you has faith until you love for your neighbor what you love for yourself" (*Sahih Al-Bukhari, Kitab al-Iman*, Hadith 13). It was an opportunity to show how one of the foundational teachings of Jesus has resonance and corollaries across religious traditions, specifically in Islam. Like the first sermon, this was another opportunity to respond to Muslim scholars inviting theological conversation with Christianity. In a landmark text published and promoted in 2007, over a hundred prominent Muslim scholars from around the globe collaborated on a theological project called *A Common Word*, addressed to Christians.<sup>11</sup> The authors of this global interfaith project rooted their project in respective sacred texts, notably comparing Matthew 22:38–40 to sayings of the Prophet Muhammad.

#### §

Leading into these sermons I had already heard Mennonite denominational leaders calling congregations to deepen their understanding of Islam.<sup>12</sup> Mennonite scholars had spent years in dialog with Muslim scholars, with the support of agencies like Mennonite Central Committee.<sup>13</sup> And more recently Eastern Mennonite Missions has developed a team specifically supporting conversation with and learning about Muslims in North America.<sup>14</sup> I take for granted that pastors and congregations are called to learn about Islam and its holy texts and to build relationships with Muslims near and far, whether one's purposes are evangelical or in pursuit of social justice. But the question remains whether and how Christians bring Muslim holy texts into the context of worship.

---

11 See <http://www.acommonword.com/>. Accessed September 30, 2015.

12 For the Mennonite Church USA response see: <http://www.acommonword.com/the-response-of-the-mennonite-church-to-a-common-word/>. Accessed September 30, 2015.

13 See the Winter 2006 issue of *Conrad Grabel Review* (24, no. 1). Editor's introduction available online at: <https://uwaterloo.ca/grebel/publications/conrad-grebel-review/issues/winter-2006/shiah-muslim-mennonite-christian-dialogue-ii>. Accessed January 29, 2016.

14 See <http://www.emm.org/index.php/resources/christian-muslim-relations-team>. Accessed January 29, 2016.

I invited my congregation to read Muslim holy texts in worship because I believe faithful Christian action originates in transformational encounter with God in worship. In other words, rather than engaging a wrestling match between evangelism and social justice I contend that both are forms of faithful Christian witness born out of transformational encounter with the divine Other. Tom Driver shows how transformation is a core function of religious ritual, making worship vital for social change. He says “that ritual embodies the principle of growth or dynamic process through which a society transcends itself, praising, evaluating, rebuking, and remolding life as it is presently lived.”<sup>15</sup> Marlene Kropf, Rebecca Slough and June Alliman Yoder adopt this view when they say, “Christian worship is an encounter with the triune God experienced in the midst of community, which transforms and empowers members of Christ’s body for loving witness and service in the world.”<sup>16</sup> Worship is where the faithful meet and praise God, yet this encounter is transformational. Worshipers emerge with new insight, tools and passion for the mission of God. Again, this mission transcends categories like evangelism and social justice. All facets of God’s mission are born of transformational worship.

Transformational worship invites participants to see God in both familiar and surprising places. So reading the Qur’an becomes sacramental—something “intended to mediate, the presence and power of the divine.” That is, worshippers encounter the text expecting to encounter God.<sup>17</sup> Rashied Omar anticipates this kind of encounter when he writes, “In my view, the litmus test for ‘good’ and ‘bad’ religious practice is the extent to which we are willing to embrace the ‘other,’ whoever that ‘other’ may be.... [For], if we do not try to ‘know’ the other, how can we ever ‘know’ the Divine?”<sup>18</sup> And I contend the reverse is true as well. If we do not experience a transformative encounter with God in worship, we will not respond to God’s mission in the world.

Moreover, transformational worship creates a liminal space where the faithful practice, or even act out, what they desire to do in the “real” world. In the case of my sermon described above, preaching only about Hebrews 13—“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers”—could have been a teaching

---

15 Tom F. Driver, *Liberating Rites: Understanding the Transformative Power of Ritual* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 189.

16 Marlene Kropf, Rebecca Slough and June Alliman Yoder, *Preparing Sunday Dinner: A Collaborative Approach to Worship and Preaching* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2005), 39.

17 Monika K. Hellwig, “Sacrament: Christian Sacraments,” in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd edition, vol. 12, ed. Lindsay Jones (Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 7958.

18 Omar, “Embracing the ‘Other,’” 441.

about hospitality. But reading from the Qur'an was a way to actually practice hospitality, to act out what we desire to do with real Muslim neighbors. In the same way, a sermon about the Greatest Commandment exhorts the faithful to love, but a service including Muslim teaching about love is a loving gesture itself. Such modeling deepens the power of worship to transform the participant. As Tom Driver describes, worship or ritual, "is, at the least, the preparation of groups of people for the spiritual work they must do."<sup>19</sup>

As I said at the outset, evangelism and social justice are two sides of the same coin. Both are about responding to transformational encounters with God by moving beyond the walls of the Christian community and joining in God's mission of witness and service. Both often run counter to the prevailing ethos of North American (or any) culture. So both require action, courage and risk. And at their core, both intend to convey Christ's love to the world.

The worship settings described above equipped participants for evangelism; they were practice for evangelism in unique ways. We practiced witnessing to the good news of Christ's love by enacting that love in our worship. Embracing Muslim holy texts in the sacredness of our sanctuary became an act of Christ-like love for our Muslim neighbors. In our overwhelmingly Christian community perhaps Muslim neighbors hear the "good news" of Christ's love when they see Christian neighbors embracing their holy texts in a spirit of respect and curiosity.

Likewise, the worship settings described above called participants to social justice by practicing an act of solidarity with Muslim neighbors. Embracing Muslim holy texts was a bold act of solidarity in itself, modeling the kind of bold action called for in face of threats of military force. By reading the Qur'an we practiced proclaiming our stance alongside those being labeled as enemies. Driver contends such confessional acts are vital to equipping communities to publicly stand in face of oppressive forces; "Confession is to *demonstrate* where one stands, what one chooses to be, what the group is, where it stands."<sup>20</sup>

I am suggesting that evangelism and social justice are joined at the root. To rephrase Kropf et al., these two forms of action find common ground where they are rooted—in communal encounters with God that transform and empower. Such equipping worship vitally links the two in service of God's mission to the world.

## §

While my convictions about loving Muslim neighbors runs deep, I recognize

---

<sup>19</sup> Driver, *Liberating Rites*, 182.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

the limits of my experience and the provisional nature of my practice. As I reflect on the two sermons, I wonder how or if I would choose to include the Qur'an in future sermons or worship settings. A few guiding principles emerge from the above experiences. First, I only used Islamic texts specifically recommended by Muslim scholars and religious leaders for engagement with Christianity. This saves me from proof-texting and cherry-picking in texts that are mostly unfamiliar to me. Similarly, I have not sought to interpret these texts on my own. I opt for a trusting the good faith effort of these scholars to treat their own sacred texts with care, while recognizing every religion includes differing, contradictory and conflicting interpretations of its own teachings. Finally, when does the news of the day call us to reach beyond the comfort of the familiar to stretch ourselves to new understanding beyond the bounds of our tradition? Many times since September 11, 2001 I have thought that faithful Christian witness requires positive encounters with Islam.

In this essay I am seeking to give shape to a pastoral practice for engagement with the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. I put these reflections forward eagerly seeking counsel from others on this journey. And I put them forward sincerely seeking to be faithful to the call to love our neighbors as ourselves and practice hospitality to the stranger in the context of my ministry.

# Let Us Be Reminded Who We Are and What We Are Called to Do:

## The Theological Mandate of Anabaptist Witness

RICHARD SHOWALTER<sup>1</sup>

We are gathered from many nations around the globe in this meeting of Anabaptist leaders in witness and service. Who are we, and what are we called to do?

When Peter and John were first called before the authorities to answer these questions, they said, “If we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:9–12, English Standard Version).

When others of our spiritual ancestors, the sixteenth-century Anabaptists of Europe were called before the governing authorities of their day to answer these questions, they most frequently quoted two scriptures, Matthew 28:19 and 20 and Psalm 24:1. “Jesus,” they said, “told us to go to all the peoples of the world and make disciples, and the Bible is clear that the whole earth belongs to God. So we go!”

Today we can do no better than to answer these questions like Peter and John, and Hans and Michael and Dirk and Menno did. For a few minutes, let’s reflect together on their answers and ours.

The theme of the Mennonite World Conference this year is “Walking with God.” If we go to the very first chapters of the Bible, we find that theme present there. Adam walked with God. Enoch walked with God. Noah walked with God. (Gen. 3:8; 5:24; 6:9) The entire remainder of the Bible flows as an invitation to walk with God. In fact, everything we can say about being disciples of

---

<sup>1</sup> Richard Showalter lives and travels in Asia, Africa, the US, and beyond as a teacher, preacher, writer and servant. This essay was the opening plenary of the meeting of the Mennonite World Conference Mission Commission, the Global Mission Fellowship, and the Global Anabaptist Service Network, July 2015, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Jesus or being involved in mission is grounded in this simple phrase: walking with God.

Yet that old world was destroyed by a flood. And when we come to Abraham, the theme of walking with God gives way to a new expression of the same reality: I will bless you, and through you all the families of the earth will be blessed.<sup>2</sup> Beginning in Genesis 12:3, we find this theme of blessing for the nations repeated again and again throughout both the Old and New Testaments: 58 times in the Old Testament and 29 times in the New Testament, for a total of 87 times.

In the New Testament Peter speaks to “all the people” (Acts 3:25) after the healing of the lame beggar, and repeats the promise to Abraham. Paul, writing to the Galatians, repeats the same promise (Gal. 3:8). And, of course, Jesus trumpets the blessing to the nations in the records of the Great Commission in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Acts.

This blessing to the nations is described elsewhere in both Old and New Testament by *shalom*. This Hebrew word means completeness, wholeness, health, peace, welfare, safety, soundness, tranquility, prosperity, perfectness, fullness, rest, harmony, and absence of agitation or discord.<sup>3</sup> It is expressed perhaps most beautifully in the ancient priestly blessing, which I heard from the pulpit again and again in benediction as a child growing up: “The Lord bless you, and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace [*shalom*]” (Numbers 6:24–26, New King James Version).

And how does Jesus express the blessing, the *shalom*, in the Great Commission? He portrays *shalom* as essentially *walking with God*: “behold, *I am with you* all the days until the full completion of the age” (author’s translation). This blessing is quintessentially in *being and making disciples*. And what does that mean? Jesus spelled it out in two ways: (1) “baptizing in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,” i.e., “fellowship formation,” creating new fellowships of believers; and (2) “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you,” which commandments are summed up in the two great commandments: love for God and love for neighbor (Matthew 22:37–39).

Thus, the Great Commandment is included in the Great Commission. This combination leads us directly to the Mennonite World Conference Mission Commission and the two networks that are gathered here this week with a

---

<sup>2</sup> In Genesis 12:3, the Hebrew word usually translated into English as “families” (*mishpachat*) can also be translated “clans.”

<sup>3</sup> See *Strong’s Hebrew Lexicon*, entries 7965 and 7999. *Strong’s* is available online: <http://www.elyiah.com/lexicon.html>.

double focus on witness and service: the Global Mission Fellowship and the Global Anabaptist Service Network. Both witness and service are included in that great mandate of Jesus to go and bless the nations. This is who we are and what we do.

We stand in the great train of witnesses and servants of Jesus since Pentecost. In the New Testament's final statement of the Great Commission, in Acts 1:8, Jesus gives the key to power: the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. "You will receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you...." Here the images of (a) walking with God and (b) blessing for all the peoples of the world are complemented by another image, the indwelling Holy Spirit. We become partners with God in the most intimate way imaginable. God dwells within us. But how do we see this dwelling in its practical expression?

The great European revival of the sixteenth century touched every part of the church: Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Anabaptist. Luther stressed justification by faith, belief, assent, reception; Anabaptists stressed an active faith, discipleship, following Christ in life, coupled with a missionary spirit; St. Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus (1539), preached evangelistically to nuns in Spain and was almost killed by angry townsmen who no longer had access to the nun's bedrooms after their conversion.

The great re-embrace of the Holy Spirit in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has had a global impact—"the age of the Spirit," some call it.<sup>4</sup> But I would observe that the followers of Jesus have always lived in the age of the Spirit—God powerfully acting within and among us, motivating us in a mission which is a blend of word, deed, and being. We stand together today to confess that the mission is God's. Scholars, still liking to use Latin sometimes, call it the *missio Dei*.

Further, we confess that God has wooed us into partnership with him in this mission, as we see with Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3). It is a mission of word, so we speak. It is a mission of deed, so we serve in all kinds of ways. It is a mission of being, so we are present in the name and Spirit of Jesus. It is a mission in which we all have gifts to share.

One of the most attractive expressions of God's mission I have recently seen was in Shirati, Tanzania, while visiting a dear friend, Bishop John Nyagwegwe. He told me about their earlier temptation to look westward at times of need, or even at times of routine maintenance. But then they began to look in a new way beyond the West, to God. They gave up even what they were "entitled"

---

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo, 1995).

to. In a new way they sought God earnestly in prayer for his provision. God answered! For some years they struggled, but then they began to build and expand. The women's fellowship renovated old buildings for a new technical school that they desperately needed. A Tanzanian businessman chipped in. A Canadian traveler stopped by. A Dutch engineer offered his help. German Mennonites joined hands. New buildings rose. Today the school is on the verge of opening. At the same time, the young adults of the church began to gather for encouragement, prayer, and worship. Over the summer of 2015 thousands were expected to gather for another time of mobilizing fellowship. The initiative is not coming from the West or even from local church leadership. New fellowships are rising in nearby unreached communities, where people of another faith are welcoming them with open arms, even helping them build a meeting place.

The Tanzanians say: "We are watching God work, and we are working!"

Witness, service, and our very being—all in interdependent fellowship and partnership with God, one another, and with other brothers and sisters around the globe.



# Siguiendo los pasos de Jesús

OFELIA GARCÍA Y VÍCTOR PEDROZA<sup>1</sup>

En su ponencia Richard Showalter nos mostró el itinerario del camino. Nos habló de diversos personajes y sus éxitos y fracasos en su seguimiento al llamado de Dios, a la vez que destacó las acciones salvíficas de Dios fiel en la historia de un pueblo. En este itinerario nos trasladó al Nuevo Testamento y nos señaló algunas características de ese seguimiento como son la obediencia y la disposición amorosa a Dios y a nuestros prójimos.

El tema que me han asignado para desarrollar en el marco de la *Global Mission Fellowship* es “Siguiendo los pasos de Jesús.” Les invito a hacernos vulnerables a la voz del Espíritu de Cristo y encontrarnos, en algún momento, dentro de este itinerario y considerar juntos nuestros caminos en misión.

Cito el pasaje de Lucas 9:57-62 (BLP), destacando tres aspectos importantes de nuestro seguimiento.

*Mientras iban de camino, dijo uno a Jesús: Estoy dispuesto a seguirte adondequiera que vayas. Jesús le contestó: Las zorras tienen guaridas y los pájaros nidos, pero el Hijo del hombre ni siquiera tiene dónde recostar la cabeza.*

Es decir: considerar el costo de seguirle.

*A otro le dijo: Sígueme. A lo que respondió el interpelado: Señor, permíteme que vaya primero a enterrar a mi padre. Jesús le contestó: Deja que los muertos entierren a sus muertos. Tú dedícate a anunciar el reino de Dios.*

Dicho de otra forma, entender la verdadera prioridad en la vida.

*Otro le dijo también: Estoy dispuesto a seguirte, Señor, pero permíteme que primero me despida de los míos. Jesús le contestó: Nadie que ponga su mano en el arado y mire atrás es apto para el reino de Dios.*

El reto para nosotros es: el seguimiento a Jesús no se posterga por nada.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ofelia García y Víctor Pedroza son pastores misioneros en el estado de Chihuahua, México. Han ejercido este ministerio durante 36 años en diferentes estados de la República. En la actualidad trabajan con la Conferencia Menonita de México (conferencia alemana). Ofelia cursa actualmente su licenciatura en teología anabautista en el Seminario Anabautista Latinamericano (Semilla) y Víctor es antropólogo egresado de la Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia (ENAH). Este ensayo fue leído por Ofelia en una de las sesiones plenarias de la reunión de la Comisión de Misiones del Congreso Mundial Menonita, la Fraternidad Mundial Misionera y la Red de Servicio Anabautista Mundial en Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, en julio de 2015.

Somos misioneros en Ciudad Cuauhtémoc, Chihuahua, México. México, un país en el cual, mientras que la secularización avanza, paradójicamente, la religiosidad también lo hace. Secularización y religiosidad forman una combinación que se presta a muchos análisis.

Todos los misioneros hacemos misión en un contexto social particular, único. Habrá contextos que tengan ciertas similitudes y parecidos, pero el ámbito al que hemos sido llamados nos desafía y también nos obliga a hacer transformaciones. El cómo encaramos los desafíos y cómo nos transformamos depende mucho de nuestra fidelidad a Jesús Cristo.

El contexto en el que hacemos misión es el siguiente: corrupción; impunidad; imperio de las leyes del libre mercado, traducido en un salvaje neoliberalismo; una constitución política arreglada a modo, para que los dueños del poder acumulen cada vez más poder y no rindan cuentas a nadie; imperio del narcotráfico que crece imparable, que desafía toda autoridad y que tiene el poder suficiente para corromper, aterrorizar y desatar una guerra que año tras año está dejando cientos de miles de muertos, viudas y huérfanos. Todos esos son, sin duda, pecados sociales escandalosos y entre todos ellos, la enorme brecha entre una minoría de ricos y la inmensa mayoría de pobres clama por justicia al cielo.

En nuestro país, México, la cristiandad sigue siendo la religión predominante, variopinta y de extremos. Desde los grupos conservadores que califican a todos los demás grupos de herejes, hasta los grupos sincréticos, que no dudan en incorporar a su culto cualquier ritual que resulte atractivo y emocionante. Por ejemplo, una adoración musical hartamente mística que proclama a un Cristo glorioso y muy pero muy lejano de las realidades del ser humano, o también, un Cristo sin demandas que solo está dedicado a hacer feliz al creyente individual, “es mi amigo,” dicen muchos cantos. Y la religiosidad es tal, que las personas no ven ya necesario comprometerse con una comunidad de creyentes. En ambas realidades, el individualismo es lo que campea. Y eso, desde luego, es muy paradójico, pero esta religiosidad es signo inequívoco de que estamos en la era poscristiana.

En el campo de misión están ocurriendo además otros fenómenos que nos encaran: nuestra ciudad, una ciudad mediana de 150 mil habitantes, supera hoy la media mundial de suicidios. En el momento en que se redactó este artículo han ocurrido casi sesenta en lo que va del año. La mayoría de los que se suicidan son jóvenes de entre 15 y 25 años y la mayoría varones. Entre las posibles explicaciones se encuentran: frustración existencial, soledad social o enojo contra sí mismos y los otros.

Llevamos ya, al menos, cuatro generaciones de niños, con el síndrome del niño abandonado; niños creciendo sin referentes de ética y moralidad, sin refer-

entes de autoridad ni límites. Parece una contradicción y lo es, pero en este ámbito tan religioso, Dios es un desconocido para estos niños. Desde los 15 años los jóvenes abandonan su casa y la escuela y se dedican a existir sin propósito claro en su vida. Nuestra ciudad, además, tiene uno de los índices más altos de alcoholismo y de accidentes automovilísticos. La sociedad ha fracasado, ya que todo esto es signo de desencanto y desesperanza. Muchas iglesias, ocupadas en ser cada una la más grande y atractiva de la ciudad, se han desentendido del fenómeno.

Es en este contexto en el que seguimos a Jesús, atendiendo a sus exigentes demandas de transformación social y personal. En el pasaje anotado, saltan a la vista por lo menos tres condicionantes para aquel que desea o que es llamado a seguir y servir a Jesús. En el primer verso podemos observar del joven interlocutor de Jesús mucho entusiasmo y verdadera pasión para seguirle, pero Jesús le invita a reconsiderar, la pasión o el entusiasmo no es suficiente, es necesario estar dispuesto a considerar el costo. ¿Somos capaces de renunciar a nuestras comodidades para seguir sus pasos? Es necesario rendirse al Señorío de Jesús y a partir de ahí seguir a su Rey y Maestro. Por eso es discípulo, porque está en un constante aprendizaje de cómo es su Señor, de lo que enseña su Maestro, y su máximo gozo está en obedecerlo.

El discípulo, el misionero, el que sigue a Jesús acepta que en incontables ocasiones las condiciones en que realiza su trabajo no serán las más óptimas. Por eso, es necesario que se despoje de la tiranía de la propiedad privada y de la acumulación de bienes; que acepte que su nueva familia, la comunidad de creyentes, tiene prioridad sobre la familia de origen, la biológica; y que no puede posponer el seguimiento para realizar primero otros proyectos. También debe aceptar que mirar atrás recordando, añorando, suspirando nos inhabilita para la misión, para entrar de lleno al Reino, y nos incapacita para consolar y esperar al que no ve futuro en su vida.

El primer reto es enseñar a los creyentes a seguir a Jesús y en lugar de las modas. Un autor ha dicho recientemente que incluso el sistema oferta-demanda, ha sido superado por la moda. La moda impone todo criterio de comportamiento y de pensamiento. En mi ciudad, que es a la vez secularizada y muy religiosa, se manifiestan cristianismos que van de moda en moda. Pero el problema de las modas es que estas no tienen fundamentos sólidos y cuando los creyentes se aburren, en el mejor de los casos, se cambian de organización religiosa, buscando algo más emocionante o se vuelven cristianos solitarios o, en el peor de los casos, dejan de serlo y siguen las modas seculares.

En mi pequeña iglesia menonita, estudiamos las enseñanzas del Maestro contenidas en el Nuevo Testamento y específicamente en los cuatro evangelios

y nos abocamos a aplicarlas. En principio, nos esforzamos a convertirnos en una comunidad de amor, de fe y esperanza, de ayuda mutua, de comensalía abierta, en la que se socorre al desvalido y se auxilia al enfermo. Pues no es lo mismo girar invitaciones que invitar al primero que pase por enfrente, no importa quien sea, si es sicario, gay, indígena o migrante centroamericano a compartir los alimentos.

Nos ocupamos de los niños y trabajamos con ellos como personas muy pero muy importantes. Nos presentamos ante los niños como adultos buenos, que no abusarán de ellos, que no los engañaran, que no los maltratarán; adultos que les dispensan cariño, respeto, atención y guía, y que así los llevan a conocer a Jesús el Cristo. Evangelizamos a las mujeres. Preparamos un pastel y mientras éste está en el horno, reflexionamos con ellas sobre el llamado de Cristo. Oramos con los pobres y necesitados. Un hombre, muy demacrado, llega hasta nosotros y dice: “ya tenía tiempo que quiero venir” y, sin más, comienza a relatar su historia. “He sido un hombre muy malo, tan malo que mi primera esposa se suicidó porque no aguantó mi trato y, con la actual, no quiero que pase lo mismo.” Lo reprendemos y luego le anunciamos que sólo el Mesías Jesús puede perdonarlo, transformarlo y hacerlo un hombre nuevo.

Dios quiere reconciliar a todos consigo mismo y reconciliarnos con nuestros prójimos. La salvación es espiritual y personal, pero tiene consecuencias sociales. Por eso, no nos embrollamos en el conflicto evangelización o acción social, porque ambas tareas no se niegan, van juntas.

Los misioneros, los pastores, somos los primeros llamados a modelar este seguimiento. Ya anoté algunos compromisos del que acepta el llamado al discipulado. El discípulo, el que sigue en la vida a Jesús el Cristo, renuncia explícitamente a toda pretensión de poder, de fama, de riqueza, de autonomía, de lealtad a medias. Renuncia a promover modas religiosas con el fin de mantener cautivas a las ovejas y dándoles alimento que no las convertirán en seguidoras fieles.

Apuntamos entonces a formar comunidades de fe que manifiestan visiblemente este seguimiento. Comunidades donde se practica la justicia, la igualdad, el amor y la misericordia. Comunidades que participan con Cristo del ministerio de reconciliar al mundo.

No es sencillo. Mammón, manifestado en las leyes de libre mercado también han enajenado a los creyentes, quienes buscan y construyen justificaciones ideológicas a su materialismo económico, a su individualismo, a su “legítimo” ascenso social y a sus alianzas con muchos poderes. Su lealtad no es una, al Cristo, sino muchas, a otros poderes.

No es sencillo. Muchas iglesias han incorporado a su modo de ser todo un

aparato sensorial, que los ilusiona con la riqueza material y justifican el individualismo. Tienen estructuras religiosas jerárquicas y santones que ilusionan a los creyentes con hacerlos sujetos ricos y poderosos, librados del sufrimiento. Es decir, cargar con la cruz de Cristo no tiene nada que ver con ser un seguidor. “Cristo ya lo pagó todo” creen a pie juntillas.

En este ambiente secular y religioso hacemos la misión.

Claro que no es sencillo seguir al Mesías y vivir el evangelio y promoviendo entre los creyentes un estilo de vida sencillo, que es una evidente acción contracultural respecto del materialismo.

Promover un estilo de vida sencillo en respuesta al llamado del Evangelio, no es promover la pobreza, porque ésta siempre lo será a causa de relaciones económicas sociales injustas. Pero tampoco es promover la riqueza porque igual, ésta siempre lo será a causa de relaciones socioeconómicas injustas. Ambas promueven la relación esclavo-amo, siervo-señor, explotado-explotador. Mientras que la sociedad alternativa es una sociedad de relaciones igualitarias donde todos somos hermanos y hermanas y proclamamos a Cristo para la liberación de todos. No es tampoco promover el individualismo, como si los demás seres humanos no importaran, porque seguir a Jesús, implica el rechazo y la renuncia al racismo, el nacionalismo, el clasismo y la xenofobia.

Estar siguiendo a Jesús en la vida, junto con otros discípulos y discípulas es convertirse en una comunidad de vida alternativa, para la sociedad secular y la sociedad religiosa en la era poscristiana; estar siempre en misión y en camino y tener siempre presente que *"nadie que ponga su mano en el arado y mire atrás es apto para el reino de Dios."*



# Ensemble, pour le partenariat dans l'Évangile

JOHN FUMANA<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Dieu nous a appelé de différentes parties du monde pour le servir, et dans l'obéissance au Seigneur, nous nous réunissons pour répondre à l'Ordre Suprême. Ce faisant, nous partageons notre foi et cela nous conduit à être des partenaires dans l'Évangile. Il est important de partager la même compréhension de ce que nous entendons par un partenariat dans l'Évangile.

*Le partenariat* peut être défini selon deux perspectives : biblique et sociale.

La Bible révèle que Dieu a fait l'être humain comme son partenaire. Dans Genèse 1: 26, Dieu dit: « Faisons l'homme à notre image, selon notre ressemblance, et qu'il domine sur les poissons de la mer et les oiseaux du ciel, sur le bétail, sur toute la terre, et sur tous les reptiles qui rampent sur la terre » (LSG). Dieu bénit l'homme et lui donna le pouvoir de régner sur l'univers (Genèse 1: 28). Dans ce partenariat, Dieu est aussi le fournisseur de ressources dont l'être humain a besoin pour régner sur le monde (Genèse 1: 29).

Socialement parlant le partenariat est un arrangement dans lequel les parties conviennent de coopérer pour faire avancer leurs intérêts mutuels. C'est une relation de coopération entre les personnes ou les groupes qui acceptent de partager la responsabilité pour atteindre un objectif spécifique. Cette définition soulève la question sur l'intérêt du partenariat et de l'objectif à atteindre. Notre intérêt est de servir le Seigneur. Notre objectif est la mission.

Selon Ronald J. Sider, Philip N. Olson et Heidi Rolland Unruh, la source du partenariat dans l'Évangile est l'amour rédempteur de Dieu et le pouvoir de transformation. Jésus a dit à ses disciples : « Comme le Père m'a envoyé, moi

---

<sup>1</sup> *John Fumana est président du Réseau Anabaptiste Mondial pour la Diaconie (GASN) de la Conférence mennonite Mondiale. Il est un laïc et membre de la Communauté des Églises des Frères Mennonite du Congo. John Fumana est engagé à travailler avec l'église dans la promotion de l'approche du développement communautaire basé sur les atouts (promotion de la vision, des compétences et de l'ingéniosité des gens pour les aider à atteindre leurs objectifs de développement). Cet essai était une présentation plénière lors de la réunion de la Commission Mission de la Conférence Mennonite Mondiale, regroupant la Fraternité Missionnaire Mondiale, et le Réseau Anabaptiste Mondial pour la Diaconie, à Harrisburg, Pennsylvanie en Juillet 2015.*

aussi je vous envoie » (Jean 20: 21). L'Église a été envoyée pour accomplir le plan et la volonté de Dieu pour l'humanité. Comme Dieu désire que tous aient la vie en abondance, nous (l'Église) devrions aider les autres à réaliser leur potentiel de vie tel que Dieu l'a destiné. Comme le Père insiste pour que « la droiture soit comme un courant d'eau » (Amos 5: 24), l'Église doit travailler pour créer le genre de société qui plaît à Dieu. Comme Dieu, le Créateur de toute chose, prend plaisir à son travail et promet de renouveler la terre, nous (l'Église) devrions servir comme des responsables, des intendants créatifs des ressources de la terre. Comme Dieu incarné dans le Christ a demandé à tous de recevoir la Bonne Nouvelle, notre travail et notre témoignage offrent une invitation à d'autres : « voyez quel amour Dieu a pour le monde ! »<sup>2</sup>.

### **Le But du partenariat**

Notre objectif en tant qu'Église et Corps du Christ est bien reflété dans Matthieu 28: 19. Jésus envoie l'Église pour faire des disciples de toutes les nations.

Pour le Dr Christopher Wright, « les Écritures révèlent que la mission de Dieu englobe trois grands thèmes : Bâtir l'Église (au moyen de l'évangélisation et de l'enseignement), Servir la société (par le biais de la justice et de la compassion) et Prendre soin de la création »<sup>3</sup>. La justice et la compassion sont l'expression du service de l'Église à la société ou au monde.

### **Le mandat de l'Église**

Les termes de référence de la mission sont donnés par Jésus : « proclamer la bonne nouvelle aux pauvres (la prédication de l'Évangile, le témoignage au monde), la liberté pour les prisonniers, le recouvrement de la vue aux aveugles, la libération des opprimés (service), la proclamation de la grâce du Seigneur », en d'autres termes, la repentance, le salut, l'amour, la paix et la justice (Luc 4: 18).

C'est servir Dieu avec « la parole » et « les œuvres ». Le mandat de l'Église est holistique. Cela conduit aux questions : que veut dire servir le Seigneur ? Qu'est-ce que la « Bonne Nouvelle » pour un pauvre ? Comment l'Évangile peut être une « Bonne Nouvelle » pour l'aveugle ? Esaïe 58: 6 - 10 expose la question de la sorte de culte et de service qui plaît à Dieu. Il soulève également la question du véritable jeûne. Jacques 1: 27 dépeint la religion que Dieu agrée.

---

2 Voir Ronald J. Sider, Philip N. Olson et Heidi Rolland Unruh, *Churches That Make a Difference: Reaching Your Community with Good News and Good Works*, Grand Rapids, MI, Baker, 2002.

3 Chris Wright, « *The Church and Global Mission* » [en ligne], *Wycliffe Global Alliance*, September 2012, <http://www.wycliffe.net/missiology?id=2729>.



La Religion que Dieu notre père accepte comme étant pure et sans tâche est de : « visiter les orphelins et les veuves dans leurs afflictions, et se préserver des souillures du monde ».

Le meilleur Service rendu à Dieu consiste donc à :

- annoncer la bonne nouvelle du salut
- rompre les chaînes de l'injustice et délier les cordons de l'oppression : travailler pour dissoudre tout ce qui se lie injustement nos semblables et promouvoir la justice
- libérer les opprimés,
- partager la nourriture avec l'affamé et fournir un abri aux sans-abri
- habiller la personne qui est nue
- prendre soin des orphelins et des veuves

Ce mandat est holistique et nous sommes des partenaires dans sa réalisation, car Dieu nous a équipé de divers dons pour le servir (1 Corinthiens 12: 4 - 12). Le mandat de l'Église étant holistique, il n'y a pas de mission sans service, ni de service sans mission. C'est une question de partenariat, et le but ultime est de faire de toutes les nations des disciples, non seulement par la prédication de l'Évangile, mais également en servant le monde par des actes d'amour et de compassion.

Dieu a doté l'Église mondiale d'une diversité de dons, mais il y a un seul esprit conduisant à l'objectif commun. Il existe différents types de services, mais ceux-ci sont rendus pour le même et unique Seigneur. Il existe différents types d'opérations, mais c'est le même Dieu, le Père de notre Seigneur et Sauveur Jésus-Christ qui opère tout en chacun de nous. Ceci est le fondement de notre partenariat dans l'Évangile. Le témoignage est accompagné par le service au monde, afin de montrer l'amour de Dieu.

Comme il y a un seul corps et un seul Esprit, la parole et les œuvres sont des éléments indissociables de l'Ordre Suprême. Dieu a donné cette diversité (parole et œuvres) pour le perfectionnement des saints, pour le travail de son ministère, et l'édification du corps de Christ, qu'est l'Église (Ephésiens 4: 4, 12). C'est le travail de l'Esprit du Seigneur pour nous appeler au partenariat dans l'Évangile. L'Église est appelée à être le sel et la lumière du monde (Matthieu 5: 13 - 14). En d'autres termes, l'Église est appelée à apporter et montrer la différence avec le monde par des actes d'amour. Et la meilleure expression d'être le sel et la lumière c'est proclamer la Bonne Nouvelle du salut et servir le monde par les actes d'amour.

Pour cette raison, notre mission ou notre travail d'évangélisation va de

païr avec l'éducation, la santé, le développement et les services de secours et d'assistance aux pauvres et aux nécessiteux. Le Seigneur rend l'Église responsable de prendre soin des gens. Cette responsabilité comprend la diffusion de la Bonne Nouvelle pour que les hommes soient sauvés, et la manifestation de la compassion en répondant à leurs besoins. Faire cela c'est obéir au Seigneur car ce jour-là le roi dira à ceux qui étaient obéissants : « Car j'avais faim, et vous m'avez donné à manger; j'avais soif, et vous m'avez donné à boire ; j'étais étranger, et vous m'avez recueilli; j'étais nu, et vous m'avez vêtu; j'étais malade, et vous m'avez visité; j'étais en prison, et vous êtes venus vers moi », (Matthieu 25: 35 - 36). La foi sans les œuvres est morte. Il n'y a pas de foi sans œuvres, et pas d'œuvres sans la foi (Jacques 2: 15 - 17).

Tout l'Évangile apporte le salut dans son sens le plus large. Ceci implique le partage du salut à travers la parole et les actes. Par conséquent, comme une Église mondiale, nous sommes appelés à atteindre nos communautés avec l'Évangile dans sa totalité pour toute personne à travers les églises entières. En vivant l'Évangile dans son entièreté, le ministère holistique surmonte les clivages artificiels - entre l'action sociale et l'évangélisation, entre le ministère pour les individus et la quête de justice sociale, entre l'accent sur le disciple et une passion pour la sensibilisation.

Nous sommes partenaires parce que nous obéissons à notre Seigneur et Sauveur Jésus-Christ. Nous sommes partenaires parce que nous croyons aux Écritures. Et les Écritures disent que nous avons été appelés à servir Dieu en servant le monde, et le service est un mandat holistique. Il est question de faire des disciples de toutes les nations par notre témoignage, et par la manifestation de l'amour et de la compassion au monde par nos actes. Ces deux choses sont des composantes inséparables de la mission. « Et que l'un d'entre vous leur dise : Allez en paix, chauffez-vous et vous rassasiez ! et que vous ne leur donniez pas ce qui est nécessaire au corps, à quoi cela sert-il ? Il est ainsi de la foi: si elle n'a pas les œuvres, elle est morte en elle-même » (Jacques 2:16 - 17).

Comme anabaptistes, nous sommes appelés par Dieu à faire la différence : partager l'amour de Dieu pour le monde en paroles et en actes. Nous sommes partenaires dans cet appel. Notre mandat est de travailler à la transformation des personnes et des communautés, à la construction de plénitude dans le corps, l'âme et l'esprit. Et nous le faisons avec confiance dans ce que dit Paul dans Philippiens 1: 6, « celui qui a commencé cette bonne œuvre parmi vous la portera à son achèvement par le jour de Jésus-Christ ».

Soyons des partenaires dans l'Évangile. « Que notre lumière brille devant les hommes, afin qu'ils voient nos bonnes œuvres, et qu'ils glorifient notre Père dans les cieux » (voir Matthieu 5: 16).

Nous le faisons déjà, mais il est temps de penser à ce que nous pouvons faire pour renforcer ce partenariat. Que devrions-nous faire pour le renforcer ?

- Regarder les différents dons que Dieu nous a accordés en tant qu'église mondiale et corps du Christ
- Nous efforcer de maintenir le témoignage et le service inséparables dans notre travail
- Garder notre foi vivante en manifestant l'amour au monde
- Proclamer la Bonne Nouvelle du salut et servir le monde pour le perfectionnement des saints
- Être une église qui fait la différence pour atteindre le monde
- Equiper l'Église mondiale pour être actif dans le partenariat

Que Dieu bénisse son Église. Amen !



# Book Reviews

Todd M. Johnson and Cindy M. Wu, *Our Global Families: Christians Embracing Common Identity in a Changing World*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI, 2015. 220 pp. \$22.99. ISBN: 9780801049576.

I recently heard a sermon in which the preacher showed the congregation a pie on a plate, saying he used to see his experience of Christianity like a whole pie. But he now understood that his experience was really like his second pie plate—with only one small slice on it. “I want the whole pie,” he told us.

Well, I want the whole pie too, and because of that I often find myself with Christians from different parts of the world. I have had some God-filled moments in my experience with the diversity of Christianity, where the Spirit enables us to celebrate our differences. But I have also had moments of hopelessness, when rifts in the global church seem to block the way forward. Johnson and Wu’s insistence on unity within Christianity can seem naïve. But it can also sound like the Holy Spirit calling the church to imagine what is possible only with God.

Johnson and Wu write from an evangelical perspective, exploring our identity and relationships in the local and global church. The book aims to address unity and diversity within our global families through the lens of identity. What does it look like to be many as one? How are Christians different from or similar to our local cultures? What is the texture of interaction between diverse Christians and between Christians and others in the world? These are some of the questions the authors explore.

This book uses statistics to describe Christianity today, to give a snapshot of other world religions, and to discuss some sociological trends of globalization. The reader is offered a portrait of the vastness of the world and of the problems facing humanity today. But don’t get discouraged; the second section of the book focuses on the common identity of Christians, framed with words from Scripture. The book’s visionary and positive tone is remarkable considering the topic’s tendency to overwhelm.

Some of this exploration of identities rings hollow, however. The privileging of white, Western Christian voices over others is glossed over as the authors paint their vision of mutual sharing. “The bond of our common humanity is stronger than the divisiveness of our fears and prejudices,” claims Jimmy Carter in the beginning of chapter 4 (55). In a time of gun violence, racism, terrorism, and Muslim profiling, I see much evidence among Christians to the contrary, that fear and prejudice are forces to be reckoned with. This book only gives Western domination a meager treatment and mentions the challenge of individualism ever so briefly.

But Johnson and Wu do look carefully at the concept of allegiance, a topic that all Christians today must engage. They consider tribalism, nationalism, and an allegiance to Christ that conflicts with other allegiances. They ask critical questions about culture and faith: Who gets to decide what level of enculturation is “acceptable”? Do Christ-followers have to call themselves Christian or leave their other cultural/religious communities? What effect do denominational or cultural identities have on the global body of Christ, and how can all of us become more Christlike? What do we do when claiming our common identity—globally or as Christians—alienates others? The authors dare to ask questions without easy answers and make them come alive with real life examples from around the world.

Then they share inspiring stories of the innovative ways Christians have negotiated varied identities. They are clear that any kind of Christian unity requires outside-the-box thinking and brazen reliance on the Spirit. While the authors also give profiles of ecumenical organizations and overviews of Christian perspectives on diversity, the stories are what keep the conversation real. This book did not leave me with a clear picture of where we are and where we are going; Johnson and Wu would rather help the reader experience our global families in all their unquantifiable color than boil them down into a few take-aways.

*Our Global Families* is, finally, mission focused, which fits the authors’ visionary, experiential attitude. They entertain the necessary intersections between evangelism, justice, and righteousness to consider what it means to “make the world a better place,” returning again and again to Scripture throughout the book. They communicate that we are united by a common mission. Still resisting the impulse to simplify, the authors explore mercy and justice, care for the poor, and creation care. They quote Scripture and give lists of concrete actions to take. There’s also a chapter called “What We Can’t Do.” In the end, the mission is God’s, and the authors’ ability to maintain that point is really what makes their confidence believable—and contagious.

The whole pie, like John’s scroll in Rev 10, is sweet to the mouth but bitter to the stomach. This book encourages us to eat it anyway and live into it with the confidence that God goes with us. That kind of confidence can often be mistaken for naïveté. Whether it is grounded in wishful thinking or in God’s possibilities makes all the difference.

MARIA HOSLER BYLER is a part of Immanuel Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, VA, and is an MDiv student at Eastern Mennonite Seminary.

Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement, Volume II: Modern Christianity from 1454–1800*, Orbis, Maryknoll, NY, 2012. 503 pp. \$40.00. ISBN: 9781570759895.

It is only natural to be interested, first of all, in “our” history—the one that explains our own particular context and helps us understand where we come from. Thus, when I began to teach church history survey courses to Baptist students in the former Soviet Union in the 1990s, I worked hard to build up a narrative of Christianity that would give perspective to evangelicals in an Orthodox context whose recent past was defined by official atheism. I flatter myself that I eventually succeeded in picking out a functional path between translated English texts and new editions of nineteenth-century Russian histories. However, in the process I largely ignored the “undergirding insight” of *History of the World Christian Movement*—namely, that Christianity was never strictly a European religion but rather a worldwide movement before 1500. Reading through this second volume, which covers the years 1454–1800 (a third volume on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is planned), I began to wonder whether I have ever actually taught church history at all. Doesn’t any localized version risk distorting the worldwide history of Christianity? Of course, a truly complete historical narrative would be impossible to assemble, much less read; thus the reason why local and specific histories are necessary. Yet I am grateful to Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist for showing a way to knit together myriad local stories into a comprehensive whole.

The book is organized both according to centuries and continents, illustrating developments in different geographical areas more or less in parallel, giving sustained attention to the development of Christianity in the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Europe. Protestant readers in particular might feel the tectonic plates shift under their feet a bit, as the authors do not use the sixteenth-century European Reformation as the dividing line between the Middle Ages and the modern era. Instead, their starting point is the development of navigation and shipping in the fifteenth century, which led to the conquest of South America, Africa, and Asia by Europeans and consequently the spread or reintroduction of Christianity. The European Reformation only appears about a quarter of the way into the volume. Indeed, the narrative may feel overly Roman Catholic to some readers, but generally the treatment of different Christian confessions is balanced. I was gratified to note that more space is given to Orthodoxy in its various forms than is usually the case in historical surveys of similar length. The authors do not shy away from the darker conundrums of church history, such as Christian complicity in the slave trade and colonialism. Their “take” on Christian history is far from triumphal. Readers with little tolerance for ambiguity may find some of the narrative unsettling

Along the way, Irvin and Sunquist tell many stories that may be completely new to Anglo-American readers. I had never heard of Yajiro (1511–50), the Japanese

criminal turned Christian, who directed Francis Xavier's steps in Japan (63–65), or of Jacobus Elisa Johannes Capitein (1717–47), a Fante-speaking African slave who was one of the first West Africans to become both a Protestant and a missionary (323). One of the goals of this history is precisely to tell stories about real people, presenting as many details as possible and limiting historical interpretation (xiv). In this, the authors are quite successful. At the same time, interpretation is not lacking, with brief but clear summaries of the effect of navigation, colonialism, slavery, and industrialization on Christianity. The main points are repeated in different contexts, and the result is a concise, accessible narrative that the reader can pick up at any point without having to start at the very beginning. Each chapter closes with a brief but helpful bibliography for those who wish to do further study.

Needless to say, two scholars working all alone could not produce such a comprehensive study. The research and writing was carried out over ten years in both group and individual consultations with specialists. I was dying to know who they are, but unfortunately the authors decided the list would be too long. Perhaps they were afraid of leaving out someone's name. It is also inevitable that mistakes will be made in presenting such an ambitious work. I found two without trying, which makes me wonder what other errors there are. Nevertheless, with so much checking and cross-checking done by other historians and editors, the book is certainly as reliable as most.

I wonder what some Russian Orthodox historians would make of a book like this. Over the past twenty-five years, great efforts have been made to recover the history of Christianity suppressed during Soviet times, but to my knowledge that recovery has not often extended to include other forgotten or threatened Christian confessions. What significance would the neglected voices of Asian or African Christians have for the Orthodox? It is interesting that the only attempt I know of to present a comprehensive history of Christianity in the Russian language was done by a Baptist—Dr. S. V. Sannikov of Odessa (Ukraine). If his two-volume *Twenty Centuries of Christianity*<sup>1</sup> were translated into English and *History of the World Christian Movement* were translated into Russian, both English- and Russian-speaking Christians would be enriched. We cannot do without our local and personal histories, but it is of great value to see where and how they connect to the worldwide Christian movement.

MARY RABER (*St. Louis, Missouri, USA*) is a service worker with Mennonite Mission Network teaching church history and other subjects at Odessa Theological Seminary (Ukraine) and other theological schools in the former Soviet Union.

---

<sup>1</sup> Sergei Victorovich Sannikov, *Dvadsat' vekov Khrisianstva*, 2 volumes (Odessa: Bogomyслиe, 2001).



Janel Kragt Bakker, *Sister Churches: American Congregations and Their Partners Abroad*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2014. 298 pp. \$31.95. ISBN: 9780199328215.

I recently met with a pastor and church planter from Pennsylvania who challenged me with the following question: “What are ethnic Mennonites willing to give up in order to welcome into their community people who self-identify as Anabaptists?” From his position “peering over the fence” in southeastern Pennsylvania, he felt a theological and ecclesiological kinship to Anabaptists but was constantly faced with the challenge of ethnic conformity and a lack of hospitality due to cultural difference.

It is with this view toward cultural difference as a theological value for ecclesiological renewal that I turn to Janel Kragt Bakker’s *Sister Churches*. In this book, Kragt Bakker undertakes a thorough study of twelve congregations around Washington, DC, that engage in sister church relationships with congregations in the Global South. Through the process of interviewing pastors and parishioners from these twelve congregations, which represent four denominations, she hopes to show how sister church relationships can represent “shifting patterns of global religious engagement and a new paradigm in the theology and practice of mission. Attempting to break free from the outmoded and patronizing metaphor of the mother/daughter relationship, northern and southern Christians who participate in these relationships seek to encounter one another in a relationship of equals—both churches contributing to a common mission of serving each other and the world” (18).

In order to demonstrate that sister church relationships offer a new paradigm for religious engagement across the denominational and theological spectrum, Kragt Bakker chose to study mainline churches that represent the theological and racial diversity of North American congregations. Among the congregations represented in this survey were Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, and Baptist churches with sister church relationships that were at least two years old. In each case, she interviewed not only the North American pastor, who often carried the primary relationship with the sister church, but also parishioners who were involved in the relationship to varying degrees.

Her approach to analyzing the data collected as part of these case studies employed a phenomenological method in that she “sought to illuminate the lived experiences of my respondents by analyzing the stories they told and the reflections they offered” (9). Narrative analysis was also useful for deciphering the attitudes that respondents brought to their understanding of the sister church relationships, as well as for comprehending the meaning that they assigned to these relationships. These research methods enabled her to gauge whether or not the participants in these sister church relationships experienced a renewal in their congregations as well as in their personal lives as a result of these engagements.

She discovered that even among the theological and ecclesiological diversity represented by the congregations surveyed, there was a common commitment to building and sustaining these relationships. Most of the congregations placed a high value on the relationship, irrespective of the significant cultural and theological differences that emerged during the relationship. For example, reflecting on the relationships developed between Living Faith Anglican Church in Washington, DC, and Murambi Parish in Rwanda, a member of the North American congregation noted that the relationship “gives us a sense that the Christian faith isn’t only an American faith, and that we are part of something much larger. That gives us a mission and a drive that is a lot stronger than in so many other churches I’ve been in” (175). Kragt Bakker reported many of these sentiments from members of the congregations she studied.

Sister church relationships are most effective when the relationship is sustained for a long period of time. Over the long term, parishioners from these congregations come to know each other in a way that enables the sharing of stories and practices that begin to inform the theology of the other. Reflecting on this phenomenon, Kragt Bakker writes, “The congregations involved in sister church relationships were strengthened by incorporating their experiences into their collective biographies. Sister church relationships allowed congregations to craft their self-understanding around stories of generosity and reconciliation” (175). Without these deep relationships, the power dynamics of paternalism can override the best intentions of the partner from the north.

A criticism of the methodology employed in this book is that all the congregations that Kragt Bakker surveyed were long-standing, established churches with annual budgets near or exceeding \$500,000. What might we learn from small churches that have established international sister church relationships? If a church is unable to bring financial resources to bear within the relationship, how might that change the power dynamic that is inherently present when a relationship is initiated by a wealthy North American congregation to a congregation with fewer financial resources? This is especially relevant considering that resource-rich congregations are more prone to prioritizing projects over relationships, as Kragt Bakker documented in two of the twelve cases (149).

Surveying a smaller North American congregation may have opened up other possibilities for how sister church relationships might be conducted with greater mutuality. However, smaller churches rarely have the financial or relational capital to devote to establishing and maintaining international sister church relationships. As such, these congregations often work toward establishing ties to nearby local congregations. These relationships may offer a more sustainable model while still celebrating the theological and ecclesiological diversity present in this age of globalization when the church of the Global South has in many ways come to North America.

Despite the reservation noted above, I believe that sister church relationships offer a helpful way forward in theology and mission for the twenty-first century. In an Anabaptist framework, sister church relationships offer a tantalizing opportunity for witness in a world at war. Could Mennonites build sister church relationships with congregations in Iraq, Iran, and Syria as a witness against the totalizing power of war? We could offer a powerful witness of a concrete way of rejecting “othering” in favor of seeing our global counterparts as true brothers and sisters in Christ.

Lutheran pastor David Kline notes that “we no longer understand ourselves as keepers of the Great Commission for the sake of the world but as companions on a shared journey with a shared commission” (139). As Kragt Bakker has shown, sister church relationships offer intriguing possibilities for increased theological engagement and an expansion of our vision for mission. For the Mennonite church, these intentional engagements can move us beyond the cultural fortresses we have been tempted to build around our theological and ecclesial engagements, and can open possibilities to new life as our partners around the world share their gifts with us and as we receive them with humility, grace, and gratitude, and give of ourselves in return.

MARTIN RHODES *works for Virginia Mennonite Missions as a short-term missions coach.*

**Steven P. Miller, *The Age of Evangelicalism: America's Born-Again Years*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2014. 221 pp. \$24.95. ISBN: 9780199777952.**

During the 2004 American presidential campaign, candidate George W. Bush sought his second term with overt appeals to the evangelical electorate. At one campaign stop in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, President Bush was received by a local religious group and presented with a quilt embroidered with the statement, “I Love America.” This stitched sentiment was presented not by the head of the local patriotic megachurch or by Lancaster’s family values activists but by members of the local Amish community. The fact that Bush was able to capture the minds and hearts of these pastoral pacifists in the midst of the war on terror is one of the many novel pieces of evidence for what historian Steven Miller calls *The Age of Evangelicalism*.

The overarching argument of the book is that evangelicalism is at the *center* of American history since the 1970s. Typically understood as a subculture or sect, evangelicalism according to Miller is actually constitutive of American culture and politics themselves. The claim is not so much that periodic evangelical gusts fanned certain flames in American society but that evangelicalism was actually the air being breathed—or in some cases, choked on.

Miller is not giving a simple account of the rise of a “Christian America,” via either

the Republican Religious Right or progressive evangelicals, though both feature prominently in the narrative. Neither is he arguing that most Americans became evangelicals or even that their visions for America were always legislated. Instead, Miller contends that evangelicalism simply provided “a language, medium, and foil” that helped Americans make sense of the world (5). This third term “foil” is crucial, for Miller argues that even ardent anti-evangelicals were forced to inhale evangelicals’ noxious fumes, a fact that caused these resisters to alter their own messages and visions for America.

The details of this story are found amid politics and paintings, screeds and songs, bills and Branson, Missouri. Miller begins his story with what he calls the “seventies evangelical moment,” a period when America jumped at the opportunity to be “born again” after Watergate. Importantly, this decade would produce America’s first publically “born again” president, the Sunday-School-teaching, Southern Baptist Democrat from south Georgia, Jimmy Carter. Carter’s homespun Christianity capitalized on the therapeutic brand of faith emerging in American culture at the time, an evangelicalism more focused on personal integrity than nationalism. But Carter’s evangelical America would soon be surpassed by Ronald Reagan’s as the emerging Christian Right helped drive most evangelicals to the Republican side in the 1980 presidential election.

Though not an evangelical himself, Reagan was an evangelical’s president. He would implement the “God strategy” with great effect, using overtures to the Christian Right that created his persona of defender of *all* religious life in America. The GOP would seize upon this mantle for the next several years, gradually causing Americans on all sides of the political and ideological spectrum to equate religion with Republicanism. Only at the “Obama pivot” were Democrats able to renew their religious vision, in large part because of Obama’s paeans to progressive evangelicals like Jim Wallis. Yet again, evangelicals were the instigators of this change. Miller’s overall political narrative is characterized by nuance and depth, reworking overused binaries and attending to overlooked figures and movements that other treatments of this period neglect.

Miller supplements the political story with dips into intellectual history and pop culture, illustrating how evangelical ideas influenced highbrow discourse even as “evangelical chic” helped to define the social history of America at this time. The influential concepts of the “naked public square,” “culture wars,” and even the academic study of American religion itself are shown to be products of evangelical influence. The genre of Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) emerged alongside *Left Behind* novels, Thomas Kinkadee paintings, and “purpose-driven” self-help guides, all capturing hearts and minds even as they grabbed a share of their respective media markets.

Miller’s riveting references to intellectual and pop cultural currents make me won-

der if his book ends too soon. He places the eschaton of the age of evangelicalism at the 2012 presidential election, the first national race since 1976 where evangelicals were neither overtly courted nor represented among the candidates. He is surely right that the political fortunes of evangelicals took a sharp decline at this juncture, but analysis of the decline of evangelical cultural influence is lacking here. The evangelical right and left may have lost significant power as polarizing political forces, but what about their persistent impact in framing quintessentially American modes of entertainment, therapeutic self-help, or charity? Profitable faith-based cinema like *God's Not Dead*<sup>2</sup> or *Heaven Is for Real*,<sup>3</sup> immensely popular preachers like Joel Osteen, and the giant aid organization World Vision are just a few examples that signify continued and evolving evangelical success even as they also display quintessentially American cultural characteristics. Perhaps examples like these are evidence that the age that began in the 1970s has simply entered a new phase. They also may confirm that Miller's narrative is at times driven too much by the evangelical political story. More discussion of the pervasive power of evangelical intellectual life, "chic," and especially how non-evangelicals adopted or resisted these forms would have made his argument all the more compelling.

Readers of this journal will likely be interested in the ways that Anabaptists—who are not a significant part of Miller's narrative—show up in the book. Whether in his descriptions of the Amish welcome of Bush (highlighted above) or of the profound influence of Anabaptists in evangelical social justice movements, or in his characterization of Mennonite-lite thinker Stanley Hauerwas as the Francis Schaeffer of the evangelical left, Miller makes it clear he believes that Anabaptists are part of the evangelical epoch in some way. This novel historical placement of Anabaptists as active participants in the culture-making of post-1970s America should open up all sorts of questions for members of our tradition who would rather consider ourselves a foil to the age's excesses.

AARON GRIFFITH is a member of Durham Mennonite Church and a doctoral student in American religious history at Duke Divinity School, Durham, NC.

**Berry Friesen and John K. Stone, *If Not Empire, What?: A Survey of the Bible*, CreateSpace, 2014. 354 pp. \$17.00. ISBN: 9780692344781.**

For a little over a decade now, "empire criticism"—an interpretive method that aims to uncover the anti-imperial message in various biblical texts—has been on the ascent, especially among New Testament scholars. Friesen and Stoner's book makes

---

<sup>2</sup> *God's Not Dead*, directed by Harold Cronk (Scottsdale, AZ: Pure Flix Entertainment, 2014), film.

<sup>3</sup> *Heaven Is For Real*, directed by Randall Wallace (Culver City, CA: TriStar Pictures, 2014), film.

a real contribution to this approach, not only by presenting a popular account of empire criticism—one that will be especially valuable for Anabaptists—but also by trying to show that this anti-imperial message is continuous with a tradition that runs from the Old Testament through to the early church and is embodied especially in Christ. The key word in their book is *empire*: “a system of coordinated control that enriches itself through overwhelming socio-economic and military power at the global level” and “portrays itself as the primary source of security and peace in the world” (7). The authors, for their part, view empire as the primary threat to life and peace on earth, and they attempt to show how valuable the Bible can be as a source of imaginative and political resistance to this global threat.

But hasn't the Bible often been a tool of oppressors? Friesen and Stoner argue that the history of the Hebrews is actually a history of two competing visions of God, one allied with the political and sacral centers of imperial power, the other the friend of the dispossessed and marginalized. Moreover, throughout the book, the authors provide an accessible account of the ancient contexts and alternative worldviews that so often prove crucial to a robust interpretation of such biblical stories. By directing our attention to these historical and imaginative contexts, Friesen and Stoner not only push the willing reader past simplistic Sunday School interpretations but also lead us to deeper, richer, and more demanding readings of long-familiar texts. For example, they reveal the original *political* meanings of words such as “gospel,” “salvation,” and “ekklesia” (church). Their interpretation of Revelation is especially beautiful and instructive. The stories, as they tell them, offer fresh insight into the faith of Jesus and the character of YHWH's kingdom, correcting distortions and cultural complicity that have too often embedded themselves in Christians' belief systems.

There are many who will profit from this book. It will be edifying to Anabaptists, especially to many of us who already have an anti-imperial worldview and who want to make sense of the Old and New Testaments within our established worldviews. I imagine that the book will also be of interest to radically minded non-Christians who seek an alternative to empire and who will find surprising and fascinating information about the relevance of biblical history to their project. On the other hand, the book may be unconvincing to Christians of other traditions and those unfamiliar with the empire-criticism approach to the Bible. Friesen and Stoner are not biblical scholars in their own right, nor do they often appeal to the work of ecumenical biblical scholars; rather, they rely almost entirely on a single work by Wes Howard-Brook for their textual interpretation. As Friesen and Stoner know well, anyone can justify their doctrine with Scripture, so even in a popular work one desires more scholarly references to establish the credibility of various readings. On more than a couple of occasions, the authors claim to understand texts that have puzzled Christians and scholars for centuries—the messages are anti-imperial, of course! They may well be right, but without further reference to

reliable sources, a skeptic could very easily dismiss their entire project.

One might also worry that the book relies too heavily on a binary categorization of texts as either pro-empire or anti-empire. Anti-empire stories are praised, while pro-empire stories are vilified as coming from places of imperial power; indeed, Friesen and Stoner often seem to run the Bible through a kind of imperially poisoned-well hermeneutic—any text written by those close to the levers of the empire’s power necessarily serves the interests of empire. Members of the empire are *always* and unforgivably suspect. Empire ruins and poisons everything; thus, those in league with the empire cannot have authentic relationships with God. Any Old Testament book or story that holds a “David-and-Solomon” worldview (or honors the kings in any way) or that emphasizes temple worship is pro-empire and dismissed. Because this anti-imperial lens is laid upon the Scriptures, one is led to ignore or even deny the other ways God may speak to us through the Word, even through those ghastly pro-empire voices (Joshua, Judges, 1 Samuel, First Isaiah, the David tradition, etc.). The sheer wrongness of empire is so absolute that the reader is led to imagine that empire may be the only real evil about which we ought ever to speak. But those of us with a long experience of the redeeming but also flawed reality of our churches might wonder: is it really the case that small, nonviolent, forgiving, and suffering communities are guaranteed to be righteous? Is centralized power the only world-destructive malice with which we have to contend?

These questions lead to a final concern: Friesen and Stoner’s exhaustive focus on the political leaves one to wonder, where is God? To their credit, the authors do believe that life is more than political community: life involves love and loss and the entire panoply of human relationships (201). Nevertheless, there are only a handful of references to life also being about a living relationship with God (YHWH). Instead, Christianity seems to be first and foremost a political revolution. The work and message of Jesus is simply the formation of an alternative community, a new social system, one founded on justice, compassion, forgiveness, and nonviolent resistance rather than domination, vengeance, and bloodshed (see 248–49, 271). Indeed, these are all essential to the kingdom of God, but the presence of God itself is strangely elided by Friesen and Stoner’s account. Throughout the vast majority of the book, prayer is not mentioned as an important facet of this community—as if the strength to stand against empire and the wisdom for justice, compassion, and nonviolence could be imagined apart from calling on God’s Spirit in, with, and for us. For readers who believe—and believe it is extremely important—that God comes near to us, lives in us, and transforms our spirits with, yes, a kind of supernatural love, the vision of community presented by Friesen and Stoner may appear too much like a merely political vision of utopia.

My concerns notwithstanding, *If Not Empire, What?* is a valuable and instructive book, especially for those of us eager to work for the kingdom of God and to con-



front the empire. Throughout their book, Friesen and Stoner reiterate the radical, anti-imperial voice that the body of Christ needs to hear again and again if it is to make manifest the kingdom of God, here and now. It is a hard message but one we need to hear until all of our lives—political as well as spiritual—are fully conformed to the life of Christ.

KARIN HOLSINGER SHERMAN *is a writer and mother living at the center of imperial academic power in Cambridge, United Kingdom. She feels conflicted about this.*

Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Eduardo Mendieta, eds., *Decolonizing Epistemologies: Latina/o Theology and Philosophy*, Fordham University Press, New York, 2012. 321 pp. \$35.00. ISBN: 9780823241361.

“The maintenance of life is an expression of knowledge” (19). This is how Walter Mignolo begins his opening essay in the edited volume *Decolonizing Epistemologies: Latina/o Theology and Philosophy*. Serving as a kind of capstone for the collection, Mignolo’s claim captures a thread and a position that runs through the other contributions, albeit in different ways. The volume concerns the question of epistemology—of what we know and how we know and how we know what we know, and, most importantly for Mignolo and friends, how we produce what we know. The claim that the maintenance of life—meaning all spheres of life: economic, political, social, religious, as well as the banal acts by which each of these are constructed each day—is an expression of knowledge suggests that everyday life reveals our epistemologies, and at the same time, that everyday life produces our epistemologies. In their essays, the authors of this volume attempt to decolonize these default epistemologies that order our lives—epistemologies that occur at the intersection of power and knowledge, of coloniality and liberation.

Mignolo’s essay sets the stage for the remainder of the volume. He reviews the interactions between modernity, coloniality, postmodernity, and decolonization. Coloniality refers to the ideological structure undergirding various forms of colonialism and is, he argues, “constitutive of modernity” (23). Thus, there is a eurocentric linkage between knowledge and coloniality—eurologocentrism—which polices the boundaries of what counts as knowledge and who counts as an epistemic subject/agent. The work of decolonization is to de-link knowledge from eurocentrism (and thereby coloniality). “Decolonial thinking,” Mignolo writes, “means to dwell and think at the border (the slash “/” that divides and unites modernity/coloniality)” (26). Further, “decolonizing epistemology and decolonial epistemology have to be anchored in geo- and body-politics of knowledge” (27). I want to highlight two essays that perform this epistemology well and raise some provocative points of contact with Mennonite/Anabaptist theology and epistemology.

In her essay “Mujerista Discourse: A Platform for Latinas’ Subjugated Knowledge,”



Ada María Isasi-Díaz emphasizes the knowledge of Latinas at the grassroots. She privileges the voices of the oppressed and impoverished by “thinking with” them rather than “thinking about” them, as modern anthropologists tend to do (44). She positions herself in “an ongoing dialogue that profoundly respects the peoples’ ability to reason and to participate reflectively in their own struggle against oppression” (44). This decenters the eurologocentrism that privileges the white, the educated, the male. Isasi-Díaz affirms that the primary site for knowledge about oppression, conflict, resistance, and liberation is revealed and produced by those who experience it. She refers to this as *lo cotidiano*, which includes the experiences of micro aggressions, systemic oppression, and the ways of surviving and resisting them, as well as producing liberating forms of existing. In short, *lo cotidiano* refers to the profoundly deep and complex, yet also the ordinary: the “everyday of Latinas” (46). By privileging *lo cotidiano* as the site of knowledge and ordinary Latinas as epistemic subjects/agents, the everyday also becomes the site of decolonization and decolonial epistemologies.

Just as coloniality’s eurologocentrism ignores the knowledge of the non-elite, it also renounces any knowledge not based in rationality—that is, in a disembodied, objective mind. In her essay “Thinking Bodies: The Spirit of Latina Incarnational Imagination,” Mayra Rivera Rivera makes her case for embodied knowledge and what she calls “body-talk” or “body-words” (209–10). She explains how bodies remember experiences, especially oppressive and traumatic ones: “Colonial-sexual violence against African and indigenous women of the Americas indelibly marked the bodies of many of their descendants. Greed, violence, enslavement *literally* became incarnate” (209). Body-talk is the language that emerges from these colonized bodies. Unlike abstract logocentric discourse, however, these are words “that emerge from the islanders’ bodies, from their mouths, stomachs, esophaguses, and so forth” (214). With poetic force, “body-words seek to erode the confining structures of U.S. national, racial, and sexual ideologies” (215). The decolonizing epistemology of these Latinas comes from their bodies, from how and what their bodies remember. Likewise, Mayra Rivera Rivera argues, their theology emerges out of the stigmatized body of Jesus whom they remember. Their theology is one of suffering and liberation embodied in the incarnate God. Contrary to the redemptive suffering prevalent in colonialism, the purpose of Rivera’s linking of liberation with suffering bodies is to decolonize, to delink knowledge and liberation from coloniality and eurocentrism.

Each of these essays provokes questions about the linkages between coloniality and Mennonite/Anabaptist knowledge, theology, and everyday life. Indeed, given that the Mennonite tradition is a Christian tradition that emerged in Europe during the rise of modernity, it should come as no surprise that white Mennonites in the Americas retain and reproduce epistemologies of oppression. These must be examined, recognized, and named—while Mennonite theology has been critical

of some forms of state violence, it has not been anti-colonial. It is also the case that through missionary work many others have joined Mennonite/Anabaptist traditions. Indeed, European Mennonites no longer constitute the largest demographic of Mennonites/Anabaptists globally. The essays by Isasi-Díaz and Rivera present a particular challenge to European Mennonites in this regard. How might we position ourselves with our sisters and brothers so that we can stand with them against the coloniality that oppresses them? Because coloniality is eurologocentric, this will involve a decentering of ourselves so that we can privilege those marginal Mennonites/Anabaptists (and others) who suffer under coloniality—so that we can hear their body-words and their theologies and epistemologies of liberation. We must ask ourselves: What Mennonite/Anabaptist knowledges have been rendered unnecessary? What knowledges have we ignored? What knowledges have we deemed inadequate compared to our dominant eurocentric theologies? How do we decenter ourselves and enter into *lo cotidiano* of those on the margins of colonial regimes of power and knowledge? This is the challenge of decolonization that this book places before Mennonite/Anabaptist epistemologies and theologies today.

MELANIE KAMPEN is a member of Springfield Heights Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Treaty 1 Territory, and is pursuing a PhD in Theology at the University of Toronto, territory of the Huron-Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit River—Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant.

**Beth Baron, *The Orphan Scandal: Christian Missionaries and the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, 2014. 245 pp. \$24.95. ISBN: 9780804791380.**

In her provocative and insightful study *The Orphan Scandal*, historian Beth Baron tells a complex story in a consistently engaging and accessible manner, intertwining histories of American and European evangelicals, British colonial authorities, local elites, state officials, and leaders of the nascent Muslim Brotherhood in the 1920s and 1930s in Egypt. Baron organizes her study around a particular incident—the titular “orphan scandal” that rocked Egypt in 1933. On June 7 of that year, teenage Egyptian Muslim girl Turkiyya Hasan left the Swedish Salaam Mission school and home for orphans in Port Said after sustaining a beating that left her badly bruised. Hasan claimed the Swiss missionary Alzire Richoz had beaten her because she refused to convert to Christianity. Leaders of the mission school—who undeniably had exerted sustained emotional pressure on Hasan to convert—countered that Hasan had been beaten for showing disrespect to a visiting American missionary. Hasan soon became a *cause célèbre* among activists in the still-young Muslim Brotherhood, with the *ikhwan* (brothers) using Hasan’s case to rally popular anti-missionary sentiment. This “orphan scandal” in turn embroiled Egyptian state

and British colonial authorities. As Baron summarizes, the Hasan case “came to represent the frontline in the war between missionaries and Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood. And it showed contestations over legal jurisdiction between the state, religious authorities, and foreign representatives” (85).

Baron’s account is divided into two main parts. After a prologue narrating the events of Hasan’s beating, her fleeing to local authorities in Port Said, and the ways that different actors responded to the ensuing public outcry, Baron turns in part one to chapter-long histories of three different Protestant missions for “orphans” from Muslim, Coptic Christian, and Jewish families. (Islamic law distinguishes “orphans” [pl. *aytam*; sing. *yatim*], children who have lost a father, from “foundlings” [pl. *luqata*; sing. *laqit*], children whose paternity is unknown. Protestant missionaries worked with both kinds of orphans.) Then, in part two, Baron examines how the Muslim Brotherhood used the Hasan affair to stoke anti-missionary sentiment and to expose the Egyptian state’s constraints (thanks to the British occupation and the Ottoman Capitulations) to control missionaries, in turn prompting the state simultaneously to expand its reach through the organizing of social services (including to orphans) and to act against the growing Islamist movement.

Chapters 2 through 4 present case studies of three Protestant mission efforts in the first decades of the twentieth century in Egypt, centered around care for orphans: the efforts of the American-based Presbyterian mission agencies in Cairo, with a particular emphasis on the Fowler Orphanage for girls established by the Quaker couple Esther and John Fowler and later taken over by the Presbyterians; the Asyut Orphanage in Upper Egypt led by Pentecostal missionary Lillian Trasher; and the efforts of Maria Ericsson and the Swedish Mission to Mohammedans in Port Said. Baron ably assesses the commonalities and the distinctive elements of these three mission efforts. She describes how missionaries viewed abandoned and orphaned children as an opportunity: “Where others saw a stigma,” she writes, “missionaries saw the possibility of ‘winning souls for Christ’: the child was a blank slate who could be saved” (37). While the American Presbyterians began their mission efforts with a focus on elite Egyptian families, the Presbyterians, Baron contends, shifted focus to “working with slaves, orphans, and abandoned children, whose families made few if any claims and who could stay on in Egypt to help the evangelicals” (44).

These different Protestant orphanages sought to keep children in the homes as long as possible so that missionaries “would have time to shape” their charges through routines of religious lessons, homework, housework, and prayer (51). When extended families placed orphans at Fowler House or the Asyut Orphanage, they had to sign contracts promising to leave the children at the orphanage until the age of eighteen (69). When extended families pulled their children from one of these orphanages, the missionaries experienced it as a profound loss: one missionary wrote with lament of “a dear little ten-year-old Mohammedan . . . stolen by her father and

married soon after because he feared she might become a Christian” (52). Orphan children were part of what Protestant missionaries viewed as a “spiritual landscape” that they described in militant terms, with missionaries occupying, retreating, battling upon, facing sieges, and ceding territory within this spiritual landscape (39).

Children received in missionary orphanages were expected to “study the Bible, sit in on services, and listen to prayer,” partaking in Protestant Christian practices despite their Muslim, Jewish, or Coptic families of origins. Children at Asyut Orphanage, where around 10 percent of the children came from Muslim families, learned English by listening to gramophone hymns like “Onward, Christian Soldiers!” and “Joy to the World” (73). Children did not have to become Christians at the orphanage, but they were expected to “follow the forms of Christian practice and discipline” (95). Baron observes that low-income, socially marginalized Egyptians “initially took this to be a small price to pay for services which were in short supply” (27).

Baron explores the complicated relations between the missionaries and colonial authorities. The colonial authorities protected missionary efforts, yet missionaries often chafed at what they experienced as restrictions. Baron explains that “colonial officials protected the right of Christian missionaries to proselytize, but they did not go out of their way to protect converts and allowed Islamic courts to decide cases of personal status.” George Swan, leader of the Egypt General Mission and head of the Inter-Mission Council when the orphan scandal erupted, described British officials as “hyper-nervous about the Moslem faith” and as keeping “a tight hand on Christian Missions, fearing that they would be a cause of arousing the Mohammedans to fanatical uprising” (36).

Baron’s case studies highlight how European and American women coming from patriarchal denominations in which they would have had minimal scope for religious leadership back home were able to exercise such leadership in Egypt. Baron also teases out differences among the Protestant mission efforts she studies, noting how Presbyterian missionaries closely examined potential baptismal candidates, testing whether or not orphan girls who sought to convert displayed sufficient piety, knowledge, and commitment, whereas Trasher, as a Pentecostal, gave particular weight to spontaneous religious experience—the baptism of the Spirit—in the life of her orphaned charges.

In part two, Baron examines how Islamist movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood deployed concerns over Christian missionary activity to mobilize and attract followers, with these efforts focused and intensified by the public outcry at Hasan’s beating and the alleged attempt at forced conversion. Baron explains how the Muslim Brotherhood drew upon an understanding of religious freedom quite different from the understanding held by Christian missionaries in order to organize opposition to such missionary outreach. “To missionaries,” Baron observes,

“freedom of religion meant the freedom to choose and to change their religion. To Muslims, it meant freedom of religious minorities to practice their religion and of the majority to protect their own, particularly the young and vulnerable, from proselytizing” (53). Christian missionaries, Baron continues, presented a serious threat in the eyes of the *ikhwan*: such missionaries “undermined the faith of Muslims, going after orphaned, abandoned, and poor children, whose care was mandated by Islam. The prevalence of female evangelicals roaming the countryside freely and targeting young girls as well as occasionally ‘seducing’ young men, according to critics, presented a cultural challenge to Islamists and the gender order they envisioned” (117). Hassan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, criticized the duplicitous nature of Christian service, warning that “under the guise of practicing medicine, teaching embroidery, and sheltering boys and girls,” missionaries were seeking to pull Muslims from their faith (119).

Perhaps the most fascinating dimension of Baron’s book is her demonstration of how the Muslim Brotherhood emulated and adopted Christian missionary strategies. “Learning from the missionaries,” Baron contends, “al-Banna and Brothers preached in clubs and cafes; traveled to towns and villages to spread the call (*da’wa*); and set up weekly lectures designed to counter the influence of missionary talks” (124). She continues: “The Brothers learned from their first adversaries that providing social welfare was an excellent way of recruiting supporters and spreading their message” (134). One Muslim Brother emphasized the need to adopt “the active means of the missionaries” (135), while Labiba Ahmad stressed the importance of Islamists organizing and providing social services for the poor and the elderly “in order to block the path of the missionaries” (137).

In her concluding chapters, Baron analyzes how the Egyptian government responded to the orphan scandal in a two-fold manner: by “extracting Muslim children from missionary orphanages and finding them new homes” (166), in the process expanding the reach of the Egyptian state and inscribing sectarian divisions into Egyptian society while also “containing, then crushing, the anti-missionary movement” (152) in the process of beating back the Muslim Brotherhood’s challenge to its authority.

*The Orphan Scandal* is a model of mission history that offers a humanizing account of mission efforts while situating such efforts within broader social, political, and colonial contexts. Baron’s study should be read by anyone interested in the history of Western Christian mission efforts in the Middle East generally and Egypt specifically, as well as by anyone examining how children—from low-income families in particular and especially orphans—have been a focus of Protestant missionary efforts.

ALAIN EPP WEAVER *directs the Planning, Learning, and Disaster response for Mennonite Central Committee and is the author of Mapping Exile and Return: Pales-*

tinian Dispossession and a Political Theology for a Shared Future (*Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014*).

**John E. Sharp, *My Calling to Fulfill: The Orie O. Miller Story*, Herald Press, Harrisonburg, VA, 2015. 439 pp. \$29.99. ISBN: 9780836199338.**

This new biography of Orie O. Miller (1892–1977) by John E. Sharp is a richly textured account of a Mennonite leader who was involved in developing much of the institutional infrastructure through which Mennonite life, witness, and service were channeled between 1920 and 1960. Miller’s expansive vision and strong leadership contributed directly to constructing the trajectory that by the end of the twentieth century had transformed the Eurocentric Mennonite enclave into a global movement.

This biography can be read on several levels. Sharp crafts a compelling narrative of a man whose leadership gifts were recognized early and who would be called to play multiple strategic roles. The reader encounters a plethora of acronyms for the multiple agencies, committees, and boards in which Miller was a moving force. This is also a study of the intergenerational struggle of a conservative ethno-religious community to negotiate rapid cultural change in the tumultuous twentieth century. Finally, the biography traces the steady development of international mission and service ministries that have reshaped Mennonite reality. Visionary leaders will respond to crises as opportunities to mobilize intellectual, financial, material, and human resources to address the new issues.

In 1864 John F. Funk, a young Mennonite entrepreneur, founded *Herald of Truth*. Funk served well a church in transition by publishing German and English editions of the newspaper. He promoted a series of innovations and new structures. By 1910 evangelistic meetings and Sunday schools had become widely accepted, and the Mennonite Church had boards of missions and charities, publications, education, and a Mennonite General Conference. Parallel developments had taken place in other Mennonite groups. But Mennonites were not prepared for what lay immediately ahead.

World War I marked what Dutch historian Jan Romein called the “watershed of two eras.” For all churches, the modernist-fundamentalist conflict was a major expression of this multi-pronged crisis. Miller’s generation bore the brunt of these crises.

Orie Otis Miller was born and reared in a traditional, closely knit Amish Mennonite community in northern Indiana. Father and son had great respect for one another. Miller embraced the values he absorbed from his parents and local congregation, of which his father was the leader, and developed a rigorous form of discipleship based on a holistic understanding of the gospel.

Lacking their own organization in 1918 to respond to war-devastated Europe and the Middle East, Mennonite workers were placed with the Quaker and inter-church Near East Relief agencies. Miller was one of nine young Mennonites sent to serve with Near East Relief in 1919. Assigned to Beirut, he was soon made director of operations for that region. In 1920, following the founding of Mennonite Central Committee, Miller led a team of three young men in an attempt to get food and clothing to the Mennonites in southern Russia. These were formative experiences that he would draw on throughout his life. In addition to honing his administrative skills, Miller learned to know people of a variety of religious persuasions and saw the strengths and values each offered.

Over the years, as Miller led service and mission programs in many countries, he always made contact with one or two people in a particular country who were well informed. Each time he visited that country, he would call on these individuals. He valued the broader view of the present situation of those who kept their fingers on the pulse of the nation. He was also developing valuable relations with leaders of other churches, missions, and service agencies.

Since he was not “native born” and had graduated from Goshen College, Miller was mistrusted and censured by conservative Lancaster County Mennonites for his openness toward other Christians. One can only marvel at his humility and patience toward these critics. His love and respect for the church could hardly be questioned. Quietly attending assemblies of the International Missionary Council, he interacted with leading figures in Protestant missions. When he led Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM) into cross-cultural missionary work in the early 1930s, he determined to avoid mistakes older missions were charged with. In preparation for finding a field for EMM in East Africa, Miller went to London to consult with the director of World Dominion, a group inspired by the writings of Roland Allen, a sharp critic of traditional missions.

Miller recognized that the kind of traditionalism to which Lancaster County Mennonites clung was a drag on effective cross-cultural mission. The traditionalist mindset could not be reconciled with Allen’s “indigenous church” ideal, but Miller knew that the resources needed to engage in world mission had to come from this supporting constituency. He was confident cultural change and adaptation would be byproducts of participation in world mission.

As Sharp amply demonstrates, Miller was a visionary leader. Repeatedly, Miller anticipated emerging needs and opportunities. The list of new agencies and programs launched as a result of his driving initiative provides a clue to the scope of his influence across four decades. Always working with others and with utter loyalty to the church, Miller helped Mennonites find their way through multiple crises and into varied ministries around the world. For more than a decade after he retired from administrative responsibilities, he restlessly traveled the world, always

in quest of “the next frontier.”

In a work of this complexity and scope, the author has admirably organized and effectively presented the material. Only occasionally does an error creep in. For example, the statement on page 190 concerning the Brethren in Christ mission movement is incorrect: Sharp claims that the “Brethren in Christ were several decades ahead of Mennonites in sending and supporting foreign missionaries.” In reality, Mennonite Brethren, the General Conference Mennonite Church, and the (Old) Mennonite Church were sending and supporting missionaries in Java, Turkey, and India at the same time as the Brethren in Christ. Also, the discussion on pages 222–24 refers several times to “George Brunk.” Since several key leaders in the Mennonite Church have carried that name, making clear which one is being referenced along the way would help the reader. Sharp has demonstrated the rich resources to be found in biographical studies. We are in his debt for this excellent portrait of a remarkable leader.

*WILBERT R. SHENK is senior professor of mission history and contemporary culture, Fuller Graduate School of Intercultural Studies.*