

Book reviews

Ingleby, J. San, TK., Ling, TL. (eds.). 2013. *Contextualisation and Mission Training. Engaging Asia's Religious Worlds*. Oxford: Regnum Books International. 109 pages. ISBN 978-1-908355-40-9. Price: £5.99

In this concise book, the eight contributors reflect on the various facets of the contextual missiological training in Asian religious frameworks. Their shared conviction which underlies the whole study is that holistic theological-cultural formation should enable Christian theology students as well as mission workers and practitioners to explore critically and engage skilfully with the multiple religious contexts of Asia, including Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Hinduism. Lack of such a formation is blamed for the often minimal success that Christian missions from the West have had hitherto in impacting the religious worlds of Asia.

Issues discussed in the volume range from the theory of contextualisation through cross-cultural hermeneutics to proposals of the context specific training models. The book is arranged in two major sections: Contextual Frameworks and Engaging the Multiple Religious Contexts of Asia, each of which contains four articles. The first three papers are worth particular attention as they accurately set the theoretical background for further considerations.

In the first article, Tan Kang San looks at missiology through the lens of the fragmentation of theological education at large as well as the local and global challenges that Asian contexts pose to both formal and non-formal mission training programmes. He describes the task of missiology in terms of investigating biblically and critically the motives and methods of mission to see if it fits the criteria of God's reign in a particular cultural-religious context. Jonathan Ingleby's focus is on the hermeneutical principle in relation to contextual mission training. In his provocative text, he accuses the Western approach to mission of domesticating the gospel in order to accommodate and enhance regnant modes of knowledge, wherein the postulated normativity of the theological claims is used de facto to exercise power. Ingleby's take on contextualisation as primarily a matter of power structures brings a fresh and thought-provoking perspective on Christian self-awareness. According to the author, theology ought to understand itself as navigation which responds to, but does not produce or control, the weather. Consequently, those who engage in Christian proclamation must invite and enable the hearers to imagine, i.e., to construct a new world. The following paper by David Miller in a way qualifies Ingleby's call for 'radical contextualisation' by exploring the inevitable tension between 'contextual mission' and 'faithful mission'. While

the former resists importing an alien form of Christianity which would not flourish in its new setting, the latter avoids the traps of syncretism and heresy. The last contribution in that section comes from David Harley and concerns the content and the cultural factors of Asian missionary training programme. In terms of situating Christian mission within a contextual framework however, it is far less useful than the three previous articles.

Carol Walker whose text opens the second section of the book examines issues concerning Christian missionary formation relative to witness to Muslims, and she points out that alongside generic theological and cultural principles the optimal introductory training should also include the use of (preferably region specific) case studies. In his 'Lessons from the life of Karl Reichelt' Rory Mackenzie does precisely that: he integrates the particular missiological 'case' with more universal christological questions, which underlie the endeavours of all cross cultural missionaries. Mackenzie's insightful analysis provides us not only with a comprehensive account of Reichelt's mission in China and his interactions with Mahayana Buddhism, but also with a balanced evaluation of his missiological approach in the context of the contemporary challenges. Tan Loun Ling offers the 'middle way' model of missionary training in China which stems from the Confucian spirit of moderation and harmony. Finally, the Eastern pattern of thinking, which goes beyond all binary conceptions of 'either-or' for the sake of a 'both-and' approach to reality, is elaborated in terms of mission training in the Indian context. In this last contribution, Christina Manohar rightly notices that mission starts with listening and therefore particular mission methods cannot be forced from outside, but need to emerge from the context.

The reason why I find the first three articles of the volume particularly stimulating is that their authors make us realize the extent to which deliberations on mission training are mutually correlated with and dependent on more primordial questions in philosophy and theology of religions, notably questions regarding the dialectical tension between the universal and the particular, which is so critical for our understanding of contextualisation. Unless it is grounded in a critical reflection on 'missiological essentials' no training of mission workers will be capable of enhancing deeper and longer term engagements within the complexity of Asian social, cultural, and religious systems.

In this sense, the volume in question certainly contributes to the ongoing conversation about conditions and implications, opportunities and threats of contextual mission. On the negative side, it is somewhat disappointing that none of the contributors mentions ecumenical issues as a factor in contextual theology of mission. Furthermore, minor mistakes can be found in the Bibliography. However, all in all, this selection is to be recommended to everyone who resonates with Brian Stanley's conviction that 'Christianity is

most true to itself when engaged in the risky business of mission'. Without doubt the book will leave its readers with much to ponder.

Reviewer: Dr Jakub Urbaniak, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, PRETORIA, 0002.

Kim K & Anderson A. 2011. *Edinburgh 2010: Mission now and then*. Oxford: Regnum. vii + 476 pages. ISBN 978-1-870345-91-0. No price quoted.

Here we have the 'official record' of the proceedings of the 2010 Edinburgh study process and conference to mark the centenary of the 1901 World Missionary Conference. This will be a primary source of reference for this conference for many years to come along with the fuller record contained in the Edinburgh 2010 website – www.edinburgh2010.org.

This record contains the Edinburgh 2010 Common Call, greetings, a comment on the spiritual life of the conference, homilies, worship, the extremely significant keynote address presented by Prof Dana Robert, perspectives on the address, papers given at the plenary and parallel sessions, reports, reflections, statements, a bibliography and appendices, including documents from the other significant conferences which took place in 2010, the Cape Town Commitment and the Tokyo 2010 Declaration. The focus of the conference was the nine study themes. The resulting reports, prepared from 2008 constituted the 'raw material' (:51) for the discussions. These were critiqued from the perspectives of seven transversal perspectives with the aim of achieving a degree of cross-fertilisation in the ensuing discussions.

It is not correct to say that 'there is no institutional continuation of the Edinburgh 2010 project' (:5) for the bodies which emanated from the 1910 conference still continue its remit which obviates a continuation committee as was found necessary in 1910.

The claim that 'the study process has been polycentric, open-ended and as inclusive as possible of the different genders, regions of the world, and theological and confessional perspectives in today's church' is only partly true in the light of Maluleke's (:73-74) trenchant critique concerning the representation, rather than presentation, of Africans and the continuing dehumanisation rather than restoration of the dignity of the poor, Africans, women, Palestinians et al. So too with the debacle involving the exclusion of Daryl Balia, the conference organiser which calls into question the integrity of the entire conference. While there was a vast increase in the ecclesiastical representation with the inclusion of Roman Catholic and Orthodox participants, the same could not be said of the totality of the participants due to the preponderance of white males. Can this still and always be attributed to an oversight at this late stage in human history? Then there was the issue of the location of the conference; at least here the Lausanne committee got it right in terms of the centre of world Christianity and representativity. What a

better way it would have been to celebrate ‘the fruit of the event over the last one hundred years in mission and unity’ (:3) at ‘its centre of gravity in the global south’ rather than at the epicentre of Christian decline?

It was only right that the conference took place in the context of the spiritual life and that its worship was not dominated by the traditions of the West/North. Sadly, still one hundred years after Edinburgh 1910, it was not possible for all the participants to celebrate the sacrament of holy communion together. This remains a serious challenge to the mission and unity of the world Christian community. Doubtless, the participants had a ‘good’ conference, but it remains to be seen how it will contribute to the reconciliation of all in Christ.

Reviewer: Prof GA Duncan, Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, PRETORIA, 0002.

Myers, BL. 2011. *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development*. New York: Orbis Books. 386 pages. ISBN 978-1-57075-939-0.

A number of books have appeared over the past few years in which a Christian response to poverty is discussed. In 1977 Ronald Sider’s groundbreaking book, *Rich Christians in an age of Hunger* was published with David Chilton’s response which appeared four years later, *Productive Christians in an age of Guilt Manipulators*. Other titles which also grapple with the same topic include *When Charity destroys Dignity* (Glenn Schwartz), *To Give or not to Give* (John Rowell) and *When Helping Hurts* (Steve Corbett & Brian Fikkert) to name but a few. In his 2011 revised and expanded edition of *Walking with the Poor* (the first edition appeared in 1999), Bryant Myers focuses on, what he describes as transformational development.

Myers is of the opinion that most people have a restricted view on poverty, seeing it only as some form of need which exists, be it for food, a decent place to sleep, clean water, knowledge, skills and access to services such as health systems, markets or credit (p 113-114). Christians will usually add the need to understand the good news about Jesus Christ as another deficit. Although the author acknowledges the truth of this viewpoint, he identifies a number of problems with seeing poverty primarily as a deficit. The underlying assumption is that as soon as the deficit is corrected, people will no longer be poor. Furthermore, the response which is invited is to provide in that which is missing, where all good things (food, education, health systems, etc.) are brought in from the outside. This results in demeaning and devaluing the poor where those providing the help consider the poor as being defective and inadequate.

The solution Myers offers is to address the problem of poverty in a holistic way. Relieving poverty is not a matter of choosing what type of help needs to be given, but to properly analyze the cause of the problem and then

to produce sustainable solutions. Transformational development starts by articulating a better future for the community. This entails a process through which the community clarifies for itself what really matters and what not (p 175). The community needs to determine what human well-being is, how the community sees its own role, what its vision is for the community members, what claims God makes on the community and what claims the community members make on each other.

The author's solution is the Biblical concept of shalom which he describes as "just, peaceful, harmonious, and enjoyable relationships with each other, ourselves, our environment, and God" (p 175). Because poverty manifests itself in physical, social, mental and spiritual areas, addressing poverty should also take place within all of these areas. Therefore immunizing children, improving food security, reconciliation, simply listening to those whose poverty resides in a broken heart, are all part of the process of bringing shalom back into a community.

The goals of transformational development include changed people who have recovered their true identity and vocation as well as just and peaceful relationships with oneself, the community, with those outside the community and the environment. It is therefore clear that Myers's suggestion does not imply merely handing out gifts to impoverished people as many well-meaning people and organizations regularly do and which often creates greater problems than those which are solved. Myers wants to work towards sustainable solutions by thinking holistically about the causes of poverty and addressing these causes in a way which will lead to change throughout the community.

The book includes lists of helpful resources to further explain how these goals can be reached. People already involved in programs alleviating poverty as well as those planning on visiting impoverished areas would do themselves a favor by studying this book and by planning their work in accordance with Myers's suggestions.

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Ott G & Wilson G. 2011. *Global church planting: Biblical principles and best practices for multiplication*. xiv + 449 pages. ISBN 978-0-8010-3580-7. Price US \$29.99.

The authors of this book are acknowledged experts in the field of church planting and the fruits of their experience and reflection are presented here as a guide to church planting in cross cultural contexts. This is a practical text which is based in solid biblical principles, missiological understanding from a particular perspective which not all will share. Yet, combining current trends and best practices, it offers a descriptive analysis of a variety of models and processes in church planting which missionaries can employ to multiply churches. In addition, a number of novel approaches are innovative

foci are adopted including short-term teams, partnerships, careful use of resources and contextualisation. The work is enhanced by the use of many case studies from many countries and is founded on a parable of the apple trees.

This first part of the book examines the biblical foundations for church planting by looking at the task, the reasons for it and the beginnings of church planting in the New Testament. The section ends with the development of twelve principles for church planting. Part two deals with strategic considerations for church planting. The first chapter in this section has a historic focus and includes surveys of the work of Rufus Anderson (the father of indigenous approaches), Roland Allen, John Nevius, Donald McGavran before analysing the method advocated by David Garrison. A significant comment for missionaries concerning church planting movements (CPMs) 'is that although they may be launched by missionaries, they become movements only when the local people have embraced the gospel and caught the vision' (:75) to reach out. Chapter five examines the role of the apostolic church planter as opposed to the less effective pastoral and catalytic church planter. Here, an essential issue arises regarding the preparation of pastors and a serious problem has to be faced despite the apparent success of church planting methods. Training is given over a very brief period compared with the situation, eg. in a variety of Reformed churches. This is regarded essentially as a matter of saving souls. Is there any other profession/ vocation that permits this cursory form of training, eg. medicine, law, education? Chapter six outlines various shapes of these emergent churches and lays a great emphasis on contextualising structures and ministries. However, in a table 6.2 on page 120, under the heading of governance and leadership it says 'Adapt existing leadership structures that exemplify servant leadership and plurality of leaders'. How is this to be achieved other than imposing a foreign model in contexts where this is the very opposite of the local structures and this applies to many contexts?

The third section of the book deals with the developmental phases of church planting under a number of chapter headings – preparing, launching, establishing, structuring and reproducing. Section four is concerned to elucidate the critical factors involved in this approach to mission. In these chapters sensitive issues for church plants and planters are raised, including the nature and challenge of partnership, problems for families, financial matters particularly dependency issues. From a practical point of view this is the most helpful part of the book. It contains a great deal of discussion on sensitive subjects which are encountered by missionaries throughout the world regardless of the type of mission engaged in. A substantial bibliography is appended.

The epilogue concludes with a continuation of the apple tree planting parable as an apposite model for a church planting approach to mission. This book contains a great deal of useful material related to missionary engagement in the contemporary world. While many might not agree with

this approach, the book offers a cogent defence of the approach based on solid experience and reflection.

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Redford, SB. *Missiological Hermeneutics: Biblical Interpretation for the Global Church*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2012. 363 pages. Paperback. ISBN: 13:978-1-60899-402-1.

Redford's book is an exploration of how the Bible and mission inform missiologists and missionaries in hermeneutical practice. The author gives shape to the nature of missiological hermeneutics by examining the Bible, cultural values, historical struggles and experiences of people who are engaged in the mission of God. The book is structured into six chapters. Chapter one examines how others have defined missiological hermeneutics. Chapter two examines missiological hermeneutics in the Bible itself. Chapter three is a critique of Western hermeneutics from a missiological perspective. In chapter four, the discussion moves in a more practical direction. The focus is on polygamy and how Western missionaries brought cultural presuppositions regarding marriage into Africa. Redford's argument is that it is Western cultural baggage that firstly, prevents polygamous marriage among African Christians, and secondly, forces African converts who were in polygamous marriages before conversion, to divorce, which in his thinking, is a far greater sin than polygamy. In chapter five, Redford deals with the role of missionary experience in relation to biblical interpretation and in chapter six, he emphasizes the importance of a cross-cultural ministry experience in understanding the Bible correctly.

The initial chapters of the book show the link between Abraham and the modern missionary and the importance of the promise of God to Abraham. Redford asserts that the promise which God made to Abraham was missiologically shaped. The author seeks to understand the extent to which the promise to Abraham was understood and transmitted properly. He probes the idea that it may not be just modern day missiologists and Christians who missed God's plan for the nations but that the central biblical figures in the Bible, namely, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph (the patriarchs) may have often-times missed it as well. The idea declares Redford, is for people to put aside their own miss-conceived theological and missiological baggage and understand God's missiological concerns. Redford asserts that missiological praxis and the guidance of the Holy Spirit is what is needed to shape our understanding of the way in which God works in the world. The new missiological hermeneutic which he proposes incorporates the illumination of the Holy Spirit through communal and individual spirituality with a culturally appropriate contextualization of the text. Redford uses this method to engage with polygamy and 'conversations with followers of Islam'. The book not

only represents a call for the constant shaping and re-shaping of interpretative lenses and cultural assumptions but is also a call to be mindful of the transformative work of the Holy Spirit in everyday living. The idea that the world belongs to God and any missiological activity in the world is God's mission in the world is an over-arching concept throughout the book. The crux of the matter for Redford is that the missiological hermeneutic of God's promise to the nations is transmitted to us through the Bible and THE Holy Spirit. Christians must give this appropriate attention and allow it to direct their involvement in God's mission in God's world.

The author's use of the terms 'missiological' and 'missional' are confusing. These appear to mean one and the same thing and are merely used interchangeably for effect. If the two words do indeed vary in meaning, I have failed to understand the difference from the reading and re-reading of this book. Furthermore, Redford seems to imply that correct biblical interpretation can only be achieved by multicultural Christians. Ironically, it is precisely this polarization that he seeks to discard among missiologists and biblical scholars. While the book does not adequately bring a missiological hermeneutic to bear on biblical theological reflection, the ideas put forward around issues of mission, *missio Dei* and a mission theology are enlightening and interesting. The book is a must read for missiologists and those interested in God's work in God's world (*missio Dei*).

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Van Gelder, G & Zscheile, DJ 2011. *The Missional church in perspective: mapping trends and shaping the conversation*. Grand Rapids: BakerAcademic. Xx + 186pp. Paperback. ISBN 987-0-8010-3913-3.

This book attempts to provide an overview of what has come to be known as the missional church conversation in North America during the past decade. It begins with a discussion of the 1998 publication of *Missional church* and seeks to show how the conversation has developed in North America since the publication of this work. It also points towards perspectives that might extend this conversation.

Although some developments connected to the missional conversation outside the North American context are mentioned, this book explicitly recognises its North American context, and seeks to understand the conversation as it developed within this context. It is an important publication for those seeking to understand the North American missional conversation, and for those around the world seeking to continue participating in this dialogue.

The introduction and the first two chapters will assist those not familiar with the missional conversation to understand its basic approach. It is written in such a way as to be accessible to those outside the conversation, but will also help those who are familiar with the conversation to get a clearer picture of the key elements underlying many of the publications over the past ten years. It gives particular attention to a critical evaluation of Missional church.

Chapter three seeks to provide a map of missional perspectives. It lists a large number of books and online resources, categorising them into four branches and 10 sub-branches. This map is developed around the question of agency, “the extent to which one starts with the mission of the church and the extent to which one starts with the mission of God” (:69). This chapter might be one of the most important contributions made by the book, but the distinctions can be difficult to follow if the reader is not familiar with the literature being discussed, since the branches are discussed in a highly cursory fashion.

The second part of the book seeks to extend the conversation outlined in chapter 3 through an in-depth reflection on questions of the Trinity, culture and congregational practice within the missional church conversation. One chapter is devoted to discussing each of these.

Chapter four introduces to the dialogue the critique that has been levelled against Missional church, namely that perspectives on the Trinity from the Eastern tradition were not sufficiently reflected upon. While incorporating this broader tradition of Trinitarian theology it contributes to the 20th century discussion on Trinitarian theology and Trinitarian ecclesiology by reflecting on mission, and emphasising that ecclesiology and missiology cannot be separated.

From the Trinitarian perspective developed in chapter four, chapter five then proceeds to a missional engagement of culture within the 21st century globalised world. Focussing on the North American context, the chapter focus the discussion on a mission to Western culture. The chapter makes a rich contribution to missional reflection on culture, with a strong emphasis on creation. It also engages with the argument in *Resident aliens*, which has been influential in the missional conversation, and enters into critical dialogue with their approach in seeking to provide a way forward for the missional church in public.

Chapter six then concludes by drawing from the preceding work into a picture of what a missional church might look like in practice. It reflects on questions such as discipleship, church leadership and organisation, and church renewal and planting, reaching a conclusion on what a missional church would mean for these aspects of the church.

The focus on the North American context makes this work a valuable contribution, and the authors' sensitivity in acknowledging their own embeddedness within this context contribute to the book being helpful in understanding interlocutors from the North American context involved in the

missional conversation. Yet the book fails to sufficiently reflect on the important questions of power and empire associated with this context and its relation to the globalised world, and particularly on the question of the church's embeddedness within the systems of power in the North American context, that of the United States in particular.

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