Book Reviews

Jesus in Latin America.


Jon Sobrino, Jesuit missionary (from Spain) and theology professor at San Salvador, in 1976 wrote the major Christological work, translated into English (in 1978) as Christology at the Crossroads (CCR). The present book is a follow-up on the earlier one, and is made up of essays written from 1978 to 1982. The chapters clarify and explicate positions taken in the first work and bring forward some themes only touched on there. Responding to accusations of “reducticism,” noted by critics in CCR—in the areas of basic Christological doctrine; of Christian soteriology and eschatology; the integral notion of gospel liberation; the meaning of Christian discipleship and praxis—Sobrino is at pains to establish the orthodoxy of his views and to show that these views, followed through more completely, are ways of deepening and making relevant the traditional teachings and of indicating their significance and urgency for today, especially for Latin America.

The Foreword, contributed by the distinguished Gregorian University (Rome) theologian Juan Alfaro, affirms that the present book should dispel remaining doubts regarding the orthodoxy and legitimacy of Sobrino’s Christology. Alfaro does point out, however, where greater emphasis could have been given to the deeper unity of seemingly opposed elements: orthodoxy and orthopraxis, interior conversion and the praxis of justice, and so forth.

The excellence of Cohn-Sherbok’s work is diminished by two serious omissions. One is the Holocaust, when that event calls in question God’s capacity to liberate. The other is an anomaly more evident each day, namely, the hostility felt against the State of Israel and international Jewry by Latin Americans whose theology, while Christian, is so deeply Jewish. Obviously, these are painfully sensitive issues, but for Christians and Jews who come together around their common passion for justice, they must be engaged. Judging from this book, its author could in the future be of great help.

C. G. Arévalo, S.J.

On Earth as It Is in Heaven: Jews, Christians, and Liberation Theology.


This book belongs to a growing body of writings by Jews on issues and themes peculiar to Christian liberation theologies. For example, Orbis has also published this year another fine volume on the subject: Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation by Marc H. Ellis, an American Jew. This was inevitable. Liberation theology, especially Latin American and black, is impossible without the legacy of exodus and the Jewish prophetic tradition, Jesus being for Christians its culminating exemplar.

There is something especially striking about an American rabbi, Dan Cohn-Sherbok, a resident of Canterbury and director of Kent University’s Center for the Study of Religion and Culture, San Francisco Theological Seminary, (California).

Jorge Lara-Braud is Professor of Theology and Culture, San Francisco Theological Seminary, (California).

Jesus in Latin America is, in its totality, a good “Sobrino sampler,” and the relative brevity of the chapters in the last two parts allows one to get into his thought more easily. His longer books display both the power and the intensity of his vision and insight, but are not free from the proximity and rhetoric we have come to expect from “third-world theologians.”

In sum, we have here, desde America Latina, an important collection of essays in “liberation Christology,” an excellent bridge between theological exposition and “spiritual reflection” and also a valuable introduction to Sobrino’s thought. Few books tell us more eloquently and profoundly what the “preferential option for the poor” means, in concept and in praxis as well.

—Jorge Lara-Braud

C. G. Arévalo, S.J.
Foresight: Ten Major Trends That Will Dramatically Affect the Future of Christians and the Church.


Imagine yourself sitting down at a card table strewn with hundreds of puzzle pieces. The box lid titles the puzzle as "The Future Of Christians and the Church." But, alas, there is no picture on the box to guide! That is where the book Foresight has its great value. It is a widely ranging collection of quotations, suggestions, thoughts, and commentary organized under the umbrellas of ten major trends that will dramatically affect the church's future. Four examples are: From Regional Churches to World Church, From Clergy/Laity to Community of Ministers, From Male Leadership to Male/Female Partnership, and From Threatened Nations to Threatened Planet.

Much is presented to the reader with the teasing and challenging invitation to put it all together personally. You are invited to paint a picture of the future of the church, and different ones of us will come out with different pictures. But in that doing lies the opportunity to seek a clearer vision and conviction concerning what it is that Christians should be about. As said in the introduction, "It is a way of reflecting on what today's world is and what tomorrow's world will be, and how we may respond as Christians" (p. 10).

Author Howard Snyder, coordinator of the pastoral team of the Irving Park Free Methodist Church, in conjunction with writer Daniel V. Runyon, has certainly produced a challenge to face up to the intersection of the global picture and the church. Foresight is a book and "puzzle" worth completing.

—David P. Young

David P. Young is Area Associate for Latin America and the Caribbean, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Atlanta office. He served previously as consultant on Futuristics at the Central Philippine University (1977-79).

Understanding the Atonement for the Mission of the Church.


John Driver, Mennonite missionary teacher in Latin America and Spain, examines in this work atonement themes in Scripture and traditional teaching from a "radical evangelical perspective." His careful scholarship and articulate statement of a Mennonite viewpoint on both the work of Christ and the mission of the church make this a valuable resource.

Driver works with three sets of theological material: images, motifs, and theories of atonement. He shows how biblical images and motifs of reconciliation rise from and reflect the reality of early Christian experience. They include "archetypal images" of Christ such as representative man, pioneer,
forerunner, and first born; motifs such as conflict-victory-liberation, vicarious suffering, martyr, sacrifice, expiation, redemption, reconciliation, justification, and adoption. Atonement theories are also analyzed and evaluated according to the familiar threefold classification: conflict and victory, moral influence, and satisfaction.

In his own interpretation of the New Testament data, the author incorporates elements from standard theories with a view to setting forth "the biblical view": Christ as victor over oppressive powers, as pattern of sacrificial obedience, and as effecting deliverance from sin. He finds consistently missing from traditional interpretations the radical call to suffering discipleship, and the creation of a messianic community that models the life of reconciliation and witnesses to Christ's claims upon corporate structures. The failure of traditional views is traced to the Constantinian captivity of the church since the fourth century and the theology associated with it.

In his critique and reconstruction, Driver offers to the rest of the church the enriching gift of the radical Reformation: of the call to Christian faithfulness and "concrete community" that rises from New Testament atonement teaching. However, the author's fine point that a doctrine of reconciliation demands a community of reconciliation is worth pressing a bit further than he has taken it. A Corinthian complementarity and "full-orbed view" requires those of "radical evangelical perspective" to listen and learn from other points of view. The mutuality recommended by Driver collides regularly with his judgment that alternative readings are the ideology of a Constantinian establishment. The "us and them" mentality that pervades the analysis makes for a polarizing rather than a reconciling community. We shall approximate "the biblical view" of the atonement when we have a community of interpretation that is itself inclusive of the whole people of God.

—Gabriel Fackre


When they first came as immigrants to North America, Mennonites did not engage in missionary activity. However, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries spiritual revival in their midst brought also missionary concerns, which led the Mennonites to evangelistic efforts in the heart of urban Chicago (1893) and distant Argentina (1917). In both places the Spanish-speaking world became a missionary challenge to Mennonites.
In this book, Rafael Falcón, a native of Puerto Rico who teaches at Goshen College in Indiana, offers us a brief but well-written history of a half-century of Hispanic Mennonite churches in North America. An intentional concerted effort to hold Mennonite services in Spanish began in September 1932, through the ministry of J. W. Shank, a missionary to Argentina, who was spending his furlough as a student at Bethany Biblical Seminary in Chicago. Fifty years later there were fifty congregations in sixteen states, with about 2,000 members.

Falcón begins with a very brief summary of Mennonite history (chap. 1) and a reflective chronicle of the beginnings of their work among Hispanics in the United States (chap. 2). His third chapter provides a most valuable account of how growing Hispanic churches, interacting with other minorities, struggled to find their identity within the Mennonite community, and contributed to foster in it an ongoing process of cultural and racial pluralism. Chapter 4 provides a brief history of fifty-four congregations (including two in Canada), and chapter 5 describes seven agencies, associations, and programs of a cooperative nature. The holistic concerns that characterize Mennonite missionary work are evident in all these developments, and church growth is tabulated and analyzed in chapter 6.

This book should be of great interest for the many church leaders who are now reflecting about the role and mission of Hispanic churches within their denominational families. There are seven informative appendices, one of them a study of “extinct congregations.” Eleven pages of pictures show the wide diversity of persons, church buildings, and activities that characterize Hispanic Mennonites in North America. The translator says in the Preface that they are evangelical “in the sense that their birth, their behavior and their being center in the ‘evangel’.” Such evangelical thrust permeates the outlook and style of Falcón’s book.

—Samuel Escobar

Samuel Escobar is Thornley B. Wood Professor of Missiology at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Academic Adviser to its Hispanic Ministries program.

The Subversion of Christianity.


Jacques Ellul, author of some forty theological and sociological volumes, contends that historical and present-day Christianity contradict their biblical origins. The church’s relation to political power, money, and culture exemplifies this perversion. Having established the essential biblical link between revelation and practice, the author shows how the perplexing subversion of the Christian message happened: (1) theologians began considering the biblical revelation as a source of answers to philosophical questions rather than as history; (2) Christianity’s rapid spread brought it into syncretistic relationship with religions of the time and into the centers of political power and wealth, producing an institutionalized religion that furnished society with its justifying ideology; (3) Islam’s influence on Christianity fused law with theology, promoted war and forced conversion, and furthered mysticism, fatalism, slavery, and colonialism.

Ellul complements his earlier views on dialect as fundamental to understanding the Bible, the effect of the institutionalization of Christianity on the poor and on women, Christianity and the sacred, moralism, preaching on sin and its relationship to terrorism, and the powers. Finally, the author suggests a more basic cause for the distortion of Christianity’s radicalism: we find God’s revelation intolerable, since he leaves us with no power to manipulate him or ability to justify ourselves and make Christianity our possession. We recoil when faced with freedom and non-power. Ellul’s concluding stance, however, shows him positive with respect to the Holy Spirit’s action in renewing and preserving the church in all ages, including the future.

As expected from Ellul’s earlier works, he gives no quarter, but here such an “extreme” stance proves inherent to the argument: only if radically criticized can the church’s history and present state become clear.

The Subversion of Christianity, both more concerned with the evangelizing mission of the church and more straightforward than most of Ellul’s earlier works, provides an excellent point of entry for readers unsure of how to begin reading him.

—Joyce Main Hanks

Buddhism and Christianity in Japan: From Conflict to Dialogue, 1854–1899.


As Notto R. Thelle very arrestingly reminds us in his Preface to this important new study, participants in Buddhist-Christian dialogue in Japan since the 1960s have often declared that this situation “has introduced a radically new stage in the relationship between the two religions” (p. vii). It is somehow implied that the idea of dialogue among religions has its beginnings in trends of the World Council of Churches or as a result of Vatican Council II. Thelle reminds us that such a wheel was invented long ago, and that, in fact, a great deal of dialogue between Christians and Buddhists was beginning to take place in Japan in the period up to 1899. His carefully researched and well-articulated study, a revision of his doctoral dissertation for the University of Oslo in 1983, gives a vivid historical account of some of the ups and downs of encounters between Christians and Buddhists, from the time of Commodore Matthew Perry’s opening up of Japan to Western influences...
in 1854 to the opening of the interior of Japan to foreign trade, travel, and residence in 1899. Although there are a few references to the century of Catholic figures now and then, the story on the Christian side deals mostly with Protestants.

It may be surprising, upsetting, or reassuring for modern readers to find out from Thelle’s narrative that most of the common perceptions and misperceptions that Buddhists and Christians have had about each other were very thoroughly aired in Japan in the period under study. Indeed, readers may be shocked at some of the lamentable caricatures that members of these two world faiths had of each other, but they will be interested to find out about more hopeful approaches toward mutual understanding that were gradually taken on both sides. Thelle is content for the most part to report these mutual exchanges with a minimum of editorial comment. But he does have a viewpoint of his own, which the dust jacket says reflects the approach of the eminent Norwegian missiologist Karl Ludwig Reichelt (1877–1952), whose work with Chinese Buddhists centered in the Tao Fong Shan institute in Hong Kong. That approach is described as “a view that regards practitioners of Eastern religions as fellow truth-seekers and friends in the Tao.”

Thelle was born in Hong Kong of Norwegian missionary parents, and was educated in Norway, with further training in Japanese studies in England and in Buddhist studies in Kyoto. He served as associate director of Kyoto’s National Christian Council Center for the Study of Japanese Religions, and has written extensively on Japanese Buddhism, new religions, and the contemporary religious scene in Japan. In 1986 he was appointed to the chair of missiology and ecumenics at the University of Oslo.

In the context of great appreciation for Thelle’s research, which opens many new paths of understanding in a complicated and controversial field, there are two limitations of his study that might be kept in mind. The first limitation is due to the period covered, which begins in an atmosphere of mutual animosity, but ends for all practical purposes with the First Buddhist-Christian Conference in Tokyo in 1896, when mutual dialogue was the order of the day. Indeed, as Thelle would be the first to remind us, there was to be a lot more of both harmony and acrimony between Christians and Buddhists to come after 1899, especially in the 20th century.

The second limitation, perhaps inevitable in a study of this sort, is that political and ideological issues are somehow kept in the background. To be sure, chapter 8 deals with “Political and Ideological Issues” in forthright ways, but it ends with the tantalizing remark that “Educational authorities maintained their anti-Christian policy, but at the same time Buddhism became a target of their criticism” (p. 134). The analysis ends here, just as it was beginning to become very

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James M. Phillips is Associate Director of the Overseas Ministries Study Center, and served as a Presbyterian missionary in Korea (1949–52) and in Japan (1959–75).

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George Jennings is Professor Emeritus of Psychological Anthropology with former professorships at the U. of Minnesota, Bethel (Minn), Wheaton (Ill.), and Geneva Colleges. He has received numerous grants, including the Fulbright, for field work in the Middle East for nearly 40 years. As Executive Secretary of the Middle East Christian Outreach (USA), as well as their Research Consultant, he is a Fellow of the American Anthropological Assoc., the American Ethnological Soc., the American Scientific Affil., and holds membership in the American Society of Missiology. His numerous publications include those for professional journals and books.

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interest. Throughout the book, there are only hints of the later intensive Marxist analyses of religious developments in the period covered by this study, as well as of analyses derived from the writings of Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch that Protestants in particular were to employ. To be sure, it was only after 1945 that Japanese scholars went in for Marxian or Weberian/Troeltschian analyses in major ways, but since they dealt extensively with the era surveyed in this book, their observations deserve some sort of hearing.

Such limitations should not prevent us, however, from expressing profound appreciation for the significant contributions that Thelle has made in this fine study.

—James M. Phillips

African Cry.


Liberation theology is not only a Latin American phenomen. African Cry is a major contribution to African liberation theology—one of the first books from sub-Saharan Africa (outside of South Africa) on political-economic-cultural issues. Jean-Marc Ela is a Catholic Cameroonian theologian who based at the Maryknoll Language School, Mosa, Tanzania. Ela is a ringing African call for the Roman Catholic Church (and other Christian churches) to be involved in justice and peace issues. In suggesting that the time has come to reinvent Christianity in an African context, Ela boldly asks: “What is there in the experience of church as lived by the communities of Africa today that might give the church of Rome food for thought and for renewal?” (p. 24). “How can the church exercise in African society the critical function of faith instead of being an element of the established system?” (p. 50). “What is the meaning of fellowship among individuals and peoples, what is the meaning of solidarity and friendship, in the context where misery and oppression are rife?” (p. 62). In black Africa “daily, and in the name of the gospel, shall we write the history of the real liberation of the oppressed?” (p. 139).

In essays such as “An African Reading of Exodus,” “Critical Awareness and Religion in Black Africa,” and “Authenticity and Alienation,” Ela urges the church to be a social force, a protest against the established order, the conscience of a conscienceless society, the voice of the voiceless. “Where an editorial press and opposition unions are annihilated, it would surely seem to be the task of the church in Africa to take up the protestations of so many victims of oppression, the denunciations of so many situations of injustice, the demands of so many workers, youth and peasants, and make them its own” (p. 76).

“Our relationships to the gospel oblige us to assume the critical role, inherent in our faith, of judging society” (p. 99). Ela stresses that in Africa the gospel should be lived as a message of human liberation.

—Joseph G. Healey, M.M.

Ministerial Formation in a Multifaith Milieu: Implications of Interfaith Dialogue for Theological Education.


Love the Stranger: Ministry in Multi-Faith Areas.


These two paperbacks complement one another. The first is concerned with theological training for ministry in a pluralistic society and the second with the exercise of that ministry in multi-faith areas.

Sam Amirtham and Wesley Ariaratj, respectively directors of the Programme on Theological Education and of the Sub-unit on Dialogue of the World Council of Churches, have edited a useful report on the conference they jointly organized at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in June 1985. It was attended by between twenty and thirty
theological educators in Asia who for the best part of a week wrestled with the question of the formation of those who were being prepared for ministry in multicultural, multifaith situations: a phenomenon by no means restricted to Asia, but increasingly recognized as the context within which the Christian church is called upon to fulfill its mission everywhere.

The report is patchy, as one would expect from eleven contributors, and the recommendations in the two appendices at the end are general in character. They reflect the conviction that theological education now has to take the interfaith context seriously: an obvious conclusion, but one that is more readily enunciated than put into practice. I found the contributions by Kenneth Cracknell and Diana Eck the most interesting, since they gave illustrations of how theological courses could be reshaped to give full weight to the interfaith dimension.

Love the Stranger is the latest publication in the “New Library of Pastoral Care.” It is written by Anglicans for Anglican priests in Britain seeking to come to terms with ministering in parishes where large numbers of Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs have settled. The authors are former missionaries in Pakistan and India respectively. For some time they were both on the staff of Crowther Hall, the college of the Church Missionary Society within the federation of the Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham. Since 1979 Christopher Lamb has been coordinator of the “Other Faiths Theological Project,” sponsored by the Bible Churchmen’s Missionary Society and the Church Missionary Society. Roger Hooker was seconded by the CMS in 1982 to the Diocese of Birmingham for ministry among Asians.

Despite the deliberate restriction of the book to the British scene and the Anglican parish in particular, it serves as an excellent introduction to what is involved in actually ministering in a multifaith situation. Indeed, the restricted canvas enhances its value for those working in different situations in that it concentrates on the particular and practical rather than the general and theoretical. It is admirably written, highly sensitive, and theologically firmly grounded. It is to be warmly commended to the widest possible readership.

—Paul Rowntree Clifford

Christian Art in India.


This summary of John Butler’s lifelong scholarly concern for the use of the arts by Christians in India dwells largely on architecture, painting, and sculpture. His approach is historical and cross-cultural in that he traces the roots of arts and styles introduced from abroad by missionaries and colonial powers and deals with their adaptations as well as dealing with the Christian use of Indian traditions and schools of art. His art critique is theologically informed and is of considerable sophistication. He has seen almost everything he describes. This is now the best book we have covering the whole subject and it is likely to remain the best book for many years to come.

Most of the church buildings now in use in India were built before Indian independence. Butler has major chapters on the Portuguese period and the British period in which he not only treats the arts of the time in India but also does considerable connecting up with specific roots in Europe and with similar heritages in Christian mission in Latin America and China. He also has chapters on precolonial Christian art—from tombs of St. Thomas the Apostle on—and on Mogul contributions and influences and on the modern period including a number of experiments to Indianize church buildings and pictures in various ways. The theological perception and artistic taste with which he evaluates these experiments are catholic and profound. But they are also very English—which may be Butler’s only handicap; and it is not crippling.

The annotated bibliography is full and very useful. The line drawings are clear and of great help. The plates are adequate—except for the two in color, which are of poor quality.

—Richard W. Taylor

Richard W. Taylor, a United Methodist missionary, is a member of the staff of the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society. He is the author of Jesus in Indian Paintings.

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Indian Theology in Dialogue.

Klaus Klostermaier is already well known through his earlier work, Hindu and Christian in Vrindaban, which was first published in 1969 and has become something of a classic. At that time he was a Catholic monk. The present work is reticent in biographical details of its author, telling us only that he wrote the Foreword in Winnipeg.

The book consists of twelve essays, which “emerged as answers to questions from Hindu and Christian friends” (p.v). Among the subjects considered are a sketch of a Hindu-Christian theology of love, sacramentology, Samnyāsa—A Christian Way of Life? and Hindu-Christian dialogue: Its Religious and Cultural Implications. The author has read widely and deeply in the Hindu Scriptures. He has an impressive grasp of the enormous range of material with which anyone who attempts to write about Hinduism has to deal. He demonstrates that in many respects the Hindu tradition is closer to historic Christianity than has often been realized. This does not lead him into a superficial syncretism. He stands in the Catholic tradition of Vatican Council II and spells out his own theological position in the final essay of the book. This might more usefully have stood at the beginning.

This is a very different kind of book from the earlier one, to which it is related as complement rather than as continuation. It contains a treasury of insight and information that are not readily available elsewhere and breaks new ground in exploring the implications of Hindu-Christian meeting. Sadly, it is seriously marred by an inexcusable number of printing errors.

—Roger H. Hooker

Roger Hooker served as a missionary in North India from 1965 to 1968. His present ministry is among people of South Asian origin in the Anglican Diocese of Birmingham, England.


This book makes a scholarly and definitive contribution to the study of Philippine-American relations as ex-
experienced by the Protestant missionaries in the Philippines, 1898–1916. Clymer, a professional historian well informed on Philippine-American history, has researched primary sources in both of these countries and has selected and organized a vast amount of material into a well-written and readable book, with helpful notes and references.

It is important for the reader to hold Clymer’s subtitle in mind—An Inquiry into the American Colonial Mentality—because this study is concerned with this particular theme in a specific place and period. The focus is upon the pronounced Protestant missionary perspective covering the eighteen-year period from the Spanish-American War until the Jones Act, when the United States Congress made it clear that independence was the ultimate goal of American policy in the Philippines. Clymer’s splendid study is not intended to be a review of the Christian mission in the Philippines during this period or even a brief history of the initial American Protestant missionary work in the archipelago. As an example, the story of the few but fine educational and medical missionary institutions and enterprises as well as the mission to the Chinese population are treated only secondarily, and the extensive Roman Catholic legacy is limitedly viewed through the American Protestant lens of that era.

Clymer’s thorough scholarship, balanced judgment, and good writing make this a valuable and responsible work for our attention today, though we with our current understanding of global mission are often uncomfortable with and embarrassed by the colonial, paternalistic, and condescending approach and mentality of many of these early missionaries. Today we would rather herald the Credo, which empowered the people of the Philippines to the nonviolent revolution of February 1986: “We are a people of God. We believe in justice, democracy and peace . . . and in the solidarity of all peoples.” That first-generation missionary endeavor, the subject of this book, was a necessary building block for the people power of the future.

—Lyman C. Ogilby

Lyman C. Ogilby, was missionary and bishop, Philippine Episcopal Church, 1949–67, and bishop, South Dakota, 1967–70. He has recently retired as bishop of Pennsylvania, having served in that post since 1971.
Theology by the People: Reflections on Doing Theology in Community.


This is a thought-provoking book that challenges the role of "academic theology" and traditional Western theology in general. The book calls all theologians and theological students to take "people" seriously as the primary agents of the basic theological tasks of the church. All contributors of the excellent articles in the book are asserting that theology must be for the people, by the people, and of the people, for "theology must confront all the people with the challenge of Christ."


The book also includes "An Open Letter to Colleagues in Theological Education" that asks us "to listen to the stories of suffering people" and learn from them. The select bibliography at the end of the book is useful. This book is recommended to all theological students and professors that they may be challenged by the third-world perspective on doing theology.

—Wi Jo Kang

Saving China: Canadian Missionaries in the Middle Kingdom, 1888–1959.


After eight years of research, Canadian writer Alvyn Austin has written a book that, he says, is not "a history of Christianity within the Canadian missions," but simply "a story of . . . a fascinating group of people" (p. xvi) and their perception of China and its inhabitants. He promises an "exciting story—of intrigue in high places and death in back alleys, of Christian charity and of modernization" (p. xvi). A skillful writer, Austin indeed provides an absorbing account of Canadian missionaries—evangelical
A careful reading of the book, however, reveals an uneven treatment of the various topics. For instance, Austin excels in recreating the social context and events that, in Canada, influenced the lives of the missionaries, but his descriptions of the missions scene raise serious doubt about his knowledge of Chinese history and language. He doesn’t seem to know that the expression “the Rape of Nanking” (pp. 205-7) refers exclusively to the killing of 200,000 civilians and the rape of 20,000 Chinese women by the Japanese troops in December 1937. Equally disturbing are the description of the Boxers as “gangs of teenaged boys” (p. 75), and the misreading of the characters written on their banners as well as the numerous misspellings of Chinese terms.

Regarding the missionaries themselves, Austin is very thorough with Protestants and makes ample use of archival sources. By comparison, he has not done much original research in the archives of the mostly French-speaking Roman Catholic missionaries. He often rehashes—errors included—what can be found in already published articles and books. His study shows a poor grasp of Catholic terminology and little familiarity with the history of the Catholic church in China. These serious weaknesses are sometimes compounded by his lack of command of the French language. Austin’s most blatant mistranslation is when he affirms that prior to 1939 each Catholic missionary going to China “had to preach a sermon affirming his opposition to ancestor worship and to all aspects of Chinese paganism” (p. 145). Austin’s source, in fact, explains that missionaries, prior to starting their apostolate in China, had “to take an oath” against the Chinese Rites. The expression in French is prêter un serment, which Austin thought to mean “preach a sermon.”

The book reads like a good novel. If Austin had maintained the quality of scholarship he often displays regarding Canadian Protestant missionaries, he would have made a most valuable contribution. Unfortunately, his study is plagued by too many flaws and errors to be relied upon. —Jean-Paul Wiest

Jean-Paul Wiest, Research Director of the Maryknoll Society History Program, is the author of a forthcoming book on the history of Maryknoll in China.
Christianity and the World Religions: Paths of Dialogue with Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism.


The Brazilian Catholic Church is the largest national church in the Catholic family, and in recent years one of the most progressive (p. xii). Long associated with the ruling classes, it was brought into conflict with the state by recent decades of military rule, and during 1968-74 it was often the only institution able to criticize the authoritarian regime (p. xii).

In this book, Mainwaring describes the interaction between the church and the government over the years 1916-85. The author teaches at the University of Notre Dame, where he is assistant professor of government. Much of the research was done in Brazil during 1980-82. The work focuses on the origins, development, and dilemmas of the ‘popular’ or ‘progressive’... Church. By popular Church I mean those sectors that have a progressive political vision of the Church’s mission vis-à-vis the peasants, workers, and poor urban residents (p. xiii). The author argues that the traditional outlook of the Brazilian hierarchy was transformed by factors both external and internal to it. The former were the political events and the grassroots movements in the church, and the latter were the hierarchy’s own theological reflection.

In Part I Mainwaring describes the neo-Christendom church, 1916–55; the reformist church, 1955–64; and the Catholic Left, 1958–64. In the rest of the book he describes the popular church: its emergence, 1964–73; development, 1974–82; and partial decline, 1982–85. Mainwaring’s sympathies are with the popular church and the progressive clergy, yet as he describes the interaction between social realities, grassroots Catholic movements, and the episcopal support or resistance, he maintains a professional perspective. His extensive end notes, bibliography, and index are helpful. This is an excellent introduction to the Brazilian Catholic Church over recent decades.

—H. McKennie Goodpasture

Christianity and the World Religions: Paths of Dialogue with Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism.


Hans Küng’s reputation as author and as professor of ecumenical theology and director of the institute for Ecumenical Research at the University of Tubingen may be enough to attract readers; but in fact, central as his contribution is, his co-authors significantly determine the framework of this book.

Josef van Ess writes about Islam, and Heinrich von Stietencron describes Hinduism; both are professors at Tubingen. Heinz Bechert, author of the section on Buddhism, is professor at the University of Gottingen.

The discussion of Islam is lively and insightful. Van Ess especially alert to issues that have damaged Christian-Muslim relations. Von Stietencron masterfully draws together significant threads from the vast tapestry of Hinduism, providing coherence without oversimplification. The section on Buddhism is the least satisfactory. Bechert presents Buddhism
mostly as doctrine. He omits Buddhism's liturgical and monastic transformation as it crossed cultures, and minimizes the importance of lay morality.

After one of the co-authors has set out the essentials of a religion, Küng responds, indicating how Christians face similar issues and suggesting what implications this dialogue has for further Christian theological and ethical reflection. As an approach, this is unobjectionable; in Küng's hands it is also persuasive. He attempts to respond within the framework established by the other religion, and emphasizes convergences. In his dialogue with Islam, for example, he states Trinitarian doctrine in terms more amenable to Muslims than familiar to Christians.

Readers may evaluate this work by their own agreement with Küng's responses to other religions. That would be a mistake. The book succeeds or fails on the adequacy with which central issues within these religions have been identified and brought into significant discussion with Christianity. On that basis, it is largely a success.

The book is a reprint transcript of a series of public lectures by the authors at the University of Tübingen in 1982.

—James N. Pankratz

Evangelism on the Cutting Edge.


This book consists of ten essays written by scholars associated with Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. The aim is to tackle issues that they perceive to be crucial in the modern debate about evangelism. The topics chosen are all of vital importance; they include religious pluralism, ecumenism, revival, justice, contextualization, the demonic, self-esteem, and preaching. There is a closing essay on the role of theological education in the development of leadership in evangelism. The editor provides an introduction and a comprehensive bibliography.

The position developed in these essays is predictable. One of the lasting merits of this collection is that it provides access to the thinking on evangelism in one stream of recent American evangelicalism. It does so in a way that is available to the average layperson.

Overall one gets the distinct impression that evangelism is an ecclesiastical football to be kicked around between contending parties. The early essays by Kenneth Kantzer and Arthur Johnston are especially combative. This is unfortunate, for the prospects for a genuine exchange of views are increasing daily. Things do improve in the essays of William Taylor and David Hesselgrave, where a serious attempt is made to wrestle with the relationship between evangelism and society. But even then the material is certainly not on the cutting edge. Timothy Warner's essay on the demonic and Gary Collins's on self-esteem open up issues that are new to the field. Wayne Detzler provides a useful survey of material on revivalism. However, he fails to note that revival is not generally initiated by the obsession with inerrancy that has been such a marked feature of recent evangelicism. Detzler goes so far as to claim that "the inerrant Scriptures" are the warp of revival. This does scant justice to the kind of theological convictions that have actually sustained the really genuine revivals of the past.

—William J. Abraham

William J. Abraham is McCreless Professor of Evangelism, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas. Before coming to the United States, he pastored churches in the Methodist Church in Ireland.
This unique book was written with two groups of people in mind: Christians from the islands of the South Pacific associated with the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC), which requested this history for its Fifth Assembly, and second, church leaders, global mission staff persons, and mission professors concerned with the workings of regional councils of churches throughout the world.

Issues raised include: To what extent does outside ecumenical funding that supports such a regional council—particularly massive funding for programs—promote regional and local Christian identity, solidarity, independence, and ability to deal with change? Or does such support control agendas, develop new dependencies, raise divisive issues, and artificially alter the natural course of regional Christian mission and witness?

Forman’s analysis realistically considers these dangers, yet overall applauds the witness and mission of the PCC, including activist educational and social programs that peaked in importance for the PCC in the late 1970s. Massively funded in large measure by grants from outside the region, these were cut off by internal PCC executive decision five years ago in favor of a “new style [that intends] to facilitate the activity and cooperation of the churches themselves, rather than to take action on their behalf” (p. 160).

The author, recently retired D. Willis James Professor of Mission at Yale, has devoted much of his concern to the Pacific churches over the last twenty-five years and uses his expertise to good effect. His ability to locate and utilize the relevant documentary material needed during a time when, alas, very little attention has been (and is) given to preserving same, is outstanding. The resultant history is lean yet solid, replete with distinctive portraits of key leaders, Protestant, Anglican, and Roman Catholic.

—Robert R. von Oeyen, Jr.

Robert R. von Oeyen, Jr., taught for eight years in church history and religion, including Pacific church history, at the ecumenical Pacific Theological College, Suva, Fiji. He is presently the pastor of Clifton Presbyterian Church, Clifton, Virginia.

The Voice of Many Waters: The Story of the Life and Ministry of the Pacific Conference of Churches in the Last 25 Years.

Only an insider in the conservative Baptist or Presbyterian world (white northern synod—not black or southern) could feel the nuances of the “Keswick” teaching to “let go and let God,” or the revivalist dream of converting enough people to make a social impact and recover evangelical power, or the prophetic teachers’ world flight.

Frank elaborates on all of these and acknowledges their influence on his roots and on the institutions of the 1980s. But he has little stomach for them.

Frank’s discussion of the Victorious Life Movement will likely be the prime contribution of this book, since the other two movements have been widely studied. Briefly put, the “Keswick” teaching, a species of sanctification, stressed moment-by-moment inner calm and serenity as the ideal temperament for the godly. At worst it was passive, narcissistic, and self-deceptive. It prevailed into the 1960s until the Charismatic Movement overwhelmed it as a popular style of piety.

I was surprised that Frank did not develop the opposition of the older Princeton Seminary people to these three movements. B. B. Warfield’s writings (see Perfectionism) fought Charles Trumbull’s. Billy Sunday and the techniques begun by Charles Finney received little support from the Old School types. Indeed, if the Princeton theology was as influential among evangelicals as some say, then Frank’s use of these three elements is called into question.

The book’s refreshingly personal style makes it delightful historical reading. Frank’s own constructive statements, at times prophetic in tone, reflect the influence of Jacques Ellul and, to my mind, are not always satisfying solutions of biblical vectors.

One shudders at what historians fifty years hence will say about the popular theology of our day as conveyed in print and electronic media.

—Stephen Board

Stephen Board is Vice President, Harold Shaw Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois.

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achievement in ecumenical relations. COEMAR took the lead in developing relations with Orthodox churches, in facilitating the development of regional church bodies, and in strengthening both the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. Quietly through its general secretary, John Coventry Smith, it also sought to reach out to evangelicals.

Many innovative mission programs were attempted. Some proved important to the mission of the church; many did not.

“To be right ahead of time is to be considered wrong” (p. 27). That quotation may well sum up COEMAR’s efforts to lead Presbyterians into a new day in mission. Despite efforts to relate the Christian mission to a time of decaying colonialism and growing national churches, COEMAR seemed unable to convince Presbyterians in the pew of the need for change. Black remarks: “At times we felt torn between following our Christian commitment and adjusting programs to gain support” (p. 159).

—Paul A. Hopkins