

Ogbu U. Kalu, Peter Vethanayagamony and Edmund Kee-Fook Chia, 2010. *Mission After Christendom: Emergent Themes in Contemporary Mission*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 177pp.

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Mission after Christendom: Emergent Themes in Contemporary Mission derives its impetus and draws inspiration from the one-hundred year anniversary of the historic Edinburgh 1910 conference which is widely recognized as a watershed event in the modern ecumenical movement. This significant collection of essays skillfully weaves together papers on mission presented on various occasions under the auspices of the Chicago Centre for Global Ministries, to reflect the challenges and possibilities inherent in the rich tapestry of twenty-first century mission. Familiar missiological terrain is revisited and hitherto under-explored territory boldly delved into to engender a fresh vision for mission.

The breadth of the theme—Mission after Christendom—inevitably entails this book's kaleidoscopic character. The diverse and disparate essays not only reflect and refract different dimensions of mission, thus testifying to the encompassing nature of the theme, but also defy the tendency to straightjacket discourses on mission. In resisting the temptation to systematize the book monochromatically, the editors do justice to the pluriformity of mission. Parochialized perspectives of mission do not constrain this work which explores themes as diverse as globalization, Pentecostalism, migration, theological feminism, ecological racism and dialogue in meticulous and deeply insightful ways.

The introduction, by Peter Vethanayagamony and Edmund Kee-Fook Chia, aptly sets out the global nature of Christianity as reflected in the diversity of its expressions and decries as grossly unjust any attempt to understand it as a monolith. It takes note of the post-Western polycentric Christian world in which the Church's mission is taking on "a distinctively polyvalent flavour" and in which "mission is everything that Christendom did not stand for" (p. xvii).

The first two essays, by Stephen Bevans and Robert Schreiter respectively, make this book an ideal introductory reading on the Edinburgh 2010 conference. In the first essay, "Edinburgh to Edinburgh: Towards a Missiology for a World Church," Bevans offers a meticulous and instructive survey of the distinctive features of Edinburgh 2010 in comparison to Edinburgh 1910 as he seeks to draw the outlines of a theology of mission which could help foster a relevant missiology for the world Church today. Bevans points to significant missiological shifts that have characterized Edinburgh to Edinburgh: missiology's new opportunity; new context, from Euro-centric to world church missiology; new attitude, from modernity to post-modernity; new means, from power to vulnerability; and new purpose, missiology for missions or for the church? Robert Schreiter's essay "Mission from the Ground Up:

Emerging Themes in Contemporary Mission,” initiates exploration into the method of mission. Schreiter complements Bevans by offering a perspectival overview. He acknowledges “how a way of conducting mission grows out of particular understanding of what mission is intended to be” (p.13). Schreiter speaks of “mission from the ground up,” and introduces as to four sites “where we might be observing a new call to mission” (p.16), namely re-imagining secularity, accompanying the “bottom billion” (p. 16), revisiting the religious interface, and tracing the unintended consequences of globalization.

Amos Yong and the late Ogbu Kalu, one of the co-editors who passed away before the publication of the book, offer insights on two topics of great importance and magnitude that have the potential to alter the shape of global and ecclesiastical structures. Kalu explores the interface between mission and globalizing tendencies which has not only aided mission by enhancing the scale and opportunity for doing mission but also poses significant challenges. Kalu skillfully draws together diverse threads to paint a comprehensive and coherent picture of the problematic yet opportunity-filled interface between Christianity, mission, and globalization. Emerging as a strong advocate for particularity, Kalu focuses on the myriad local appropriation of global forces which have resulted in the creation of a “dynamic cultural force that has reshaped” both Christianity and its mandate to mission (p. 42). Yong’s innovative representation of the post-colonial dimension of Pentecostal theology of mission in terms of resistance to the hegemonic, unitary and universalistic theologies of mission is ground breaking and noteworthy. Yong’s essay is a creative and perceptive exploration of the resourcefulness of emerging Pentecostal missiology to “critique and even circumvent the colonial approach” to missions (p.46). Yong acknowledges that paradigms of Pentecostal mission from the global south could be more vital resources for developing a post-colonial Pentecostal theology of mission than the Euro-American West. By dissecting the imperialism of the Latin West and analyzing the missiological perspectives and practices of the earliest Christian communities found in the book of Acts, the post-apostolic communities and the postcolonial and post-Christendom resistance movements, Yong sketches the outlines of a theological foundation for a “Pentecostal-political missiology of resistance” (p.56). By throwing light on Pentecostalism from a post-colonial and post-Christendom perspective, Yong’s article has the potential to assuage the discomfort and doubts that prevail about the political dimension of Pentecostal churches.

Peter Vethanayagamony examines the altered landscape of world Christianity where there is a clear shift in the centre of the Christian mission movements from the West to the Rest, thus making the rest the subjects and agents of mission. He highlights the implications such a demographic shift poses for Christianity, especially to the Western church which is perplexed by its changing position within world Christianity. A positive reading of this phenomenon as “a renewing force channelled from the Rest to the West” (p. 69) places this transition in perspective, couching it in the language of mutual enrichment and learning.

That this book carefully engages with the signs of the times is reiterated by Gemma Tulud Cruz' essay, "Expanding the Boundaries, Turning Borders into Spaces: Mission in the Context of Contemporary Migration." Cruz passionately argues that the present context of migration explosion and its concomitant effects makes it incumbent for Christian mission to engage with questions and issues concerning justice, struggle and diversity. Analyzing the wider issues surrounding these questions, Cruz envisages missiological responses to these issues from the perspective of liberation and inculturation that would enable mission to engage with the new and nuanced context that fosters contemporary migration.

Robert J Priest's essay on "Short-Term Missions as a New Paradigm" enables us to understand how the changing context for mission has an impact on the modes of mission. Recognizing the growing popularity of Short-Term Missions (STM), Priest explores their place and role as a viable means of mission today. The justification for Short-Term Missions is made based on the recognition that STM increased the likelihood of short-term missionaries becoming career missionaries, and that STM had positive benefits for both the short-terminer and sending congregations. However, Priest also problematizes how naming itself as "missions" makes STM susceptible to appropriating or hijacking "the sacred rhetoric and funding strategies historically reserved for career missionaries in order to pay for something which is ultimately for the good of the short-term missionary and the sending church" (p. 89). Questions are also raised about the tendency within STMs to go to regions which are the "new centers of global Christianity" (p. 90). Drawing upon a variety of experiences surrounding STMs, Priest brings in an understanding of mission not in terms of a trickle-down effect of Christian faith or Christian knowledge, nor in terms of patron-client relationships, but in terms of reciprocity and mutuality situated in a relationship of asymmetries in terms of material wealth and power. In this context, short-term missions can contribute through linking capital. Three areas in which the common benefits of linking capital can be observed are shared resources, opened doors and enhanced credibility and strategic leverage for change and justice. The resourcefulness of STMs lies in collaboration that is embedded in a sharing of resources. But we need to also be cautious that such collaboration does not reinforce and reify existing asymmetries of power nor perpetuate new ones.

The latter part of the book pays attention to a few transversal themes which were dealt with in Edinburgh 2010. Nancy Bedford's essay, "Do Not Fear: Go; The Commission of Theological Feminism in the Mission of the Church," is a critical and cogent analysis of the patriarchal mindset which imbues Christianity. She persuasively argues that the commission of the risen Jesus to women, which has been deliberately sidelined by the church, needs to be taken seriously. Her primary thesis is that without this shift "the subsequent *mission* of the church as a whole loses force and integrity, too often becoming bad news, rather than good news both for those who encounter it and for those involved in its proclamation" (p. 102). What is

particularly illuminating about Bedford's article is her perceptivity to how injustice can be disguised even in discourses that deal with women. Bedford identifies three areas within theology that the commission of women can influence, namely, pneumatology, theological anthropology and ecclesiology.

Dawn M. Nothwehr in his essay "Defining "Racisms: Understanding our Globalized, Terrorized and Ecologically Threatened World," brings out the close relationship between ethics and mission. Nothwehr joins the bandwagon of missiologists who are increasingly affirming that "it is not only *that* one practices love and justice, but also *how* one practices these virtues that makes the good news appealing and relevant for the thriving of humankind" (p. 116). In light of the definition of racism offered by the philosopher Albert Memmi—as a generalizing defining and valuation of differences to the advantage of the one defining or deploying the definition and the detriment of the defined in ways which can justify aggression—Nothwehr pays attention to three forms of racism—namely color-coded racism, tribalism and xenophobia—and highlights defining racism to be an important task for the Church today, to prevent it from being complicit in the practice of racism in its diverse forms.

The essay by David M. Rhoads and Barbara Rossing entitled "Beloved Earth Community: Christian Mission in an Ecological Age," enables us to recognize how "we cannot now think of mission to people apart from God's mission to all creation," because "[we] *are* nature; and we humans cannot eat, breathe, sleep, act, work, or live without the rest of nature" (p. 129). Affirming the need for a thoroughgoing reformation involving deep repentance, Rhoads and Rossing identify five key mandates to "guide such a transformation of Christian identity and mission" (p.131). These include: the mandate to learn about the degradation of creation; the mandate to relate ecology with human justice; the mandate to see care for the creation as basic to vocation and mission; the mandate to recognize theology as shaping how we act; and the mandate to integrate earth care with mission and spiritual discipline. In a context where theology and mission have been slow to engage with ecological questions, this article has persuasive potential that can help foster a viable Christian eco-praxis as it effectively integrates ecology with questions of justice, vocation, theology and spiritual discipline.

The final essay from Edmund Kee-Fook Chia is on mission as dialogue. Reflecting upon the Roman Catholic Church, Chia perceptively brings out the differences in the approaches towards other faiths adopted by Rome and the Roman Catholic Church in Asia and points out that "[d]ialogue is the way of being church in Asia ... the method for doing theology in Asia... and... the mode of the church's mission" (p. 147). Chia delves into different aspects of mission in Asia including the idea of Triple Dialogue propounded by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences: the effects of Colonization on the Asian context and its challenges for mission; Asian biblical hermeneutics; and the transition of the Christian church from "Church *in* Asia to Church *of* Asia" (p. 152). Chia argues that it is imperative that mission in the Asian

context finds expression in dialogue with Asia's poor as well as Asia's cultures and religions. This essay has potential to be relevant beyond Asia in a context where the recognition of the reality of religious plurality calls for new ways of being church and doing mission.

On the whole the book has salutary value in terms of the breadth of themes related to mission that it covers. However, it needs to be pointed out that given its link to the Edinburgh conference it suffers from an umbilical-stranglehold which precludes topics that, though pertinent, were excluded in the Edinburgh 2010 conference—most notably the question of human sexual orientation. Such an omission brings to the fore the new tension between ecumenicity and the commitment to inclusivity. This leaves open the speculation whether there is a tacit inclination in the book to render certain areas of human struggle as taboo areas for mission. It is probably time to pause and contemplate about our own struggles, and how to avoid being complicit in perpetuating patterns of discrimination through covert ways, in which we (so to speak), refuse to name the silences.

On the whole this work is a combination of enthusiastic presentation and sharp and sustained analyses, which are carefully attendant to the changing landscape of world Christianity and world missions. This stimulating collection of scholarly yet accessible articles by authors drawn from a pool of established scholars and experienced specialists is bound to be of interest to anybody interested in global Christianity and the study of world mission.

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