

Fernandez calls what he does in this book a theological journey or a theological navigation and it is precisely that. There are times when one is not sure where one is heading, but one thing is sure—the journey is filled with exciting discoveries and is never dull. Fernandez's use of language shows his passion and his enthusiasm.

The most exciting part of the book are the chapters that constitute Fernandez's theological construction, although these are also the parts that are most difficult to read. His vision of the new church, not as an institution, but as a *movement*—"a prophetic-critical movement," engaged in the "exercise of prophetic criticism, prophetic vision and prophetic solidarity"—is surely the kind of church that Jesus had in mind.

From the impressive list of references, one can conclude that a lot of research went into the writing of this book, which is based on the doctoral dissertation of the author. However, I wish a bibliography had been included at the end for the easy and quick reference of the reader. Also, the style used for reference citations is clumsy and inconvenient. For example, on page 16, footnote 39: *Kilusan*, p.11. It took me a lot of time to find the full reference—no wonder because it is "buried" in footnote 15!

**Missiology: An Ecumenical Introduction.
Texts and Contexts of Global Christianity.**

Edited by A. Camps, L.A. Hoedemaker,
M.R. Spindler and F.J. Verstraelen
Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B.
Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995. 498pp.

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One's first impression of this work is that it is an attractive and solid missiological contribution, rooted in a Dutch scholarly tradi-

tion that lends a distinct identity to its pronounced ecumenical perspective.

The twenty-one contributors, of whom two are women, constitute an ecumenically diverse group of missiologists, most of whom have a Dutch background or at least are closely connected with Dutch missiological milieus. A good third of the writers had, by the time of publication, retired from their previous positions and a few have passed away. The remaining two-thirds of the contributors represent the contemporary scholarly, missiological establishment. The book reflects a wide range of experience in Africa, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Americas and the Middle East. Nevertheless, owing to the fact that four of the writers had their missiological experience in Indonesia, a Dutch perspective is clearly evident.

This work is thus not the product of Third World theologians. Outlining the academic achievements of Western missions since the Second World War, it is a monument to the Western missiology of that period. A question to be considered is the appropriateness of a dominant Western perspective on global Christianity in the twilight of the second millennium.

The reader does not find an "objective" description of missiology in the book: "The movement of Christianity in the world is studied on the basis of a specific interest arising from (a Christian) faith perspective....That tradition views 'all the generations of the earth' as the object of God's redemptive will and plan of salvation. Or, in New Testament language, it regards the message of God's 'kingdom' made known in Jesus Christ, as intended for 'all nations'." (pp. 3ff.) As this quotation shows, this ecumenical missiology is clearly concerned with questions of systematic theology.

Such a dogmatically well-defined starting point might, however, invite a number of questions. The editors are, nevertheless, keen to counter possible charges of aprior-

istic and dogmatic coloring by stating their intention of remaining "ecumenical." They want to be open to processes of change and deliberately employ a variety of academic and ecumenical perspectives while maintaining a broad critical attitude over and against a variety of views and faith pronouncements.

The book is divided into five main sections. In Part I which portrays "The Diversity of Global Christianity," the Christian experiences of six regional contexts are surveyed in chronological order: The Middle East, Western Europe (The Netherlands), The People's Republic of China, Ghana in West Africa, Indonesia and Brazil.

I want to take a closer look at the treatment of the Chinese region since it is a context bordering on the Japanese. One notices that China occupies the third position in this chronological arrangement owing to the timeframe of the initial mission in the area. This refers, of course, to the advent of the Nestorian mission to China in 635. Basic and balanced information on the Franciscans (1294-1347), Jesuit and other missionary orders (1582-1800) is provided. However, the author concedes that "Despite the important gains in this period, great opportunities were missed...because of the rites controversy and other internal disputes." The period 1800-49 is considered from the perspective of the Unequal Treaties and boldly interpreted as a burden for Christian presence in China, Catholic and Protestant, up to today. Chinese history is followed to 1994 with a brief description of Christian involvement in political events such as the Taiping uprising (1850-64), the Fourth of May Movement (1919), and the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). Camps nevertheless sounds an optimistic note in his conclusion, mentioning improved relations between Roman Catholics and the People's Republic and pointing to deepened inculturation among Protestants as well as among Catholics. He estimates the

number of Christians in People's Republic of China at about 20 million, equally divided between Catholics and Protestants. In keeping with the book's ecumenical concern, Camps calls for "further steps toward unity" among Chinese Christians.

Part II, titled "Word, Mission and Church," suggests an ecumenical unity within the diversity of Christian expression described above. Against this background of contextual diversity, the editors stress the increasingly important feature of a single, common, global context. Such unity is, however, not found in "an overall perspective on 'mission' naively from one perspective, and certainly not from a Western perspective." The editors propose another understanding: "This unity will have to be defined 'missionarily': It will have to be defined on the basis of an understanding of the journey of Christianity in the world as a journey with a starting point (Jerusalem) and a point of reference (the kingdom of God). And it will have to be defined in terms of the 'real presence' of that starting point and the focus on the common point of reference becoming visible in all the (contextual) ramifications of the journey." The editors are convinced that all imperialist associations with this "victory march" can safely be stripped away. The reference point is beyond all imperialist implications and actual political situations; it is given in "the completion and redemption of human existence."

This approach uses the traditional division of positions in the Theology of Religions: christocentric exclusivity, christocentric inclusivity and theocentric pluralism. The author of that particular chapter, J. van Lin, describes and discusses, but does not explicitly side with one of the three positions. He actually claims that whatever the starting point, "It becomes clear that the outworking thereof is always decisively guided by one's outspoken but underlying understanding of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, the Christ." From this statement,

one cannot reach any conclusion for the entire range of thought concerning "unity in diversity." The standpoints are plural. It does indicate, however, that this rather tightly knit group of missiological scholars leans towards a christocentric inclusivity when trying to offer a basis for Christian unity.

Part III focuses on "The Missionary Movement in History," that is, the history of missions originating from the Western world from the time of Columbus. Comprising only fifty pages, this section is about half the size of the other two. The editors indicate that mission actually emerged prior to and outside the Western, colonialist, missionary initiatives. Rather than simply chart the history of Roman Catholic and Protestant missions, the four authors who present the materials under this section pay attention to the motivating forces underlying mission, attempting to outline a type of "mentality history" for post-Colombian missions. Roman Catholic as well as Protestant mission history are located approximately between the years 1789 and 1962-63. These "perspectives from above" are subsequently balanced by a "perspective from below." Reflecting the authors' keen awareness of the need for this perspective, the last contribution in this section is called "The History of the Missionary Movement from the Perspective of the Third World." The chapter is based on materials from the Third World. The role of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) is given a central place and a Latin American view of Christian history is offered under the heading "History from the Perspective of the Poor." A church history perspective from India, entitled "History of Christianity in India" is also introduced. The writer states that this Indian Church history will not focus on prominent figures, but primarily on people's experience. Also, African contributions are noted in the sec-

tion called "Attention to its Own Missionary Initiative."

Part IV, "Missionary Vitality in Contemporary Christianity," follows missionary initiatives in different regions of the world. These initiatives reflect regional variety and analysis. Africa is thus seen in a tension between cultural rootedness and liberation. Also, the perspective of black theology is raised. As for Asia, an article by A. G. Honig looks at the "Search for Identity as a Source of Renewal," offering a wide range of perspectives from Min Jung theology to a discussion on the cosmic meaning of Christ in Sri Lanka, India and Taiwan. The Philippines is considered a place where theology is threatened, and Indonesia a locus of emerging grassroots theology. Japan enters this chapter via the mention of the internationally known missiologists Masao Takenaka (*God is Rice*) and Kosuke Koyama (*Mount Sinai and Mount Fuji*).

The concluding section, "Mission, Ecumenicity, and Missiology," sums up basic missiological developments and reiterates the concern for the unity of the missionary movement. An interesting perspective here is a return to the concept of eschatology. The editors conclude, "...missiology must give attention to the ways in which the spirituality of expectation is alive in all the different parts of Christianity, that is to the different eschatological paradigms employed among Christians. These paradigms are at the root of the polarization that has afflicted Christianity in the second half of the twentieth century. A thorough joint study precisely of the content and the manner of these forms of expectation may enable missiology to test critically the variety of intermediate goals pursued by the mission movement and to work in such a way as to promote the unity of the mission movement."

Clearly this textbook is an achievement filled with well balanced, ecclesiastically oriented presentations of missiology. Valuable

and updated bibliographies are provided. Somehow the book finds its position between the one-person-presentations of the previous generation (Verkuil is an example) and the various "readers" or collections of missiological essays, so common today. The book lies between these two types because the strong, effective leadership of the editors and the tight affinity of this group of scholars provide a unity rarely seen in a collection of essays.

This strong unity may, however, create certain disadvantages as well. To make my point clear, the book is absolutely not Western in any of the rude senses of that word. The Dutch scholars know that the missiological initiative now rests with the Third World. They leave the reader with a sympathetic impression of open mindedness and serious academic commitment and they introduce the situation of the Third World and the reflection which goes on there. Nevertheless, the selection of the contributors points out some of the limitations of the work. The perspectives of women and the Third World are missing.

It may be helpful to relate the ideas of this book to two features of the contemporary spiritual climate: postmodernism and the new spirituality. Postmodern ideas have broken down the unity of the world in the minds of a great many missiologists. David Bosch probably gave the most reflective expression of this insight in his book *Transforming Missions: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Basic to Bosch's thought is the interpretation of our time as one of plural understandings of mission. Calling this situation a paradigm in its own right, he provides unity to what actually is a dissolved and pluralized unity. In the book under review here, Verstraelen and his team of scholars work with a similar problem and try to provide models which show a concern for the *oikumene* as well as for appropriate contextualization. Their concern is for unity, and their model of

Christian unity, a missionary journey from Jerusalem to the end of time, combined with an open interpretation of the Christological confession, is an intriguing and thought-provoking solution.

Nevertheless, I am not convinced that a unity within the universe of Christian mission is really reestablished, or whether this serious attempt at a universal solution of the missionary problem hits the mark. I miss, for example, the concern for the world. The book is too Christocentric to me. I also wonder whether or not the academic terminology is taken too far. Can we speak so clearly as the book does about the aims of God, the purpose of mission and the unity of the Christian community? I am inclined to side with the more open plurality of Bosch or with the *theologia crucis* of Kosuke Koyama. In my view, the latter models provide God with more options, more openness and a somehow deeper agnosticism. Do we really know so much?

Also, I also fear that the book underestimates the power of charismatic spirituality with its theology of success and happiness. One may or may not like it, but charismatic spirituality is clearly a dominant force in contemporary mission. Does this book, which is in many ways so impressive and convincing, reveal an insufficient understanding of contemporary pluralism?

If the ambitions of the book were scaled down to suggest one perspective out of many possible ones within the cosmos of contemporary missiological options, I would express my sincere appreciation. Looking at the book in that way, I see no fatal problem in its lack of representation or its attempt to find a unified theology. Seen from this perspective, the unified, ecumenical and Western contour of this book is a good match for other, more Third World-based perspectives published by others. A wealth of knowledge, wisdom and concern is gathered by the authors; a missionary pil-

grim can simply not afford not to consult it. The one who does will be greatly rewarded.

Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World

Kwok Pui-lan

Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995. xvi, 136pp. Paper.

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It was in the summer of 1995 that I took Kwok Pui-lan's seminar on "Asian Women's Biblical Reflections and Theology," as a part of the six-week summer term for candidates for the Doctor of Ministry degree at San Francisco Theological Seminary, San Anselmo. My first impression of her in the orientation session where teachers and students gathered together, was of a soft-spoken woman, whose English had a Chinese accent and intonation, and a strong and delightful way of encouraging women's active participation in the course. She even raised her fist above her head, and everyone present (about half were women) spontaneously responded with applause and cheers. Watching all of this, I was quite fascinated and proud of her presence, expecting great wonders to happen in the class. Naturally, one of the texts for that course was this book, *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World*, which had just been published.

The first three chapters deal with the unique position of Asian Christians in the history of reading the Bible. Along with the biblical tradition, Kwok treasures the religious traditions as well as the social biographies of Asian peoples. She calls for the necessity of "demythologizing" the sacred authority of the Bible, and seeks to "demystify" the ways the Bible has been used in the past. It is the Bible itself and its interpreta-

tions as well that we should examine critically with the help of other traditions. Thus, she offers an image of the Bible as a "talking book" which welcomes multicultural dialogues in Asia to liberate ourselves from a hierarchical model of truth. She uses a "correlative logic" based on Chinese philosophy as a means of bringing the pragmatic into clearer focus. Instead of seeking after absolute truth, Kwok insists on searching for wisdom in everyday living which allows for more room for dialogue, difference and multiplicity.

In chapters 4 and 5, Kwok, as an Asian woman theologian, suggests oral and multi-faith biblical hermeneutics. In the Bible, as well as in the Asian traditions, the actual voices of women did not survive in the writing process. The majority of Asian Christian women still pass on the Biblical stories orally to those they come into contact with daily. She suggests some ways in which an oral hermeneutic may give voice to the women in the Bible, help reframe the discourse and reconstruct the dialogue and blend different narratives as if weaving a tapestry.

Kwok's multifaith hermeneutic suggests an answer to the question of the relation of the Gospel and culture. Any faith tradition, including the Biblical tradition, is not monolithic and influences peoples of different races, classes and genders. "In many Asian traditions, the knower, the known, and the knowledge are not clearly separated.... Hermeneutics has to do with much more than the study of a given text; it includes the perception of truth behind the text and the relation of the text to the ethos and practice of the religious community" (p. 68). Asian women theologians are more conscious than their male colleagues of the tendency for male dominance in Asian religious traditions. Together with a critical observation of the androcentric elements in the Bible, "Multifaith hermeneutic for women, therefore, is not characterized by a hermeneutics of consent to the Biblical