

and deepened as contact with outsiders exposed the Hidden Christians to richer and more authoritative Christian and Buddhist teachings, resources and opportunities for worship.

Whelan's extensive annotations represent prodigious research in several fields and are essential to interpreting the text. They delve into *Tenchi's* multilingual lexicon and trace the likely origin of much obscure material in the text that comes from diverse religious traditions and folk practices over many centuries. The cumulative effect of the notes is to persuade the reader that *Tenchi* is a primarily Christian document despite the inclusion of much extraneous material. For example, the notes show that based on *Tenchi*, we can tell that the Portuguese Catholic missionaries taught the Japanese Christians not only the sacraments, Latin prayers and Bible stories but also meditations on the rosary, stations of the cross, anecdotes from apocryphal works, such as the Book of James, and pious ancient and medieval legends.

Whelan's Introduction and notes helpfully point out areas where *Tenchi's* theology is confused. A key point of confusion that is worth noting is the Trinity. The unity of the Trinity is sacrificed when Deusu divides in half for the Incarnation. After the resurrection of Jesus and the Assumption of Mary, a Trinitarian formula explains that Deusu, who had originally been one, has become three bodies. Deusu is the Father, Jesus is the Son, and Mary is the Holy Spirit. Notwithstanding this statement, this author is less convinced than Whelan that Mary "becomes one of the persons of the Trinity" (31), at least not in the sense of the Roman Catholic Church's teaching about the Trinity. The *Tenchi* specifies that in heaven Deusu is the Father, the Son is the Savior, and Mary's role is Mediator—her traditional role. The sanctifying function of the Holy Spirit appears to be unknown in *Tenchi*; the descent of the Holy Spirit at

Pentecost does not occur. Mary appears to have no divine power in her own right; for example, the miracle she shows the King of Luzon comes in response to her prayers.

---

### **The Recovery of Mission: Beyond the Pluralist Paradigm**

Vinoth Ramachandra

Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans

Publishing Company, 1996, xii+293 pp.

---

*Reviewed by J. Nelson Jennings,  
Tokyo Christian University, Chiba*

This is an outstanding book and I hope that many, many people will read and study it with the care that it deserves. The strength of this work lies in how the author, Sri Lankan evangelical Vinoth Ramachandra, seeks a missiological approach to the issue of religious pluralism. As Ramachandra points out in the preface, he is *not* trying to produce another "Asian theology" (x). Rather, as the title indicates, the attempt is to retrieve a proper sense of mission that emerges out of the life and ministry of Jesus; a perspective that all too often has been blunted by modern theological attempts to deal with the allegedly new issue of religious pluralism. Ramachandra draws positively on his own non-Western, Asian background here to point out that the newness of pluralism is only in relation to a Western Christendom that only recently has entered into meaningful interaction with other faiths, especially since the 1960s. Because theological provincialism insists on asking, "Can anything good emerge beyond Europe and North America?", the fact that the author is not a Westerner will unfortunately keep some readers from taking this book seriously—especially those who most need to heed his message! Ramachandra's object is to interact with the worldwide Christian discussion on religious pluralism, which he does in a way

that engages both Western and various non-Western premises in a creative and constructive fashion.

The book is divided into three parts. Part I deals with three Asian churchmen who have made significant contributions worldwide to the formation of typical, modern theological approaches to pluralism. Ramachandra has entitled the three chapters that respectively consider these globally recognized theologians as "Mystery-Centred Faith: Stanley Samartha," "Liberating Gnosis: Raimundo Panikkar" and "Christic Theandrim: Aloysius Pieris." I find the respective treatments fair and honestly critical, as well as helpful introductions to readers unfamiliar with these three giants' lives and thought.

Part II has two chapters, entitled "Interweavings" and "Engaging Modernity." The former chapter begins by pulling together both different and common concerns of the three theologians considered in Part I. It then turns to "The Wider Landscape" in order "to explore some of the common ground between the Asian Christian writers whose work we have been examining and significant trends in the European tradition, especially developments in the latter which have taken place in the past two hundred years as the church in Europe has interacted with the dominant culture of modernity" (116). Three themes are examined: "The Turn to the Subject," "The Flight from History" and "Ultimate Silence." Chapter 5 then deals appreciatively with the work of Leslie Newbigen, specifically with his theological critique of modern secular culture, "Gospel of Public Truth." This chapter alone is worth the price of the book, offering the conclusion that Newbigen's "historical judgments need to be augmented by other perspectives, and the political dimensions of the 'tradition of rationality' created by the gospel require further exploration.... [Newbigen] has also shown how the painful and unnecessary divide between conservatives and liberals in the church may—and indeed must be—

bridged if the church is to have any credibility in a fragmented world" (171–72). This closing statement whets the reader's appetite for Ramachandra's own positive proposal set forth in Part III.

Chapter 6, "The Scandal of Jesus," seeks to recover the power of the original controversy over who Jesus is, particularly in light of his resurrection. Chapter 7, "A Gospel for the World," looks historically at the Christian mission movement and its various (including both ancient and modern) interactions with indigenous thought. I am impressed by the way Ramachandra concisely confronts the problem all peoples have, upon entering the Christian faith, of seeking to understand their own histories in relation to the salvific role of Old Covenant Israel: "While Yahweh works in all nations, in no nation other than Israel did he act for the sake of all nations" (231). There is also a healthy treatment of communal, socio-political concerns. The final chapter, "Gospel Praxis," suggests a proactive gospel mission approach under the rubrics of "humanity" "integrity," and "radicalness."

The book is not difficult to read, although that by no means is to suggest it is "light reading." As a glance at the bibliography will attest, Ramachandra draws on worldwide resources (including two of the leading contemporary African Christian thinkers, Lamin Sanneh and Kwame Bediako), as well as extra-Christian perspectives. While distinctively Christian, this work nevertheless seeks to be comprehensive in dealing with the multi-faceted subject of mission in our contemporary, globalized world. Please read it and use it for study with others. As John Stott's cover endorsement puts it: "This is the mind-stretching and heartwarming book on mission that we have been waiting for."