

Something to Think About

Issue 26 Editor: Jonathan Ingleby



Without reaching for one of those words which tend to litter our descriptions nowadays ('exciting', 'unbelievable', 'amazing') I can certainly say that this edition of *Encounters* has been one of the most interesting and thought-provoking that I have had to do with. I am genuinely grateful to all those who responded to my request for a critique of *Encounters* Issues 1-25 and who added suggestions about future possible topics. Some of you went a long way and I appreciate your generosity.

The result of this interaction, something which I had not quite anticipated, is a sort of 'issues and trends' survey. The list of all the various matters that people think we should be exploring and discussing could be used to design several lecture courses, plan a number of conferences and provide a very wide choice of subject matter (as was hoped) for the editors of *Encounters* when considering future editions.

Obviously some themes emerged as more prominent than others. This may reflect the range of the respondents (not everybody who ought to have been asked to contribute, and not everybody who was asked did so) or it may give undue emphasis to current as against long-term concerns, but in any case it does tell us what is on the agenda of many mission leaders and thinkers. I have tried to summarise these prominent themes in the opening survey while also at least listing some of the minor concerns. Where the theme seems to be a major one I have included contributors' comments as appropriate and sometimes added comments of my own. The remaining contributions are virtually word for word accounts of responses from individuals that were so full that they deserve to stand alone. My special thanks to Ida Glaser, Jonathan Rowe, Martin Lee, Rose Dowsett and Paul Thaxter.

Finally, I am sure that this 'conversation' is not over. If you want to respond to any of the suggestions already made or make new suggestions of your own, please do get in touch through the usual channels. Something along the lines of 'Surely, what we ought to be discussing is... I was really surprised that nobody thought to mention it.' We'll try to make sure that your concerns are reflected in Encounters.

Jonathan

- **Emerging Themes in Mission:** A survey and summary.
(Jonathan Ingleby, 1921 words)
- **Notes from Ida Glaser**
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- [Book Review 1: Christian Theology in Asia.](#)
(edited by Sebastian Kim; Cambridge University Press)
- [Book Review 2: The Day is Yours: Slow Spirituality in a Fast-Moving World.](#)
(by Ian Stackhouse; Paternoster Press)

Go to the Encounters website at www.redcliffe.org/encounters to read what others are thinking on the Discussion Board. Use the Voice your comments form to add to the debate.

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Emerging Themes in Mission

A survey and summary



Author: Jonathan Ingleby is a co-editor of *Encounters* and Postgraduate lecturer in mission at Redcliffe College.

As those of you who have read the Editorial will have gathered, this paper is based on the contributions of mission leaders and thinkers who were asked to comment on the first twenty-five editions of *Encounters* and to suggest future possible themes to be treated by the journal. Out of these contributions I have selected a number of key ideas which I judge reflect the main concerns of those who responded. Minor themes are also listed. Of course the list of current interests and concerns is made up of items that are uniquely the choice of the twenty three respondents. Also it is a list compiled in the Summer of 2008. The same exercise undertaken by a historian of mission trying to take a longer view might come up with very different results. Equally, in five years time other pressing issues will almost certainly have forced their way onto the mission agenda.

Nevertheless I commend this exercise to you. I am convinced that we are not doing enough mission reflection, that we are not listening enough to each other, and that we are often woefully ignorant of issues that we need to grasp simply because they are affecting world mission in significant ways sometimes without our even noticing it.

Here then are my main themes, with some comment under each heading largely drawn from the emails and letters sent by the respondents themselves. The list is in no particular order. I have put in some cross references to the individual contributions listed as Notes from... but ideally these should be read as they stand to get the full flavour of the responses.

MAJOR THEMES

Violence and mission, persecution etc.

Though the Western church has long experienced freedom from persecution, it remains a serious issue in many parts of the global South, indeed it is often on the increase. Actual physical violence against Christians is becoming common in parts of India and is not absent from China or the Islamic world. It would be good to address this in the light of an emerging 'Christian rights' approach. Does the Bible give us any guidelines here? Stories of converts from hostile contexts - showing the complexities of their situation and the price they pay would make the discussion more real.

Prosperity gospel

'The prosperity gossellers' falsehoods' says one respondent. This may be true but it is not a simple issue. There appears to be a symbiotic relationship between prosperity theology and spiritual warfare in the thinking of Southern Christianity, and, at the very least, this raises challenges for partnerships between Western Churches and Missionary Agencies and Southern Christians. Also, the sheer 'success' of the movement needs to be taken into account. Often we hear of 'massive growth and revival' and large percentage figures of the overall number of Christians in a given country are claimed as adherents. At the same time Evangelical church leaders in these countries frequently do not wish to be associated with churches that practice and preach prosperity theology as they see the theology as heretical.

Business and mission

We may need to take a fresh look at this topic in the light of the emerging economies. In the political sphere, there is a lot of discussion on the role that private enterprise can play in providing public goods such as education and healthcare. More explicitly looking at mission, do we have anything to say on what the aims of business should be? Is there an alternative model of business that goes beyond profit maximisation, or is the key question what 'Christian' businesses do with their maximised profits i.e. support more traditional mission activities or engage in Corporate Social Responsibility? Certainly some are worried that the capitalist ethos (and political ideology?) behind Business as Mission may not be entirely aligned with 'kingdom business'. See further Notes from Paul Thaxter.

Islam

Islam is always in the news as far as Christians are concerned! There are many possible topics. Women in Islam is one that has been mentioned. Islamic commitment to coercion and how to respond, is another. See further Notes from Ida Glaser.

Money and mission

The theme of 'money and mission' is linked to wider issues to do with power, control and leadership. See further Notes from Rose Dowsett where the issue of control of money is linked to training institutions.

Education and training

This topic was placed in a wide framework. There was a request for a review of the curricula of mission training colleges around the world. One respondent was interested in discussion on the 'fundamental biblical mission principles for local churches and mission organizations'. She felt that discerning these principles 'will help them [the churches and agencies] to understand the reasons for their existence' and 'will also guide them to provide adequate mission training for mission practitioners.' At another level there was concern about Christian schools, Christian universities etc. and whether these should really be the models we are pursuing?

Current political and economic issues

Obviously this could be broken down further. Migration was one popular sub-heading, as was the apparent increasing divide between rich and poor even in countries where the economy seems to be growing rapidly. Another respondent mentioned the shift to the 'left' in Latin American politics. Yet another raised the whole question of post-imperialism, suggesting that the consequences of a not-too-distant colonialism is still impacting mission today. Globalisation – what it means and what it means for mission – comes up again and again. In this connection see the questions raised about cross-cultural living in the global church in Notes from Jonathan Rowe.

Urbanisation and informal settlements (slums)

Urbanisation could obviously be included as a 'political and economic issue', but it deserves to stand alone because mentioned by so many. Asian respondents were particularly concerned – migration from rural areas is massively on the increase in a place like India, for example – but other continents are clearly not exempt from the challenge. One respondent wanted practical suggestions as to how church planting is to happen in the informal settlements (slums) of our big cities, especially in the two-thirds world. There is a need, he felt, for mission agencies to think of how sustainable mission can take place among the

illiterate, insecure, deprived and destitute people of some of the large slums. Also how do we challenge the church to get engaged? See further Notes from Martin Lee.

Technology, especially the media

People were concerned to discuss not only the use of 'technology' for better mission communications but also the subtle effect of the twenty-first century electronic media mission, meaning things like the God channel which not only work as evangelistic tools but are also often as promoters of specific lines of theology without offering the opportunity for 'reader response' or academic debate. See further Notes from Martin Lee and especially Paul Thaxter.

Contextualisation

A respondent with a Latin American inclination felt that the role of Liberation Theology in the development of both contextual theology and missiological method has not really been recognised and it would be nice to see some further discussion. This would be in the context of a more general discussion on the development of contextual theology, something which was called for by a number of people. See further Notes from Rose Dowsett.

Listening to the global South

It is not just Liberation Theology! There are many indigenous theologies and many other ways of 'listening'. For example, what has been the contribution of the African church to mission? What are the untold stories of African missionary heroes? Not enough attention has been paid to this so far, it was felt. We desperately need to raise up and hear alternative mission voices, those from the underside with non-Western perspectives. From a Western point of view this may mean more learning of languages so that non-Western languages can be 'heard'.

Learning from other traditions

There are many mission traditions: Orthodox, Catholic, Pentecostal etc. Are we learning from them? Beyond that there is the vexed issue of inter-religious dialogue. See further Notes from Paul Thaxter.

Accepting vulnerability

This included avoiding neo-colonialism, the endurance of pre-modern societies, the failure of 'progress' and 'order', and the jettisoning the modernist baggage.

Re-appropriating the Bible for mission

People seem to feel that this is important but are not sure what to recommend. See further, however, Notes from Ida Glaser and from Jonathan Rowe.

Leadership

This links (in some people's minds at least) with the topic of inter-cultural teams. A clear concern, I would judge, not always clearly expressed, is that Westerners always seem to think that they should be the leaders! There is also concern that leadership models are being borrowed from 'the world', and this applies to those both from the West and the global South.

Church and mission

The church is changing e.g. it is more than ever multicultural. What does it mean for mission? Can church and mission share new ideas and new models (e.g. 'emerging church' and 'emerging mission')? Somebody asks provocatively: 'Can a catholic ecclesiology confront globalised fragmentation?' meaning, essentially, can we in mission recover ecclesiology as a proper theological and biblical first order matter?

Short-term mission

Mostly discontent expressed here. Described by one respondent as a 'boom industry' he added the some are claiming that more resources are now being expended on short-term mission than on long-term. Some link the topic with what they call 'the Americanisation' of mission. See a searching critique of short-term mission in Notes from Rose Dowsett.

Legislation

This is the new 'nightmare factor' for mission executives. See further Notes from Martin Lee and Rose Dowsett.

MINOR THEMES

Just to complete the picture I list below the topics which were mentioned by the respondents but which might be considered minor topics, not in the sense that they were judged to be less important but that, as a matter of fact, they were mentioned less frequently. I have not included headings you can find in the Notes in the rest of this edition of *Encounters*. Again, the topics come in no particular order.

Theology in an era of world Christianity; gender and mission; hospitality and mission; reconciliation and mission; south to south mission e.g. the 'back to Jerusalem' movement; mission, evangelism and polemical approaches; new mission thinking emerging from the margins of Christianity such as: the Dalits, Women, children; families in mission; sports and mission; pastoral care in mission (both care of mission/church workers and issues of different understandings of what pastoral care entails); the relationship between the global and local church; preparing churches in the global South for mission; Latin America; the danger of downplaying proclamation; the church's responsibility in areas of high unemployment; building inter-cultural and inter-generational churches in European cities; art and mission; 'secular' vocation as a mission call; people groups revisited; America versus the rest; damaged people on offer for mission service – what might be the cultural knock-on?; measuring our effectiveness; mission opportunities associated with the growing concern regarding matters environmental and economic; positive engagement with integrated development/sustainability initiatives that involve cross community organisations; African mission initiatives, including the emergence of the National Initiative for Reformation of South Africa; mission in relation to disasters/traumas; industrial chaplaincies; livelihood groups - especially Farmers' groups; the message of reconciliation; Edinburgh 2010; changing roles of western mission societies – evaluation of different sending structures; frontier mission; insider movements; attrition and burnout in mission; gender issues; children at risk; conflict-resolution; ethics and missiology; new models of mission in the light of globalisation.

This should give us something to talk about!

CONTRIBUTORS

Finally, I offer a list of respondents (in alphabetical order!) with my sincere thanks.

Daniel Clark, Paul Davies, Rose Dowsett, Chris Ducker, Rosemary Foster, Ida Glaser, Jim Harries, Manoj Jacob, Andy Kingston-Smith, Carol Kingston-Smith, Martin Lee, Terry Lockyer, Julie Ma, Peter Oyugi, Rogelio Prieto, Tim Raby, Cathy Ross, Jonathan Rowe, David Singh, Kang-san Tan, Loun Ling Tan, Paul Thaxter, John Wibberley.

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Notes from Ida Glaser

Author: Ida Glaser.

Here are a few things that I think people need to be reading/thinking/writing about:

1. Interesting that you say you [*Encounters*] have had foci on Europe and Asia, but not on Africa. From the Christian-Muslim relations perspective, I think sub-Saharan Africa is of crucial importance. Africans are often into evangelism, but there's a lot of VERY bad feeling about. How do Christians learn to LOVE Muslims, and actually to understand them, given the history of violence, the tensions over *shari'ah* etc? How do such tensions affect mission, and how do they affect the way that converts are treated?
2. Particularly relevant here are how issues of power and, in particular, of land, affect our thinking. This is not only true in Africa, but everywhere else, and is important in relating to Muslims because of the different Islamic views of land. It is territorial issues as much as anything else that affect, for example, whether one can sensibly build a church in a particular place.
3. We need to look at mission being done by Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Atheists etc. as well as at mission being done by Christians!
4. Biblical interpretation is going to be increasingly important. My hobby horse is reading the Bible faithfully in the context of other faiths and of Islam in particular. There are also interesting questions about not only developing local interpretations but also teaching the Bible in different contexts.
5. And, of course, those different contexts raise the issue of how non-Christians read and respond to the Bible. So often we think of mission in terms of what Christians do - the Islamic context alerts us (or should do) to the importance of understanding what non-Christians are likely to be thinking about Christianity, about Christ and about the Bible before we ever meet them.
6. I'm also increasingly aware of the effects of history on how we relate to different peoples - not only colonial history, but the longer term stuff. I think this will be increasingly important as mission becomes more and more 'from everywhere to everywhere', and we have to try and deal with the dynamics of relationships between people from different backgrounds.
7. Have you looked at how money affects mission?

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Notes from Jonathan Rowe

Author: Jonathan Rowe.

In the next 25 issues it would be good to see something on the following topics, all of them important for the theory and practice of mission today.

1. Theological education is a priority for many mission agencies. What are the issues and trends? What are the challenges? Is it necessary? Or would church-based Bible training be better than formal, degree level training? Are they mutually exclusive? How are they linked?
2. There are some hard nuts to crack in the area of cross-cultural life as global Church – as some Anglican Bishops realised at the recent Lambeth conference. For example, what about pastoral care in mission (both care of mission/church workers and issues of different understandings of what pastoral care entails)? What about ethical conflicts that derive from different cultural contexts (i.e. agreement on what is good and evil, but not on the ordering of those goods and evils)? Or culturally specific leadership styles?
3. The 'theology of religion' is fundamental for understanding the way in which the Church proclaims (or avoids proclaiming) Jesus in its mission.
4. Discussion of the practical issues surrounding the role of men, women and families in mission could be very useful to both individuals and agencies.
5. We often pray for revival. But seem to have to struggle on in mission. What is the relationship between God's work and our work in mission? How can one best persevere?
6. What about biblical issues from the NT as well as the OT? Or the influence of particular biblical books or theological themes (creation, resurrection) on our understanding of mission?
7. Vocation and mission. What it is; how to discern it; what to do next; how to help others (thinking of church or mission leaders).
8. And finally... why bother with cross-cultural mission at all? Why not stay at 'home'? Would it be better if many more people did ministry in their native land? Why/ why not?

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Notes from Martin Lee

Author: Martin Lee.

It is always hard to have an overview of key issues – as there are so many. For your interest, we are thinking about using the next Global Connections conference (November 4th to 6th 2009) to look at either:

a) What do conversion, transformation and similar words really mean to us? Are we trying to Christianise people and make them adapt to our model of Christian culture, or to bring to a living relationship with God?

b) What do we mean by mission? Are the five marks of mission (proclamation, discipleship, loving service, justice and creation care) a helpful model? Probably also reflecting on the Mission of God and integral mission as well (integral in the sense of mission being our DNA, not our Western interpretation of that term to try to bring together evangelism and social action).

These two issues actually undergird much of the practice of mission and I would be pleased to hear people's views on these issues.

With regard to *Encounters*, I do wonder if there have been some major trends missing. I list a few of them below, grouped into various sections.

1. **Political and economic issues** as they affect mission - victory of free trade, 'democracy' being the only acceptable political system, misuse of power by the West, the rise of the new economies (Brazil, China, India), the growing rich/poor divide. All have, or will have, an enormous impact on how mission is undertaken and by whom.

2. **Globalisation of structures.** Many civil society structures are looking at new ways of responding to globalisation, and the mission world is rather behind. We still have a Western dominated model, and call it international!! Are there better models for global partnership which aren't western controlled multi-nationals.

3. **Urbanisation as the greatest people movement.** Migration is an issue for us Brits, but the greatest people movement currently going on is increasing urbanisation, especially in the less economically developed world. All the increase of the world's population in the next twenty years will be in urban environments - much more strategic for mission than the little bit of migration into the UK that the Daily Mail gets so excited about!! There are of course migration issues and opportunities. What about the effect of the Brain Drain on the church in the Global South and the non-powerful economies?

4. **The rise of individualism** as part of the Western mindset, and how we continue to export this. But is this becoming two way now with Bollywood and the new media? Yet at the same time we are now looking for 'identity'.

5. Religious trends such as the "**demise of Christendom**". The percentage of practising Christians in Europe and the West in general is said to be in sharp decline, especially among the young. The spiritual weakness of the Western Church, demonstrated by the apathy and lack of commitment to Christian lifestyle and values by those claiming to be practising Christians, is bound to have an impact on mission. The Western church is theologically weak and dominated by the prevailing individualist culture, yet still wants to dominate.

6. **Institutional Racism in mission** - a real hot potato. It is really there but will we ever acknowledge it? Why is corruption always associated with the poor, as if the West is immune? I constantly hear about the corruption in the African Church from rich Westerners on visits. Let's remove the plank in our own eye!!

7. There has been a move away from church and mission agencies being involved in **service delivery** (hospitals, education) in the less economically developed world (except children's homes and HIV), while this is being rediscovered by Christian groups in the West as we get government funding. Why is this? Has the self sufficiency mantra won? At the same time what explains the dominance of the specialist new projects such as HIV and street children, while major issues such as community health, malaria and TB are ignored?

8. The **demise of the traditional, generic missions** - the victory of individualism leads to the starting up of so many new ministries every week that I am at a loss to know whom to contact next. At the same time, local churches are becoming the new mission agencies.

9. **New models of mission** such as "Business and Mission", the rise of short-termism from Western churches and child sponsorship. Business and mission has so many categories – business as mission, job making, job taking, business for mission. Are we really prepared to evaluate short-term programmes?

10. How **technological advances** can be both beneficial and the opposite in mission. Many mission partners are now on skype, seeking pastoral advice from the home church. Is this good or bad? On the other hand, I have heard of a mission partner who now phones on their respective mobiles the six local pastors in the villages that he is 'mentoring' to see how they are getting on - is this support and encouragement, or yet another way of control?

11. **The rise of legislation** – both local and international. Risk assessment, child protection, insurance, visas – the list is endless. Will that be the main driver behind what we do and don't do?

The list is endless. How do we decide the key drivers and issues?

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Notes from Paul Thaxter

Author: Paul Thaxter.

We need some reflection on **mission and media** – there is a plethora of issues to be understood here e.g.

- the implications of a networked society for short and long term mission
- inclusion and exclusion in a digital world
- advocacy for mission in a mediated society – what are the current stories that need to be articulated?
- e-learning and e-training in mission discipleship
- examining the impact of radio, TV and internet as instruments of mission in countries where it is difficult to share the gospel openly compared to those in which Christian media is openly welcome (God TV, tele-evangelism) or where Christian issues are of wider public interest e.g. the Monastery series or that of Vicars' wives on British TV.

We need more missiological thinking on handling the Christian story in a mediated society. What are the guiding principles for Christian mission in the media? How do we effectively engage in politics, public discourse and power? In what ways can the church in mission be a prophetic voice to the unhealthy dynamics of tribalism, nationalism or imperial ambition? Given the number of wars in the past fifty years involving 'perceived' Christian nations, and significant genocide in places which espouse a Christian gospel e.g. Serbia and Rwanda, does our Christian mission actually make disciples that work for the peace and protection of others? This is not just a Christian concern. Rising fundamentalism of several faiths – Christian, Islamic and Hindu has led to the charge that religion seriously damages your health and its missionaries are the harbingers of sectarianism and cultural oppression.

Discipleship, Conversion and Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which announces that every person over eighteen years of age should have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and freedom to practice it or to change religion, also needs much reflection. A great theme could be a comparison between the Christian gospel with its concomitant mission activity and the United Nations Universal Declaration and its current activity to further that declaration. Can secularism be an ally and alternative to Christianity, depending on context?

The **history of mission** needs more attention. What current and projected trends can we discern by studying the past? One area of traditional mission involvement is with the provision of diverse health care, including public health, institutional care, and addiction. For instance, there has been an incredible growth in global addictive behaviour over the last thirty years but also some impressive Christian responses to people who are addicted. These responses can assist the wider church also in becoming more effective mission communities.

Business as mission is an increasingly used, though diverse, concept. The language of entrepreneurship is being re-instated in Western Christian language as it is realised that both character and skill sets are needed to help develop and transform communities. It would be worth examining current trends in fair trade, employment creation, micro-financing, and social enterprise markets, to see the advantages and disadvantages of this approach to Christian transformation.

A synopsis of **current missiological frameworks** would be helpful, in order to see which missiologies have positive implications for helping us to understand and engage in God's activities in the world. There are new insights from ecclesiology, pneumatology, and Trinitarian theology, that can help us understand how we relate in the world with others.

What are the **current missiological implications of denominationalism and ecumenism** – can Orthodox, Protestant, Catholic and Pentecostal groups effectively demonstrate the gospel in the same area? There has been little said about acknowledging mission within the Orthodox church family. What are the implications for mission in post-communist countries and, in some places, the resurgence of the Orthodox Church? Do Western Christian missionaries have any respect for the culture, beliefs and practices of Eastern Orthodox Christians?

I would welcome further reflection on the **growth of the indigenous emerging mission movements** and how they are developing with and without the encouragement of international groups e.g. what can Western Christians learn from the African Independent Churches or from the Chinese small group movements?

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Notes from Rose Dowsett

Author: Rose Dowsett.

In general, I think we all need to keep working at finding writers from the global south, so that we can hear opinions and observations from them. I know this is far easier said than done - I constantly struggle with getting non-western writers for Global Missiology projects I co-ordinate for the WEA Mission Commission. But I think at the moment we say far more about listening to the global south than we actually practise. That may mean encouraging contributions written in a different form and format, or more question and answer conversation type pieces, or translating pieces written in other languages, or...

Topics? Here are some suggestions.

1. We have been talking for a long time about encouraging global south churches to engage in their own theologizing. How about an issue which shows lots of examples of just that, and what it means in specifics? And I'd then explore how contextualized theology does or doesn't make it harder to have universal agreement on core beliefs and ethics. Even the ancient creeds (Apostles', Nicene, etc) arose from specific contexts and are expressed in particular forms and language; is that still what we would expect/hope all Christians everywhere would still embrace, or what are the implications of encouraging contextualization? I think the issues here also contribute to the current confusion in the UK as to what we mean by 'evangelical'. How far are we believing/saying/doing the same things but in different language and ways, and how far are we developing paths leading in fundamentally different directions? Does contextual theology inevitably lead to fragmentation, or is it possible still to have meaningful unity? Given current struggles and arguments within UK evangelicalism, I think this is an area we simply have to grapple with far more openly and honestly than we have done - and there are mighty few fora where we can have an honest debate without somebody or other shouting 'heresy'. I think confusion here also contributes to many younger Christians concluding that the only kind of mission they can engage in has to be relief or development based.

2. Short-term mission. Probably this is one of my hobby horses, but I do despair that now we spend more money and more energy in getting people doing what I would call baptised tourism than into the slog of long-term mission. I realize that there are some situations where someone can contribute helpfully in a short time, especially in supporting long-termers in some clearly defined way. I also understand that for some people such a trip is life changing, and that most long-termers nowadays have done a short term visit previously. However, I think the balance is completely out of kilter. Moreover, even if most long-termers now have done short term, most short termers don't go on to become long termers, and research says that after five years a high proportion of short termers have lost all interest. It seems that many short term trips are a variation on an adventure holiday, with a vaguely Christian twist. Vast quantities of Christian money are diverted to support this. Is this right? Also, biblical mission must involve the kind of incarnational lifestyle which by definition cannot be achieved in a short trip. We should make short trips clearly observational and learning trips, and not use the term 'mission' in them. We need to help individuals and churches understand that really significant mission still requires long-term investment, learning a language, trying to understand a culture, growing to know and be known and trusted... In our impatient culture, we need to recapture the importance of 'a long obedience in the same direction'. And we also need a thorough review of how we prepare people who do go on short-term trips, and how

we follow through afterwards so that a higher proportion of them will develop a lifelong global heart and mind, and be catalysts in their churches and communities.

3. Legislation, both UK and EU. The past 10-15 years we have seen a torrent of legislation which impacts our society deeply, and has huge implications (and costs) for churches and mission agencies. It also shapes the psyche of younger folks coming through to colleges and agencies, as well as costing agencies a vast amount of money. So - employment law, health and safety, what you can and can't ask when recruiting, religious and other discrimination laws, public benefit, access, risk assessment, keeping records and data protection, etc, etc. How is all this shaping what we can and can't do, what our overheads are, etc. and how is it likely to affect us in future? Probably most people in our churches, unless they are themselves employers, haven't the foggiest idea how this legislation is affecting us - and probably many are completely unaware that most legislation is generated by people committed to a liberal humanist bias which is often anti-Christian.

4. Money... Hmmmmmmmmmmm. There are especially, difficult issues like how can we responsibly within the UK rationalize the number (and quality) of training institutions, and of agencies... (Now that should provoke some lively debate!!). Can we develop less costly ways of training, and models for mission service? I don't think either of these is sustainable in their present form, apart from a few gold-plated institutions or agencies with wealthy patrons or large endowments (and we don't have too many of those...). We are far too polite and genteel to state that we are competing for money - but I think we are. We all like our own traditions and distinctives, but our prior commitment should be to ensure good training and well-run agencies for the next generation with an over-riding focus on serving the next generations rather than maintaining ourselves, in the very best interests of world mission. That means that some of us need to be the seeds that die, not just because we've finally run out of cash but because we see sharing resources while we still have them will better ensure the future.

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Christian Theology in Asia

edited by Sebastian Kim



Reviewer: Dr Kang-San Tan, Head of Mission Studies, Redcliffe College.

The book is divided into two parts: formation in Asian Christian theology and theological themes of Christianity in Asia. The stated aim of the book is on "the relation of these distinctive theologies to the specific contexts from which they emerged" (p.xi). Some of the theological themes of Christianity in Asia discussed in the book are religious pluralism, cross textual hermeneutics, feminist theology, ecumenical movement and mission.

Within the stated aim of the book, John A. Titley offers a good historical narrative on Indonesia's struggle for independence. However, there is not much on the works of Indonesian theologians. Of special interest to readers of Asian theologies will be those essays that not only relate to theology in context, but also refer to specific theological works of Asian theologians. Notably, Selvayagam's fine essay is well researched and introduces the reader to a host of Indian theologians. Foreign readers entering into foreign territories are confronted with issues such as indigenous use of Hindu concepts, dialogical and vernacular attempts, Dalit theology and hyphenated Christians in early twentieth century India.

Readers get a distinct sense of constructive developments in Asian theology through essays by Choong Chee Pang, Nozomu Miyahira, and Sebastian Kim from the Chinese, Japanese and Korean contexts, respectively. On the one hand, we are struck by *common themes* emerging from these essays such as the importance of inter-religious engagements, poverty, responses to Western imperialism and how these theologians are grappling with social political realities. For example, Korean Minjung and Indian Dalit theologies are both critical responses to the problem of poverty. On the other hand, these surveys also showed how local theologies developed in quite *distinct ways* in a post-colonial Indian context, communist China, and Korean Christianity.

Another noteworthy feature of the book is the range of perspectives from Catholic and Protestant studies, covering various Asian regions. Jacob Kavunkal's study from a Catholic perspective on Henri Le Saux and Bede Griffiths' attempt at using Indian mystical traditions as a natural base for Hindus to receive the supernatural Christian truths will challenge those within Protestant movements to engage with Asian religious traditions. In the same way, Catholic readers will benefit from insights from Evangelical writers such as Hwa Yung. The bibliography of these essays provides readers at undergraduate level with important leads into further research on these pioneers in Asian theologies.

Within the modest aim of the book, Sebastian Kim is to be congratulated for bringing a diverse team of contributors representing different traditions and contexts. The selection of articles in the first part of the book contribute to an increased appreciation of the important role that *historical and socio-political dimensions* play in the development of contextual theology. Readers are reminded that numerous Asian thinkers have sought to develop theological responses to common issues of identity, church and religious encounters. Careful readings of these works would hopefully challenge Asian readers of our common neglect of the rich theological resources within Asia. In addition, it can also encourage readers from the West to better appreciate the complexity and diversity of Asia and its Christianities. The book could be said to achieve its stated aim in exploring the distinctive theologies in context, succeeding as it does in documenting the growing literatures from Asia. Thus it makes a valuable contribution to the contemporary discussion on world Christianity.

Nevertheless, the challenge for some interactions between theological polarities and presuppositions comes with the reading of writings from theologians of such diverse

backgrounds. Readers are left wondering whether some form of evaluation is needed, which could well be modelled within this volume. When one discusses a continent as diverse as Asia, and brings together scholarship of different theological presuppositions, there is a need for some tentative integration.

For example, Thangaraj's essay on religious pluralism and Archie Lee's essay rightly devote some space to the role and authority of the Bible for Asian Christians, and the Bible's relation with other scriptures in Asia. Controversially, Evangelical Christians will have difficulty with Thangaraj's pointers toward those theologians suggesting that Hindu and Buddhist scriptures be regarded as almost synonymous with "Old Testament" scriptures (p.165). Agreeing with Samartha, Lee seems to argue that a high regard for the Christian scriptures should be surrendered if one is to engage in cross-textual hermeneutics. The question is: do Christians need to adopt such a presupposition, or wouldn't a high commitment to scripture be a prerequisite for serious cross-textual hermeneutics, regardless of one's religious background? In privileging Hindu or Buddhist scriptures, Lee in particular seeks to promote a pluralist approach that demands a presupposition of scripture's authority that is foreign to the biblical text itself. Hwa Yung's essay on Mission and Evangelism, surveying streams of Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism in Asia, argues that Evangelical theological thought in Asia would contribute to or challenge traditional theologies in four areas: holistic mission, the supernatural, contextual theology and a distinct theology of religions. Clearly, Thangaraj's religious pluralism and Archie's cross-textual hermeneutics collide with presuppositions of Paul Cho Yonggi or theologians such as Vinay Samuel, as briefly surveyed in Yung's essay. To encourage some synthesis between these polarities, it would have been good to have, say, a final section on Catholic and/or Protestant cross-responses; or a theological critique from a systematic or biblical theologian on a major theme covered in the volume. This may have modelled how such evaluation and conversion could take place, albeit provisionally.

Buy *Christian Theology in Asia* from [St Andrew's Bookshop](#).

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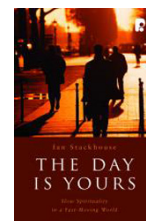
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The Day is Yours: Slow Spirituality in a Fast-Moving World

by Ian Stackhouse



Reviewer: Tim Davy, Reviews editor for Encounters and Assistant Lecturer in Biblical Studies, Redcliffe College.

Perhaps it is true to say that activism is as rife in the 'mission community' as it is anywhere else. Ian Stackhouse's new book should, therefore, be required reading for anyone embarking on or engaged in cross-cultural work, as well as for the Church at large.

His previous book, the provocatively titled, *The Gospel-Driven Church* was a broadside against the kind of faddism that we Christians all too easily become infatuated with; an obsession with programmes and the 'latest thing' that in the end fails to deliver, leaving the Christian community weary and cynical.

In *The Day is Yours* Stackhouse encourages the reader to appreciate each day as a gift from God. But rather than giving us a 'how to' guide or a list of top tips, he prefers instead to set out a rhythm for living attentively to God. Crucial to this is the embracing of Sabbath, though he refuses to pin down exactly what this will look like, acknowledging that this will be different for each person.

One of the most interesting things about the book is that it is written by a pastor who has spent the last fifteen years ministering in the heart of London's commuter belt. As a consequence the book engages with the ever-present tension between how life is and how it could be. To his credit Stackhouse does this in a realistic yet challenging way that leaves the reader inspired and able to make at least some changes to their attitudes and lifestyle that reflect a more ready appreciation of each day as being a gift from God.

A couple of interesting 'interludes' punctuate the book. Firstly, a sermon on Naboth's vineyard that exemplifies the book's critique of our 'culture of commodification'. Secondly, a superb reflection on praying the Psalms. In the view of this Old Testament scholar, the latter, a mere seven pages, is almost worth the price of the book alone!

The reader is also treated to that rare thing; a theology of sleep. Why is it, Stackhouse wonders, that so little is written on the subject?

"Such a situation is symptomatic, in my opinion, of our general disregard for the day itself, and the rhythms we are enjoined to live by. Once we decide that life is ours to grasp rather than something to be grateful for, something to attack rather than a gift to receive, then it is little wonder that night-time becomes a problem. Night-time commits the ultimate heresy for moderns: getting us to stop. To sleep well one has to relinquish, to let go. And since letting go is not something we are good at, many of us don't sleep very well."

I also appreciated the chapter on the Lord's prayer which picks up very helpfully on something of the political and economic flavour of Jesus' words. Here Stackhouse also reflects, as a pastor, on the importance of exposing the young people in his affluent church to the realities of global poverty.

In *The Day is Yours* Stackhouse offers not an escape from the busyness of our days, but a way of living more attentively to God in the midst of them. His refusal to be overly prescriptive could make the book frustrating at times, but perhaps this only goes to illustrate our own impatience and the author's wisdom in not pandering to our desire for bullet points and executive summaries.

Is the book successful in offering, as the subtitle puts it, a 'slow spirituality in a fast-moving world'? On the whole I think so. It is an excellent and much-needed work of practical and spiritual theology by a pastor in the thick of things. Though acknowledging the demands of modern life *The Day is Yours* encourages the reader to be confident in the possibilities of a gospel-defined way of living.

Buy *The Day is Yours: Slow Spirituality in a Fast-Moving World* from [St Andrew's Bookshop](#).

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