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## The Church Between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America, George R. Hunsberger, Craig VanGelder

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## Book Reviews

Markus McDowell,

Eleanor Daniel, Editors

Dana L. Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1996), 444 pages. Reviewed by Eleanor Daniel.

Robert begins her comprehensive work by observing,

The stereotype of the woman missionary has ranged from the long-suffering wife, characterized by the epitaph, "Died, given over to hospitality," to the spinster in her unstylish dress and wire-rimmed glasses, alone somewhere for thirty years teaching "heathen" children. Like all caricatures, those of the exhausted wife and frustrated old maid carry some truth: the underlying message of the stereotypes is that missionary women have been perceived as marginal to the central tasks of mission. (p. xvii)

She adds, "Rather than being remembered for 'preaching the gospel,' the quintessential 'male' task, missionary women have been noted for meeting human needs and helping others, sacrificing themselves without plan or reason, all for the sake of bringing the world to Jesus Christ" (p. xvii).

Robert's book then proceeds to demonstrate that women missionaries were and are thinkers as well as doers. For example, the first American women to serve as foreign missionaries in 1812 were among the best-educated women of their time. She demonstrates that women have participated in the creation of distinctive mission theories and that those theories have affected the shape of American missions.

The book has an introduction followed by three parts, with a total of eight chapters, and a conclusion. The bibliography provides ample resources for further research.

Part 1 is entitled "The Foundational Decades: Protestant Women from 1812 to 1860." The first chapter

examines the function of the missionary wife, which was the role of the earliest American women sent to the mission field. Robert argues that effecting social transformation was part of the mandate of these women. She demonstrates this through the examples of many early missionary wives, detailing especially the life of Ann Judson in Burma (1813).

Chapter 2 continues tracing the function of the missionary wife, but notes that the first single woman appointed as a foreign missionary went out under the auspices of the Baptist mission board in 1815. When single women began to be sent to the mission field, they often were missionary teachers, still very much a mandate for social transformation.

Part 2 is entitled "The Protestant Woman's Missionary Movement: 1860 to the Second World War." Chapter 4, "Women's Work for Women" and the Methodist Episcopal Church," traces the development of a women's missiology. The proponents of this theory assumed that non-



Christian religions degraded women, while Christianity provided social liberation. They believed that “evangelization” led to “civilization,” that the Christian gospel was synonymous with Western-style social progress. As a result, many women went to the mission field. (By 1890, 60 percent of the American cross-cultural mission force was female.)

Robert continues to trace the development of the “Women’s Work for Women” theory as it was demonstrated in independent evangelical missions, tracing particularly faith missions, notably the Africa Inland Mission, holiness missions, and Pentecostal missiology. The development of faith missions was both a step of liberation and a step backward. As founders, evangelists, and sometimes ordained leaders, women overcame gender-linked limitations often imposed by the mission boards. But without a missiological rationale such as “Women’s Work for Women,” they had no clear niche in mission, resulting in second-class status.

Chapter 6 traces the ecumenical women’s missionary movement. The shift in missiological theory was from social transformation to world friendship, precipitated in large part by the advent of World War I. Some downplayed conversion as a goal. The women’s missionary movement had virtually ceased to exist by the beginning of World War II. The factors were many, not the least of which was the rise of fundamentalism, which pitted the Bible against the ministry of women. Protestantism became polarized over doctrinal issues. And the logic of world

friendship finished the undermining of the women’s missionary movement among the mainline Protestant churches.

Part 3, comprising two chapters, is entitled “Roman Catholic Women in Mission.” In many ways, these chapters were the most illuminating for me, primarily because of little previous engagement with Catholic missions. The early Catholic women’s mission thrust was to be an auxiliary to the male missionaries, with the women’s ministry addressed to women in order to reinforce the ideal of the Christian home. The ultimate goal was to build the Roman Catholic Church. The dispensing of charity was seen by most Catholics as the major contribution of Catholic women missionaries.

Robert concludes by stating, “Without consideration of women’s missiological contribution in the history of American missions, the historical record has been distorted and partial” (p. 417). I would have to agree that she did indeed accomplish the task she set for herself.

Robert has made a valuable contribution to missiological literature. I’ve long had an interest in missionary biographies. As I read, I wished I had sometime come across the biographies of many of the women she that features. This book should be on the reading list of anyone interested in missiological developments or in women’s contribution to the ministry of the church.

**ELEANOR DANIEL** is academic dean and professor of Christian education at Emmanuel School of Religion in Johnson City, Tennessee.

Charles H. Kraft, *Anthropology for Christian Witness* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1996), 493 pages. Reviewed by Susan G. Higgins.

In early 1997, the editors of the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* selected Charles Kraft’s *Anthropology for Christian Witness* as one of the fifteen outstanding books for mission studies that had been published in English in 1996 (21[1]: 33). Kraft, a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, for well over two decades, states in his introduction that this text represents the integration of his Christian faith with his “commitment to the importance of anthropological insight to effective cross-cultural Christian witness” (p. xiii). He adds that his intended audience is that group of “practitioners,” that is, missionaries and other church workers, who have formerly had little or no contact with the field of anthropology but who need “very much to incorporate some of the most basic of our [i.e., anthropologists’] perspectives into its ministry” (p. xv).

Does Kraft succeed in the development of an anthropology for Christian witness? I think the answer is a qualified “yes” if the reader evaluates the product within the parameters Kraft has established for himself, that is, for the native North American reader who is unacquainted with anthropology and who endeavors to serve Christ in effective ministry. Many sections are devoted to the main topics in anthropology, offering an overview of the topic together with one or more appropriate examples. Kraft is not hesitant to



offer his own interpretations of biblical passages. Indeed, each chapter opens with what he calls an “integrational thought,” usually three or four paragraphs devoted to the discussion of a specific pericope and how the chapter’s contents can enrich the reader’s understanding of the passage. Furthermore, most chapters conclude with discussions of specific missiological insights or an overview of the significance of the chapter for cross-cultural workers. For example, Kraft structures the section of integrational thought that prefaces the chapter entitled “Life Cycle” around the account in Luke 2:41–52, the Passover visit of the young Jesus to the temple. He concludes the chapter with six implications for cross-cultural witness, with biblical references drawn from Matthew 26, Ephesians 1, Psalm 139, and Matthew 5, among others.

Following the introduction, the book is divided into six major sections, listed here with a brief sketch of their contents:

- Perspective - anthropology as a discipline; the nature of reality; definitions and views of culture and worldview; cross-cultural aspects of perspective; God, culture, and human beings; and human beings and race
- Culture - cultural models; the significance of forms and meanings; and a discussion of the individual and culture
- Relating to the Nonhuman Universe - the relationship of technology to material culture, economic culture, and religious belief; and the life cycle
- Relating to the Human Universe - language; art and the media; education; family; status

and role; groups; and social control

- Cultural and Worldview Change - stability and change; barriers to and facilitators of change; advocates and ethics of change; dynamics of worldview change; and theological implications of this approach
- Research and Study - the need for thorough study and preparation; careful observation; research methodologies; available resources; and difficulties

The text includes both a general index and an index of Scripture passages as well as a solid bibliography, which, although somewhat out of date (there are few bibliographic entries from the 1990s), does include most of the standard references in anthropology from the 1950s through the 1980s.

I have used this book in upper division undergraduate courses and in graduate settings with fairly good results (though always as only one of at least three required texts). The students appreciate the clarity of the presentations, enjoy the examples and illustrations, and are challenged by the references to Scripture to think for themselves about whether or not they agree with the interpretive claims Kraft makes. In addition, Kraft’s insights into the biases of the Western worldview and the way those biases teach those of us who are products of Western culture to think and to act are concepts with which most upper division undergraduates are familiar and comfortable.

However, it is precisely because Kraft does have his own interpretive agenda, because he does on occasion

make some rather controversial claims (his discussion of power encounters is a good example), and because he makes no attempt to present a careful study of the various theoretical models of the discipline, their presuppositions, and the resultant consequences for the manners in which the data is interpreted that I would not choose this text as a standard textbook for an undergraduate introductory course. Rather, in such a setting the book would be more useful for students who seek to supplement their required reading or who desire a glimpse into the ways some missionaries and church workers have applied anthropological concepts to actual field situations.

I commend Orbis for having published a noted Protestant evangelical. *Leaven* readers in search of a second evaluation will no doubt profit from Anthony Gittins’ (CSSp) recent review in *Missiology* (25[4]: 489–90).

**SUSAN G. HIGGINS** is professor of sociology and missions at Milligan College in Milligan College, Tennessee.

George R. Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder, eds., *The Church Between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 369 pages. Reviewed by Evertt W. Huffard.

The social function and status that churches once enjoyed in American life is gone. Churches (and religion in general) have been pushed



to the margins of society through such forces as urbanization and postmodernity. This collection of twenty essays challenges churches to be mission outposts and to accept the perpetual tension between the gospel and culture. The theoretical framework of contextualization of the gospel is not new for missiologists, but this volume is on the cutting edge of applied missiology in North America. Since it is a dialogue between professors, the practitioner might find it difficult reading without prior familiarity with the works of Bellah, Berger, Bosch, Costas, Hauerwas, Newbigin, Niebuhr, Sanneh, and Wuthnow. Nevertheless, it would be well worth the effort to climb the tower and see the forest, the context for contemporary ministry.

The book is divided into four parts, which define mission, culture, gospel, and church in the North American context. Part 1 calls churches from a business-as-usual posture to become mission outposts. The “Newbigin Gauntlet,” as it is called, became the natural impetus for the dialogue behind this volume. In *Foolishness to the Greeks* (Eerdmans, 1986) and *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Eerdmans, 1989), Lesslie Newbigin drew on his rich missiological insights from a lifetime of ministry in India to raise the question whether the West could even be converted by the churches in its own neighborhoods. The lack of theological depth and character of American churches along with the glaring absence of a missionary nature produces congregational models that are anything but mission outposts. If a church takes this missiological challenge seriously, the

eighteen issues raised by Van Gelder will be an excellent starting point (pp. 29–48). These issues represent a response to three basic questions: What kind of world do we live in? How do we make sense of the good news in this world? How do we live as God’s people in this kind of world (p. 41)?

Part 2 describes the American culture with its secular, individualistic, postmodern worldview from a missiological perspective. It is neither all good nor all bad. As on any mission field, new rules in ministry will be needed to respond to cross-cultural realities. For example, Van Gelder notes that church leaders will need to retool to preserve unity because a shared vision replaces denominational loyalty as the “glue.” Increasing diversity within an urban congregation requires a “unified diversity” as the “cultural uniformity” of a rural context is displaced (p. 67). Kaiser’s essay on the history of the shift from a “biblical secularity” to a “modern secularism” will open the eyes of any reader to see new tensions with his or her own cultural assumptions (pp. 85–86). For example, he explains how the substance of our lives can become divorced from creation (and the Creator) so that the significance of land is redefined strictly in terms of market value, or matter becomes a commodity with a brand name (p. 103).

Decades ago, doing theology in context required that missionaries understand the culture and the church in order to focus on the gospel. This volume seeks to go through the same process at home. Taking the challenge to become a mission outpost a step further, part 3 favors taking the

gospel, rather than the church or culture, as the starting point of mission. When this is done, there will be more theological reflection (p. 182) as well as an intolerance of ethnocentrism, since “any absolutizing force of human culture [is] an offense to the gospel” (p. 277). Significant applications of this principle are made to understanding the nature of “speaking the truth in love” in a postmodern society, the hermeneutical problems created by the gospel, and the “translatability” of the gospel in North America.

Part 4 defines a mission church as something more than a denominational substation or a seeker-sensitive community. It also challenges the previously popular bipolar view of church and culture as inadequate, because that view leaves some to conclude that if they are faithfully involved in the church they are not in culture. A broader paradigm proposes the recognition of three interacting poles—the gospel, our culture, and the community of believers. The resulting paradigm shift moves the church from recruitment (seeking and keeping satisfied customers) to mission (where we learn to give the gospel away). For the mission church, worship, more than cultural or traditional ties, becomes the one activity that really binds the church together (p. 363).

Any collection of essays tends to lose the continuity found in a singly authored volume; this work, however, makes up for the expected unevenness by the shared influence of Newbigin on each author. Maintaining the balanced perspective of the seasoned missionary, this volume would be appreciated by Newbigin for the challenge it gives to both



practitioners and theologians. For the former, especially those in the field of church growth and strategy, it stresses the value of theological reflection. For the latter, it calls theological reflection back to the relevance and necessity of the gospel.

**EVERETT W. HUFFARD** is professor of missiology and director of the Doctor of Ministry program at Harding University Graduate School of Religion in Memphis, Tennessee.

Charles L. Bartow, *God's Human Speech: A Practical Theology of Proclamation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 189 pages including bibliography and indexes. Reviewed by Markus McDowell.

Charles Bartow has written a worthwhile book about the *practical theology* of the spoken word of God. He deals with the reading of Scripture and preaching. Other books discuss the “how” and the “why”; Bartow discusses the “what.” What happens (or *should* happen) when the word of God is spoken? “In my view, practical theology, as distinguished from biblical exegesis and dogmatics, is always and of necessity local and performative, inductive and interdisciplinary” (p. 1). Bartow is following in the steps of many of the great scholar-preachers of this century: P. T. Forsyth,<sup>1</sup> H. H. Farmer,<sup>2</sup> Donald Miller,<sup>3</sup> and Paul Scherer<sup>4</sup> (authors who should be represented in every preacher’s library). Bartow maintains that in this “postmodern” age, it is not the texts that need to be rescued from ambiguity and lack of mean-

ing—it is the modern interpreters. According to Bartow, we must ask ourselves some important questions: Can we actually speak for God? How do we distinguish between what we want God to be and what he actually is? Bartow maintains that God can indeed speak through us, provided we understand that “in Christ Jesus, God takes us as we are and presses us into the service of what God would have us be” (an oft-repeated phrase in this book). In order to speak God’s word meaningfully to the contemporary world, we must begin with God, not ourselves. “God speaks first. . . . Before, beyond, and during anything we have to say about who God is, God speaks and shapes us” (p. xiii).

Chapter 1, “Hear the Word of God!” explores the significance of the statement “Let us hear the word of God!” Bartow insists that the rhetorical tropes of oxymoron, metaphor, and metonymy give humans a way to speak about our encounter with God without sacrificing the immanence of God or the human experience. The word of God is heard in silence (1Sam 3:1; Amos 8:11–12), in oxymorons (Exod 3:2b; 1Kgs 19:12b; Matt 20:26–28), in metaphors (the parables of Jesus). Although a “God comprehended is no God, and the theology that pretends to know everything is a sham” (p. 21), these rhetorical forms are necessary in our attempts to hear God—a struggle that will never be fully realized, but that must be continued.

Chapter 2, “A Gospel for Interesting Times,” continues the discussion by explicating the view that preaching is an act of “divine self-

performance.” The “kerygmatic occasion” demands “a view of Scripture reading and proclamation of the gospel that understands the preacher’s work as an act of interpretive speech” (p. 4). Bartow criticizes the modern concept that the Bible cannot be *for* us because of its social, political, and cultural milieu. That concept alienates us in this modern world, leading to what Leander Keck calls the “hermeneutics of alienations”: Scripture is silenced so that we can look for God’s self-disclosure somewhere else. Bartow eloquently argues that the word of God comes to us as *human speech*, and regardless of how it might offend or terrify us, we do not have license to ignore it. “In it we encounter divine reality on the turf of human and natural history, and so we encounter ourselves as we are, as we would be, and as God would have us be” (p. 43). It is “God’s human speech *with* us, *about* us, *against* us, and thereby *for* us” (p. 43). Thus Bartow rescues Scripture from conservatism and liberalism, progressivism and traditionalism, and all other “-isms” that our environment and experience might cause us to impose on it. He stresses that this does not negate our experience, but rather speaks to it and through it.

Chapter 3, “Turning Ink into Blood,” explores how the public reading of Scripture is a work of interpretative speech as it proclaims the gospel. Bartow describes Scripture as “arrested performances.” The written text is not an end in itself, just as a page of printed music is not the actual work, but holds only the cues that a musician needs to realize that work. Using a number of examples from Scripture and literature,



Bartow demonstrates how the reading of Scripture should “perform” the text and bring it alive again to a new audience and a new age. To read it properly, one must have an extensive understanding of the initial “performance” of the text.

Similarly, chapter 4, “A Conflagration of Love,” describes the same concept in preaching. Since the text itself is the work from which the meaning will flow, the meaning can never be anything more or less than what the text originally intended. It *means* what it *meant*. But “scriptural texts, particularly in their canonical form, accrue meanings that, though not inconsistent with meanings inherent in their original contexts, nevertheless go beyond them” (p. 96). Original settings, authorial intent, and redactional changes set the course but do not limit it. For Bartow, preaching is first of all “narrative discourse.” But it is also expository. He quotes P. T. Forsyth: “[Preachers] are not invited into a pulpit just to say how things strike [them] at [their] angle, any more than [they are] expected to lay bare to the public the private recesses of [their souls]” (p. 106).<sup>5</sup> Yet preaching is also dialogical: between God and congregation, and among the members of the congregation themselves. Bartow closes the chapter by stating that “the performance of the sermon is a risky business. The work can get mangled, subverted, turned into an excuse for performance of something other than itself” (pp. 121–22). Preachers can confine the message and subvert it through their own expectations. That risk urges a self-examination of the process, performance, and reception of the sermon.

In chapter 5, “What to Make of Sunday’s Sermon,” Bartow offers some critical stances for assessing the actual reading and preaching of Scripture. He describes preaching as having five characteristics: it has a present-tense tone; it emphasizes the divine initiative; it offers a Christian interpretation of life; it is in the indicative mood; and it features a “dexterous use of a variety of sermon strategies, and its diction (word choice) aims at cause, not at effect” (pp. 128–29). Preaching must always be evaluated for context, content, and faithfulness to God’s Word.

Chapter 6 contains three sermonic examples. Bartow notes that because these sermons are written down, they (like Scripture) are “arrested performances.” But he offers them to give the reader a practical idea of the concepts he has enumerated.

Bartow’s book presents a welcome voice in the midst of a church identity crisis that often becomes self-focused. The book urges us to focus on God first. To the oft-heard phrase “The world sets the agenda for the church!” Bartow responds, “No doubt the world would have it that way if it could get it that way. But the truth . . . is that God sets the agenda for the world *and* for the church. Both exist for the glory of God or they exist for no reason at all” (p. 136).

Bartow makes liberal use of footnotes and includes a helpful bibliography, an index of subjects and names, and an index of Scripture and allusions. He tends to be a bit wordy at times, and the first chapter in particular repeats the same concepts a number of times. In addition,

readers who are not versed in the terminology of speech communication may be confused by many of the terms and concepts that he uses.<sup>6</sup> Despite those minor weaknesses, Bartow’s book should prove thought-provoking and helpful to anyone who is involved in worship planning, Scripture reading, or preaching.

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See P. T. Forsyth, *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1907, 1980); *The Church, the Gospel, and Society* (London: Independent, 1962). See also M. McDowell, “Preaching Biblical and Modern: A Review Essay of P. T. Forsyth’s ‘Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind,’” *Leaven* 3, no. 4 (1995): 30–34.

<sup>2</sup> See H. H. Farmer, *The Servant of the Word* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964); *Revelation and Religion* (New York: Harper, 1954).

<sup>3</sup> See Donald G. Miller, *Fire in Thy Mouth* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1954); *The Way to Biblical Preaching* (New York: Abingdon, 1957).

<sup>4</sup> See Paul E. Scherer, *The Word God Sent* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965); *For We Have This Treasure* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976).

<sup>5</sup> Forsyth, *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind*, 103.

<sup>6</sup> Bartow is the Carl and Helen Egner Professor of Speech Communication in Ministry and chair of the Department of Practical Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary.



Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of the Faith* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1996). Reviewed by Frederick W. Norris.

This collection of essays represents the best insights into the history of Christian mission presently available. Andrew Walls, Curator of the Archives at Edinburgh's Center for the Study of Christianity in the non-Western World and visiting professor of ecumenics and missions at Princeton for a semester, offers a selection of nineteen pieces written between 1971 and 1994. They reflect his university education in church history and his mission experience, particularly in Africa. Because so much of his work is scattered in various mission journals published on a number of continents, this volume is a prized possession.

The first six essays are the most universally applicable and are thus subtitled "The Transmission of Christian Faith." In them lie the subtlety and clarity needed to understand how we can prepare to contextualize the gospel. The first essay notes that a traveler in a time machine would be most struck by how varied Christianity has become, not only because it is imprisoned in certain ways by each culture, but also because it liberates each culture to become something deeply its own. The second essay suggests six stages for mission history: Jewish, Hellenistic Roman, Barbarian, Western European, Expanding European and a European Christian Recessions, and, lastly, Cross-Cultural Transmission. Christianity south of the equator is now predominant. The third essay

insists that the translation of the gospel depends upon the full incarnation of Christ and thus upon a rich appreciation of the new language into which the good news comes. Such translations actually enlarge the gospel itself; specific truths are illuminated in the new culture that were not in that of the missionaries. Fourth, every nation has its own distinctives. When missionaries follow the great commission, they must acknowledge the diversity in Christian faith. Not everything important to them will be important to the nation they seek to evangelize. Fifth, Romans 1 makes it inescapably clear that a basic monotheism was present in many if not all cultures. True fragments should be expected no matter where one goes, as well as fragments that are false in the missionaries' views. Sixth, the conversion of northern Europe did not find as a resource a strong shadow of faith in a single creator. But in nations south of the equator, stories about and names of that high god are often still in place. Mission should be adjusted accordingly.

Four articles push the reader deep into Africa, which Walls knows well both from his presence there and from his studies. Evangelical missions brought Scripture and preaching, now strong components of African churches, but the shape of those churches is quite African and different from the missionaries' home congregations. Sierra Leone is a complex example. Across Africa, independent churches may be a type of Anabaptist phenomena, new outbreaks of old forms but with their own striking features. Primal religions—if that is the proper term—are strong and have been a ripe field for

Christian mission in all its history. In the last two centuries, global Western culture has put pressure on them, but they seldom if ever fully collapse, nor should all their aspects be attacked.

The rest of the chapters deal with mission themes particularly from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: problems in approaching mission history, Western discovery of non-Western art, the interrelationship of scholarship and humane learning with mission studies, American contributions to world mission, the place of medical work, the subversive force of missionary societies on home churches, and the aging missionary movement itself.

Each piece is written so well that it pulls the reader on and provides enough insight to make him or her stop and think. No one serious about mission should be without this book.

**FREDERICK W. NORRIS** is Dean E. Walker Professor of Church History and professor of world mission and evangelism at Emmanuel School of Religion in Johnson City, Tennessee.

Alan J. Roxburgh, *The Missionary: Congregation, Leadership, & Liminality* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1997), 66 pages plus notes and references. Reviewed by C. Philip Slate.

A book's size is often no gauge of its weight or value. This small volume in the Christian Mission and Modern Culture series is heavy in thought and implications. The author writes precisely, wastes few words.



He is a Baptist pastor in West Vancouver and an adjunct faculty member of Regent College in Vancouver.

The “missionary congregation” in “liminality” to which he refers is located in North America and grapples with its own mission situation. The author’s central thesis has two prongs: (1) the Christian church, once at the center of Western culture, has been marginalized, privatized, and pushed to the edges of the culture of which it was once the respected guardian; and (2) the culture within which the church exists is itself without a dominating center. Thus both church and culture are in transition to something else, still unknown.

While this work is quite valuable as an analysis of both culture and church and their relationship to each other, Roxburgh’s best contribution is found in using the concept of “liminality” as a model for engagement and reconstruction by the church. He draws on the work of Victor Turner (*The Ritual Process* and “Variations on a Theme of Liminality,” in More and Meyerhoff, eds., *Secular Ritual*) concerning the function of liminality. Characteristically, and especially in nontechnological societies, people go through three stages in a rite of passage: separation, transition, and incorporation (per Van Gennep). Turner calls them separation, liminal, and reaggregation phases. The transition phase finds one in neither the old group/situation nor the new group/position; it is a period of uncertainty and confusion. In liminality one longs for release, for a clear path to a new position. Roxburgh argues convincingly that

both Western culture and churches are in liminality, lacking a coherent center. Both are nervous and uncertain. “No fixed points of reference remain normative” (p. 39).

The author banks on analyses of writers like Lesslie Newbigin (British), John Douglas Hall (Canadian), and Americans Hauerwas, Hunsberger, and Wells. But he seeks to make sense of various church responses to the liminal condition. For example, ministry personnel—preachers, pastors, and such—hardly know their roles in liminality. The old roles are gone. “‘Reverend’ is cast overboard as a hangover from a previous age with a different perspective on role status.” He must now be “Doctor” (p. 44). Often the roles are unconsciously borrowed from Western culture, which itself is in liminality. Thus the preacher/pastor is clinician (therapeutic metaphor), chaplain (institutional metaphor), coach (sports metaphor), entrepreneur, marketer, and strategist (business metaphors) (p. 44).

Value comes in recognizing liminality for what it is and using it to move constructively into the new aggregation, the new position. Roxburgh is forthright in claiming that the biblical tradition contains several images that are more appropriate than anything borrowed from the culture, and that those images need to be rediscovered. Ecclesiology is one example.

Roxburgh calls for a return to *communitas*, not larger organizations. The local church is a social unit, and it can speak to and help transform its culture “through its own sociality as an alternative community” (p. 49). The discovery of “social bonds rooted in the gospel is again pos-

sible” (p. 53). The tendency of many churches is to spiritualize their existence and place it outside this world. But that won’t do. To be a visible *communitas* at the local level in the midst of a fragmented and uncertain culture is much more viable. “This is the way Christianity entered history. It was a new social reality formed out of a liminal experience that created the *communitas* of a new peoplehood” (p. 54). In short, the local church in Western culture must now have a missionary encounter with modern culture rather than seek its approval.

Chapter 3 offers suggestions about a Missionary Ecclesiology. “By the waters of Babylon there is no way back to the old Jerusalem” (p. 57). Churches cannot go back to some golden decade in the nineteenth or twentieth century. Preachers must become more (1) poets (interpreters of experience and “rememberers of tradition”) than caregivers (p. 58). They must assist the people in their reflection on their position, since a paradigmatic change comes only after such reflection. Preachers must also become (2) prophets who bring the Word of God to bear on specific situations. “Without this other Word, the community turns its pain into the ghetto experience of marginalization rather than the recognition that it exists for the life of the world” (p. 60). Finally, preachers must be (3) apostles in the sense that they must lead “in lands where the old maps no longer work” (p. 61). In the future “the gown of the scholar must be replaced with the shoes of the apostle”; preachers/leaders must *demonstrate* engagement with the culture, not merely teach about it, and become equippers and disciplers



(per Eph 4:11–12).

The author denigrates the traditional pyramid model with the qualified pastor/preacher at the top, as he does the inverted pyramid model with the pastor/preacher at the bottom as a servant leader. In both cases leaders are separated from the people. Rather, Roxburgh argues, one needs to conceive of an elongated pyramid on its side with a “missional pastor” providing leadership along with others. “Rather than the omniscient professional running the

congregation’s inner life, there is a team, or multiple leadership, at the heart of the congregation. . . . Pastoral care, worship, proclamation, and administration are part of the whole work of the whole people of God, not the designated territory of someone with a seminary degree and an ordination certificate” (p. 65). Hmm, I seem to have read elsewhere something like that.

In this short work much territory is covered in few pages, but it should not be the only book one reads on

Western culture-church analysis. This condensed treatment will be appreciated most by those who have already processed several works on cultural analysis. But Roxburgh’s work is helpfully important for supplying a handle on the nature and hopes of liminality in North American churches and culture.

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*(Notes cont’d from “From Galilee to the Barrio”)*

<sup>3</sup>Virgilio Elizondo, *The Future Is Mestizo* (New York: Meyer Stone, 1988), 21.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 77.

<sup>5</sup>All scripture quotations are from the New International Version (NIV).

<sup>6</sup>Jorge Chapa and Richard R. Valencia, “Hispanic Population Growth, Demographic Characteristics, and Educational Attainment: An Examination of Recent Trends,” *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 15(2): 165–87.

<sup>7</sup>Irene I. Blea, *Toward a Chicano Social Science* (New York: Praeger, 1988), 17.

<sup>8</sup>See Joseph P. Sánchez, *The Spanish Black Legend: Origin of Anti-Hispanic Stereotypes* (Albuquerque, N.M.: National Park Service, Spanish Colonial Research Center).

<sup>9</sup>Orlando E. Costas, *Liberating News: A Theology of Contextual Evangelization* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 49.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 61.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 70.

<sup>12</sup>Arturo J. Bañuelos, ed., *Mestizo Christianity: Theology from the Hispanic Perspective* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1995), 3.