

Global Missiology for the Twenty-First Century: The Iguassu Dialogue, edited by William D. Taylor. Grand Rapids, MI: WEF and Baker Book House, 2000. Paper, 564 pp., ISBN 0-8010-2259-2.

Global Missiology for the Twenty-First Century affirms the commitment of the World Evangelical Fellowship's Missions Commission to "examine our missiological foundations, commitments and practices" (p. 1) at the dawn of a new century. This 564-page book is the result of the Iguassu Missiological Consultation, held in October 1999 in Iguassu, Brazil. The consultation's site is the home of the beautiful Iguassu Falls, featured in *The Mission* (1986), a film with great significance for missions history. One hundred and sixty participants from 53 countries gathered in Iguassu to reflect, review, develop and apply missiological insights to issues arising from the cultural and ethnic diversity of today's body of Christ. Together they drafted the Iguassu Affirmation, the text of which is presented in the second chapter of the book's first section. Six additional sections follow. Part 2 sets major issues in their global context and deals with post-modernity, pluralism and a plethora of other issues facing missions today. Part 3, "Grounding Our Reflections in Scripture: Biblical Trinitarianism and Mission," offers four chapters by Ajith Fernando, leader of Youth for Christ in Sri Lanka since 1976. Part 4 addresses issues of globalized Evangelical missiology, with contributions from Africa, the South Pacific, East Asia, India, the Arab world, Latin America and the West. In part 5, representatives of some of the areas already heard from in part 4 offer regional perspectives on the world Christian movement. Part 6 reviews historic contributions to missions from groups such as the Celts, the Nestorians and the Moravians. Part 7 offers a commentary on the Iguassu Affirmation by eight consultation participants representing most regions of the world.

Most of the book's contributors focus on the unique challenges of the postmodern world—theoretical issues like the nature of truth and the authority of the scripture as well as practical concerns like globalization, the AIDS pandemic, the information technology revolution, urbanization, pluralism, persecution and the refugee tragedy. Much of the text reviews western ("northern") mission efforts from a non-western ("southern") perspective. This is certainly fitting in light of non-western leaders' commitment to meet the challenge of world evangelization and take up the reins of missions leadership. One of their numbers, Samuel Escobar, offers two excellent chapters: "The Global Scenario at the Turn of the Century" and "Evangelical Missiology: Peering into the Future at the Turn of the Century." He provides a working definition of missiology as

an interdisciplinary approach to understand missionary action. It looks at missionary facts from the perspective of the biblical sciences, theology, history, and the social sciences. It aims to be systematic and critical, but it starts from a positive stance towards the legitimacy of the Christian missionary task as part of the fundamental reason for the church's "being" (p. 101).

He further describes missiology as "a critical reflection on praxis, in light of God's Word" (p. 101).

There is no question as to the authors' Evangelical allegiance. For example, one of the book's central concerns is a commitment to Trinitarian missiology. This is important, the authors feel, because the concepts of God, Jesus and the gospel held by many Christians have been profoundly influenced by contemporary philosophical perspectives. According to Alan Roxburgh, "in Western culture, the mathematical sense of singularity functions as the dominant metaphor explaining the meaning of God's oneness" (p. 185). Concepts of the Trinity based on this are too abstract to have practical meaning, so the doctrine itself is relegated to the ranks of non-essential faith claims. The book's call for the renewal of Trinitarian missiology challenges the modern notion of oneness as singularity and offers a different understanding of the godhead stressing oneness as community. This is presented as a better foundation for understanding the community of faith as found in biblical teaching. It is also a better scaffold for building the kingdom, while the West stresses individual decision and action, most of the non-western world lives in community, reflected in the spread of the gospel along family and kinship lines.

Miriam Adeney illustrates the conflict of West and non-West in current church relationships with a story told by an African believer. "Do you know what it is like to work with you Americans?" The elephant planned a dance and invited his best friend, the mouse. The elephant partied hard, and when the evening was over he excitedly sought out his friend, only to find him crushed on the floor. The elephant had unknowingly trampled him. "Sometimes that is what it is like to work with you Americans; it is like dancing with an elephant" (p. 377). As the missions epicenter has shifted from North to South, so too has the epicenter for "doing" missiology. There are, in fact, many centers of world missiology; one of the book's strengths is the many voices it offers, representing all parts of the missionary training world. This is important, since "estimates suggest that 75% of the family of Jesus is found in the non-Western nations" (p. 6).

One of the book's weaknesses is that although most of its chapters are reflexive in nature, their reflexivity is one step removed from some of the issues facing practitioners. An obvious example has to do with issues arising in the Muslim world. An all-important question is, how does the gospel "grow" in such difficult places? Too many of the contributors make the mistake of assuming that we all understand the gospel and thus its growth as well. This volume does not sufficiently address the question, but reflexive practitioners in the Muslim world cannot avoid it. Messianic movements, which will account for much if not most of the future growth of the body of Christ, identify not with the "Christian" cultural world, nor with its uniquely Christian terminology, but with the cultural traditions of which they remain members. Missiological terminology that discourages them from participating in the dialogue should be replaced with terminology that encourages the participation of all who are committed to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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