

HISTORICAL PARADIGMS HANDOUT #1

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THE GOSPEL AMONG THE NATIONS

*A Documentary History
of Inculturation*

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Readings Related to the Founding of the Church and Its Witness in a Plurality of Cultures

The earliest documents indicating the understanding of the church and its witness to a religiously and culturally plural world are found in the New Testament and are readily available to the reader. By the second century Greek culture was no longer merely being addressed by Christian evangelists. It had become a source of theological insight as Christians reflected on the meaning of their faith. This raised the question, answered rather differently by Justin and Tertullian, of both the relation of non-Christian learning to Christian understandings of the gospel, and the responsibility of ordinary believers to examine carefully the cultural influences on their faith.

1. *Apology II, xiii-*, by Justin Martyr

Justin Martyr was one of the early apologists for Christianity, engaging in particular the intellectual elite of his time with the claims of the gospel. In this brief excerpt we see how he accounts for both the validity of pre-Christian philosophy and the Christian claim upon it. The Apology dates from the first half of the second century.

The Light That Lighteth Every Man

[§ 1] For I myself, when I discovered the evil disguise that was thrown around the divine doctrines of Christians by the evil demons, to deter others from them, laughed, both at the authors of these falsehoods, and their disguise, and the popular opinion; [§ 2] and I confess that I both prayed, and strove with all my might, to be found a Christian; not because the doctrines of Plato are entirely different from those of Christ, but because they are

not in all respects like them; no more, in fact, are those of the others, the Stoics, for example, and poets and prose-writers. [§ 3] For each, seeing through a part of the Seminal Divine Word, that which was kindred to those, discoursed rightly. But they who contradict them on more important points, appear not to have possessed the hidden wisdom and the knowledge which cannot be spoken against. [§ 4] Whatever all men have uttered aright, then, belongs to us Christians; for we worship and love, next to God, the Word which is from the Unbegotten and Ineffable God: for it was even for us that He was made man, that He might be a partaker of our very sufferings, and bring us healing. [§ 5] For all writers through the engrafted seed of the Word, which was planted in them, were able to see the truth darkly; [§ 6] for the seed and imitation of a thing, which is given according to capability, is one thing, and the thing itself, of which the communication and imitation are given according to His grace, is another.—*L.F.* xl. 68.

(Source: *Documents Illustrative of the History*

of the *Early Church*, vol. 1, ed. B. J. Kidd [London: SPCK, 1938].)

2. The Prescription against Heretics (Excerpts), by Tertullian

Tertullian, writing in the late second and early third period, could observe firsthand how Christian thought was being influenced by Greek philosophy. The result in his mind was heresy that contradicted the revelation of Jesus Christ and scripture. The result of his reasoning on Christianity in a pluralistic intellectual environment can be read below.

Chapter VII.—Pagan Philosophy the Parent of Heresies. The Connection between Deflections from Christian Faith and the Old Systems of Pagan Philosophy

These are "the doctrines" of men and "of demons" produced for itching ears of the spirit of this world's wisdom: this the Lord called "foolishness," and "chose the foolish things of the world" to confound even philosophy itself. For (philosophy) it is which is the material of the world's wisdom, the rash interpreter of the nature and the dispensation of God. Indeed heresies are themselves instigated by philosophy. From this source came the Æons, and I know not what infinite forms, and the trinity of man in the system of Valentinus, who was of Plato's school. From the same source came Marcion's better god, with all his tranquility; he came of the Stoics. Then, again, the opinion that the soul dies is held by the Epicureans; while the denial of the restoration of the body is taken from the aggregate school of all the philosophers; also, when matter is made equal to God, then you have the teaching of Zeno; and when any doctrine is alleged touching a god of fire, then Heraclitus comes in. The same subject-matter is discussed over and over again by the heretics and the philosophers; the same arguments are involved. Whence comes evil? Why is it permitted? What is the origin of man? and in what way does he come? Besides the question which Valentinus has very lately proposed—Whence

comes God? Which he settles with the answer: From *enthymesis* and *ectroma*. Unhappy Aristotle! who invented for these men dialectics, the art of building up and pulling down; an art so evasive in its propositions, so far-fetched in its conjectures, so harsh in its arguments, so productive of contentions—embarrassing even to itself, retracting everything, and really treating of nothing! Whence spring those "fables and endless genealogies," and "unprofitable questions," and "words which spread like a cancer"? From all these, when the apostle would restrain us, he expressly names *philosophy* as that which he would have us be on our guard against. Writing to the Colossians, he says, "See that no one beguile you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, and contrary to the wisdom of the Holy Ghost." He had been at Athens, and had in his interviews (with its philosophers) become acquainted with that human wisdom which pretends to know the truth, whilst it only corrupts it, and is itself divided into its own manifold heresies, by the variety of its mutually repugnant sects. What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? what between heretics and Christians? Our instruction comes from "the porch of Solomon," who had himself taught that "the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart." Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition! We want no curious disputation after possessing Christ Jesus, no inquisition after enjoying the gospel! With our faith, we desire no further belief. For this is our palmary faith, that there is nothing which we ought to believe besides.

Chapter XXI.—All Doctrine True Which Comes through the Church from the Apostles, Who Were Taught by God through Christ. All Opinion Which Has No Such Divine Origin and Apostolic Tradition to Show, Is Ipso Facto False

From this, therefore, do we draw up our rule. Since the Lord Jesus Christ sent the apostles to preach, (our rule is) that no others ought to be received as preachers than those whom Christ appointed;

And they give thanks unto Him every hour, for all meat and drink and other blessings.

[c. xvi.] Verily then this is the Way of the truth which leads those who travel therein to the everlasting kingdom promised through Christ in the life to come. And that you may know, O King, that in saying these things I do not speak at my own instance, if you deign to look into the writings of the Christians, you will find that I state nothing beyond the truth. Rightly then did thy son apprehend, and justly was he taught to serve the living God and to be saved for the age that is destined to come upon us. For great and wonderful are the sayings and deeds of the Christians; for they speak not the words of men but those of God. But the rest of the nations go astray and deceive themselves; for they walk in darkness and bruise themselves like drunken men.—W. D. M. Kay, in *A.-N.C.L.*, additional volume, ed. A. Menzies, 276 sqq.

(Source: *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Early Church*, vol. 1, ed. B. J. Kidd, SPCK, London.)

4. The Story of Mār Mārī the Apostle

This excerpt from the beginning of the Story of Mār Mārī may surprise the student with its assertions concerning an early statue of Jesus and the role it played in evangelism. It illustrates well both the wonder-working aspects of early evangelism and the focus on the conversion of royalty in societies outside of Rome. Historically the document has doubtful elements. More certain is that Edessa became Christian in the middle of the second century. The story is reported by Eusebius in the fourth century, but this document comes from an earlier period.

1 Through the divine power, we are writing the story of Mār Mārī the Apostle, one of the seventy (disciples): Our Lord, help me! Amen!

Fifteen years after Tiberius Caesar began to reign, and when the three years of the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ among humans had come to their virtuous conclusion, the salvation of all people, those in heaven and on earth, was accom-

plished at that time. And at the time when the purpose of the Savior's plan of salvation was about to come to fruition, the good news of that divine plan spread rapidly not only among the Jews but also among the Gentiles. They came to our Lord, receiving life, for he was proclaiming to them the hope of the world to come. This they recognized not through mere words but also through deeds. They left him refreshed, since they received from him solutions to their problems and forgiveness of their sins.

For this reason, they truly depicted the image and likeness of our adored Lord in various ways, as one of those who put God on themselves shows, (saying): "When I went some time ago to Caesarea Philippi, I saw there the image of our Savior Christ in body. On the gate of the house of the woman about whom it was written in the Gospel that her blood ran for twelve years, I saw a bronze statue (of the woman) standing on a high stone, her knees bent and her arms stretched forth, begging, as if in reality. Another bronze statue of a man clothed with a cloak stood opposite her, stretching his hand toward this woman. This statue is the likeness of our Savior, as all those who were assisted by our Lord and Savior testified": They fashioned his image in every place with the finest pigments! (These images) stand until now, for at the beginning, the pagans used to honor them simply in this form and in like manner, as if it were a savior. The Good Message of the heavenly kingdom flew not only to the common people but also to royalty, according to what we have learned from old stories.

2 During the time in which the ministry of the Savior took place, the news of the healing power of our Savior Christ spread to Abgar, the lord of the city of Edessa. This one had a serious illness that was constantly tormenting him—gout in the feet. He heard that our Savior was performing signs and miracles, wrote to him a letter, and dispatched to him envoys and messengers, so that he might come to him and perform healing on him. This is what he wrote to him in his letter: "Abgar Ukkama, lord of the land, to Jesus the Savior, peace! I heard that you cleanse lepers, expel impure spirits, and exorcise devils, and I believe that you are God and the Son of God, who came down to heal the creation. I have a serious illness and am asking you to come

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to me to treat this illness. I also heard that the Jews among your people hate you and seek to do you harm. If you desire it—I have a small city that is suitable for you and me; it would be sufficient for both of us, and we would be at rest in it."

The messengers arrived and entered Jerusalem on the twelfth in the month of *Nisān* (April). They found Jesus in the house of a high priest of the Jews, and the letter was read before him. But our Lord was not in a position to send him messengers, nor was he of the opinion that his Good News should reach the nations before his resurrection. Because of this, he did not send envoys, but made a reply, sending Abgar greetings as follows: "It is written concerning me: Blessed are those who did not see me but believed in me. As for now, I am seeking to complete the work of the One who has sent me, but after my resurrection, and after I have ascended to heaven, I will send you one of my disciples who will heal you from your illness and will even grant you and those who are with you life. And your city will be blessed, and no enemy will overpower it."

3 The letter came to Abgar the king, and he received it with great joy. When they related to him the wonders that were performed by Jesus in the land of Judea, he admired and was amazed by the might of God. Since he was not worthy of seeing these things, he experienced great difficulty. But what did king Abgar do? He found skilled painters and ordered them to accompany his messengers, depict the face of our Lord, and bring the depiction, so as to rejoice with his image as it would be if he encountered him. The painters arrived with the messengers of the king, but they were not able to depict the Lord's admirable human appearance. When our Lord realized through his divine understanding the love of Abgar for him, and as he saw the painters who endeavored to find the image to depict him as he was, but failed, he took a cloth and imprinted on it his face, which gives life to the world, and the image looked like him as he was. The cloth was brought and was placed in the church of Edessa, where it still remains as a source of all kinds of help.

4 . . . Thereafter, Addai placed his hand on Abgar, and all his illnesses were healed through the power of Jesus. Abgar was astonished and even stunned, as Addai performed upon him the won-

derful sign—healing from the illness in the feet that is called gout. He also healed one of his servants, whose name was 'Ebed son of 'Abdū, from an illness that he had. He too got up and then fell down on the feet of the blessed Addai, paying him homage. He also healed their other citizens.

5 When the king and his nobility realized the signs that Addai performed, they began telling him: "We beg you to tell us: Jesus, who was he? What did he teach? What did he do?" Addai said to the king: "Time now is late, but if you want, let me tell you: Send out and call upon all your forces and I will come in the morning to relate to you the story of Jesus." The king accepted his order happily and sent to gather all his nobles. Addai came in the morning and started to talk about the divine economy and how (God) created the universe and fashioned human nature and the kinds of promises that he had made to the old generations; about the advent of the prophets and the coming of Christ and the signs that he performed; and about the resurrection and ascension of Christ to heaven and the authorization that he gave to the prophets and the disciples to preach in the nations. And as the Apostle said: The king praised his speech, and the Holy Spirit confirmed his words by the performance of signs. Immediately the city and its suburbs converted on account of the signs that occurred at the hands of Mār Addai. After a short while, the whole of Mesopotamia was drawn to faith in Christ. Many among those who accepted the faith strove to virtuous conduct. After he had built the church in Edessa, equipped it with whatever it deserved, and appointed priests and deacons in the city and in its suburbs, Addai the Apostle left this world in peace on Thursday, the fourteenth of the month of *Iyyār* (May), ending his lovely contests with the trophy of victory.

6 So far were (the stories) about the conversion of Mesopotamia. Let us now turn our attention to show how the fear of God moved from there to our own territories. Because this story is not told clearly, I am putting into writing the old tradition that is transmitted in the books, as follows.

Before the blessed Addai died, he selected one of his disciples named Mārī, who was living in the love of God and was adorned with virtuous manners. He placed his right hand on Mārī, as conferred to him by our Lord Jesus Christ, and sent

him to the eastern region, to the land of Babylonia, ordering him to go and preach there the word of our Lord.

7 The blessed Mār Mārī left Edessa to begin preaching until he reached the city of Nisibis. After the blessed one converted the city of Nisibis, planted in it the truth of the true faith, overthrew its idols, and shattered its statues, he built in it churches and monasteries and set teachers and a school. From there, he moved to the land of Arzen, with Anasimos the priest who came with him from Edessa, along with Philippus, Malkišō', and Addā—his disciples—as well as with many other people. He dispatched one of the latter—Philippus by name—to Qardu.

When the blessed one reached the city of Arzen, he converted many people through the mighty acts that he was performing. Now the king of Arzen was stricken by the disease called gout. When he heard about the miracles and healings that took place at the hands of the blessed one, with great eagerness he ordered that they should bring the blessed one before him. When Mār Mārī came and went into the presence of the king, the latter greatly rejoiced in him, because the blessed one bowed down happily before him. And when the king heard the word of the blessed one, he held him in increasing honor, because of his gentleness, humbleness, and joyful countenance—for Mār Mārī was very meek and very kind toward everyone, and in him jealousy and anger had no place whatsoever. The king said to him: "Tell me! What is your religion? For I believe you are a god!" Then the blessed Mār

Mārī answered and said to the king: "God forbid! I am not God, O my lord the king, but I am a man, servant of the Living God. My religion is Christianity, and I believe in Christ, the Son of God, who descended at the end of times from heaven, and turned the world away from the deception of the demons by which it was seized. I confess this One, O my lord the king, I perform these things in his name, bringing erring people (to God and) to the faith." The king answered and said to him: "According to your claim, can your Lord, therefore, heal this illness with which I have been stricken for a long time?" The blessed one said to him: "If you believe in him, your requests will be answered."

Immediately, the king kneeled and bowed down before the blessed one, begging and saying: "My Lord, I believe! Help me!" At this point the blessed one came close and placed his hand on the spot, saying: "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom the Jews crucified in Jerusalem, get up on your feet!" Concomitant with the word of the blessed one, the king was healed, and was baptized along with the members of his house. When the entire city realized that the king was healed, they too came to the blessed one, and he healed their bruises. He thus converted the whole city, built in it a church, and appointed over it priests and deacons.

(Source: *The Acts of Mār Mārī the Apostle*, translated with introduction and notes by Amir Harrak [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005], 1-17.)

The Russes were astonished, and in their wonder praised the Greek ceremonial. Then the Emperors Basil and Constantine invited the envoys to their presence, and said, "Go hence to your native country," and dismissed them with valuable presents and great honor.

Thus they returned to their own country, and the Prince called together his boyars and the elders. Vladimir then announced the return of the envoys who had been sent out, and suggested that their report be heard. He thus commanded them to speak out before his retinue. The envoys reported, "When we journeyed among the Bulgars, we beheld how they worship in their temple, called a mosque, while they stand ungirt. The Bulgar bows, sits down, looks hither and thither like one possessed, and there is no happiness among them, but instead only sorrow and a dreadful stench. Their religion is not good. Then we went among the Germans, and saw them performing many ceremonies in their temples; but we beheld no glory there. Then we went to Greece and the Greeks led us to the edifices where they worship their God, and we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendor or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We only know that God dwells there among men, and their service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations. For we cannot forget that beauty. Every man, after tasting something sweet, is afterward unwilling to accept that which is bitter, and therefore, we cannot dwell longer here." Then the boyars spoke and said, "If the Greek faith were evil, it would not have been adopted by your grandmother Olga who was wiser than all other men." Vladimir then inquired where they should all accept baptism, and they replied that the decision rested with him.

After a year had passed, in 6496 (980 C.E.), Vladimir proceeded with an armed force against Kherson, a Greek city, and the people of Kherson barricaded themselves therein. Vladimir halted at the farther side of the city beside the harbor, a bow-shot from the town, and the inhabitants resisted energetically while Vladimir besieged the town. Eventually, however, they became exhausted, and Vladimir warned them that if they did not surrender, he would remain on the spot for three years. When they failed to heed this threat, Vladimir

marshaled his troops and ordered the construction of an earthwork in the direction of the city. While this work was under construction, the inhabitants dug a tunnel under the city-wall, stole the heaped-up earth, and carried it into the city, where they piled it up in the center of the town. But the soldiers kept on building, and Vladimir persisted. Then a man of Kherson, Anastasius by name, shot into the Russ camp an arrow on which he had written, "There are springs behind you to the east, from which water flows in pipes. Dig down and cut them off." When Vladimir received this information, he raised his eyes to heaven and vowed that if this hope was realized, he would be baptized. He gave orders straightaway to dig down above the pipes, and the water supply was thus cut.

(Source: *The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text*, ed. and trans. Samuel Hazzard Cross and Olgerd P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor [Cambridge, Mass.: Medieval Academy of America, 1953], 110-17.)

12. *The Heliand*

This ninth-century effort to tell the gospel story in terms comprehensible to peoples in a culture and situation far different from Israel in the time of Jesus may be considered a model of contextualization. Or it may be less a tool of evangelism than a product of contextualized Christianity in full expressive power. Given the initial and continued resistance of some Saxons to conversion, the Heliand may be seen as particularly artistic propaganda.

Song I

The Creator's spell, by which the whole world is held together, is taught to four heroes.

There were many whose hearts told them that they should begin to tell the secret runes, the word of God, the famous feats that the powerful Christ accomplished in words and in deeds among human beings. There were many of the wise who wanted to praise the teaching of Christ, the holy Word of God, and wanted to write a bright-shining book

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Chronicle: Lauren-Hazzard Cross and Cambridge, Mass.: 1953], 110-17.)

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with their own hands, telling how the sons of men should carry out His commands. Among all these, however, there were only four who had the power of God, help from heaven, the Holy Spirit, the strength from Christ to do it. They were chosen. They alone were to write down the evangelium in a book, and to write down the commands of God, the holy heavenly word. No one else among the heroic sons of men was to attempt it, since these four had been picked by the power of God: Matthew and Mark, Luke and John were their names. They were dear to God, worthy of the work. The ruling God had placed the Holy Spirit firmly in those heroes' hearts, together with many a wise word, as well as a devout attitude and a powerful mind, so that they could lift up their holy voices to chant God's spell. There is nothing like it in words anywhere in this world! Nothing can ever glorify the Ruler, our dear Chieftain, more! Nor is there anything that can better fell every evil creature or work of wickedness, nor better withstand the hatred and aggression of enemies. This is so, because the one who taught them God's Spell, though generous and good, had a powerful mind: the noble, the almighty Creator Himself.

These four were to write it down with their own fingers; they were to compose, sing, and proclaim what they had seen and heard of Christ's powerful strength—all the many wonderful things, in word and deed, that the mighty Chieftain Himself said, taught, and accomplished among human beings—and also all the things which the Ruler spoke from the beginning, when He, by His own power, first made the world and formed the whole universe with one word. The heavens and the earth and all that is contained within them, both inorganic and organic, everything, was firmly held in place by the Divine words. He then determined which of the peoples was to rule the greatest territory, and at what times the ages of the world were to come to an end. One age still stood before the sons of men; five were past. The blessed sixth age was to come by the power of God the Holy Spirit and the birth of Christ. He is the Best of Healers, come here to the middle world to be a help to many, to give human beings an advantage against the hatred of the enemy and the hidden snare.

(Source: *The Heliand: The Saxon Gospel*, trans. G. Ronald Murphy, S.J. [New York: Oxford University Press, 1992], 3-4.)

13. *The Apology of the Patriarch, Timothy of Baghdad before the Caliph Madhi*

Engaging the nations with the gospel, particularly when the Christian community was a sometimes oppressed minority, meant stating publicly and Christianly how other religious faiths and leaders were understood by Christians. Such encounters entailed a more nuanced approach to witness than was found when Christians possessed overwhelming political and military power. In 781 C.E. the patriarch Timothy successfully negotiated this difficult task and thus both preserved his community and showed a way forward for a Christian understanding of Muhammad and Islam.

The Questions and Answers of the Second Day

The next day I had an audience of his Majesty. Such audiences had constantly taken place previously, sometimes for the affairs of the State, and some other times for the love of wisdom and learning which was burning in the soul of his Majesty. He is a lovable man, and loves also learning when he finds it in other people, and on this account he directed against me the weight of his objections, whenever necessary.

After I had paid to him my usual respects as King of Kings, he began to address me and converse with me not in a harsh and haughty tone, since harshness and haughtiness are remote from his soul, but in a sweet and benevolent way.

And our King of Kings said to me: "O Catholicos, did you bring a Gospel with you, as I had asked you?"—And I replied to his exalted Majesty: "I have brought one, O our victorious and God-loving King."—And our victorious Sovereign said to me: "Who gave you this Book?"—And I replied to him: "It is the Word of God that gave us the Gospel, O our God-loving King."—And our King said: "Was it not written by four Apostles?" And I replied to him: "It was written by four Apostles, as our King has said, but not out of their own heads, but out of what they heard and learned from the

Word-God. If then the Gospel was written by the Apostles, and if the Apostles simply wrote what they heard and learned from the Word-God, the Gospel has, therefore, been given in reality by the Word-God. Similarly, the Torah was written by Moses, but since Moses heard and learned it from an angel, and the angel heard and learned it from God, we assert that the Torah was given by God and not by Moses.

"In the same way also the Muslims say that they

have received the Qur'an from Muhammad, but since Muhammad received knowledge and writing from an angel, they, therefore, affirm that the Book that was divulged through him was not Muhammad's or the angel's but God's. So also we Christians believe that although the gospel was given to us by the Apostles, it was not given as from them but as from God, His Word and His spirit.

(Source: *Woodbrooke Studies*, vol. 2, ed. and trans. A. Mingana [Cambridge: Heffer, 1928], 60-61.)

Documents of the Eastern Church in China

14. *The Xi'an Stele*— The Translation of the Inscription

The Nestorian monument gives a short account of the gospel intended to speak to eighth-century Chinese culture and explain the presence of Christian monks in China. Readers will note that it references scripture (Romans 1 and John 1, for example) but seeks to use terminology comprehensible to an audience of a very different cultural landscape.

A Monument Commemorating the Propagation of the Ta-ch'in Luminous Religion in the Middle Kingdom

Eulogy on a Monument commemorating the Propagation of the Luminous Religion in the Middle Kingdom, with a Preface to the same, composed by Ching-ching, a priest of the Ta-ch'in monastery (in Syriac), Adam, Priest and Chorepiscopus, and Papash' of Chinastan.

Behold! there is One who is true and firm, who, being Untreated, is the Origin of the Origins; who is ever Incomprehensible and Invisible, yet ever mysteriously existing to the last of the lasts; who, holding the Secret Source of Origin, created all things, and who, surpassing all the Holy ones, is the only unoriginated Lord of the Universe,—is not this our Aloha, the Triune, mysterious Person, the unbegotten and true Lord?

Dividing the Cross, He determined the four

cardinal points. Setting in motion the primordial spirit (wind), He produced the two principles of Nature. The dark void was changed, and Heaven and Earth appeared. The sun and moon revolved, and day and night began. Having designed and fashioned all things, He then created the first man and bestowed on him an excellent disposition, superior to all others, and gave him to have dominion over the Ocean of created things.

The original nature of Man was pure, and void of all selfishness, unstained and unostentatious, his mind was free from inordinate lust and passion. When, however, Satan employed his evil devices on him, Man's pure and stainless (nature) was deteriorated; what is just and noble was eliminated from that which is called right on the one hand (lit., in this place), and what is fundamentally identical (with wickedness) was abstracted from that which is named wrong on the other (lit., in that place).

In consequence of this, three hundred and sixty-five (spiritual beings) with different seeds (of error) arose in quick succession and left deep furrows behind. They strove to weave nets of the law's wherewith to ensnare the innocent. Some pointing to natural objects pretended that they were the right objects to worship; others got hold of (the idea that) non-existence (lit., Emptiness) and existence (are alike, after all). Some sought to call down blessings (happiness or success), by means of prayers and sacrifices; others again boasted of their own goodness, and held their fellows in contempt. (Thus) the intellect and the thoughts of Men fell into hopeless confusion; and their mind and affections began to toil incessantly; but all their travail

obedient life and death, is, therefore, a distinguishing trait and cardinal point of the Gospel. "Herein," says the apostle, "the *righteousness of God* is revealed from faith to faith." Indeed, he speaks of it as the very essence of the Gospel; and calls the opposite to it *Gentilism*, the *works of the Law*, and *another Gospel*. It is a golden thread, running through the whole tissue of Divine revelation. By this doctrine, the reformers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries cut the very sinews of Popery, those antichristian tenets of penance and purgatory, pardons and indulgencies, of the merit of works, &c. hence we may, with Luther, justly call it, "*articulus stantit vel cadentis ecclesie*," the article on which the Church stands or falls. Before this doctrine, all the Pagan and Papal superstitions fall, like Dagon before the ark of the Lord. Where this righteousness goes forth as brightness, the salvation of the Lord also goes forth as a lamp that burneth. . . .

(Source: William Brown, M.D., *The History of Missions; or, of the Propagation of Christianity among the Heathen, since the Reformation* [Philadelphia: B. Coles, 1816].)

29. *An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens,* by William Carey

From 1792, William Carey's famous call to mission is a classic Protestant apology for Christian mission, answering objections to the enterprise, but, as important, seeking to place it in the context of colonialism as understood in Carey's own time.

Mark 16:15—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

. . . In order that the subject may be taken into more serious consideration, I shall: enquire whether the Commission given by our Lord to His disciples be not still binding on us; consider the practicability of doing something more than is done; and discuss the duty of Christians in general in this matter.

An Enquiry whether the Commission Given by Our Lord to His Disciples Be Not Still Binding on Us

Our Lord Jesus Christ, a little before his departure, commissioned his apostles to "Go, and teach all nations"; or, as another evangelist expresses it, "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." This commission was as extensive as possible, and laid them under obligation to disperse themselves into every country of the habitable globe, and preach to all the inhabitants, without exception or limitation. They accordingly went forth in obedience to the command, and the power of God evidently wrought with them. Many attempts of the same kind have been made since their day, and which have been attended with various success; but the work has not been taken up, or prosecuted of late years (except by a few individuals) with that zeal and perseverance with which the primitive Christians went about it. It seems as if many thought the commission was sufficiently put in execution by what the apostles and others have done; that we have enough to do to attend to the salvation of our own countrymen; and that, if God intends the salvation of the heathen, he will some way or other bring them to the gospel, or the gospel to them. It is thus that multitudes sit at ease, and give themselves no concern about the far greater part of their fellow-sinners, who to this day, are lost in ignorance and idolatry. There seems also to be an opinion existing in the minds of some, that because the apostles were extraordinary officers and have no proper successors, and because many things which were right for them to do would be utterly unwarrantable for us, therefore it may not be immediately binding on us to execute the commission, though it was so upon them. To the consideration of such persons I would offer the following observations.

First. If the command of Christ to teach all nations be restricted to the apostles, or those under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, then that of baptizing should be so too; and every denomination of Christians, except the Quakers, do wrong in baptizing with water at all.

Secondly. If the command of Christ to teach all nations be confined to the apostles, then all

such ordinary ministers who have endeavoured to carry the gospel to the heathens, have acted without a warrant, and run before they were sent. Yea, and though God has promised the most glorious things to the heathen world by sending his gospel to them, yet whoever goes first, or indeed at all, with that message, unless he have a new and special commission from heaven, must go without any authority for so doing.

Thirdly. If the command of Christ to teach all nations extend only to the apostles, then, doubtless, the promise of the divine presence in this work must be so limited; but this is worded in such a manner as expressly precludes such an idea "Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the world" . . .

It has been said that some learned divines have proved from scripture that the time is not yet come that the heathen should be converted; and that first the witnesses must be slain, and many other prophecies fulfilled. But admitting this to be the case (which I much doubt [footnote: See Edwards on Prayer, on this subject, lately re-printed by Mr Sutcliffe.]) yet if any objection is made from this against preaching to them immediately, it must be founded on one of these things; either that the secret purpose of God is the rule of our duty, and then it must be as bad to pray for them, as to preach to them; or else that none shall be converted in the heathen world till the universal down-pouring of the Spirit in the last days. But this objection comes too late; for the success of the gospel has been very considerable in many places already.

It has been objected that there are multitudes in our own nation, and within our immediate spheres of action, who are as ignorant as the South-Sea savages, and that therefore we have work enough at home, without going into other countries. That there are thousands in our own land as far from God as possible, I readily grant, and that this ought to excite us to ten-fold diligence in our work, and in attempts to spread divine knowledge amongst them is a certain fact; but that it ought to supersede all attempts to spread the gospel in foreign parts seems to want proof. Our own countrymen have the means of grace, and may attend on the word preached if they choose it. They have the means of knowing the truth, and faithful ministers are placed in almost every part of the land, whose spheres of action might be much extended if their congrega-

tions were but more hearty and active in the cause: but with them the case is widely different, who have no Bible, no written language (which many of them have not), no ministers, no good civil government, nor any of those advantages which we have. Pity therefore, humanity, and much more Christianity, call loudly for every possible exertion to introduce the gospel amongst them.

The Practicability of Something Being Done, More Than What Is Done, for the Conversion of the Heathen

The impediments in the way of carrying the gospel among the heathen must arise, I think, from one or other of the following things;—either their distance from us, their barbarous and savage manner of living, the danger of being killed by them, the difficulty of procuring the necessaries of life, or the unintelligibleness of their languages.

First. As to their distance from us, whatever objections might have been made on that account before the invention of the mariner's compass, nothing can be alleged for it, with any colour of plausibility in the present age. Men can now sail with as much certainty through the Great South Sea, as they can through the Mediterranean, or any lesser Sea. Yea, and providence seems in a manner to invite us to the trial, as there are to our knowledge trading companies, whose commerce lies in many of the places where these barbarians dwell. At one time or other ships are sent to visit places of more recent discovery, and to explore parts the most unknown; and every fresh account of their ignorance, or cruelty, should call forth our pity, and excite us to concur with providence in seeking their eternal good. Scripture likewise seems to point out this method—"Surely the Isles shall wait for me; the ships of Tarshish first, to bring my sons from far, their silver, and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord, thy God" (Isa. 60:9). This seems to imply that in the time of the glorious increase of the church, in the latter days (of which the whole chapter is undoubtedly a prophecy), commerce shall subserve the spread of the gospel. The ships of Tarshish were trading vessels, which made voyages for traffic to various parts; thus much there-

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fore must be meant by it, that navigation, especially that which is commercial, shall be one great mean of carrying on the work of God; and perhaps it may imply that there shall be a very considerable appropriation of wealth to that purpose.

Secondly. As to their uncivilized, and barbarous way of living, this can be no objection to any, except those whose love of ease renders them unwilling to expose themselves to inconveniences for the good of others.

It was no objection to the apostles and their successors, who went among the barbarous Germans and Gauls, and still more barbarous Britons! They did not wait for the ancient inhabitants of these countries, to be civilized, before they could be christianized, but went simply with the doctrine of the cross; and Tertullian could boast that "those parts of Britain which were proof against the Roman armies, were conquered by the gospel of Christ." . . .

After all, the uncivilized state of the heathen, instead of affording an objection against preaching the gospel to them, ought to furnish an argument for it. Can we as men, or as Christians, hear that a great part of our fellow creatures, whose souls are as immortal as ours, and who are as capable as ourselves, of adorning the gospel and contributing by their preaching, writings, or practices to the glory of our Redeemer's name, and the good of his church, are enveloped in ignorance and barbarism? Can we hear that they are without the gospel, without government, without laws, and without arts, and sciences; and not exert ourselves to introduce amongst them the sentiments of men, and of Christians? Would not the spread of the gospel be the most effectual mean of their civilization? Would not that make them useful members of society? . . .

Thirdly. In respect to the danger of being killed by them, it is true that whoever does go must put his life in his hand, and not consult with flesh and blood; but do not the goodness of the cause, the duties incumbent on us as the creatures of God, and Christians, and the perishing state of our fellow men, loudly call upon us to venture all and use every warrantable exertion for their benefit? Paul and Barnabas, who hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, were not blamed as being rash, but commended for so doing, while

John Mark, who through timidity of mind deserted them in their perilous undertaking, was branded with censure.

Fourthly. As to the difficulty of procuring the necessaries of life, this would not be so great as may appear at first sight; for though we could not procure European food, yet we might procure such as the natives of those countries which we visit, subsist upon themselves. And this would only be passing through what we have virtually engaged in by entering on the ministerial office. A Christian minister is a person who in a peculiar sense is not his own; he is the servant of God, and therefore ought to be wholly devoted to him. By entering on that sacred office he solemnly undertakes to be always engaged, as much as possible, in the Lord's work, and not to choose his own pleasure, or employment, or pursue the ministry as a something that is to subserve his own ends, or interests, or as a kind of by-work. He engages to go where God pleases, and to do, or endure what he sees fit to command, or call him to, in the exercise of his function. He virtually bids farewell to friends, pleasures, and comforts, and stands in readiness to endure the greatest sufferings in the work of his Lord, and Master. It is inconsistent for ministers to please themselves with thoughts of a numerous auditory, cordial friends, a civilized country, legal protection, affluence, splendour, or even a competency. . . .

It might be necessary, however, for two, at least, to go together, and in general I should think it best that they should be married men; and to prevent their time from being employed in procuring necessaries, two, or more, other persons, with their wives and families, might also accompany them, who should be wholly employed in providing for them. In most countries it would be necessary for them to cultivate a little spot of ground just for their support, which would be a resource to them, whenever their supplies failed. Not to mention the advantages they would reap from each other's company, it would take off the enormous expense which has always attended undertakings of this kind, the first expense being the whole; for though a large colony needs support for a considerable time, yet so small a number would, upon receiving the first crop, maintain themselves. They would have the advantage of choosing their situ-

ation, their wants would be few; the women, and even the children, would be necessary for domestic purposes; and a few articles of stock, as a cow or two, and a bull, and a few other cattle of both sexes, a very few utensils of husbandry, and some corn to sow their land, would be sufficient. Those who attend the missionaries should understand husbandry, fishing, fowling, etc., and be provided with the necessary implements for these purposes. Indeed a variety of methods may be thought of, and when once the work is undertaken, many things will suggest themselves to us, of which we at present can form no idea.

Fifthly. As to learning their languages, the same means would be found necessary here as in trade between different nations. In some cases interpreters might be obtained, who might be employed for a time; and where these were not to be found, the missionaries must have patience, and mingle with the people, till they have learned so much of their language as to be able to communicate their ideas to them in it. It is well known to require no very extraordinary talents to learn, in the space of a year, or two at most, the language of any people upon earth, so much of it at least, as to be able to convey any sentiments we wish to their understandings.

The missionaries must be of great piety, prudence, courage, and forbearance; of undoubted orthodoxy in their sentiments, and must enter with all their hearts into the spirit of their mission; they must be willing to leave all the comforts of life behind them, and to encounter all the hardships of a torrid, or a frigid climate, an uncomfortable manner of living, and every other inconvenience that can attend this undertaking. Clothing, a few knives, powder and shot, fishing-tackle, and the articles of husbandry above-mentioned, must be provided for them; and when arrived at the place of their destination, their first business must be to gain some acquaintance with the language of the natives (for which purpose two would be better than one), and by all lawful means to endeavour to cultivate a friendship with them, and as soon as possible let them know the errand for which they were sent. They must endeavour to convince them that it was their good alone which induced them to forsake their friends, and all the comforts of their native country. They must be very careful not to resent injuries which may be offered to them, nor

to think highly of themselves, so as to despise the poor heathens, and by those means lay a foundation for their resentment, or rejection of the gospel. They must take every opportunity of doing them good, and labouring, and travelling, night and day, they must instruct, exhort, and rebuke, with all long suffering, and anxious desire for them, and, above all, must be instant in prayer for the effusion of the Holy Spirit upon the people of their charge. Let but missionaries of the above description engage in the work, and we shall see that it is not impracticable.

It might likewise be of importance, if God should bless their labours, for them to encourage any appearances of gifts among the people of their charge; if such should be raised up many advantages would be derived from their knowledge of the language, and customs of their countrymen; and their change of conduct would give great weight to their ministrations.

(Source: *The Highway of Mission Thought*, ed. T. B. Ray [Nashville, Tn.: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1907].)

30. *Christianity and Commerce*, a Speech by David Livingstone

David Livingstone (1813-1873) was a pioneer missionary to Africa. His understanding of the relationship between Christianity, commerce, and civilization was not universally embraced by missionaries of his generation, but aptly characterized the chief rationale of colonial missions. The reading below contains excerpts from a speech in Cambridge in 1857.

My object in going into the country south of the desert was to instruct the natives in a knowledge of Christianity, but many circumstances prevented my living amongst them more than seven years, amongst which were considerations arising out of the slave system carried on by the Dutch Boers. I resolved to go into the country beyond, and soon found that, for the purposes of commerce, it was necessary to have a path to the sea. I might have gone on instructing the natives in religion, but as civilization and Christianity must go on together, I

59. "Christian Missions and the Western Guilt Complex,"
by Lamin Sanneh

Lamin Sanneh's essay on the Western guilt complex indicates what would become the most sweeping movement in Christian mission in the latter part of the twentieth century, the rise of a critique of liberal Western missions for their growing disinterest in conversion, and with it strongly evangelical missionary movements arising in lands that were once the object of mission. Sanneh reminds the reader that guilt over colonialism and imperialism past and present does not grant missionaries and mission agencies the right to deny the value of conversion for the convert, or ignore the real contributions of Christianity to those lands into which it has come.

When at the age of 18 I approached a Methodist church in the Gambia with a request for baptism, thus signaling my conversion to Christianity from Islam, the resident senior minister, an English missionary, responded by inviting me to reconsider my decision. And, while I was at it, he said, I should also consider joining the Catholic Church. My conversion obviously caused him acute embarrassment, and I was mortified on account of it.

However, his imaginative solution of my linking up with the Catholic Church did not work out; after a year of vain attempts I returned to the English missionary. After assuring me that the baptism of the Methodists was recognized by the Catholics, he agreed in principle to receive me into the church.

At that stage of my life I would have joined the church on almost any condition, for I had this absurd idea that the gospel had marked me out for something, whether for reward, rebuke, or ridicule I did not know; whatever it was, I felt inexorably driven toward it. On the night of my baptism I was overcome with emotion, finding it hard to believe that my wish was being fulfilled. Not even the thousand tongues of Methodist hymnody could have given utterance to the avalanche of thoughts and feelings that erupted in me.

I make this extended autobiographical introduction to indicate how in the liberal Methodist tradition I first encountered the guilt complex about missions which I have since come to know so well after living more than two decades in the West. I have found Western Christians to be very embarrassed about meeting converts from Asia or Africa, but when I have repeated for them my personal obstacles in joining the church, making it clear that I was in no way pressured into doing so, they have seemed gratefully unburdened of a sense of guilt. Furthermore, when I have pointed out that missionaries actually made comparatively few converts, my Western friends have reacted with obvious relief, though with another part of their minds, they insist that missionaries have regularly used their superior cultural advantage to instill a sense of inferiority in natives.

It seems that for my Western Christian friends, if missionaries did not justify by their field labors the guilt the West carries about the mischief of the white race in the rest of the world, then other missionaries would have to be invented to justify that guilt.

It should provide food for thought that the church has succeeded in importing this guilt complex into Africa. I found the church there to be self-conscious about matters religious—especially matters involving God, death, judgment, the virgin birth, and miracles—which presumably the Enlightenment banished from rational debate. Consequently, the church was wary of embracing members tainted with the brush of conversion, for such new members would not have acquired the reservation deemed appropriate to religious subjects.

The church took further precautions against religious enthusiasm: for my catechism I was introduced to New Testament form criticism and to Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Tillich, John Macmurray, John A. T. Robinson, Vincent Taylor, Oliver Chase Quick, and other "sensible" writers. On my own initiative I discovered the works of C. S. Lewis, whose brand of commonsense Christianity encouraged me no end. Nevertheless, the liberal strand was the dominant theme in my formation, hallowed with the refined ministrations of writers like Bertrand Russell and Harold Nicolson.

The church's hesitant attitude about religious conversion in turn surprised, frustrated, dismayed, saddened, and confused me. Also, given the prominent place religion occupies in Africa, I was baffled by the apparent determination of my church superiors to keep religious subjects from all "decent" and "cultured" conversation. I realize now that this attitude is deep-rooted in Western liberal culture. However, before I left Africa for Europe I had no way of understanding it, for it had no analogue in my society, and, more important for me, it appeared to skirt the declared aims of a missionary church.

My business in this piece is not to linger on Memory Lane but to confront directly the guilt complex about missions that so often prevails in liberal counsels. I believe that the liberal claim to openmindedness about missions would be strengthened by a closer examination of what actually happened—and may still be happening—in the encounter between Western missionaries and non-Christian peoples.

Much of the standard Western scholarship on Christian missions proceeds by looking at the motives of individual missionaries and concludes by faulting the entire missionary enterprise as being part of the machinery of Western cultural imperialism. But missions in the modern era has been far more, and far less, than the argument about motives customarily portrays.

Missionaries of course went out with all sorts of motives, and some of them were clearly unwholesome. Yet if we were to try to separate good from bad motives, I daresay we would not, after a mountain of labor, advance the subject much beyond the molehill of stalemate. We might, for example, take a little out of the cultural imperialism bag and put it into the social-service category, and ascribe both phenomena to Western cultural conditioning. But that exercise would do little to further our understanding of the nature and consequences of cross-cultural missions.

Instead of examining motives, I propose that we focus on the field setting of missions, where local feedback exerted an influence all its own. And what stands out in particular about the field setting is the emphasis missionaries gave to translating Scripture into vernacular languages. Most Protestant missionary agencies embarked on the

immense enterprise of vernacular translation with the enthusiasm, urgency, and commitment of first-timers, and they expended uncommon resources to make the vernacular dream come true. Today more than 1,800 languages have been involved in the worldwide translation movement. In Africa alone, the Bible has been translated into 522 vernacular languages, with texts in over 200 additional languages now under development. Catholic missions have been similarly committed to the transposition of the catechism into vernacular terms, with language study a crucial part of the enterprise. The importance of vernacular translation was that it brought the missionary into contact with the most intimate and intricate aspects of culture, yielding wide-ranging consequences for both missionary and native alike.

The translation enterprise had two major steps. One was the creation of a vernacular alphabet for societies that lacked a literary tradition. The other step was to shake the existing literary tradition free of its esoteric, elitist predilection by recasting it as a popular medium. Both steps stimulated an indigenous response and encouraged the discovery of local resources for the appropriation of Christianity. Local believers acquired a new interest not only in the vernacular but also in recording their history and collecting accounts of indigenous wisdom. One missionary whose work sparked such response was J. G. Christaller, who came from Basel to the Gold Coast (now Ghana). Between 1871 and 1881 he produced a Bible translation, a dictionary and a grammar of the Twi language, crowning his labors with a compilation of 3,600 Twi proverbs and axioms. He also helped found the *Christian Messenger* in 1883, a paper devoted to the promotion of Akan life and culture. His *Twi Dictionary* has been acclaimed as an "Encyclopaedia of Akan civilization" by the modern generation of Ghanaian scholars.

Often the outcome of vernacular translation was that the missionary lost the position of being the expert. But the significance of translation went beyond that. Armed with a written vernacular Scripture, converts to Christianity invariably called into question the legitimacy of all schemes of foreign domination—cultural, political, and religious. Here was an acute paradox: the vernacular Scriptures and the wider cultural and linguistic

enterprise on which translation rested provided the means and occasion for arousing a sense of national pride, yet it was the missionaries—foreign agents—who were the creators of that entire process. I am convinced that this paradox decisively undercuts the alleged connection often drawn between missions and colonialism. Colonial rule was irreparably damaged by the consequences of vernacular translation—and often by other activities of missionaries.

Because of its concern for translations that employ the speech of the common workaday world, Christian proclamation has had a populist element. In many traditional societies, religious language has tended to be confined to a small elite of professionals. In extreme cases, this language is shrouded under the forbidding sanctions of secret societies and shrines, access to which is through induced trances or a magical formula. The Christian approach to translatability strikes at the heart of such gnostic tendencies, first by contending that the greatest and most profound religious truths are compatible with everyday language, and second, by targeting ordinary men and women as worthy bearers of the religious message. This approach introduced a true democratic spirit into hitherto closed and elitist societies, with women in particular discovering an expanded role.

For example, after George Pilkington, the English lay missionary, translated the Bible in Uganda, some 2,000 men and 400 women acted as colporteurs operating as far as the forests of the Congo. Pilkington's translated Bible sold 1,100 copies in the first year of publication, with an additional 4,000 New Testaments, 13,500 single Gospels, and 40,000 readers. Theodore Roosevelt, who visited Uganda in 1910, witnessed the scene and said it was nothing short of astounding.

The project of translation contains implications about the nature of culture itself. Translation destigmatizes culture—it denies that culture is "profane"—and asserts that the sacred message may legitimately be entrusted to the forms of everyday life. Translation also relativizes culture by denying that there is only one normative expression of the gospel; it results in a pluralism in which God is the relativizing center. The Christian insight into this phenomenon carries with it a profound ethical notion, for it opens culture up to the demand and

need for change. A divinized, absolutized culture precludes the possibility of change.

The impact of the translation process is, indeed, incalculable. Suddenly hitherto illiterate populations were equipped with a written Scripture for the first time, and from the wonder and pride of possessing something new that is also strangely familiar, they burst upon the scene with confidence in the whos and whys of their existence. For example, the Luo tribesman Matthew Ajuoga was helping missionaries translate the Bible into his native language. He discovered that the missionaries translated the Greek word *philadelphia*, "brotherly love," into Luo as *hera*, and this experience caused him to protest, saying that "love" as the Bible explained it was absent from the missionaries' treatment of Africans. He subsequently founded an independent church, the Church of Christ in Africa, in 1957, which gained a considerable following across tribal divisions. Another example is the Zulu Bible, which enabled Zulu converts to respond to missionary criticism of the Zulu way of dressing. The Zulus said that they found in Genesis 27:16 sanction for their custom of dressing in skins, a practice the missionaries had attacked. In the eyes of the Zulus, it was the missionaries who were flouting the dress code. Thus it was that, confronted with the bewildering fact of Western intrusion, local populations used the vernacular to avert ultimate disenchantment, in this way utilizing the gains of mission to offset the losses to colonialism.

The evidence of the importance of translation in Christian missions is remarkably consistent. From the 16th century when Francis Xavier decided to cast his lot with the East against his own Western culture, to the 19th century when Christaller singlehandedly promoted Akan culture, to the 20th when Frank Laubach inveighed against the encroachments of American power in the Philippines, missionaries in the field have helped to promote indigenous self-awareness as a counterforce to Western cultural importation. Obviously missionaries wanted to proclaim the gospel because they believed it to be superior to any message others might offer. But it is really not consistent to blame missionaries for believing in what they preach. And we must note this salient, consistent feature of their work—namely, that they confidently adopted the language and culture of others

as the irreplaceable vehicle for the transmission of the message. Whatever judgment missionaries brought with them, it certainly was not about the fitness of the vernacular to be the hallowed channel for communicating with God.

Besides the paradox of foreign missionaries establishing the indigenous process by which foreign domination was questioned, there is a theological paradox to this story: missionaries entered the missionary field to convert others, yet in the translation process it was they who first made the move to "convert" to a new language, with all its presuppositions and ramifications. Thus we have the example of Robert de Nobili (1577-1656), an Italian nobleman who went to India as a Jesuit missionary, arriving there in 1605. He passed for a guru, an Indian saintly figure, and even for a sannyasi, a wild, holy man, adopting Hindu customs and religious terminology to define his own personal piety. Two other examples were Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), who adopted the opposite path to de Nobili by assimilating into upper-class Chinese society during the Ming dynasty, coming to China in 1580, eventually undergoing a profound cultural transformation as a Confucian scholar; and Charles de Foucauld, who served in the French army in the Algerian war where he witnessed moving scenes of Muslim personal piety, leading him to regain his own Christian faith, and becoming in everything a Tuareg Bedouin nomad. Whether missionaries converted anybody else, there is no doubt that they were their own first converts.

It is also apparent that at least in Africa, Christian missions expanded and deepened pluralism—in language, social encounter, and ethnic participation in the Christian movement. Missions helped to preserve languages that were threatened by a rising lingua franca, extended the influence of the vernacular through careful methodical and systematic investigations in the field, and helped to establish connections within the wider family of languages. In their grammars, dictionaries, primers, readers, and systematic compilations of proverbs, axioms, customs, and other ethnographic materials, missionaries furnished the scientific documentation by means of which the modern study of cultures could begin. Whether missionaries translated well or badly—and there are masterpieces as well as outrageous parodies—they made

field criteria rather than the values of empire-building their operative standard.

Indeed, if there is any aspect of missionaries' motives I would want to pursue, it would be their desire to excel in whatever they undertook. They scrutinized their work in the hard and somber light of giving an account before God. Thus we find in their meticulous record-keeping, in the minutiae of account ledgers, in faithful official and family correspondence and in the assembling of petitions, an extraordinary concern for accuracy.

In examining missionary archives I am struck constantly by the missionaries' painstaking attention to detail. Inventiveness was a rather rare vice in that stern, austere world of missionary self-accounting. Thus, unwittingly, was laid the firm foundation of modern historiography in Africa and elsewhere. Even the nationalist point of view that came to dominate much historical writing about the new Africa was to a large extent molded by the missionary exploration of indigenous societies.

When they succeeded in translation, missionaries inadvertently vindicated indigenous claims, and when they failed they called forth the criticism of local people. Furthermore, their success in translation merely hastened the day of their departure, while failure called into question their continuing presence. Words have impact, especially in the abundant surplus of their unintended consequences. Translation is no respecter of motives—which is why it should be detached from the question of motives and examined in its own right.

Missionary statesmen in the 19th century saw quite clearly where the vernacular principle was leading, and they welcomed it as the supreme reward of Christian discipleship. For example, Henry Venn of the Anglican Church Missionary Society said that "the marked national characteristics" that the vernacular principle fosters in the expression of the gospel, "in the overruling grace of God, will tend to its perfection and glory." He spoke vividly of "a euthanasia of mission" once the vernacular principle exerted its full force. He said the business of mission was "not to supply an European pastorate, but to prepare native pastors . . . and to fix the spiritual standard in such churches by securing for them a supply of Vernacular Scriptures" (*To Apply the Gospel: Selections from*

the Writings of Henry Venn [Eerdmans, 1971]). Such an aim, he counseled, differed sharply from the goals of colonialism in perpetuating overseas dependencies.

The modern religious map of Africa reveals in a striking way the close connection between the growth of Christianity and the widespread employment of the vernacular. The converse also seems to hold: Christian growth has been slightest in areas where vernacular languages are weak—that is, where a lingua franca such as English, French, Portuguese, Arabic, or Swahili has succeeded in suppressing mother tongues.

To make the contrast even starker, we can point out that the reverse phenomenon appears in Islam, also a missionary religion, but one that does not translate its Scriptures for its canonical rites. Islam is strongest in societies where a lingua franca exists and weakest in places of vernacular preponderance. For example, Islamic gains in north Nigeria occurred at the hands of the Fulani reformers in the 19th century. In the process, the Fulani assimilated to an Islamized Hausa culture and lost their own Fulfulde language.

Islamic reform has nowhere to my knowledge made the perpetuation of the vernacular a concomitant of orthodox rectitude, and I know of no Muslim language institutes dedicated to the systematic study of the vernacular. Islam has succeeded brilliantly in its missionary enterprise, promoting at the same time a universal devotion to the sacred Arabic. In Africa, we see evidence of its considerable gains in spite of what we might regard as insuperable odds against a nontranslatable Scripture. For this reason the implications of Muslim success for pluralism are quite serious.

I will conclude, as I began, with a personal story, this one about the unexpected dynamics of translation. After completing my Islamic studies in the Middle East in 1969 I went to Yorubaland in Nigeria as a lay worker with the Methodist Church. I was immediately taken to the local market to pur-

chase some bare essentials for my flat. My companion was a senior English missionary who had spent many years in Ibadan and knew his way around. He translated for me as we did the round of market stalls, with the stall keepers' curiosity naturally aroused by the missionary, in their eyes a stranger from beyond the stars.

Before we had picked our way through the market, a small crowd had gathered to marvel at the sight of a white man translating for an African in an African language. It was as if we had got our arrangement wrong and put the Western cart before the African horse. The image of "total stranger" the stall keepers had of the Western missionary was completely belied by this exposure.

Of the several lessons one can draw from this incident, one is particularly relevant to the Western guilt complex about missions. There is a widespread tendency in the West to see missions as destroyers of indigenous cultures or else as alien cultural agents from the West. Yet in the incident at the local market, my missionary companion came to be acknowledged by the stall keepers as an accomplished "native," one of themselves, on the basis of the vernacular rule that they normally used to determine the boundary between insiders and outsiders. In the act of translating, my missionary friend demonstrated that he had as much claim to being in Africa as he had to identifying with the West. His own Western cultural differences were no longer a barrier, nor even a useful evaluative standard, but an opportunity for cross-cultural interchange. This example suggests that Christian missions are better seen as a translation movement, with consequences for vernacular revitalization, religious change, and social transformation, than as a vehicle for Western cultural domination. Such an assurance should help alleviate some of the Western guilt complex about missions.

(Source: Lamin Sanneh, "Christian Missions and the Western Guilt Complex," *Christian Century*, April 8, 1987.)

.oikoumene.org/gr/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/public-witness-addressing-power-affirming-peace/poverty-wealth-and-ecology/

neoliberal-paradigm/09-11-07-dar-es-salaam-statement-on-linking-poverty-wealth-and-ecology.html.)

Evangelical Mission Documents

The documents below arise from a series of meetings first hosted by the Billy Graham Association, beginning at Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1992. Their significance may be found by comparison with the WCC documents, particularly as they describe the human situation, but also in what they choose as the beginning point for making their affirmations, and what they choose to affirm that other statements do not. It is also useful to compare the Lausanne Covenant from 1974 with the Iguassu Declaration of 1999.

74. The Lausanne Covenant (1974)

Introduction

We, members of the Church of Jesus Christ, from more than 150 nations, participants in the International Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne, praise God for his great salvation and rejoice in the fellowship he has given us with himself and with each other. We are deeply stirred by what God is doing in our day, moved to penitence by our failures and challenged by the unfinished task of evangelization. We believe the Gospel is God's good news for the whole world, and we are determined by his grace to obey Christ's commission to proclaim it to all mankind and to make disciples of every nation. We desire, therefore, to affirm our faith and our resolve, and to make public our covenant.

1. The Purpose of God

We affirm our belief in the one-eternal God, Creator and Lord of the world, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who govern all things according to the purpose of his will. He has been calling out from the world a people for himself, and sending his people back into the world to be his servants and his witnesses, for the extension of his kingdom, the building up of Christ's body, and the glory of his name. We confess with shame that we have often denied our calling and failed in our mission, by becoming conformed to the world or by withdrawing from it. Yet we rejoice that even when borne by earthen vessels the gospel is still a precious treasure. To the

task of making that treasure known in the power of the Holy Spirit we desire to dedicate ourselves anew (Isa. 40:28; Matt. 28:19; Eph. 1:11; Acts 15:14; John 17:6, 18; Eph 4:12; 1 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 4:7).

2. The Authority and Power of the Bible

We affirm the divine inspiration, truthfulness, and authority of both Old and New Testament Scriptures in their entirety as the only written word of God, without error in all that it affirms, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice. We also affirm the power of God's word to accomplish his purpose of salvation. The message of the Bible is addressed to all men and women. For God's revelation in Christ and in Scripture is unchangeable. Through it the Holy Spirit still speaks today. He illumines the minds of God's people in every culture to perceive its truth freshly through their own eyes and thus discloses to the whole Church ever more of the many-colored wisdom of God (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21; John 10:35; Isa. 55:11; 1 Cor. 1:21; Rom. 1:16; Matt. 5:17, 18; Jude 3; Eph. 1:17, 18; 3:10, 18).

3. The Uniqueness and Universality of Christ

We affirm that there is only one Saviour and only one gospel, although there is a wide diversity of evangelistic approaches. We recognise that everyone has some knowledge of God through his general revelation in nature. But we deny that this can save, for people suppress the truth by their unrighteousness. We also reject as derogatory to

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Christ and the gospel every kind of syncretism and dialogue which implies that Christ speaks equally through all religions and ideologies. Jesus Christ, being himself the only God-man, who gave himself as the only ransom for sinners, is the only mediator between God and people. There is no other name by which we must be saved. All men and women are perishing because of sin, but God loves everyone, not wishing that any should perish but that all should repent. Yet those who reject Christ repudiate the joy of salvation and condemn themselves to eternal separation from God. To proclaim Jesus as "the Saviour of the world" is not to affirm that all people are either automatically or ultimately saved, still less to affirm that all religions offer salvation in Christ. Rather it is to proclaim God's love for a world of sinners and to invite everyone to respond to him as Saviour and Lord in the wholehearted personal commitment of repentance and faith. Jesus Christ has been exalted above every other name; we long for the day when every knee shall bow to him and every tongue shall confess him Lord (Gal. 1:6-9; Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Tim. 2:5, 6; Acts 4:12; John 3:16-19; 2 Pet. 3:9; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; John 4:42; Matt. 11:28; Eph. 1:20, 21; Phil. 2:9-11).

4. The Nature of Evangelism

To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gifts of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. Our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism, and so is that kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand. But evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Saviour and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God. In issuing the gospel invitation we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus still calls all who would follow him to deny themselves, take up their cross, and identify themselves with his new community. The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his Church and responsible service in the world (1 Cor. 15:3, 4; Acts 2:32-39; John 20:21;

1 Cor. 1:23; 2 Cor. 4:5; 5:11, 20; Luke 14:25-33; Mark 8:34; Acts 2:40,47; Mark 10:43-45).

5. Christian Social Responsibility

We affirm that God is both the Creator and the Judge of all people. We therefore should share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men and women from every kind of oppression. Because men and women are made in the image of God, every person, regardless of race, religion, colour, culture, class, sex, or age, has an intrinsic dignity because of which he or she should be respected and served, not exploited. Here too we express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive. Although reconciliation with other people is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbour and our obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression, and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist. When people receive Christ they are born again into his kingdom and must seek not only to exhibit but also to spread its righteousness in the midst of an unrighteous world. The salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead (Acts 17:26, 31; Gen. 18:25; Isa. 1:17; Psa. 45:7; Gen. 1:26, 27; Jas. 3:9; Lev. 19:18; Luke 6:27, 35; Jas. 2:14-26; John 3:3, 5; Matt. 5:20; 6:33; 2 Cor. 3:18; Jas. 2:20).

6. The Church and Evangelism

We affirm that Christ sends his redeemed people into the world as the Father sent him, and that this calls for a similar deep and costly penetration of the world. We need to break out of our ecclesiastical ghettos and permeate non-Christian society. In the Church's mission of sacrificial service evange-

lism is primary. World evangelization requires the whole Church to take the whole gospel to the whole world. The Church is at the very centre of God's cosmic purpose and is his appointed means of spreading the gospel. But a church which preaches the cross must itself be marked by the cross. It becomes a stumbling block to evangelism when it betrays the gospel or lacks a living faith in God, a genuine love for people, or scrupulous honesty in all things including promotion and finance. The church is the community of God's people rather than an institution, and must not be identified with any particular culture, social or political system, or human ideology (John 17:18; 20:21; Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8; 20:27; Eph. 1:9, 10; 3:9-11; Gal. 6:14, 17; 2 Cor. 6:3, 4; 2 Tim. 2:19-21; Phil. 1:27).

7. Cooperation in Evangelism

We affirm that the Church's visible unity in truth is God's purpose. Evangelism also summons us to unity, because our oneness strengthens our witness, just as our disunity undermines our gospel of reconciliation. We recognize, however, that organisational unity may take many forms and does not necessarily forward evangelism. Yet we who share the same biblical faith should be closely united in fellowship, work, and witness. We confess that our testimony has sometimes been marred by a sinful individualism and needless duplication. We pledge ourselves to seek a deeper unity in truth, worship, holiness, and mission. We urge the development of regional and functional cooperation for the furtherance of the Church's mission, for strategic planning, for mutual encouragement, and for the sharing of resources and experience (John 17:21, 23; Eph. 4:3, 4; John 13:35; Phil. 1:27; John 17:11-23).

8. Churches in Evangelistic Partnership

We rejoice that a new missionary era has dawned. The dominant role of western missions is fast disappearing. God is raising up from the younger churches a great new resource for world evangelization, and is thus demonstrating that the responsibility to evangelise belongs to the whole body of

Christ. All churches should therefore be asking God and themselves what they should be doing both to reach their own area and to send missionaries to other parts of the world. A reevaluation of our missionary responsibility and role should be continuous. Thus a growing partnership of churches will develop and the universal character of Christ's Church will be more clearly exhibited. We also thank God for agencies which labor in Bible translation, theological education, the mass media, Christian literature, evangelism, missions, church renewal, and other specialist fields. They too should engage in constant self-examination to evaluate their effectiveness as part of the Church's mission (Rom. 1:8; Phil. 1:5; 4:15; Acts 13:1-3; 1 Thess. 1:6-8).

9. The Urgency of the Evangelistic Task

More than 2,700 million people, which is more than two-thirds of all humanity, have yet to be evangelised. We are ashamed that so many have been neglected; it is a standing rebuke to us and to the whole Church. There is now, however, in many parts of the world an unprecedented receptivity to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are convinced that this is the time for churches and para-church agencies to pray earnestly for the salvation of the unreached and to launch new efforts to achieve world evangelization. A reduction of foreign missionaries and money in an evangelised country may sometimes be necessary to facilitate the national church's growth in self-reliance and to release resources for unevangelised areas. Missionaries should flow ever more freely from and to all six continents in a spirit of humble service. The goal should be, by all available means and at the earliest possible time, that every person will have the opportunity to hear, understand, and to receive the good news. We cannot hope to attain this goal without sacrifice. All of us are shocked by the poverty of millions and disturbed by the injustices which cause it. Those of us who live in affluent circumstances accept our duty to develop a simple life-style in order to contribute more generously to both relief and evangelism (John 9:4; Matt. 9:35-38; Rom. 9:1-3; 1 Cor.

9:19-23; Mark 16:15; Isa. 58:6, 7; Jas. 1:27; 2:1-9; Matt. 25:31-46; Acts 2:44, 45; 4:34, 35).

10. Evangelism and Culture

The development of strategies for world evangelization calls for imaginative pioneering methods. Under God, the result will be the rise of churches deeply rooted in Christ and closely related to their culture. Culture must always be tested and judged by Scripture. Because men and women are God's creatures, some of their culture is rich in beauty and goodness. Because they are fallen, all of it is tainted with sin and some of it is demonic. The gospel does not presuppose the superiority of any culture to another, but evaluates all cultures according to its own criteria of truth and righteousness, and insists on moral absolutes in every culture. Missions have all too frequently exported with the gospel an alien culture and churches have sometimes been in bondage to culture rather than to Scripture. Christ's evangelists must humbly seek to empty themselves of all but their personal authenticity in order to become the servants of others, and churches must seek to transform and enrich culture, all for the glory of God (Mark 7:8, 9, 13; Gen. 4:21, 22; 1 Cor. 9:19-23; Phil. 2:5-7; 2 Cor. 4:5).

11. Education and Leadership

We confess that we have sometimes pursued church growth at the expense of church depth, and divorced evangelism from Christian nurture. We also acknowledge that some of our missions have been too slow to equip and encourage national leaders to assume their rightful responsibilities. Yet we are committed to indigenous principles, and long that every church will have national leaders who manifest a Christian style of leadership in terms not of domination but of service. We recognise that there is a great need to improve theological education, especially for church leaders. In every nation and culture there should be an effective training programme for pastors and laity in doctrine, discipleship, evangelism, nurture, and

service. Such training programmes should not rely on any stereotyped methodology but should be developed by creative local initiatives according to biblical standards (Col. 1:27, 28; Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5, 9; Mark 10:42-45; Eph. 4:11, 12).

12. Spiritual Conflict

We believe that we are engaged in constant spiritual warfare with the principalities and powers of evil, who are seeking to overthrow the Church and frustrate its task of world evangelization. We know our need to equip ourselves with God's armour and to fight this battle with the spiritual weapons of truth and prayer. For we detect the activity of our enemy, not only in false ideologies outside the Church, but also inside it in false gospels which twist Scripture and put people in the place of God. We need both watchfulness and discernment to safeguard the biblical gospel. We acknowledge that we ourselves are not immune to worldliness of thoughts and action, that is, to a surrender to secularism. For example, although careful studies of church growth, both numerical and spiritual, are right and valuable, we have sometimes neglected them. At other times, desirous to ensure a response to the gospel, we have compromised our message, manipulated our hearers through pressure techniques, and become unduly preoccupied with statistics or even dishonest in our use of them. All this is worldly. The Church must be in the world; the world must not be in the Church (Eph. 6:12; 2 Cor. 4:3, 4; Eph. 6:11, 13-18; 2 Cor. 10:3-5; 1 John 2:18-26; 4:1-3; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2; John 17:15).

13. Freedom and Persecution

It is the God-appointed duty of every government to secure conditions of peace, justice, and liberty in which the Church may obey God, serve the Lord Jesus Christ, and preach the gospel without interference. We therefore pray for the leaders of nations and call upon them to guarantee freedom of thought and conscience, and freedom to practise and propagate religion in accordance with the will of God and as set forth in The Universal

Declaration of Human Rights. We also express our deep concern for all who have been unjustly imprisoned, and especially for those who are suffering for their testimony to the Lord Jesus. We promise to pray and work for their freedom. At the same time we refuse to be intimidated by their fate. God helping us, we too will seek to stand against injustice and to remain faithful to the gospel, whatever the cost. We do not forget the warnings of Jesus that persecution is inevitable (1 Tim. 1:1-4; Acts 4:19; 5:29; Col. 3:24; Heb. 13:1-3; Luke 4:18; Gal. 5:11; 6:12; Matt. 5:10-12; John 15:18-21).

14. The Power of the Holy Spirit

We believe in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Father sent his Spirit to bear witness to his Son; without his witness ours is futile. Conviction of sin, faith in Christ, new birth, and Christian growth are all his work. Further, the Holy Spirit is a missionary spirit; thus evangelism should arise spontaneously from a Spirit-filled church. A church that is not a missionary church is contradicting itself and quenching the Spirit. Worldwide evangelization will become a realistic possibility only when the Spirit renews the Church in truth and wisdom, faith, holiness, love, and power. We therefore call upon all Christians to pray for such a visitation of the sovereign Spirit of God that all his fruit may appear in all his people and that all his gifts may enrich the body of Christ. Only then will the whole world become a fit instrument in his hands, that the whole earth may hear his voice (1 Cor. 2:4; John 15:26, 27; 16:8-11; 1 Cor. 12:3; John 3:6-8; 2 Cor. 3:18; John 7:37-39; 1 Thess. 5:19; Acts 1:8; Psa. 85:4-7; 67:1-3; Gal. 5:22, 23; 1 Cor. 12:4-31; Rom. 12:3-8).

15. The Return of Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly, in power and glory, to consummate his salvation and his judgment. This promise of his coming is a further spur to our evangelism, for we remember his words that the gospel must first be

preached to all nations. We believe that the interim period between Christ's ascension and return is to be filled with the mission of the people of God, who have no liberty to stop before the end. We also remember his warning that false Christs and false prophets will arise as precursors of the final Antichrist. We therefore reject as a proud, self-confident dream the notion that people can ever build a utopia on earth. Our Christian confidence is that God will perfect his kingdom, and we look forward with eager anticipation to that day, and to the new heaven and earth in which righteousness will dwell and God will reign forever. Meanwhile, we rededicate ourselves to the service of Christ and of people in joyful submission to his authority over the whole of our lives (Mark 14:62; Heb. 9:28; Mark 13:10; Acts 1:8-11; Matt. 28:20; Mark 13:21-23; John 2:18; 4:1-3; Luke 12:32; Rev. 21:1-5; 2 Pet. 3:13; Matt. 28:18).

Conclusion

Therefore, in the light of this our faith and our resolve, we enter into a solemn covenant with God and with each other, to pray, to plan, and to work together for the evangelization of the whole world. We call upon others to join us. May God help us by his grace and for his glory to be faithful to this our covenant! Amen, Alleluia!

(Source: "The Lausanne Covenant," <http://www.lausanne.org/covenant>.)

75. Iguassu Affirmation of the World Evangelical Fellowship, 1999

Preamble

We have convened as 160 mission practitioners, missiologists, and church leaders from 53 countries, under the World Evangelical Fellowship Missions Commission in Foz de Iguassu, Brazil, on October 10-15, 1999, to: (1) Reflect together on the challenges and opportunities facing world missions at the dawn of the new millennium; (2) Review the different streams of twentieth-century evangelical missiology and practice, especially since the 1974