

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Vox Evangelica* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_vox_evangelica.php

The Theology of the Christian Mission: A Review Article¹

John Savage

[p.70]

Time was when missionaries pointed to the Great Commission and obeyed it precisely because Christ's word said, 'Go'. They had no time to delve into theory or doctrinal principles. Their motives and message were simple. Their methods and movements were largely dictated by the circumstances of their labour. Theologians, on the other hand, were not affected by the missionary movement. There seemed to be little or no call to study the complex ecclesiological problems of the missionary situation. The question of the relation between theology and mission was scarcely raised. Theologians and missionaries moved in different fields.

Now, however, the atmosphere has changed. Missionaries everywhere are seeking for a systematic theology of mission which will help guide them in the difficult responsibility they bear in the name of Christ. Theologians are becoming increasingly involved in missionary questions, because of the growing prominence of doctrinal, ecclesiastical and ecumenical problems in the worldwide Church.

The validity of the Christian mission is being questioned today. The multiplicity of missionary organizations and the relative paucity of 'results' have caused adverse critics to call the whole business 'a racket'. The resurgence of non-Christian religions has thrown into relief the fact that, far from storming the citadels of resistance to the Gospel, much missionary effort has been a series of disjointed skirmishes on the periphery. The emergence of new independent nations, with their respective manifestations of nationalism and corresponding religious associations, has challenged the motive of Christian missions, particularly when the message they bring is associated in any way with an alien culture.

The study of missionary literature leads to the conclusion that the Church's world mission is based on the plight of men, on the need of the world; that it is composed of a series of organizations, each dependent upon human initiative and enthusiasm; that it is conducted by appeals for service, prayer and support, the response to which depends largely upon the spiritual and emotional state of the hearers or readers. Is this, in effect, the valid basis of missionary work?

These challenges and others summon Christians to a re-examination of the foundations of missionary labour. What were the considerations which initially moved the Apostles and have subsequently turned the Church out toward the whole world? Were they philanthropic—sympathy with the ignorant, the diseased, the dispossessed, the lost? Or were they theological—harmony with the great redemptive purpose of God? What place does the Christian mission have in the total revelation of God? On what does the Christian mission rest?

¹ *The Theology of the Christian Mission*: edited by Gerald H. Anderson (London: SCM, 1961). The page references in the text are to this volume.

What is its authority and value? What may it hope to accomplish? What methods should it employ?

Such questions reveal an immediate need to return to the Bible and to restate

[p.72]

our theology of mission in terms of God's unchanging nature meeting man's universal need, expressed in a way which is relevant to an aggressively non-Christian world. In a lecture to the London Bible College, Bruce Nicholls, of the Union Biblical Seminary, Yeotmal, India, stated that, among the fundamental questions which demand an unequivocal answer are: 'Who is Jesus Christ and why did He die?' 'Is He *a* way to the truth and life, or the Way?' 'Is He *a* saviour of the world or the Saviour?'²

In an attempt to meet this need, Gerald H. Anderson has gathered contributions from 25 scholars in different parts of the world, in a volume which approaches this vast subject from four angles. The first part of the book contains six papers which view it from the Biblical aspect. The second part comprises three studies which review its historical development. The third has eight contributions on the relation of Christian missions to other religions. In the fourth, eight writers consider various aspects of the theory of the Mission.

In his own introduction to the symposium, Professor Anderson of Manila, Philippines, (to distinguish him from Wilhelm Andersen, whose essay 'Further toward a Theology of Mission' closes the book), surveys the development of the study of this theme thus far in the twentieth century. He mentions the following trends and factors among others: One is that a movement toward a fundamental re-formation of the theology of mission has been gaining momentum. This may be discerned in the type of question asked at missionary conferences, particularly in the major international gatherings from Edinburgh 1910 to Ghana 1957-8. A second factor has been the diversity of Protestant attitudes toward men of other religions. A third trend has been toward a theocentric concept of mission in trinitarian perspective. He concludes his survey by recognizing the inadequacy of the attempts made in recent years formulate to the theology of mission.

The missionary's approach to his task is determined quite considerably by his understanding of man's state and of the nature of his religion. In his essay on 'The Biblical View of Man in his religion', Johannes Blauw, Secretary of the Dutch Missionary Council, makes a Biblical analysis of the position of man before God, and gives brief suggestions for a theological criticism of man's religions (31-41). These religions may be regarded as human answers to God's question, 'Man, where art thou?' God has allowed all nations to walk in their own ways (Acts xiv. 16), to do their own thinking and to make their own answers. Understanding these answers leads to a knowledge of the man himself, in and behind the religions. Only Jesus Christ is from above. In His light, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, the ways of man in his religion are seen to be 'imagination's'. Man, however, can hear the Gospel when the approach is made in terms of his own religious position. While admitting the value of Johannes Blauw's contribution, evangelical scholars may enquire whether he has taken sufficiently into consideration the Biblical description of man as lost, perishing, dead in trespasses and sins.

² Bruce Nicholls, *Missionary Strategy*, 1962.

Eschatology cannot be overlooked as an integral part of the theology of the Christian mission. Some have thought that it has nothing to do with Christian action in the present day and that it has a paralysing effect upon missions. Prof. Oscar Cullmann, of Basel and Paris, shows that, on the contrary, the Biblical hope of the 'end' constitutes the keenest incentive to action (42-54).

[p.73]

Two constitutive elements in Biblical eschatology as a whole are the divine omnipotence by which alone the end will come, and human ignorance of 'the day and the hour' or of 'the times or seasons which the Father has fixed by His own authority'. These elements constitute a spur to Christian fulfilment of the Church's duty in the period to which we belong, and for which the power of the Holy Spirit has been received (Acts i. 7-8). The proclamation of the Gospel to all nations becomes a 'sign' of the end, and integral element in the eschatological plan of full salvation.

In his exegesis of Matthew xxviii. 16-20, as related to the Easter stories found in the other Gospels, Karl Barth demonstrates that the Christian mission arises out of the historical fact of Christ's Resurrection. It is the outcome of His revelation as the One Who held, holds, and will hold all authority. His command to make disciples envisages the founding of the Apostolic church, the existence of which is constantly renewed as listeners become 'apostolic', as new disciples begin to proclaim the good news (63). Because of Christ's presence, the great commission of the risen Lord to make disciples, baptize and teach, is valid until the close of the age.

Searching for the motives which made Paul pursue the missionary task in such an exemplary fashion, Professor Donald G. Miller of Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia, finds that God's own self-revelation in Christ and in Scripture was the primary issue. The fact of His unity and His lordship laid upon Him an inescapable obligation. 'The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him' (Romans x. 12-15). In Athens, Paul was stirred to action by idolatrous challenges to Christ's lordship (Acts xvii. 16, 31). The Gospel is impelled, by its very nature as a revelation, to embrace the whole world. It cannot come to terms with any syncretistic tendency to amalgamate the good in all religions. Paul was moved by the need of man viewed, not from a human perspective, inspired by psychological and sociological analyses. His whole understanding of man was theological. Jesus Christ was for Paul the measure of man's depravity and his potential glory. The futility of man's life in alienation from God and the fact that man is under divine judgment motivated Paul to offer man Christ's deliverance. Paul took the wrath of God seriously. He worked constantly under the stimulus of this motive.

F. N. Davey contributes an essay on the decisive part which the Gospel according to John plays in the Christian mission (86-93). He states that John alone gives an absolute theological framework to the narrative about Jesus. Yet it is expressed in terms of the raw material of fundamental human need, referring to birth, water, wind, eating, drinking, meat, darkness, death. The Fourth Evangelist clarifies the Apostolic approach, showing that there is no authentic part of human life which does not point beyond itself toward Christ. The Gospel reaches men where they are. John, however, is concerned with the opposition between the truth of God and the darkness in which sinful men are in bondage, from which the only deliverance is by the grace of God in Christ apprehended by faith.

The second part of Anderson's book is composed of three historical studies which examine developments among (a) Protestants in general, (b) Free Churches in particular, and (c) Roman Catholics.

William Richey Hogg examines the reasons for the lack of missionary concern

[p.74]

at the time of the Reformation and its subsequent birth and growth up to 1914. He traces the burgeoning of Protestant missions in the nineteenth century back to pietistic movements which emerged almost simultaneously in Germany, Britain and the Thirteen Colonies during the previous century. Francke, at the University of Halle, set forth a world view and missionary concern quite new in Lutheranism. This did not give rise to a sect but produced a new movement within Lutheranism which attracted educated and influential people. Gaining his missionary vision from Francke, Zinzendorf influenced an entire community at Herrnhut to accept missionary responsibility. Whole families went overseas as self-supporting units. The whole Moravian Church became a missionary society with warmhearted zeal. Calvinism's transplantation to American soil brought striking results. Directly confronting 'savages' ignorant of the Gospel, the Calvinists' concern for the souls of men emerged in various missionary work. In Britain, Carey spoke to hearts stirred by the Evangelical awakening. He did not use the term 'foreign missions', knowing only one mission to be Roman carried out on *all* fronts.

The 'Great Century' of the Christian movement, according to Latourette, was from 1815 to 1914. Then came the peak of Western impact upon the non-Western world. Anglican missions flourished in British colonies, Reformed Missions in Dutch colonies, Lutheran missions in German territories, and Roman Missions in the possessions of Latin European countries.

Professor Hogg's colleague at Dallas, Franklin H. Littell, continues the study by pointing out that Western Europe can no longer be taken for granted as the centre of Christendom. The time has passed when 'younger churches' may be considered as minor deposits of European church life. Not only have two world wars and two types of totalitarianism shaken the complacency of European religious establishments at a time when indigenous churches overseas are becoming aware of their identity and independence, but also the centre of support for Christian expansion has shifted. The large majority of Protestant missionaries are now supported by Free Churches in North America and Great Britain, and the major proportion of support for Roman Catholic undertakings is coming from the United States. Professor Littell maintains that the 'younger churches' find themselves in a situation remarkably like that of the early Church. A new period of Church history is at hand for those who will pattern their life on the New Testament.

The development of Mission Theology among Roman Catholics is admirably summed up in a paper contributed by Father Andrew V. Seumoio, O.M.I., who reveals the extent and thoroughness of the work done since 1910, and particularly after the Second World War. His bibliographical notes indicate source material which will afford scope for profitable study.

In the third section of Anderson's work, eight scholars analyse the encounter of Christianity with other faiths, including Communism. This is probably the part of the book which will call for the closest examination and the most careful study.

Ernst Benz of Marburg affirms that the formulation of a new theological understanding of the history of religion is an urgent task. He maintains that the two traditional basic types of approach are no longer adequate, and suggests that two new ways offer themselves to us. First, to make a study of the New

[p.75]

Testament references which indicate that an exclusive claim to absoluteness is not the only attitude to be adopted by Christians toward non-Christian religions. In this connection, he quotes Acts xiv. 8-18 which the Roman Catholic theologian Père Jean Danielou has made the basis for his doctrine of the *révélation cosmique*. Paul emphasises here the continuity of the self-witness of the living God throughout all generations. Benz also refers to Luke xiii. 29 ff., Matthew xxv. 21, and vii. 21-23. The second way is to address our questions to those who have come into personal Christian conviction and experience after having grown up within one of the non-Christian religions. The old approach has been made by theologians who did not know those religions from within.

Discussing the problems created by the resurgence of non-Christian religions (148-157), Paul D. Devanandan points out that, no matter how widely they may differ from one another in their basic credal affirmations, they are all agreed in their opposition to the missionary expansion of Christianity. Moreover, they are all being challenged by Communism. They call for inter-religious cooperation, suggesting that Christians should give up all talk of mutual exclusion, in order to find a formula of comprehension which will make for unity in diversity. Much of the religious vocabulary which is used by Christians and non-Christians appears to be the same. Is the fear of syncretism driving Christians to the opposite danger of safeguarding the one talent of their faith so zealously that they come to the point of hiding it? (Matthew xxv. 18, 24-29). Dr. D. T. Niles has said that the talk about syncretism has led, in India, to an inclination towards 'ghettoism' in the Churches.

Twentieth century Christianity's concern with Communism introduces a new phase in our relation to non-Christian religions. In his paper on the encounter with Communism, Dr. Frank Wilson Price, Director of the Missionary Research Library, New York, points out that this militant ideology in action challenges all faiths. To the orthodox Marxist, every form of religion is an opiate and will ultimately disappear in the Communist society. Christianity, therefore, finds itself standing alongside Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and other religions, in opposition to a self-sufficient, materialistic and atheistic creed. Although Dr. Price gives ten valuable points which Christians everywhere should bear in mind when approaching Communists, he omits the crucial issue of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If He is risen from the dead, and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel, then the Communist perspective is false. Time, and the things which exist in time, are not the only realities. God has broken into history in the Person of Jesus Christ and the horizontal relationships between men are now determined by the primary vertical relationship between God and man. That relationship determines the essential principles of right and wrong, and applies them in all circumstances. Hence, while Christians may sympathize profoundly with certain Communist ideals, admire some of their moral reforms, and appreciate their group

discipline, we cannot harmonize our ethical principles with theirs. We can only match them with something higher and better. 'We must obey God rather than man'.

Japan provides a remarkable laboratory for the study of new religions. Some 700 of them have registered with the government since the last war. At least five of them have won more than 600,000 adherents each. Reiyukai, a Nichiren sect, alone has gained a membership of 2,300,000, or more than four times the

[p.76]

total Christian population. Masatoshi Doi, Professor of Church History and Ecumenics, Kyoto, indicates the causes of this. After giving historical and pragmatic reasons, he focuses on the theological problem. The Japanese Church is noted for its high theological attainment in comparison with Churches in other mission lands. Yet Protestant evangelism in post-war Japan, has not been effective, in spite of the slogan 'Let the Gospel penetrate into the masses!', whereas hundreds of thousands of people are thronging to fanatical religions which promise to meet their immediate needs (168-178).

The essay to which most theologians will probably make a bee-line is A. C. Bouquet's on *Revelation and the Divine Logos* (183-198). He puts forward a series of six propositions, each of which he considers in logical sequence. He then tries to answer three questions which, by their nature, appear to have been put to him in India. In so doing, he emphasizes the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth. 'His crucifixion when Pontius Pilate was procurator of Judea is completely attested; and whatever may have been and are the exact nature of the post-Resurrection appearances, the evidence is clear enough that they have taken place.... Thus the career of Jesus as the *Logos Incarnate* is not a record of what people would like to have happened, but of what actually did happen. It is not an edifying fiction, but a supreme event in the life of the Eternal Deity... by which something decisive for the human race was achieved' (196).

Christians recognize that the New Testament Gospel is a fulfilment of the Old Testament revelation rather than a radical displacement of it. The question raised by Professor L. Harold De Wolf of Boston, Massachusetts, in his paper on 'The Interpenetration of Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions', is whether other religions contributed to the Christian religion (199-212). He mentions, for example, the evidence of influence from Greek sources in the New Testament, the amalgam of Christian and pagan elements in the religious life of Europe, and the witness to a syncretism of customary rites which is found in the Church calendar, notably, 25th December and Easter. He finds examples of Christian influence among the devotees and institutions of non-Christian religions, Hindus and Buddhists being mentioned specifically.

Studying the theological issues concerning this interpenetration of religions, he outlines four main policies which have been recommended or attitudes which have been adopted: (1) Total rejection of non-Christian religions, with the purpose of radical displacement; (2) Relativistic syncretism; (3) Discontinuity, and (4) Fulfilment.³ De Wolf gives arguments for what he calls

³ See A. C. Bouquet, *The Christian Faith and the Non-Christian Religions*, 1958; E. C. Dewick, *The Christian Attitude to other Religions*, 1953; and Hendrik Kraemer, *The Christian Mission in a Non-Christian World*, 1938; *idem*, *Religion and the Christian Faith*, 1956; *idem*, *The Christian Faith and Non-Christian Religions*, 1958.

a carefully discriminating doctrine of the fourth. 'As Jesus came... not to abolish the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them, so His Gospel comes today to the laws and prophets of other religions to fulfil them.' An examination of his appeal to the Biblical testimony shows that an important part of his argument rests on the exegesis of John i. 9. His appeal to the testimony of first-generation Christians in several regions of Africa is significant. 'Many of the missionaries who had evangelized those regions had believed in radical displacement, but in the experience of their converts the Gospel had come nevertheless as fulfillment' (211) It would be helpful to have this confirmed by other competent observers. The point, however, which requires most careful consideration occurs during Dr. Wolf's appeal for a new understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. 'If God has revealed Himself to men solely as the Son and only in

[p.77]

Jesus of Nazareth', he concludes that we cannot hope to find any sign of His revelation of Himself where there is no knowledge of Jesus. The inference from this would be that God has left Himself without witness in most of the world through most of the centuries. De Wolf maintains that this is implied by the logic of Kraemer's theory of discontinuity.

The fourth section of the book is taken up with a restatement of missionary evangelism for our day. Canon Max Warren leads the discussion by a paper on 'The Meaning of Identification' (229-238). He clarifies our Christian task as being a twofold one. First, the Church has to identify itself with the world as Christ did, and with the same purpose of redemption. Secondly, the Christians of the West need to identify themselves with the Christians of the East. He believes that the phrase 'identification with' provides a clue to a new and creative relationship. What this may involve is to be understood from the pattern set before us by Jesus Christ our Lord as seen in Philippians ii. 5-8, Psalms xl. 6-8; 2 Corinthians v. 21; Galatians iii. 13-14. The study of these passages should produce an attitude of mind such as can enter creatively into the human situation in which missionaries find themselves. Identification, however, must also be with the will of God as revealed in Christ. Working along the line of His purpose gives meaning and direction and poise to life.

The need for a book on the Theology of the Christian Mission is undeniable. The importance of this particular work is that it brings together contributions from men of different nationalities with vast experience in a variety of ecclesiastical traditions and missionary associations. Eleven are from the United States and five from Britain. Three are from Asia and only one from Africa. Future books of this nature will undoubtedly contain more insight from overseas. Within an enriching variety of treatment there are arresting divergencies of approach, particularly to the problems and perils of syncretism. While most of the book will be useful to laymen, some contributors have fallen into the use of a jargon which seems remote from reality. This is a pity, if the gap between theological thought and missionary practice is ever to be bridged.

The student is now confronted with the question of whether Anderson's book meets the burning issues of the hour in the Christian Mission. How far has it helped us to understand the relationship between Theology and Mission in the contemporary situation? Are those engaged in Mission convinced that a sound Biblical theology is vitally relevant to the task to which

they are committed? Is the book itself informed by Bishop L. Newbiggin's affirmation that 'a theology of mission lives from studying the Bible'?⁴

Whether the book is adequate or otherwise, it draws attention to the place of theological study in the strategy of missionary outreach. At a time of radical change, it is not sufficient to say 'the experience of our mission teaches us that...' Newbiggin says, in his foreword to the volume, 'nothing will suffice save radical rethinking of the nature of our mission. Such rethinking must include both a realistic understanding of the new facts with which the mission has to deal, and a humble return to the source of the mission in the Gospel' (xiii).

Scriptural principles underlie practical problems which beset the Christian mission. Tact, intuition and a clear appreciation of the difficulties involved cannot point to their solution. Only the Word of God can lead to practices which overcome the impossibilities in the human situation and discharge the

[p.78]

responsibilities of missionary work. The theology of mission is the study of the Apostolic work of the Church and the basic principles of missionary work. It includes investigation of the most profitable God-ordained methods of preaching the Gospel which lead to the conversion of those who are outside Christ. Its aim is to think about the Gospel and interpret it in the light of each succeeding age, under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Today, it calls for the study of the various religions, cults, and ideologies which battle for the mind and soul of man in the lands of the younger churches. And it demands a statement of the Christian faith which meets the challenge of the theological climate which prevails where resurgent religions and Communism are predominating factors, A true theology of mission will give us a Biblical evaluation of religions. Setting out with the conviction that the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is unique and universal, we may ask how a Christian is to approach those who profess or practise a religion which they regard as the way to God? Are non-Christian religions to be viewed as a search for God or are they an evidence of estrangement from Him? Do the forces behind such religions come from above or from beneath? Are their practices a debasing of purer designs? Are they the degeneration of a people's earlier response to God's self-revelation through nature, providence or conscience? The tendency has been to swing between two extremes. One is to take a non-Christian religion at its best and to show how its quest is fulfilled in Christ. The other is to denounce everything non-Christian as valueless. There has been a tendency for Christians to underestimate other religions through concentrating on certain obvious features of the behaviour and attitude of 'popular' religion. When discussing various types of Christian approach to those of other religions and emphasizing the significance of the testimony given by converts from these religions, Bishop Stephen Neill raised the thought-provoking question as to whether Christ must not be the Destroyer before He can be the Fulfiller, the Saviour. It was there in the Christian's personal experience of passing from death to life. Must it not be so in the case of those who pass from their respective religious systems to Christ?⁵

B. R. Easter writes that, standing on Scripture in its assessment of and approach to non-Christian faiths, Reformed Christians see the reality of God's general revelation in creation,

⁴ Lesslie Newbiggin, *One Body, one Gospel, one World; The Christian Mission Today*, 1958.

⁵ S. Neill, *Creative Tension*, 1959.

history and human life. They regard other religions as a rejection of the revealing God, i.e. a deliberate denial, exchange and turning from Him to darkness and chaos. General revelation now brings guilt and wrath (Romans i. 18 f.). They recognize God's present activity among those religions in Common Grace. They stress the absoluteness and uniqueness of the Biblical revelation in Christ, bringing men the reconciliation, and the new light and power, that they need. They emphasize also the importance of a loving, personal approach to those of other faiths—appreciating the other's position, feeling united with them in sin and need of grace, loving them as our neighbours depending on God's Word to convict and lead to faith.⁶

Another issue on which an adequate theology must inform missionaries is that of nationalism and the Church's approach to the nations. How are the nations to be regarded? Are they among the orders appointed by God for human society, or are they forces organized in independence of Him and, in some cases, in actual hostility to His will? Christians have tended to take opposing views, according to their interpretation of the Scriptures and according

[p.79]

to the trends of the times in which they lived. Scripture, however, makes it plain that nations as such shall ultimately bring glory and honour into the heavenly city. To this end, the Church must exercise her proper ministry among them, at times saying an emphatic 'No' to the demands of nation or state, and, at other times, serving as its spiritual illumination and dynamic.

It is becoming clear that, if the whole world is to be evangelized, missionary work must be undertaken by the whole Church. This constitutes a challenge to missionaries and missionary societies to find their proper place in a true theology of the Church. It calls for a forward-looking understanding of the nature of the Church, adequate to the crises, the opportunities, and the unexplored possibilities of the period on which we are entering. On the practical level, it will demand team work of the highest order between those who have become known as the older and the younger Churches. Such partnership is not easy. Two cannot walk together unless they are in agreement. There are characteristics in both partners which are open to misunderstanding. Each must, therefore, be willing to hear what the Spirit is saying to the Churches about these matters and repent of the things which grieve Him and cause resentment between Christian brethren. If there is to be oneness in obeying Christ's command, there must be the kind of openness between us which will lead to brokenness at the foot of the Cross.

The emphasis on the Crucifixion and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus, and the Person and ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Theology of the Christian Mission must be definite. It is only as the love of God is shed abroad in the hearts of forgiven sinners by the Holy Ghost that there is an outflow of Spirit-prompted witness to the world. In his doctrinal dissertation for the Department of Mission of the Free University, Amsterdam, Harry R. Boer's thesis⁷ is that the real impetus of the Church's missionary outreach is to be found in the Holy Spirit's descent at Pentecost. He, therefore, emphasized the need for renewed reflection on 'the meaning of the Holy Spirit for the missionary proclamation of the Church. He it is who bears

⁶ In *Puritan Papers*, 1962.

⁷ H. R. Boer, *Pentecost and Missions*, 1961. Boer's original dissertation, published as *Pentecost and the Missionary Witness of the Church*, n.d., contains the full documentation.

the witness of the Church. His is the life that her witness transmits. His the unity that makes the Church one.' In practical application, he asks, 'Have we in our mission work always laid the emphasis where it needed most to be placed? Do those who have come to Christ through our witness have an adequate understanding of the witnessing task that has now wholly fallen, or may soon wholly fall, upon them?'

The future of missions will depend, under God, on the solidity of their Biblical foundations. But will a book on Theology help people to rediscover these foundations? Hendrik Kraemer asks the question in a letter to Gerald Anderson explaining why he was reluctant to collaborate in his work by writing an essay on 'Syncretism as a Theological Problem for Missions' (179-182). The conviction has grown in him that such essays do not change missionary thinking or missionary strategy. They are read, registered as the writer's particular opinion, and then put on a library shelf. Theology and missionary strategy are thus kept neatly separate.

He maintains that this tendency is due to an attitude toward theological problems which regards them as theoretical affairs. To Kraemer, however, they are eminently practical matters demanding decisions followed by action. A sound theological conception is not simply a matter of intellectual interest,

[p.80]

but rather the most practical thing in the world. The indissoluble oneness of clear thought with vigorous action belongs to the essence of true theology, especially in relation to the Church's missionary calling.

In the meantime, he could not overcome his aversion to write 'one article more'. He did not believe in its usefulness. 'What I hope and pray for', he added, 'is the awakening of the responsible agencies to the fundamental necessities'. On that note, it may be wise to end.