

Books on Missiology in Hewitson Library

This is a brief summary of the following books on missiology in the Hewitson Library, Knox College.

A Theology of Mission - Challenges and Opportunities in North East Asia, Gaylan Kent Mathieson

Joining in With the Spirit – Connecting World Church and Local Mission, Kirsteen Kim

Invitation to World Missions – A Trinitarian Missiology for the 21st Century, Timothy Tennent

Asian Handbook for Theological Education and Ecumenism, Hope Antone (editor)

Short Term Mission – An Ethnography of Christian Travel Narrative and Experience, Brian Howell

Global Church – Reshaping our Conversations, Renewing our Mission, Revitalising our Churches,

Graham Hill

1. A Theology of Mission - Challenges and Opportunities in North East Asia, Gaylan Kent Mathieson

This book explores the challenges of mission in North East Asia, which, despite a Christian presence dating back to very early times, still remains largely untouched by the gospel. The author contrasts this with Buddhism which originated in India, and accommodated itself to cultures beyond its own and is widespread throughout the region. Mathieson provides a solid Trinitarian theology of mission, explores the approaches of Buddhist and Christian mission respectively, and offers suggestions for Christian engagement with the cultures of East Asia.

2. Joining in With the Spirit – Connecting World Church and Local Mission, Kirsteen Kim

Quoting one of the references on the back cover:

“Kirsteen works from the particular perspective of the Holy Spirit without losing the fundamental Trinitarian basis of most recent missiology. Her sources are broad, her scope is global – this book is good news for anyone who wants to find out what mission means today.”

3. Invitation to World Missions – A Trinitarian Missiology for the 21st Century, Timothy Tennent

This is an excellent book for anyone who wants to seriously engage with the missional context the church is facing today. Tennent summarises the impact of what he calls seven megatrends shaping twenty first century mission. For example:

1. Christendom has collapsed and 21st century mission must be reconceptualised on new assumptions. He says, “The structures built on the paradigms of Christendom are no longer viable.” In particular he highlights three key paradigm shifts, which has seen the church “move” in the following ways:
 - i) From the centre to the periphery
 - ii) From “Jerusalem” to “Athens” (the place of scepticism, debate, dialogue and enquiry amidst competing deities)
 - iii) From a geographic, particularist identity to a global identity.

The other megatrends he discusses are:

2. The rise of Post-Modernism – Theological, Cultural and Ecclesiastical Crisis
3. The Collapse of “The West Reaches the Rest” paradigm.
4. The Changing Face of Global Christianity. There are now six sending and receiving continents, and of all Christian missionaries serving in other contexts it is estimated that only 12 - 15% are from the West.
5. The emergence of a fourth branch of Christianity, with the rise of independent churches and groups of Christians not aligned to either Roman Catholic, Protestant or Orthodox traditions.
6. Globalisation, Immigration, Urbanisation and New Technologies
7. A Deeper Ecumenism

There is plenty of food for thought here in this well researched and stimulating book.

4. Asian Handbook for Theological Education and Ecumenism, Hope Antone (editor)

This is an extensive coverage of the many aspects of Christianity in Asia from its beginnings to the the present day, including an article by the PCANZ’s John England on the origins of Asian ecumenism. As John says, Asian Christianity is the other half, often unknown, of the Christian story. This massive book is in six parts and covers most topics anyone with an interest in this field would be looking for. It would be worth dipping into for anyone researching on the topic or interested to find out more about this lesser known side of the Christian story.

5. Global Church – Reshaping our Conversations, Renewing our Mission, Revitalising our Churches, Graham Hill

In this book Graham Hill argues that the church in the west needs to have a greater awareness of the movement of Christianity worldwide, and to understand the extent to which the future of Christianity will be shaped by the church in the Majority (developing) World. His statistics are compelling – quoting Stephen Bevans he says, “By 2025 fully two-thirds of Christians will live in Africa, Latin America and Asia ... The “average Christian” today is female, black, and lives in a Brazilian favela or an African village.” He predicts that by 2025 there will be 160 million Christians in China; growing to 247 million in 2030.

He quotes Philip Jenkins: “We are currently living through one of the transforming moments in the history of religion worldwide. Over the last century, the centre of gravity in the Christian world has shifted inexorably away from Europe, southward, to Africa and Latin America, and eastward toward Asia. Today, the largest Christian communities on the planet are to be found in those regions.”

Hill goes on to explore what this means for the future of the church, making a case for a new narrative, inviting these diverse voices into the conversation; and the emergence of a new global missional theology.

For example:

Embracing a New Narrative

“The future of the global church exists in dynamic and global conversations. We need to replace Eurocentric and Americentric worldviews with a global, missional worldview.”

The New Narrative:

Christ’s global missional church needs a global missional worldview. Western Christians need to pay careful attention to the future of the church as it emerges from the Majority World, and vice versa. The truth is that the future isn’t emerging from any **one** context. It is emerging globally. And it is especially emerging from the Majority World. Western Christians can learn so much from their sisters and brothers and majority world and indigenous cultures.”

A Global Missional Theology will include Majority World and indigenous and western voices in the conversation, making it robust.

Hill draws widely on other authors and refers to other thinkers and writers who have contributed/are contributing to the conversation.

This stimulating book is well worth a read for anyone interested in the reflecting on how the shape of Christianity has changed and will continue to change – and how we can both engage with and contribute to those changes.

6. Short Term Mission – An Ethnography of Christian Travel Narrative and Experience, Brian Howell

This is the first book I have read on the subject of short-term mission. This is quite a phenomenon in the USA where apparently over a million people are involved in some form of short-term mission annually. So the main emphasis of the book is addressing the nature of short term mission from this North American perspective. However, there is plenty of good content here for those who are involved in similar experiences from New Zealand. I like the emphasis on re-thinking short term mission and re-educating about the aim and purpose of these programmes.

For this reason I have written a fuller review of this book, concentrating on a summary of Chapter Nine, which is entitled “Just Bring Greetings, or “Creating a New Narrative for Short Term Mission.”

Creating a New Narrative for Short Term Mission

In this chapter Howell discusses some of the different attitudes that are held towards the philosophy of short term mission (STM) and offers a new way of viewing it. Not everyone is in favour of short-term mission. Some stakeholders have suggested that it should be abandoned. For example, Schwarz (2003) says:

“The cultural meanings of tourism are fraught with troubling inequalities and dynamics of power that invariably pave over local identities and autonomy in favour of homogenous tourist culture.”

“STM travellers project or imagine the lives of those to whom they minister” and have a tendency to “romanticise them.’

Howell however is of the opinion that short term mission has value for both travelling and receiving groups and offers a way forward. He suggests that a basic, simple understanding of the purpose of short term mission could include:

- 1) To create lasting change for those travelling
- 2) Accomplish good purposes in line with orthodox understandings of mission.

People often talk about how STMs are meaningful. But what are the “right meanings?” He argues that STMs have value if these outcomes are achieved (and that the outcomes be permanent):

- Increased passion for mission and evangelism
- A desire to give more money to mission
- A desire to give more money for development
- Increased Christian faithfulness

Reforming Short Term Mission (STM)

So if STM’s are to be promoted for the right reasons, and have these preferred outcomes, effective preparation is important ... “Beneficial or detrimental dynamics of these trips is dependent on the training of the participants and the administration of the event.”

Unprepared short term travellers “see everything and understand nothing.”

Good preparation helps to change expectations and experiences of STM travellers through an increase in “cultural intelligence,” and enhances their ability to interact effectively across cultures.

Researchers of STM’s describe a common structure to the experience, being pre-trip, the trip itself, and post-trip. While preparation is important, Terence Linhart (2005, 2006) emphasises the importance of the post-trip stage, to reflect on the experience more deeply than is usually allowed for.

Howell says we must pay attention to the structures, systems and institutions in which the educational practices around short-term mission take place; which are at the heart of the power and control of STM.

“Just Bring Greetings”

Daniel Kiringiye, an Assistant Bishop of the Anglican Church in Uganda affirmed the call of many STM reformers to reorient their trips around listening as opposed to projects or activities. In response to a question about how best to engage he said, “Just bring greetings.”

So how can one pitch a trip to bring greetings as short term mission? “The guiding STM narrative can do little with a trip where the primary activity is greeting. For this reason, some church leaders have continued to call for the word *mission* to be dropped.”

Oscar Muriu, a Kenyan pastor said:

“We don’t call them short term missions any more. We call them short term learning opportunities. The problem with calling it a mission is that it implies an agenda. There is something we need to

come and do for you, or **to** you, to better your life. In reality that doesn't happen in two weeks. Life is far more complex than that." (Blumhoeffler and Crouch, 2008).

The challenge is in the fundamental institutional arrangements for these trips:

They are initiated, funded (controlled) and conceptualised by the travelling group – in accordance with a missionary model of action and exchange.

- Long term relationships with denominations and exchange programmes mitigate these problems. Greater partnership and collaboration is the answer.

Comments from a Paraguayan pastor and professor are instructive:

"Keep coming ... to live with us, to get to know us, have fellowship together and thus, living together, to learn from one another and teach one another."

Missions and Power

Some quotes for reflection and consideration:

"(Churches in developing nations) do not need more rich Christians coming to paint their church and make them feel inadequate. The **do** need more humble people coming to share their lives."

"By recognising the cultural dynamics of short term missions, and then reshaping them through an understanding of how culture changes, these travels may begin to have more lasting and substantive effects on everyone involved."

My (Phil King) comment:

There is a power relationship inherent in these encounters. If you were to reverse it and have your youth teams /mission teams visit here from Vanuatu etc, who would you want to set the agenda; what would you want them to do?

- *Phil King*
PCANZ Global Mission