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Evangelical and Frontier Mission Perspectives on the Global Progress of the Gospel

Regnum Books, Oxford, 2011, 312 pages.

In November of 2011, in the edition of Regnum Books International, the book *Evangelical and Frontier Mission Perspectives on the Global Progress of the Gospel* was published and placed on the market. The story of this book begins with the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910 where Christians from major Protestant denominations and missionary societies gathered together to discuss the nature of Christian missions. After 100 years, a similar event occurred in Edinburgh and this book is the result of that event. Also, it is one of the books that was published as a part of the Regnum Edinburgh 2010 Centenary Series. This book is a collection of 19 articles from various authors divided into six major sections depending on the areas of study/interest, plus it includes the Tokyo 2010 Declaration about Making Disciples of Every People in our Generation.

The book starts with a foreword by A. Scot Moreau (who is one of the editors) in which he explains the scope and aim of the book. The first two articles are part of the historical section and discuss Christian missions in the last 100 years. The first article, written by A. Scott Moreau, discusses the development of evangelical missions in the North American setting. The aim is to present the story of evangelical missions from 1910 to the present, and to provide a better understanding of the Lausanne Movement and the reasons Lausanne chose to celebrate the centenary of the 1910 Edinburgh Conference separately from the Ecumenical Movement. The second article, written by David Taylor, discusses the frontier mission movement in the last 30 years between the missions conferences in Edinburgh 1980 and Tokyo 2010. The author analyzes changes and successes in evangelical missions toward unreached people and the possible future of such endeavors.

The second section, called “Unreached Peoples Insights,” contains four articles. The first article, written by Greg Parsons, informs readers about the history and impact of the Fuller School of World Missions. This article, in the editor’s words, presents “a significant case study for those who would understand American evangelicals and frontier mission” (55). The second article, written by Ezra Sargunam and Andrew Swamidoss, is dedicated to Donald A. McGavran and Ralph D. Winter. In this short article, the two writers talk about their personal memories and the influences that McGavran and Winter had had on their lives. The third article is dedicated to a history of the Perspectives Course in which Yvonne W. Huneycutt describes major trends in American culture and in missions leading up to the mid-seventies, its early development up to 1981,

and the future of the expansion and development of the Perspectives Course in the twenty-first century. The fourth article, by Alan R. Johnson, talks about developments in Pentecostal missions and their relatively slow response toward unreached people groups, and suggests the ways in which Pentecostal churches can use their strengths to reach unreached people by paying attention to certain concepts that will sharpen the focus and practice of Pentecostal missions.

The third section is dedicated to international initiatives, that is, to the mission movements in Africa, Korea and China. The first article comes from Moussa Bongoyok in which he discusses how the concept of “unreached people groups” has impacted African theological education and missions in the French speaking part of Africa. Describing the history of this development, Bongoyok also talks about the possible future impact of theological schools that prepare people for ministry. The second article, written by Timothy K. Park, talks about the history and growth of the Korean mission movement. The history of the Korean mission movement is divided into three periods starting from 1907 and ending with the present situation. The author also analyzes factors that contributed to the growth of the Korean mission movement – its strengths and weaknesses. In the last article in this section, Yalin Xin discusses the role of leaders in the Chinese House Church Movement focusing primarily on Deborah Xu from the Word of Life Church and her impact on the development of this movement. Xin also informs readers about the organizational work structures and methodologies of the Word of Life house church network.

The fourth section talks about the means that various evangelical churches use to fulfill the Great Commission. Hence, in the first article, Robert A. Blincoe talks about the relationship between existing church hierarchies and mission agencies, and challenges the notion that such agencies are a threat to church unity or that they do not have a biblical basis. He does this by providing New Testament examples of such agencies (*kherva*) and by comparing mission agencies to private corporations that exist in free-world governments. The solution for this tension is for official church hierarchies to stop calling mission agencies “parachurch organizations” and to become “missional churches” and not only “churches with mission.” In the second article, Jim Haney talks about the concept of “people groups” and how this concept has developed over time in terms of communication, globalization and information. For this purpose, Haney introduces readers to three primary global lists that account for the peoples of the world – data, approaches and methodologies used to estimate the progress of church planting among a particular people group or country. The article also discusses why, after 2000 years of Christian history, there are still 3,706 unreached people groups and how they can be reached.

The fifth section is dedicated to reflections on two mission conferences in 2010

held in Tokyo and Cape Town. The first article, written by Yong Cho and David Taylor, has the purpose of informing readers about the purpose and framing of the Tokyo 2010 Global Mission Consultation. The article explains that the Tokyo conference was held in order “to celebrate the progress made in missionary efforts since Edinburgh 1910, assess what remains to be done in making disciples of all peoples, and develop plans for inter-mission cooperation to fully engage the remaining least-reached peoples in our generation” (201). Next, the book has the Tokyo 2010 Declaration which representatives of evangelical global mission structures developed and adopted. After the Declaration, Kevin S. Higgins, in his article, offers personal reflections on Tokyo 2010 regarding missiology and the measure of engagement. The author argues for clarity in definitions that are used in the assessment of mission work because criteria behind data directly affect the measurements of mission accomplishment. He also discusses the relationship between two aspects of mission work: the closure movement (finishing the task of the Great Commission) and the so called, “insider approach.” The fourth article, by Enoch Wan, describes the content and atmosphere of the two missions conferences held in Tokyo and Cape Town in 2010 and compares them with the conference held in Edinburgh in 1910 – their similarities and differences – and based on that comparison, Wan extracts some insights that emerge from it. The last article, written by Cody Lorange, talks about the Third Lausanne Congress on world evangelization that occurred in Cape Town in 2010. This congress celebrated the 100th anniversary of the 1910 missionary conference convened in Edinburgh. Lorange starts the article with his personal reflections on the Cape Town event, pointing out its Christ-centered atmosphere, but in the rest of the article, he aims to show the contributions that this congress will have to the church and its mission. His second aim is to show what the Spirit of God is saying to the church through this congress.

The last (sixth) section of the book is called “Evangelicals Return to a Holistic Gospel and Kingdom Mission” and contains four articles. In the first article, Ralph D. Winter talks about the biggest trend in global missions which, according to him, is “a recovery from a gospel of merely personal salvation to a restoration of kingdom thinking” (267). He thinks this because the aim of such a gospel is the transformation of this world as in the Lord’s prayer, “Thy will be done on earth” (267). In this article, Winter argues for a gospel message that is not merely focused on personal salvation, but also concerned with the transformation of society. The second article, by C. René Padilla, is called “The Ebb and Flow of Kingdom Theology.” In this article, Padilla presents some historical examples of using the gospel of the kingdom for ungodly purposes – both in Roman Catholic and Protestant camps. He discusses the relationship between mission and colonization, and argues for evangelism that is accompanied by social

action. Padilla offers valuable insights when he compares the old traditional way of understanding and doing church mission against the new integral way of mission. The third article, by Gregory A. Boyd, "A War-Torn Creation" talks about spiritual warfare as a continuous and present reality for Christians and church missions. Boyd argues that creation does not reflect the loving and good character of God, but instead it is full of violence and carnage because creation is permeated with spiritual warfare according to Boyd.

The fourth and final article is by Robert J. Priest in which he talks about the future of church missions. Priest briefly describes the history of Christian missions, various eras and understandings of Christian missions, and current situations and modes of operation, and offers some insights for the future of the Christian mission. The book ends with an index and the list of contributors.

The structure of the book is good and logically organized because the book starts with a historical overview of missions then discusses more or less current trends, ideas, events and people who had and still have an impact on church missions. Then the last part of the book is focused on a more theological overview of Christian missions and the future of it. Every article has a brief introductory note by editors which make reading the articles easier and more understandable. The articles are written on various levels – some are more informational, full of data and technical, some are written more in the form of a sermon, while other articles are a mix of personal reflection and theological insights. Such diversity in the articles is expected because it reflects the different characters of its authors. This adds to the value of the book.

This book is also valuable because of two other things: first, through the pages of this book, the reader can catch a passion for the lost that these authors have, and that passion has potential to challenge the comfort zone of normal Christian life. Second, in their articles, the authors discuss various concepts, principles and "tools" that are needed for successful work in missions. This makes this book a rich source of insights that the Christian church needs to hear and accept if it wants to be successful in its work. For example, readers can read about the necessity of preparatory work rather than just focusing on quick and tangible results. Also, people who are involved and want to be involved in missions need to have adequate information about unreached people groups. They can read about the need for institutions that would theologically educate, enable and train people for missions and the need to merge together theory with practice. Also, the spiritual side of mission work needs to be accompanied with good organization, and those who are doing mission work must be careful not to impose their own culture instead of the gospel. The book calls readers to focus more on the Kingdom of God and God's rule than on spreading denominational church traditions. Likewise, of paramount importance is to place Christ in the midst of inter-church

relationships because from this focus, unity, love and mission will naturally flow. There are some other great insights and I cannot repeat them all in this review, but reading and hearing the voice of God through this book is challenging.

This book deserves to be translated into Croatian (although that is highly unlikely). If nothing else, this book deserves to find its way to the public for two reasons: first, there is a lack of quality literature that speaks about mission work. Second, Croatia is still predominately a mission field for foreign missionaries. Due to these realities, this book enables the reader to recognize good and positive, as well as negative, features that foreign missionary activity can bring. More importantly, this book calls readers to recognize that after some time “mission fields” need to become responsible mission outposts both in domestic and foreign areas. Occasionally this book might become overwhelming for a reader who is not acquainted with the terminology and developments in the world of missions in evangelical churches, but in general, this book has its place in the academy, the church, and among a wider population who would like to know more about the past, present and future of mission work among evangelical churches.

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