

Book Reviews & Notes

Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader,
edited by Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne
(Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2009, 800pp.)



Editor's Note: The following slightly edited article has been excerpted from "Perspectives Reader 4th Edition Ships," Mission Frontiers magazine, January–February 2009, pp. 22–25. Used by permission.

The Fourth Edition of *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* is ready for Perspectives extension classes in January, 2009. Leaders of the

Perspectives Study Program have been working since the fall of 2006 to update and refine the curriculum. A core team of five people worked with many of the larger community at the USCWM in Pasadena. Dozens of Perspectives coordinators across the country and the world were frequently consulted during the process.

Something Old

Co-editor Steve Hawthorne reports that the lesson structure, basic themes and core ideas have been refined more than they have been changed. The Fourth Edition will be familiar to the tens of thousands of people who have worked through the *Perspectives* course. The fifteen lesson titles are almost identical.

Something New

But much has changed. Many articles have been retained but greatly revised, even though they carry the same title. Some have been edited to simplify the language or to organize them more clearly. Other articles have been updated with up-to-date figures, current vocabulary or emerging ideas.

In the Fourth Edition, counting all the sidebar articles and the two forewords, there are 172 articles, with 65 of them new to the book. The book remains the same length as the Third Edition, with 800 pages overall. That means that many articles were edited to be shorter. And new articles tended to be much shorter. Of the editorial portion, the new material (177 pages) is about 23%. There are now 152 authors, with 61 of them new to the book. Compared to the Third Edition, the number of women contributing as

authors nearly doubled from 9 to 17. The number of non-western authors increased from 9 to 21.

Biblical Section

In the biblical section new articles clarify the powerful idea of blessing, explore how God endowed humanity with responsibility for creation care and delve into the tricky issues of contextualizing Christ-following movements. A few new items by recognized scholars show how the truths of the kingdom of God give hope that the pursuit of God's mission aims to overcome evil and display signs of Christ's life and righteousness in the present age.

Historical Section

In the history section new material recounts the fascinating story of how the Gospel moved to the east, the surprising change of how the Christian movement has shifted to the Global South and the encouraging reality of mature non-western mission movements sending more missionaries than are being sent from the West. Look for a summary of research that dispels some of the anecdotal myths about missionaries harming societies.

Cultural Section

The culture section contains some new material about orality and oral learning strategies. There is more about story-telling that presents the Gospel in ways that connect with and yet eventually transform the worldview of receptor societies. New material delves into the complexity, beauty and value of ethnicity in a globalized, urbanized world in which many feel themselves to be part of multiple peoples. Another set of articles explores the complexity of missionary identity with integrity in a globalized, terrorized, pluralized world.

Strategic Section

In the strategy section new material lifts the definition of churches above the institutional features to the reality of Christ being obeyed as Lord. Around the simple reality of Christ being served as king in dynamic church movements, the hope of the kingdom of God to withstand evil and to bring significant change to society becomes practical. Some of the new articles describe dynamic church planting movements, bearing fruit in two ways: bringing about significant changes in culture and society, while at the same time multiplying rapidly to bring the Gospel throughout entire peoples and cities. For many the highlight will be several new case studies describing the dramatic and costly work of God among the unreached. A new section about world Christian discipleship is designed to help every believer

move beyond filling roles and integrate their lives with others to fulfill God's greater global purpose.

Perspectives alumni and instructors will want to get their copy of the Reader as well as the companion Study Guide. The Study Guide has been significantly revised. The lesson titles are largely the same. But every lesson has been changed to some extent.

Editor's Note: The Fourth edition of the Perspectives Reader includes material that readers of IJFM will find familiar (from Rick Brown, Rebecca Lewis, Robert Woodberry, and others). It also has some great new contributors such as N. T. Wright, Richard Bauckham, Lesslie Newbigin, Philip Jenkins, Miriam Adeney, Tim Keller, Rick Warren, Kay Warren and many others. See the January–February 2009 Mission Frontiers article for a list of the new articles/sidebars with short descriptions.



One God, One Message: Discover the Mystery, Take the Journey, by P.D. Bramsen (Greenville, SC: ROCK International, 2008, 424pp.)

—reviewed by Krikor Markarian

"Isn't God great enough to be able to tell people what he wants and delete their sins without having to sacrifice his dear son and torturing him?!!!" (Bramsen, p. 296).

In his new book, *One God One Message*, missionary author P.D. Bramsen attempts to answer questions like the one above, which, although they sound very modern, are the very kind of questions Muslims have been raising since the seventh century. Bramsen has been a missionary among the Wolof in Senegal for many years and is best known for his production of a radio broadcast series known as the "The Way of Righteousness," now available in 80 languages. Originally written for the Muslim Wolof audience, the series includes 100 fifteen-minute broadcasts which tell the story of the biblical prophets in chronological order.

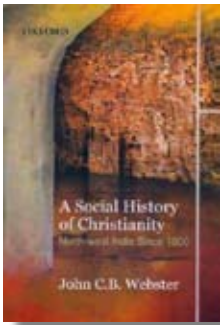
Now in his latest evangelistic/apologetic work, Bramsen has put together a 30-part study, or what he calls a "journey," written especially with Muslims in mind. However, at the same time the study has been broadened to include a wider audience, recognizing that many of the same issues Muslims wrestle with, such as the authenticity of the Scriptures, the Trinity, the incarnation, and the atonement, are raised by an increasing number of skeptics in the post-Christian West.

The book is divided into three parts, the second of which is the largest (comprising 19 of 30 chapters). In

the second part Bramsen attempts to build a foundation for understanding the concept of substitutionary atonement in Christian systematic theology. This is the typical approach of many missionaries today among Muslims, which Bradford Greer addresses and critiques in his article "Towards More Meaningful Interaction" in this issue of *IJFM* (pp. 38–41). This critique certainly would apply in Bramsen's case. Rather than find new biblical ways to explain the gospel to Muslims and post-Modern Westerners to reach beyond their built-in objections, Bramsen has sought to carefully, methodically and apologetically make a theologically sound case for the substitutionary view of the cross—and to emphasize this as the heart of the Christian message. Now while there is nothing intrinsically wrong with understanding the ministry of Jesus in these terms, the question remains whether the early disciples really understood the "gospel of the Kingdom" in this way. And more significantly, was this what they chose to *lead* with in explaining the mission and purpose of Jesus?

For example, in Acts 2, Peter gives perhaps the most powerful evangelistic message ever preached. Surprisingly, Peter's emphasis in this first recorded sermon of the early Church is not on the death of Jesus, but on his resurrection. Further he says that forgiveness of sins comes about through being *baptized* in the name of Jesus! He says nothing of the cross being a substitute for us. The result of this simple Kingdom-centered message was that 3,000 people were baptized during Pentecost, and were "added to their number." The emphasis therefore is unmistakable: the reality of the resurrection, the practice of baptism in Jesus' name, participation in Kingdom community and being filled with the Holy Spirit. This basic fourfold message is what the early Church deemed essential for bringing people into a saving faith. Might the same be true today?

Interestingly, Bramsen's book makes no mention of the "gospel of the Kingdom." The emphasis is very much on *personal* justification before God, and not so much on the *community* of God's people. In fact, the concept of community is entirely lacking. And yet isn't this the common ground that both the early Church and Muslims today share? And is it possible that with Jesus at the center of this community in both Muslim and Christian theology we might together more highly lift Him up, so that he might "draw all men" unto himself?



**A Social History of Christianity:
North-West India since 1800,**
by *John C. B. Webster* (Oxford
University Press India, 2008, 410 pp.)

—reviewed by *H. L. Richard*

This impressive regional study of the history of Christianity in India deserves to be widely read. Since that is unlikely to happen, this review will outline the outstanding contents with many quotations. Webster is an accomplished historian and moves away from traditional historiography with its tendency towards an account of missionaries and their work in favor of rooting his history in the local context, thus the “social history” of his title. In his own words,

Since the history of Christianity in the north-west has been more socially than theologically or missiologically driven, and marked more by social than by spiritual or cultural developments of significance, this will be primarily a social history of the Christian people there. (pg. 11)

Webster outlines the political and religious situation in northwest India in the early nineteenth century, including these insightful comments:

... the boundaries between the religious traditions were not always rigid or even clear. The census commissioner noted a kind of pervasive popular religion shared by Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs alike, especially in rural areas where people had similar beliefs, worshipped at the same shrines, and joined in different religious festivals together. (30)

Denzil Ibbertson, the Punjab census commissioner in 1881, was hard pressed to determine who should be classified as a Hindu. He found not only an enormous range of religious belief and practice among Hindus but also strong similarities between their belief and practice on the one hand, and that of their non-Hindu neighbours on the other. There were, in short, no clear boundaries to determine who was by religion a Hindu and who was not. Ibbertson solved the practical problem of census enumeration simply by making “Hindu” a residual category in which to place any Indian who did not belong to “some other recognized faith.” (34)

Seven different Protestant mission societies entered the northwest (“The Punjab and its Dependencies” to the British; Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir, plus part of Pakistan today) from 1800 to 1857. Early missionaries preached an individualistic faith mainly concerned with eternity, and studied very little about the beliefs of the people they worked among (53). “For converts, repentance included a total break from one’s Muslim, Hindu, or Sikh past which had been lived (by definition, even if unknowingly) in denial of or rebellion against God” (54). Missionary disagreements were almost entirely about how far to go in criticizing local religions.

The missionaries’ knowledge of India, while broadening all of the time, did not seem to go very deep. One finds in their writings repetitions of rather than challenges to common European stereotypes of Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, hill people, plains people, frontier people, Kashmiris, and of their respective religious outlooks. (61)

The Rebellion of 1857 included the murder and displacement of the numerous weak Christians who were the result of the first period of mission work in northwest India. Webster analyses various trends of the “high imperial era” from 1858-1880, including under “the imperial ethos” both the fact that the first three lieutenant governors of the Punjab were “staunch” Evangelicals and that the missionary had an unchallenged authority:

He was the father and the guardian of the infant Christian community; he held the purse strings and supervised all aspects of mission work at the station to which he was posted. He decided what was best for whom and there was really no court of appeal above him. (81)

Educational missions were a major thrust, and were developed in close relationship with the British authorities.

At the end of this period, as at its outset, the mission school was a central feature and powerful symbol of the Christian presence and Christian cultural influence in the region” (95). But “evangelism remained the central aim and main justification of all the work done by the Christian missions in northwest India throughout this period (95).

Delhi saw the beginnings of a Chamar responsiveness to the message. Baptist missionary James Smith,

became so convinced that India would never be effectively won by evangelists paid by foreign religious bodies, that on 5 November 1868 he persuaded the evangelists in Baptist mission employ to give up their mission salaries and do evangelism as they were able on a voluntary basis (99).

There were stark differences between the Baptists and the Anglican Society for Propagating the Gospel:

Smith wanted converts to develop their own ways of being Christian, Winter wanted to bring them into conformity with churchly ways. One thing is clear from the correspondence and occasional printed comments: the Baptists and SPG missionaries did not like or approve of each other very much. (118)

The Anglicans also had a caste cleavage between Chamars and higher caste converts. To be a communicant member of the church one had to give up participation in any feast or festival that involved idolatry. The result of this seemingly innocent rule was diabolical.

This posed no obstacles for the socially boycotted Muslim and caste Hindu converts to overcome because they were not invited to such feasts. However, the Chamars did not boycott converts, but invited their Christian friends and relatives to join them in their marriage celebrations and other festivities. The result was that Chamar converts who retained these ties with their caste fellows were ineligible for communicant membership and were thus second-class members of the Church... (116)

In the Punjab some missionaries engaged Sikh and Muslim populations at a more serious level, but “virtually no scholarly interest was shown in the Hindu religion during this period” (100). Two striking indigenous sects developed around guru figures Hakim Singh and Chet Ram (107), both of whom became Christ figures to their followers; neither group accepted baptism yet both were persecuted as Christians.

From 1881 to 1918 Webster outlines a vastly changing scenario in society and church. Modernization and urbanization were impacting society at all levels, new mission societies were entering the picture and particularly a huge influx of female missionaries changed the mission scene, plus there was awakening of traditional religions, particularly the rise of the Arya Samaj. But overwhelmingly this period was about the Dalit conversion movement, as by 1918 over 100,000 villagers had been baptized.

Why did so many Chuhras seek Christian instruction and become baptized converts? This question constantly plagued the missionaries who tried to sort out who among their many inquirers were properly motivated and who were not. (177)

The dominant missionary paradigm to explain the Dalit conversions was that these people wanted to raise their social status and find greater dignity and respect, relating all of this to Christian theology. But there is an alternate understanding that is more carefully rooted in the social context.

Chuhras were bound and profoundly conditioned by the patron-client relationships which lay at the basis of the rural socio-economic order. Linked to their desire for freedom from bondage to these oppressive and degrading relationships was a perception that the missionary and the whole mission network might serve as an alternative, more benevolent patron, or even counter-patron, who would help them in their struggle with the local landlords and moneylenders. The missionaries were slower to see this dimension of the movement than its more obvious thrust toward higher social status, but when they did, they took differing attitudes towards it. Gordon and his fellow United Presbyterians described it as *ma-bapism* [mother-fatherism] and sought to stamp it out like a heresy. (178)

Competition began among missions, with the Salvation Army and Roman Catholics especially competing against the established Protestant missions;

Intra-Christian competition was freeing Dalit converts from tight missionary control. If they were not satisfied with one mission patron, they could change to another nearby without ceasing to be Christians (200).

In Delhi the Baptist experiment with independent communities of disciples rooted in their context came to grief, partly due to Christian problems and somewhat due to non-Christian reactions (186-187). The Christian,

Community had established boundaries which set them apart from other communities, baptism being the central boundary marker” (201). Yet “Christian evangelism with its built-in threat of conversion proved to be the most effective means by which fundamental human rights and social justice issues

were raised in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century northwest (204).

The decades leading up to independence for India were not easy for Christians.

The history of Christianity in the northwest was severely affected by this momentous shift in regional priorities from the socio-cultural to the political. Whereas Christians had played a significant role in provoking and sustaining socio-cultural change in the region, they were now to be pushed to the sidelines as little more than spectators to power struggles in which others had become the prime movers. (205)

A general breakdown of the traditional Evangelical consensus in theology added to strains in the Christian movement. The urban churches by now were self-supporting and self-governing, but “much of their membership consisted of employees of local Christian educational and medical institutions” (213).

The rural church was largely silent, but appears in historical records in four areas. First was economic need, ongoing poverty, indebtedness and economic dependence. Second was “socio-cultural and psychological identity issues.” Educational issues were third, and finally “negotiations with their well-intended but strong-minded missionary patrons over the steps to be taken towards creating self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating churches” (226).

The urban and rural church was largely divided in political opinion, with educated urbanites supporting the nationalist movement while rural congregations remained loyal to the British Empire. Missionaries tended to reflect the same urban-rural divide. The movement to church union and indigenous leadership was fraught with tension, particularly related to money. In the end the transfer of church power to Indian Christians was with less agitation than the transfer of national political power, but with a disturbing aspect:

Not only were both the missionaries and Indian Christian leaders involved averse to mass agitation, but it also proved to be quite unnecessary anyway. The result was basically an elite to elite transfer in which the ninety per cent rural Dalit majority of Christians was largely both uninvolved and bypassed throughout the negotiation process. This assured the small elite minority of at least initial dominance in the new Indian Church structure as the missionary presence and influence receded. (269)

Webster concludes that by 1947 Christianity was no longer in any meaningful sense a movement in northwest India. It was now a settled and established sociological community.

In the modern, post-Independence period “the Christian churches and community in the northwest experienced as much change... as in any previous period of their history” (273). Webster’s chapter is an outstanding essay on the travails of Christianity in modern India. Three streams are clear in the northwest. First is the historic Protestant churches.

All of these denominations are hierarchically organized and power within them has become increasingly centralized in the hands of top officers who function as patrons of their

churches' resources for the benefit of their loudest and most clamorous clients. (356)

The Roman Catholic churches have a strong institutional presence and the resources to match their commitments.

This combination has given the Catholic Church something of an elite image to go along with the general Dalit image Christianity bears, as well as a profound sense of stability amidst the chaos and conflict among the Protestants. This sense of stability is reinforced by the absence of open politics in Catholic dioceses. The clergy dominate and lay people are appointed to positions from above rather than elected from below. Internal conflict thus remains largely hidden. (356-357)

The third stream is the new Pentecostal and Evangelical churches "who are winning by far the most converts from outside the Christian community and are thus giving to Christianity whatever sense of movement it still has in the region" (357).

A final brief chapter places Christianity in the northwest in its larger context of Christianity in India. Webster closes with reflections on key terms that have arisen throughout the study. First is *evangelism*, and he suggests that careful historical analysis makes the alternate term 'proselytism' "both inappropriate and pejorative" (365). The second key term is *alienation*:

... the overwhelming majority of the converts were already either personally or structurally alienated from their local society before they met up with Christian evangelists. (365)

Conversion is the third key term, and Webster suggests that "conversion, as a process of internal transformation at the core of one's being as well as of external changes in behaviour and relationships, takes time, perhaps even more than one generation" (365). *Community* is the fourth key term, and none is more important to a proper understanding of Christianity in India.

Marginalization, with the related issues of image and identity, is the penultimate term. Webster observes that "the tension between a socially defined Dalit identity and a theologically defined Christian identity is not easily resolved in a caste-based society and within a religious community where, in this particular region, caste is not the primary social marker" (368).

Last is *Christianity*.

Christianity is not a monolithic, homogeneous, and static entity, nor is it an unchanging, self-contained sub-culture or autonomous belief system and way of life...in India the "essence" of Christianity has frequently been not only located in its colonial past but also equated with the Christianity of foreign missionaries.

But this history of Christianity in northwest India proves otherwise, and sets a high standard for future regional histories of Christianity to seek to attain. **IJFM**

In Others' Words

Editor's Note: In this new department, we point you to resources outside of the IJFM that we hope you'll find helpful: other journals, print resources, DVDs, web sites, blogs, YouTube videos, etc. We welcome suggestions, but cannot promise that we will publish each one we receive. Standard disclaimers on content apply.

www.wciu.edu/library
library.wciu.edu/links/

Kenneth Scott Latourette Library focuses primarily on international development. It has many resources for culture studies, some of which are not commonly found in other libraries. Lots of great research links. A few links require a password.

www.strategicnetwork.org

The strategicnetwork.org website is a treasure trove of mission information. Knowledge base: 16,000 articles on scores of topics. Includes special and premium collections such as IJFM, EMQ, IBMR, MISSIOLOGY, JOURNAL OF ASIAN MISSION, PRACTICAL ANTHROPOLOGY, WORLD PULSE, and others. Most information is free, some collections are only available to subscribers who contribute \$20/year. Also includes: Missiopedia: user-edited mission manual; Networks: web-based forums; E-Groups: free mailing list services; Resource: resource reviews; Store: recommended books & more; E-Groups: free mailing list services.

www.wirelesshogan.blogspot.com

Blog by a Navaho writer. See *When I grow up I want to be a shepherd*.

www.efcatoday.org/take-my-hands

Excellent article from the Evangelical Free Church of America.

www.garyhabermas.org

Resurrection of Jesus research, dealing with doubt, etc. Scores of videos, audio, articles. Many debates with skeptics. Everything on this site is free.

www.rethinkingforum.com

The Rethinking Forum is a small and diverse network of people who are deeply interested in Hindu-Christian interface.

www.vishalmangalwadi.com

Vishal Mangalwadi is an international lecturer, social reformer, political columnist, and author of thirteen books.

www.globalmissiology.org

Global Missiology is a quarterly publication of contributions from international researchers, practitioners and scholars who have a global perspective. Articles in English, French, Portuguese, Chinese and Vietnamese.

www.waymakers.org

WayMakers helps people pray in the simple power of Biblical hope for people throughout their communities, and even for peoples in distant places. Produces *Seek God for the City* prayer guide.