

# Editorial Reflections

## *The Kingdom of God*

This time I (Ralph D. Winter) will comment on a particular theme and mention a few books on the subject. I'm concerned how better to understand the divergent concepts of the Kingdom of God that have been central to the polarization between Fundamentalism and Liberalism in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and still today.

For example, there are those who feel that the Kingdom of God is something that is going to come someday if we can just be patient. Along with that, often, is the idea that in the meantime the world is clearly getting worse and worse and there is really no reason to try to fix it because it is just going to get worse anyway. In fact, the faster it gets worse the closer we are to the coming of the Kingdom.

Then there is another view, an opposite extreme you might say, of those who feel that the Kingdom is already here. It is the church. When we win people into the church we are winning them into the Kingdom, which is true, but is that all there is to the Kingdom? In this view, when God talks about His Kingdom extending across the world, He's talking about the church expanding across the world. There is a good deal of truth in that, of course, but that also means that there is no Kingdom to be supported, pursued, upheld, developed *beyond* the church. It implies that we don't need to get mixed up in the world of politics, science, modernization and all that. We just need to mind our own business and win people into the church. Jesus' statement "I will build My church" ends with a period; there is nothing the church should do but build itself.

It certainly is true that expanding the Church is terribly important and absolutely essential. But there is something in between these two extremes of 1) waiting for the Kingdom and keeping out of trouble and 2) concentrating on the growth of the church, but then not feeling that we have any obligation to step outside the church and to work with this world's problems, with the World Health Organization, work for banishing malaria or poverty in Africa. We should be willing to work with anybody and everybody who can enable God's will to be done on earth. Are the good works that glorify our Father no longer important? Are those things for the world to do, and not for the church? Should we simply focus on evangelism and church recruitment, and let all those other things be someone else's responsibility?

What would a third intermediate view be to these two extremes? For one thing, there are two sets of books in front of me here in my office—about fifteen in each group. One group is on the "missional church," and there is not space to take it up in this issue. It has to do with churches that are restless, that feel there is something more to be done. They want to get their members involved in the real world, not just to add to their church membership, but to actually change the world. These missional churches are lashing out in good projects and helpful things, many of them rather superficial, only a few harmful. At least they represent a middle way between the two extremes just mentioned.

The other set of books talks much more specifically, if indirectly, about the whole matter of what we are supposed to do on earth in addition to *waiting for the Kingdom* or *expanding the church*. These books are not necessarily all new, but they all pertain to the whole matter of the Kingdom of God and God's will being done on earth today. They build on the idea that we should be salt and light and that our light is going to shine, not just by our talk but by our walk, and that our deeds will glorify God thus making our words more credible. This is Matthew 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father who is in heaven." The good deeds are, first of all, to display the character of God in this world here and now, whether we solve all problems or not. We can at least manifest a strong witness that glorifies God. If we do, we're in the middle area. All of the following books are in that middle area.

The first book is an older book now in its second edition with a new Introduction, called

*Fundamentalism and American Culture*, by George Marsden (Oxford University Press, Second Edition, 2006, 351 pp.)

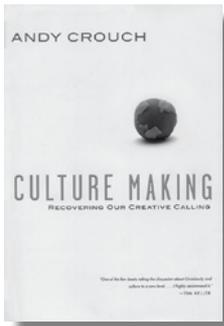
George Marsden is one of the principal historians of American church life. This book goes into great detail about how Evangelicals have struggled with this whole issue.

*Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism*, by George Marsden (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1987, 319 pp.)

This is an earlier book by the same author telling how Fuller Seminary was established in 1947—the same year when a faculty member, Carl F. H. Henry, wrote a book called *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*. Henry's book broke a hole in our Evangelical universe letting in a flood in all kinds of con-

cerns about cultural traditions and worldly problems which we had not thought we had to deal with—a very groundbreaking book. That this book's publication coincided with the founding of Fuller Seminary was symbolic. Very soon Fuller Seminary was labeled neo-evangelical. It emphasized things that hadn't been emphasized before. It worked in the middle ground between Fundamentalism and Modernism, or, let's say, Fundamentalism and Liberalism, or, more accurately, between working class/Bible Institute people and university/seminary people.

*Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling*, by Andy Crouch (InterVarsity Press 2008, 284 pp.)



This very recent book by Andy Crouch again addresses the question of what our role is in this whole world (not necessarily inside the church, but outside the church), how we can affect our culture and how important culture actually is. It's a very interesting book. I'll quote a couple of things from it so you'll get a feel of what he's talking about. On page 204, he compares the hopeless situation, really, under the rule of the gods of Rome, by comparison, to the Christian perspective. He says,

We have to admit that a [Roman] pantheon filled with a wild variety of gods of various sorts and conditions, playing favorites and capriciously intervening in history in an endless cosmic competition, seems much better suited to the haphazard process of cultural consolidation in the ferment of the Mediterranean Basin than the idea of a single Creator God who has chosen a particular people and sticks with them with the ferocity of covenant love.

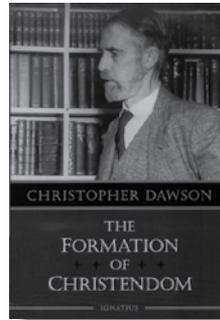
On page 261 he more or less summarizes his book,

If we are to be kingdom-announcers, modeling the new way of being human, we are also to be cross bearers. This is a strange and dark theme that is also our birthright as followers of Jesus. Shaping our world is never for a Christian a matter of going out arrogantly thinking we can just get on with the job, reorganizing the world according to some model we have in mind. It is a matter of sharing and bearing the pain and puzzlement of the world so that the crucified love of God in Christ may be brought to bear healingly upon the world at exactly that point... Because, as he himself said, following him involves taking up the cross. We should expect, as the New Testament tells us repeatedly, that to build on his foundation will be to find the cross etched into the pattern of our life and work over and over again.

My only comment on this excellent book is that he is focused, understandably, on what people can actually do

right now *as individuals* in their own local situation. I think that's remarkable and a good place to start, but I do think that he grossly underestimates the task that we have before us—the full scope of the war in which we are involved. There are many, many problems which local fellowships and small groups together will never be able to solve unless they promote organized teams which can operate on a larger scale and really beat down those problems. I think this book is good in terms of meddling in that middle area and the Kingdom being here already, but it does not go far enough. Andy Crouch is a musician, an artist and a sparkling personality, but is not, in this book, a world-level strategist.

*The Formation of Christendom*, by Christopher Dawson (Ignatius Press, a republished collection, 2008, 319 pp.)



This book is probably the most important book in the whole group—a new book but not new content. Christopher Dawson, a Catholic historian was a giant of an intellect. A professor both at Oxford and at Harvard in his lifetime, he possibly had a more sweeping, comprehensive understanding of the last two thousand years and the impact of the Christian church on Western civilization than any man who has ever lived. One of his earlier books, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, is an absolute spellbinder and groundbreaker which, in my lifetime, was one of the major turning points in my understanding of the fact that our religion, our faith, our people, our church, our activities, really are forming and developing our whole world and society. This is not what most people believe. This is not what is taught in our schools. This is not what is thought to be true in hardly any sphere of secular life, but it is true. It is absolutely crucial.

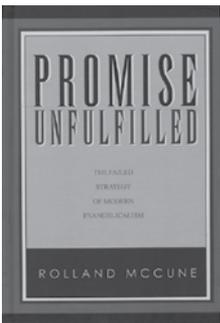
*These Sought a Country*, by Kenneth Scott Latourette (Harper & Bros 1950, 156 pp.)

Here's another old but very vital book. These are lectures by Kenneth Scott Latourette who, within the Protestant sphere this time, probably represented the absolute pinnacle of insight and knowledge about the growth and impact of the Christian church across the last 2,000 years. This particular book (of over 40 he authored) talks about five missionaries. Two of them went to China. Hudson Taylor and Timothy Richard were both out-and-out evangelicals and church-planting people, but whose overall ministries were radically different. Hudson Taylor

pursued relentlessly the development and expansion of the church, which, of course, is absolutely basic. Timothy Richard did the same thing. He planted churches and was very successful. But at the same time, he had a very different educational background in England. He found himself drawn to some of the upper-class people of China who ran things, and tried to influence them on another level: nature and science, history and astronomy, etc. He spent a good deal of his time founding universities and changing the whole structure of education in China.

You can easily see the difference between these two very sincere men who were good friends in many ways, but just didn't agree at all on how to go about mission. One of them had to do with the extreme of the church being the Kingdom of God, and for that reason its expansion was enough on which to focus. The other felt that the church of God was supposed to be salt and light and to interfere in this world and to extend God's will in terms of the Kingdom. The fact is that both men had enormous impact on China. There is nothing you can really critique about either one of them. But it is also true that while they were cordial to each other as persons they diverged sharply in their methods.

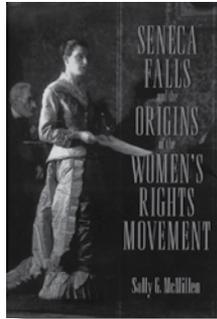
*Promise Unfulfilled: The Failed Strategy of Modern Evangelicalism*, by Rolland McCune (Ambassador Publications 2004, 398 pp.)



Here's a book that presents an amazing and fair-minded, meticulous tracking of the changes of perspective on the part of key evangelicals in the middle of the twentieth century. I don't know of any book that is as careful and as thorough as this one by a professor from the Detroit Baptist Theological

Seminary. He shows very clearly how Carl F.H. Henry began to think outside the box—Billy Graham, too. McCune tracks what Billy Graham said in speech after speech across the years. You can easily see how both Carl F. H. Henry and Billy Graham were beginning to see things differently. Interestingly, reading the book, you could easily be persuaded that Henry and Graham were gaining good insight and were right. However, McCune is clearly opposed to their change of thinking. Thus, you have a remarkable combination of opposition to the new thinking and yet a very fair-minded and objective treatment thereof. It is a valuable book.

*Seneca Falls and the Origins of the Women's Rights Movement*, by Sally G. McMullan (Oxford University Press 2008, 310 pp.)



This is a very well researched book that talks about the origins of the women's rights movement and shows how closely it was related to the development of thinking within the Evangelical sphere. There is nothing like the actual facts of history to disabuse us of perspectives that aren't quite right. Today we have no idea of the battles, problems and prejudices that these women went through in those days to change their world. This is a remarkable replay of those events.

*The Decisive Hour of Christian Missions*, by John R. Mott (Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions 1910, 251 pp.)

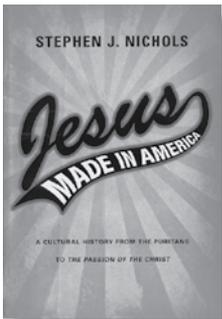
Here is a book which is an exposition, you might say, of the thinking of the thousands of college level missionary candidates and missionaries that were catapulted overseas out of the volcano of the Student Volunteer Movement back in the very early days of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. John R. Mott is the outstanding leader, unquestionably, of the entire movement. He was an imposing man who actually got a Nobel Prize and could have been elected US president, had he been willing to be nominated. This book is his summation of what happened at the famous meeting of 1910 in Edinburgh, a remarkable account of just what they thought. Their thinking reflected a carry-over of the 19<sup>th</sup> century upper-class, influential, wealthy people's views about missionaries changing this world, not just extending the church. At the same time he was writing (when the Student Volunteer Movement was exploding) there was also another movement, very separate, of Bible Institute people, Moody Bible Institute leading the way—157 Bible Institutes in which there was a fertile soil of thousands of missionaries going out. But they were totally unmentioned in the Student Volunteer movement's records of missionaries "sailing."

This was unfortunate, in a way, because the missionary movement in this country obviously was not just college or non-college people. It was both. The identification of these two streams enables us to understand how there came to be a class and social polarization, including a theological polarization. That polarization has been partly valid and partly invalid. We have to better understand what happened and go beyond it today.

*Colonialism and Christian Missions*, Stephen Neill, (McGraw Hill, 1966, 446 pp.)

This is an old book, a gem, and hard to find. It is written by an absolute giant of mission history and knowledge. It shatters all kinds of current stereotypes of what missionaries did or didn't do and shows how colonialism was by no means as evil as the secular world thinks it was. I am reminded of Dinesh D'Souza's famous chapter, "Two Cheers for Colonialism," in which he tells how there were certainly serious problems with colonialism, but remarkable benefits at the same time. This is the sort of thing that you do not hear today although D'Souza wrote that just recently. Neill's is a very significant book that has to do with the actual record of what you could call the interference of the church in the world beyond its boundaries, in that middle area between waiting for the Kingdom and supposing the Kingdom is already here in the form of an expanding church.

*Jesus Made in America: A Cultural History from the Puritans to the Passion of the Christ*, by Stephen J. Nichols (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2008, 237 pp.)



The Puritans, it turns out, were by no means just a bunch of super-religious people. They were super-involved in this world. In fact, one of the famous sermons preached in 1636 by John Cotton, "The Christian's Calling," declares that the Christian calling is precisely to interfere with this world and to change it, *and that it is equally important to do that as well as to be forgiven of your sins!* (Cotton, John, "Christian Calling," in Miller, Perry, ed. *The American Puritans: Their Prose and Poetry*, Columbia University Press, 1982, pp. 171-181) Now, obviously the Puritans were up against many practical obstacles so that they couldn't just think about systematic theology and how to extend the church.

*Prophetess of Health: A Story of Ellen G. White*, by Ronald Numbers (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008, 417 pp.) and

*The Creationists: From Scientific Creationism to Intelligent Design*, Ronald Numbers (Harvard University Press, expanded edition, 2006, 616 pp.)

Ronald Numbers grew up in a Seventh Day Adventist pastor's home. He is kindly toward people like Ellen White, who was essentially the founder of the Adventist Church, and his own father who also believed in the Adventists' 6,000-year-old universe. Today, Numbers

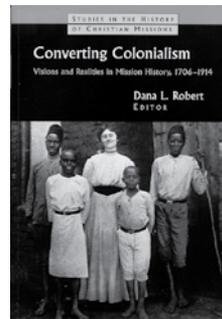
himself is a highly respected "Historian of Science and Medicine," a professor at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. His books are meticulously developed, giving graphic insight into the 1870's, 1880's and 1890's when Ellen White and many others were concerned about health, cures and the conquering of disease. It's a fact that around the world there isn't a finer network of hospitals than the Seventh Day Adventist network of hospitals. We are greatly indebted to the Adventist tradition. They are a remarkable example of the meddling of Evangelicals in this world.

On the other hand, Numbers has no use for Flood Geology or Young Earth thinking, despite his courteous treatment of those who promote such ideas. The second book is actually an amazing blow-by-blow account of how Evangelicals gradually took over an Adventist teaching—literally letter by letter, article by article and meeting by meeting. It is a fascinating story.

*The Home Base of American China Missions, 1880-1920*, by Valentin H. Rabe (Harvard University Press 1978, 299 pp.)

This is a very valuable book. It has not as much to do with China as it has to do with the American home base of missions to China and elsewhere in the 1880 to 1920 period. That period encompasses the origin and development of the Student Volunteer Movement. The book gives fascinating insight into what intelligent, influential and wealthy people in mainline denominations were doing and thinking in terms of what missions is and what missions ought to be. It is an excellent, factual insight into that whole sphere of mission.

*Converting Colonialism: Visions and Realities in Mission History 1706-1914*, Dana L. Robert (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2008, 314 pp.)



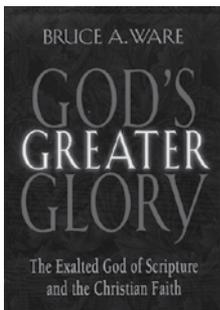
Dana Robert is one of the best and brightest scholars at work today in the history of missions, and this book gives outstanding examples of how colonialism itself was greatly changed and modified, not only by the colonial powers themselves, but also by the people with whom they went to deal. It is rich with insights.

*God and Globalization: Vol. 4 Globalization and Grace*, Max L. Stackhouse (Continuum, 2007, 281 pp.)

This book seeks to understand on the global level what God's will might be for believers here and now. This is the exact opposite of Andy Crouch's book about what individuals can do within their own immediate social sphere. Obviously, just as the mass production of axe heads

in London knocked out the existence of hundreds of blacksmiths across the country (simply put them out of work), we can see the same process happening on a global level. It doesn't matter if a more efficient process for doing something is done ten miles away or ten thousand miles away, the less efficient will die. Modern transportation and communication have made the entire world smaller and have brought pressingly into existence factors on the global level that used to exist only on the local or national level. For example, it has been true for many years that a Walmart could kill off dozens of smaller grocery and department stores in its area. Now that they have expanded beyond the U.S., they are doing it on a global level—which, in the long term, is often a good thing. (During World War II, 600,000 small businesses were closed down as being inefficient. After the war the ground was laid for a whole new burst of larger, more efficient enterprises which vaulted us out of the depression era.) There is absolutely nothing new about this happening on the global level. However, this is something that Christians should understand, be concerned about and do something about. This is, again, meddling in the intermediate period, between the Kingdom to come and the Kingdom that is here.

*God's Greater Glory: The Exalted God of Scripture and the Christian Faith*, by Bruce A. Ware (Crossway Books 2004, 254 pp.)



This book, from its title, does not seem to be related to the whole issue of the expanding understanding of some evangelicals of the larger view of God's will in this world, but he does, very clearly, discuss those issues from a theological point of view. This is a fairly up-to-date book that should not be ignored.

*American Religious Traditions: The Shaping of Religion in the United States*, by Richard E. Wentz (Augsburg Publishing House, 2003, 455 pp.)

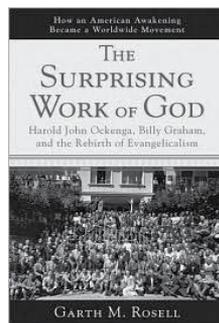
This book is a superb collection of actual, blow-by-blow events in this country that have to do, not just with the shaping of religion, which the title implies, but with the shaping of the United States itself.

*Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century*, by Timothy Yeats (Cambridge University Press 1994, 275 pp.)

This is an important book. It talks very knowledgeably about the entire Christian mission movement in the last century. It is a little bit thin on American activities, but the author very clearly understands the stressful transitions that

have taken place over time, for example, in the global level conferences from Berlin in 1966 sponsored by Billy Graham and *Christianity Today*, and later the indirect sponsorship by Billy Graham of the Lausanne conference in 1974, the development of the Lausanne Covenant, and then the many conferences following the one in Lausanne. The book is insightful in pulling together disparate facts about the same situation. Except for its price it certainly is a valuable book.

*The Surprising Work of God: Harold John Ockenga, Billy Graham, and the Rebirth of Evangelicalism*, by Garth M. Rosell, (Baker Academic 2008, 268 pp.)



This book is probably the best book in this entire list in displaying the transitions going on within Evangelicalism in the middle of the last century. Garth Rosell is the son of the famous evangelist, Merv Rosell, who was very much a part of the Youth for Christ movement and one of the main revival speakers of his time. So Garth grew up in the world of Harold John Ockenga and Billy Graham. You'll notice that he doesn't talk a lot about polarization or reducing tension. He simply talks about "The Surprising Work of God" and the "Rebirth of Evangelicalism." This is an interesting point of view because the word *rebirth* could actually refer back to the Evangelicalism in the earlier century. The 19<sup>th</sup> century had a very spectacular and different pattern of work.

In this book Rosell presents many personal anecdotes and quotes. It is an extremely meticulous book written by a professional historian who has endless original documents at his disposal. He has a huge bibliography on the whole subject. The book shows how Youth for Christ efforts of a popular sort employing the standard definitions of evangelism, not reform of this world, burgeoned into a major movement and how that movement then merged with the thinking of Carl F. H. Henry and Billy Graham and those who backed, for example, Fuller Seminary and later Gordon-Conwell Seminary—and, in general, concern for this world. Both seminaries were the initiative of Harold Ockenga. Rosell explains this without rancor or reference to tensions. He tries to be very fair about the new fervor within this new evangelical movement and gives loads of vital information on that subject.

To give a little insight into the flavor of the book and of the era it describes, on page 162 there's a section called "The Reform of Society." Here the author quotes Henry's book

the *Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* saying, “For their own part the Fundamentalists sponsored no program that attacked societal evils and ignored serious reflection on how an evangelical ecumenism might impinge in a culture crisis.” The author summarizes, “Rather they constituted almost exclusively on ‘evangelism’ as ‘the solution’ to every problem.” *Henry may not have stopped to think that working-class people generally lacked the necessary influence to make those changes.*

Rosell says, on page 164,

How are we to make sense of Fundamentalism’s seeming disinterest in such matters? When Modernists talked about building the Kingdom of God on earth many fundamentalists focused increased attention on the rapture of the church and the prospect of a better life in heaven.

Then he quotes Henry addressing a group of evangelical pastors. “How many of you over the course of the past six months have preached a sermon devoted in large part to the condemnation of such social evils as aggressive warfare, social hatred and intolerance, the liquor traffic, exploitation of labor management and the like?” Not a single hand, he reported, was raised in response. “For the first projected period in its history,” Henry lamented, “evangelical Christianity stands divorced from the great social reform movements” (in the 19th century).

On page 171 he writes,

Throughout his early ministry Ockenga also invested in issues relating to the manufacturing, distribution and abuse of hard liquor. Drawing once again on his Wesleyan roots, Ockenga warned his Park Street congregation of the “awful menace, the soul destroying menace, that life killing menace—alcohol.” The substance that “has taken more lives than all our wars and more money than our worship or God or the education of our children and the entertainment that we enjoy.” Ockenga goes on to say, “I challenge you as Christians tonight to fight this thing in the church. Fight it in your home, fight it in society. Fight it by the ballot. Fight it by local options. Fight it with your influence. Fight it with your testimony all down the line and God knows how many souls you can save from hell and turn to Him.”

### *To Sum Up*

Most of the books mentioned here are just recent acquisitions. Many are fairly new, but there are loads of other books that talk about *this whole issue, which, in my opinion, is the major issue in terms of mission strategy today.* We often think in terms of what it takes for people to become Christians and we are naturally and properly concerned about expanding the growth of the church. In missions we do understand a little differently what that church will look like. It may look very International Journal of Frontier Missiology

Muslim or it may look very Hindu, but it will still be very biblically based and absolutely sound and valid.

In any event, the discussion above has more to do with issues than with what the church will look like. It has to do with the relationship of that movement, priceless and essential as it is, and the will of God for His glory and His Kingdom in the larger sense. Obviously there are hundreds of other books that are older and equally relevant. In fact, if I went back more than three months in terms of my own acquisitions, I could review dozens of other books in this area. However, the number of books is not as important as the depth and concern of the issue. Are we or aren’t we to “meddle” in this world? Is there a better way to glorify God and make our evangelism credible?

In conclusion let me say that it is very important for me to realize that it is not just a case of whether or not we should be trying to make this world better for *human beings* to get along. For example, the whole of the animal kingdom is also beaten down with suffering night and day—from biting flies and internal parasites to predators and everything else. It isn’t just *human beings* who need to be delivered from evil.

For me the key issue is whether doing good deeds in this life is essential to glorifying God and communicating His character. The other side of the coin is, if we don’t demonstrate His character, are we misrepresenting God? Are we giving people the impression that God doesn’t care to stamp out malaria in Africa, for example? This is not simply an issue of doing good, improving the human condition, or making human beings happy in this life. It is a matter of stamping out the works of the Devil (1 John 3:8) and it’s a matter of glorifying God, which is a more significant thing by far than just simply helping people get along. When Jesus healed people what was He really doing? Was He trying to show us *how to heal*, or was He revealing God’s heart *that* we should heal? Was He trying to be kindly to people? Of course He was. Was He trying to emulate the character of God? Yes, in an even more important sense. Otherwise we do, in fact, misrepresent God. We may preach, in effect, that all God wants is for us to join in Sunday gesticulations and ignore the vast evil outside the church that is flooding this world, bringing nine out of ten Americans down into suffering and premature death due to disease alone. “Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice.” (1 Samuel 15:22 KJV) **IJFM**