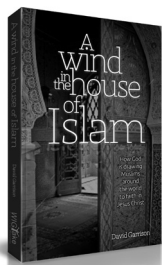


Book Reviews

A Wind in the House of Islam: How God is Drawing Muslims around the World to Faith in Jesus Christ, by David Garrison (Monument, CO: WIGTake Resources, 2014, pp. 328)

—Reviewed by Bradford Greer, PhD



I am a perfectionist and a skeptic. My perfectionism impacts the way I view research. Well-designed, anthropological-missiological research often has limited parameters and develops well-grounded idiographic theory (descriptions of individuals or individual social groups). Once an idiographic theory has been validated in numerous

other studies, then I am willing to accept a wider application of the theory.

Admittedly, I came to David Garrison's new book, *A Wind in the House of Islam*, with some doubts. For example, how was he going to research in any reliable and valid manner these supposed sixty-nine contemporary Muslim movements to Christ (p. 231)—movements in twenty-nine countries spanning the Muslim world (p. 5)? The project seemed too broad.

Now, Garrison (PhD, Historical Theology, University of Chicago Divinity School) is eminently qualified to conduct this research. He has been immersed in the area of church planting movements for many years and has written a text of reference by that name.¹ He has broad experience, having served as a strategist and regional leader for the International Mission Board in South Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, Northern Africa and the Middle East. In addition, he has studied about a dozen languages and has visited some 100 countries.

Despite Garrison's impressive qualifications, doubts remained due to my field experience. I lived and worked in a specific Muslim context for over twenty-five years. I have seen what can happen in my area of the world. In that conservative context people can appear to have dynamic faith but this does not mean that they have truly encountered the Lord. Many are poor and faith is sometimes a negotiable commodity. I have also interacted with those who have worked in other areas of the Muslim world. Though I am confident that many of these sixty-nine movements are valid, I have heard reports that cause me to question some of them.

So, with a skeptic's eye I proceeded to follow Garrison on a tour through the House of Islam. The further I journeyed,

reading his assessments, the more I was pleasantly surprised. Garrison allayed most of my reservations; his goal was limited and he strove to describe accurately what was happening in these movements, not sensationalize them. He was realistic, cognizant of the potential impacts that could cause some of the claims to be called into question. His descriptions of these movements and the life stories he included as examples of these movements resonated well with my own field experiences and the knowledge that I have gleaned from others. I consequently gave him a very high score with regard to face validity.

Following the guidelines for describing one's research, Garrison begins by laying out the parameters of the project, providing definitions, and noting the limitations inherent in the act of researching. He interviewed believers from Muslim backgrounds in each of these areas. To increase the reliability of his findings he triangulated his data by consulting with seasoned missionaries and believers from Christian backgrounds in each area, and by conducting background research (for example, drawing from doctoral dissertations). He acknowledged that he and his team could not study all sixty-nine movements; his team had to limit their scope to forty-five movements in thirty-three people groups in thirteen countries.

Garrison defines a movement to Christ as at least 1000 baptisms or 100 new church-starts within a given people group or ethnic Muslim community over one or two decades (p. 39). Conversion is defined by a transformed life through a new relationship with God through the person of Jesus Christ as revealed in the New Testament (p. 38).

Though this makes it sound like the book is a dry and dusty analysis, Garrison has made his research accessible by turning the vast geographical space from Morocco to Indonesia into a house with nine rooms: 1) West Africa, 2) North Africa, 3) East Africa, 4) The Arab World, 5) The Persian World, 6) Turkestan, 7) Western South Asia, 8) Eastern South Asia, 9) Indo-Malaysia (p. 23). He presents a brief history of Christian engagement in each room, and then he uses stories of specific believers from a Muslim background who exemplify how people have been responding to the gospel in that region. Garrison also adopted a phenomenological approach to his research, simply describing what was observed without editorializing about whether it was right or wrong.

As Garrison guides us through the rooms we discover that some have turned to Christ because they were dissatisfied with Islam; this was clear for many in the North Africa Room and the Persian Room. By contrast, others who have turned to Christ have retained their Muslim identity and have remained within their communities, the Eastern South Asia Room being a prime example. If these followers of Christ had adopted a Christian identity this would have been interpreted as a betrayal of their communities and they would have lost the

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opportunity to propagate their faith among others. During his interviews with those from groups who retained their Muslim identity, Garrison sought to clarify the doctrinal accuracy of their faith. Believers repeatedly demonstrated a clear understanding of who Christ is, yet their primary concern was not doctrinal accuracy but a changed life. Garrison noted, "An unexpected response occurred again and again, as these Muslim background followers redirected the question away from doctrine and toward holiness and life transformation" (p. 63).

This book has two weaknesses. The first weakness is that it is limited on data. We are presented with a set of anecdotes, chosen because of their representative value. As a missiologist, I would have preferred much more. However, there were two justifiable reasons for this weakness: 1) the desire to make the research accessible to everyone, not just to the academic; and 2) security concerns. The second weakness appears in the analysis of the West South Asia Room. Though Garrison accurately presents both the interviews conducted in that room and the experiences of missionaries who serve there, some of us who intimately know that region would interpret the same data in a different manner.

In spite of these two weaknesses, the book has immense value. It provides a much-needed objective analysis of what God is doing across the Muslim world. Over the past few years there has been a bit of controversy over missiological trends in the Muslim world, in particular, over insider movements. Western missiologists who have worked alongside these movements have asserted that such movements were the result of what God was doing in the Muslim world. Others have doubted this claim because they cannot believe that God could allow a person to retain a Muslim identity after turning to Christ. The controversy at times has drawn into question the quality of the faith of these followers of Christ, with some stating that those who retain their Muslim identity only do this because they are either afraid of persecution or they have been negatively influenced by foreign missionaries. Garrison's research appears to demonstrate that neither of these accusations is valid. His research shows that there are those who feel that faith in Christ and retaining one's Muslim identity and remaining within one's community are not inconsistent. It also shows that adopting this stance does not eliminate the possibility of persecution.

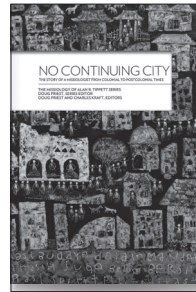
One must read the book to discover how this can be so.

Endnotes

¹David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World*, Midlothian, VA: WIGTake, 2004.

No Continuing City: The Story of a Missiologist from Colonial to Postcolonial Times, by Alan R. Tippett (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013, pp. 580

—Reviewed by Glenn Schwartz



This is the autobiography of Dr. Alan R. Tippett who retired from the Fuller School of World Mission in 1978 and passed away in Canberra, Australia in September 1988. For those of us who knew him personally, this is a treasure for which we owe him a great debt. I consider it a privilege to have had a close friend-

ship with Dr. Tippett during the 1970s when he was on the faculty of Fuller.

Several themes surface repeatedly in this 580-page autobiography. The first is the struggle with the colonial missionary environment into which he was born and under which he served, particularly in Australia and Fiji. Of course, he encountered it in many other places as he traveled around the world, researching, writing and lecturing. Along with Dr. Donald McGavran and others, Dr. Tippett helped to create a new missiology adequate for postcolonial times. He did this by turning his own experience as a missionary into something that led to the independence of the church in Fiji. That struggle to overcome colonial missions surfaces again and again throughout this book.

A second theme that surfaces now and again is his disappointment—even disdain—for the organized church (particularly his own Methodist denomination), which tolerated a level of unhealthy spirituality that often left him disillusioned. He saw it in the local parishes of Australia where he served as a young pastor before becoming a missionary. His concern rose not only to the upper levels of the denomination in Australia, but also to the World Council of Churches, which he felt had left its moral obligation to maintain a missionary message, particularly following 1948.

A third recurring theme is how hard it was to handle separation from his family for the sake of what he felt God was calling him to do. During his twenty or so years as a missionary in Fiji he traveled barefoot for weeks at a time in the rural villages, while Edna stayed behind caring for the home and their three daughters. He spent an entire year in Washington D.C. doing a masters degree in history without his family. Later on, he spent two and a half years in Eugene, Oregon

again without his family helping to establish the Institute for Church Growth at the invitation of Dr. McGavran. During this time he enrolled in the University of Oregon and eventually earned a PhD in anthropology. At the end of that time he missed his family so much that he knew he had to leave for home as soon as a seat on the next plane could be found. He did not even attend his own graduation ceremony.

At one point in the book he gives a poignant description of what it was like to sacrifice family unity for the sake of his missionary career. For example, when he and Edna returned to Australia from Fiji, they left behind their daughter, Lynette, who stayed in Fiji all her working life. When he and Edna and Robyn left for the School of World Mission in Pasadena, they left Joan behind in Australia. When Alan and Edna finished their time in Pasadena and returned to Australia, they left Robyn behind in America.

A fourth frequent theme is his life-long battle for credibility among secular anthropologists. He was every bit as qualified as non-believing anthropologists and was determined to gain credibility for missionary anthropology. He never missed an opportunity to read a paper and give the Christian viewpoint at an annual or regional conference of anthropologists. One of the battles along this line is represented by his long-time challenge to James Michener for the way he wrote the book *Hawaii*. In that book Michener developed an anti-missionary stance, blaming missionaries for destroying and breaking up Polynesian religion and culture. Dr. Tippett felt that many young potential missionaries went into the American Peace Corps—or not into missionary service at all—as a result of the publication of *Hawaii*. Dr. Tippett had a serious disdain for the way missionaries were portrayed through Michener's writings. But this is only part of the story, and I am not sure that Dr. Tippett knew before his passing the results of his challenge to Michener. Over the years there was some change in Michener's position. During a TV interview in the 1970s, Michener was asked about his treatment of missionaries in the book *Hawaii*. Michener acknowledged that his blame of missionaries was not totally justified. He admitted exactly what Dr. Tippett often said, that animism in Polynesia was already breaking up before the arrival of Christian missionaries. So, Dr. Tippett's efforts paid off, but Michener's book had long since done its damage.

A fifth theme is Dr. Tippett's passion for philately—stamp collecting.¹ I knew that he was an avid stamp collector and that he had a weekly radio program for children in Fiji during which he told the stories behind the issue of a new series of stamps. But several things I learned were new to me. During the Great Depression, for example, things were so tight economically for him and Edna that he used stamp collecting to help make ends meet. He would use his weekly day off as a pastor (usually a Wednesday) to go into Melbourne on the train to attend the stamp auction. He would buy a small pack of stamps for a

few shillings and then go to the back of the room and separate them. When he had something worth reselling he would take it back to the auctioneer and resell it for a profit. Once when he was leaving home for the auction Edna said, "Try to make enough from the stamps so you can buy a chicken on the way home." In fact, stamp collecting helped to keep the family going financially at various times in their ministry.

While he kept his interest in philately as a hobby over the years, it was during his retirement in Canberra that his efforts began to pay off. By this time he became so accomplished in collecting and arranging stamps that he won one award after another for various collections he arranged. He and Edna joined the Philatelic Society in Canberra and used it not only for a good way to enjoy retirement, but as a place for Christian witness. Edna would attend the meetings with him and set up the displays while he interacted with other philatelists.

A sixth theme is Dr. Tippett's exemplary contribution to missionary literature. He produced volumes and volumes of research (the equivalent of book-length documents) that will never be published. But he left several volumes, including this autobiography, that were near enough to completion that a new series of heretofore unpublished manuscripts could be readied for publication. We are indebted to Drs. Doug Priest and Charles Kraft for moving these manuscripts from the idle shelf to the publisher; they deserve our deepest appreciation.²

A seventh theme that continues to surface, one that Dr. Tippett does not hide in this autobiography, is his struggle to adjust to unavoidable changes in his life. When he left Eugene, Oregon in 1966 he felt he was returning to the unknown in Australia. Upon his finishing the PhD program, he says:

... I was awarded the degree, but I felt no elation whatever. I did not wait for the conferring, which would have meant missing Joan's wedding. There were a few friends who wanted to celebrate, but it was no celebration. It was no achievement; it was a long, painful ordeal. I had never sought it. I had never wanted it, and I was utterly torn apart lest I had hurt those whom I loved more than life itself.

The next day I was on a plane heading home to Australia. I had the degree, but something had gone out of my life. I wondered if I could ever get it back again. I tried to satisfy myself with the thought that it wasn't just my degree. It belonged just as much to Edna and the girls, without whose support I could never have done it, especially in middle age. If it was an achievement, it was a family one, that I knew.

But was I still in the stream of God's will? ... It was a long and almost tearful journey. There was no interest in anything I saw, no taste in the food, no excitement in the return; just the depression of not knowing how I stood with those I loved and with my Lord. Not until I was actually home, and for the immediate present caught up with the activity of [Joan's] wedding itself, did the depression start to lift. ... I felt a little better with Edna by my side. . . (pp. 286-87)

These words are a bold admission of a human struggle, and one that may sound surprising from someone who was in some ways quite private. But something seems to have changed after he and Edna retired in Australia.

But this was not the only time he faced the challenge of adjustment. Consider his thoughts as he left the School of World Mission in Pasadena in 1978. He and Edna were flying to Australia on a 747 when he penned the following:

... Now we were returning to the land of our fathers — just the two of us, and we had no idea where we would eventually settle.

The years of my active ministry had been spent, and I had no longer any active status. My office as a missiologist I had relinquished, and I no longer had any sponsor for a project. I looked out of the plane window and beheld a wide, open space of nothingness. True, I was heading home to the land of my fathers. My father and now my mother had passed on hence, and I was the “patriarch of my tribe,” but as I returned there was no tribe that remained. I was heading home with no goal, no purpose, no mission, no set assignment, no certainty, and no responsibility to anyone. I wasn’t even sure what expectations I ought to have when I got home, or whether I would even recognize the place when I got there. The 747 droned on. I realized how terrible it was to have no purpose in life, not to know who you were or even what you were.

Sure, one felt that somewhere out there was a new life, that even at the age of retirement one could start again. Indeed, unless he did start again, with a new goal, and a new drive, he would surely die. True, my new passport now read, “Citizen of Australia,” and that was reassuring, but for all that, I knew in my heart of hearts that I had no continuing city and that Australia would be a very different place from that which I had left before World War II.

Like a man coming out of an operation, knowing he had lost an organ and wondering how things would go with him, with no status, no family, no home but a vast, half-empty land, no project, no sponsor, no knowledge of what one could do on a meager pension—not even a deadline to meet. It was a strange emptiness, as the 747 droned on.

Then I reflected that each time I had launched out into the unknown in faith it inspired something beyond myself to rouse that faith. And I knew the truth found in these words to the hymn penned by Anna Waring:

Father I know that all my life
Is proportioned out for me.
And changes that are sure to come
I do not fear to see;
But ask thee for a present mind,
Intent on pleasing Thee.

The rhythm of the droning 747 changed. There was land beneath. (p. 435)

These words are a bold admission of a human struggle, and one that may sound surprising coming from someone who was in some ways quite private. But something seems

to have changed after he and Edna retired in Australia. I am guessing that the above words were written before he settled into life in Canberra. As one reads beyond this part of his story it becomes clear that he had quite a few invitations to address church groups and even to do some overseas travel and speaking. I was pleased to see that the above rather discouraging account gave way to a continuing and effective ministry during his retirement years. That fact alone gives a refreshing slant on the statements above. I heartily encourage anyone interested in missions to read the entire book and see how the life of a premier anthropologist/missiologist in the 20th century made his contribution to Christian mission.

As I bring this review to a close, several observations are in order. First, it crossed my mind many times while reading this story that all those books—published and unpublished—were prepared using a conventional typewriter, a machine without memory as we know it today. So Edna typed and retyped many manuscripts. Dr. Tippett was not one to be attracted to the latest fad, but imagine how much more he could have produced if those books and manuscripts had been saved in memory rather than having to be retyped each time.

A second observation regards Dr. Tippett’s demeanor as a missionary and missiologist. Being Australian, he frequently spoke with understatement. He had the credentials and experience to toot his own horn if he had chosen to do so. Instead, he discovered that understatement can be more powerful than overstatement—and have more credibility. The hundreds of missionaries and international church leaders who were his students experienced firsthand the quality of his spiritual life and professional competence. Both of those qualities come through on many pages of this autobiography.

In closing, this autobiography should be read by anyone who knew Dr. Tippett personally, especially his students. It should be recommended reading for all missionary candidates who want to know how a missiologist thinks. If you are interested in missiology—and you are only going to read one book this year—I heartily recommend *No Continuing City: The Story of a Missiologist from Colonial to Postcolonial Times*. **IJFM**

Endnotes

¹ There is even a separate index of philatelic terms at the end of this book.

² The series published by William Carey Library is called “The Missiology of Alan R. Tippett Series” with Doug Priest, Series Editor and Doug Priest and Charles Kraft, Editors.