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Mission of the Church in the World: A Biblical Theology (Book Review)

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reality, the presence of the Holy Spirit, and the kingdom of God would play an equally fundamental role as those suggested by Kadushin and Bowman.

The key epistemological topics, then, are discussed in the first four chapters. At times it is difficult to shake the impression that Bowman is merely rehashing a stale intellectualism. After all, he places great stress on the role of cognition, the need for definition, and the appropriate arrangement and classification of concepts and subconcepts. But in chapter 5, tellingly titled "Organic Thinking and Wholeness," Bowman begins in earnest to work on linking his description of cognition to a more fully rabbinic understanding of knowledge. "As the rabbis read Scripture," Bowman reminds us, ". . . they were under no heavy compunction to arrange their thoughts into theological outlines" (70). After all, the Bible itself "was not written as a servant to logic" (74).

The final two chapters appear to function more or less as appendices reaffirming the importance of correct use of language in order to develop our Christian minds. These chapters restate what has been

Bowman's central point. "The thrust of this book," he says, "has been a renewed focus on our need to conceptualize, to acquire a vital religious language, and to enrich our vocabularies, in the conviction that such an emphasis is uniquely at the heart of good religious education" (95).

There are some curious tensions in the book. One of these I have already suggested, viz., the tension between a tendency towards an intellectualism which interprets "mind" as primarily concerned with concepts and cognition, and a larger, organic view of knowing. In addition, the reader occasionally experiences an unexpected call to freshness and innovation amidst strong affirmations of tradition. In the same vein, the author sometimes describes education as a communal affair (cf. 99), and at other times as independent and self-directed learning (cf. 69).

On balance, the book is well worth reading. Its readability, the diverse insights, the numerous reminders, and, above all, the gentle but persistent call to train a new generation in the "mind of Christ" ensure that the time invested in this book is not wasted.

The Mission of the Church in the World: A Biblical Theology, by Roger E. Hedlund (Grand Rapids: Baker) 1991. 300 pages, paperback, \$16.95. Reviewed by Michael Williams, Assistant Professor of Theology.

As Hedlund's subtitle suggests, this book is an attempt to present a biblical theology from a missiological point of view. While I have some doubts about whether the entire biblical corpus can be poured through the missiological sieve, the idea is exciting, and it does bear considerable fruit.

Hedlund is by no means a theological innovator. Presenting missiology as a paradigm for biblical theology is something of a fad of late, and Hedlund has thoroughly mined the works of the first wave of missiological theologians. There are frequent references to Blauw, De Ridder, Boer, Glasser, and Newbigen throughout the work. This is not a work intended to contribute to missiological theology. Its frequent, almost monotonous use of citation, along with its textbook style and simplistic exegesis suggest that the book is intended rather as a primer. One could say a primer on theology of missions, but that would miss the genius of the missiological theology movement. At one time, evangelical contributions in missiology came primarily from systematic theology. Today they are coming from missiologists doing biblical theology. Thus we might better describe Hedlund's work as an introduction to the Bible from a missiological perspective.

The missionary emphasis of the New Testament is

well known in evangelical circles. Unfortunately, the fact that the Old Testament also has a strong missiological element has often gone unnoticed. Hedlund cogently presents the Old Testament emphasis upon missions. The Old Testament never presents Yahweh as the exclusive deity of the Hebrews. There is a strong universalistic streak running throughout the Old Testament. Yahweh is the Lord of history. His sovereignty is proclaimed over all peoples, all nations and tribes. If on no other score, this book is worth reading for its emphasis upon the fact that Israel was elected in order to play a servant role among the nations. Hedlund does a workman like job of pointing out that the election of Israel was not a matter of privilege but rather of responsibility (36-39).

To say that Yahweh is the Lord over the nations and that his election is a particularistic act (the election of Israel) with a universal object (the redemption of the nations) is not to fall into an easy universalism. Hedlund takes on the universalistic trends coming from some missiological quarters today. He rejects the notion that all religions represent legitimate roads to God. The evidence comes not only from the Old Testament's running critique and outright ridicule of the idols, but it also, and most powerfully proceeds from the lips of God himself in the first commandment: "You shall

have no other gods before me'' (20). Hedlund rightly rejects all universalism as representing the death of the evangelistic mandate, whether it is a universalism derived from the relativism and religious pluralism of liberalism, or a Barthian reading of Romans 5.

While the book unfolds as a walk through Scripture from a missiological focus, it is the different themes which Hedlund develops that stand out as worthy of merit: his criticism of a social gospel as mere philanthropic enterprise, enculturation and missions, the application of biblical materials to issues in Hinduism, cultural contextualization, the remnant, and the finality and uniqueness of Christ come to mind. One theme that would have helped his thesis but which he devotes little attention to is the question of the land in the Old Testament and how that emphasis upon a particular

piece of land—a piece of land with immense missiological implications, is put aside in the New Testament for an emphasis upon the entire world.

It is precisely here that the one great shortcoming of the book is found. While Hedlund attempts to be historical in his treatment, the grand movement of redemptive history receives little notice or development. The contours of that history would have contextualized the election of Abraham in terms of the universalistic mission of Genesis 3:15—chapter 11, and would have given shape to the movement from Palestine to the *kosmos* and Israel to *ta panta*, all things. Overall, however, this book is a good introduction to the biblical emphasis upon missions, and would make a good textbook or adult Sunday School text.