

ABSTRACTS AND CRITICAL BOOK REVIEWS

in the discussion. These few elements might have added interesting value to the arguments posited by the authors. Though the book excludes these Israelite or ANE elements, the book is an excellent scholarly material for use by any evangelical who refutes the historical critical methodology and its variations, of interpreting the HB. Graduate students in biblical studies and particularly OT, and professors alike, will find this resource book highly invaluable.

Innocent Gwizo

Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, PHILIPPINES

---

*Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology*, by Darrell L. Guder. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015. xiv + 203 pp. ISBN: 0802872220. Softcover US\$ 19.

The purpose of the book is to show that though Christianity is religion of mission, the spirit of mission had been lost for many centuries due to misunderstanding of the true meaning of mission by giving wrong meanings to mission and using incorrect methods of evangelism which led to dissention and conflict. It also emphasized on how the Christian church could understand the true meaning of mission and get back to the early Church's spirit of mission by avoiding the spirit of division and using appropriate methods in order to evangelize the world and advance the kingdom of Christ.

Darrell L. Guder notes that the study of mission focused on methods and practices, and the theory that support them. Since Mission comes before theology, it is the mother of theology not vice versa. Mission needs two important things: commitment to evangelizing the world and the strategy how to do it (p. 5). The study of mission requires series theological engagement within the different cultural context. This needs to consider the local culture and tradition in order to do theology of mission. This new fact (theology of mission) was the result of modern missionary movement (p. 6).

Guder credited Karl Barth, one of the prominent protestant theologian of the twentieth century, for igniting the theological revolution that resulted in global discussion of mission that reshaped the theology of mission (p. 7). According to Karl Barth, the concept mission was originated from God himself that the Father sending the Son, the Father and the Son

sending the Holy Spirit to this world. This shows the interrelation of the Trinity in the process of sending (p. 8).

As far as sending the Son is concerned, there is an important question to be asked. Is it God the Father alone who send the Son to this world? How about God the Holy Spirit? Is the plan of Salvation laid only by the agreement of God the Father and God the Son? Or by the agreement of the three persons of the Godhead? The Genesis creation story tells us the Godhead involved in creation. (Gen 1: 1-4; John 1: 1-5). Who brought "the Word," one of the Godhead, and mysteriously incarnated Him in the womb of Mary? It is the Holy Ghost (Luke 1: 35). Is this not sending? This implies that the Godhead equally involved in laying and implementing of the plan of Salvation. Who descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove to confirm that Jesus is the anointed Son of God at his baptism? Holy Spirit (Matt. 3: 13-17). Is this not sending? As God the Father and God the Son send God the Holy Spirit (John 14: 15-26), it is God the Father and God the Holy Spirit who send God the Son. Very often we tend to attribute the sending of the Son as well as the Holy Spirit to God the Father alone. So, sending the Son is not only the act of God the Father but also God the Holy Spirit. Not only Karl Barth and the author, but also many of missiologists missed out this important truth.

Guder pointed out that though the church is missionary by its very nature and now it is appropriate to talk about missional theology, the Western theological tradition for so long has completely ignored the missionary character of the church. Ignoring the missionary character of the church led them to ignoring the need for theology of mission (p. 8). He seems to agree with Karl Barth's unique view of mission: "There is important, complementary distinction between mission and theology. Mission was oriented to gospel communication to the unbelievers, both inside and outside to church...." (pp. 9-10). This seems very strange but it is an important truth. We all understand that communicating the Gospel to unbelievers is *Missio Dei* "the mission of God" given to His church. But who are unbelievers?

We often tend to think that believers are people who are inside the Church, but unbelievers are people who are outside the church, because they did not accept the Gospel message. But as Karl Barth and the author said, there are unbelievers in the church. When I say "unbelievers," I don't mean nominal Christians, because nominal Christians also believed in God. But there are unbelievers in the church. They not only come to the church, but may even work in the church, not because they believe but for several temporal reasons. The author is right that these people needs the gospel message. In fact, I believe, these are the first group who needs the Gospel message than unbelievers who are outside of the church.

Guder goes on and said that missional theology is not universal theology, but always and essentially local, that is, working out of and in critical interaction with a particular strand of Christian tradition in a particular cultural context. (pp. 13-14). This, I believe, is a fundamental truth that all theologians should be aware. In the modern missionary era, when the missionaries came to Africa, they applied theology without understanding the context. In those days polygyny was common in Africa. Nathaniel G. N. Inyamah has pointed out that though there were several reasons for African societies to practice polygyny, high death rate due to war and epidemics, wealth and political power were the prominent factors (Inyamah, *Concordia theological Monthly*, Vol. XLIII, March, No. 3, 140).

Without considering the local context, the missionaries forced the husbands to stay with only their first wives and divorce the rest. The divorced wives with their children were forced to flood the Mission Centers and became financially burden (Natasha Erlank "Gendering Commonality: African Men and the 1883 Commission on Native Law and Custom" *Journal of Southern African Studies* Vol. 29, (2003) Issue 4: 944.). It is easy to imagine what these divorced wives and their children feel about the Christianity. This shows how missional theology is crucial for the great commission. Theology needs to be contextual and local.

After losing its missionary vocation for many centuries, the church began to get back to the right track in the "nineteenth century." This century was marked as "the rise of modern missionary movements." The rise of many Missionary movements played important role in making Christianity a global movement. Tremendous work was done in Africa, Asia, Latin America and other parts of the world. Due to that, in the first half of twentieth century, Christianity became global movement (p. 178). But, the global character of Christianity had lack of organization in evangelism and inappropriate use of resources. This created an "urgent concern for the unity of Christian witness" that paved the way for the establishment of "The World Council of Churches (WCC)" in 1948 (p. 180-182).

Though one of the prime purpose of WCCA was promoting common witness in work for mission and evangelism, there are many Christian movements who are not members of WCC. We cannot deny the contribution of these Christian Missionary movements for the expansion of Christianity, but we also cannot deny the negative effects that they have. As far as the negative effect is concerned, first, the multiplicity of global Christian Missionary movements will weaken all movements financially and thwart the rapid growth of Christianity. Second, it creates conflict between missionary movements and become an obstacle for evangelism. In the case of my country, different missionary movements were seen as enemies to each other until those who saw this conflict lost their interest to

accept the gospel message. Third and very important, ecumenical movements are watering down faithfulness to the biblical truth. They are not preaching and teaching about the biblical doctrines that divides them. Due to that many fundamental biblical doctrines became taboos just for the sake of unity.

Aytegeb B. Awoke

Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, PHILIPPINES