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Review: The Great Commission: Evangelicals and the History of World Missions

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college professors, at the same time, this book could join hands with either a more comprehensive study of Luther's theology (P. Althaus's meaty 1966 study remains a standard) or a biography (e.g. R. Bainton's *Here I Stand*) in a course on Luther or Reformation theology.

All the foregoing strengths make this book worthwhile, but a fifth and final strength contains, to my mind, the key to its significance and timeliness. If hundreds of pastors all over the English-speaking world were to read and digest the message of *The Genius of Luther's Theology*, Christianity could, under God, experience another Great Awakening. With all due gratitude to Professors Kolb and Arand, this is not due to any cleverness of their own. Rather, they have simply latched onto the gospel itself, in all its counter-intuitive, doctrinally-contoured, conscience-cleansing, wrath-remembering, love-generating dimensions. In today's fragmented, atheological evangelical mishmash, nothing could be more important. As pastors and writers have scrambled to delineate the boundaries of evangelicalism, the center—the gospel—has gone neglected. Indeed, confusion over the gospel is rampant today both in our pews and in our seminary classrooms. For some, the gospel is the announcement of Jesus' lordship; for others, the arrival of the kingdom of God and its ramifications for this life; for still others, a story (not propositions) in which we are invited to participate. Yet as important as Christ's dominion, the coming of the kingdom, and the ongoing biblical narrative are, none of them is the gospel. Looking at and reflecting on a single core reality from various angles, Kolb and Arand, through the penetrating mind and prickly temper of Martin Luther, have reminded us that the gospel is simply the counter-intuitive announcement that one is put irreversibly right with and perfectly approved before God by looking, in trusting faith, to Christ, against all fallen human instinct to earn one's salvation. Luther came to see that the only thing that qualified him for divine approval was a frank recognition that he did not qualify. Self-despair was the way out of despair. Approaching God not only having emptied his hands of rebellious wickedness but also scrupulously meticulous obedience, Luther clung only to Christ, God's promise in flesh and blood. Impatient with the domestications of Luther, human sin, and divine holiness so pervasive in various branches of evangelicalism today, Kolb and Arand have, like the Reformer, brought us back to the heart of biblical theology—free grace, received open- and empty-handed, by virtue of the ultimate sacrifice. This, indeed, is the genius of Luther's theology.

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The Great Commission: Evangelicals and the History of World Missions. By Martin I. Klauber and Scott Manetsch, eds. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2008, xii + 228 pp., \$14.99 paper.

The Great Commission is the fruit of a conference on the history of evangelical missions held at Trinity International University in April 2006 in honor of long-time Trinity church history professor John Woodbridge. Twelve scholars from diverse denominational and ethnic backgrounds contributed to the volume, which includes: an introduction (Douglas Sweeney), three articles on early Protestant missions (Glenn Sunshine, Jon Hinkson, Timothy George), three articles on modern Anglo-American missions (Bradley Gundlach, Thomas Nettles, Fred Beuttler), three articles on majority world missions (Daniel Salinas, Richard Cook, Tite Tiénou), and a final article on the biblical and theological imperative for the ongoing work of global missions (D. A. Carson).

The appendix by Alice Ott provides a nice annotated and descriptive bibliography of Woodbridge's published works.

As a volume treating the period of missions history since the Reformation, *The Great Commission* generally resembles Stephen Neill's *History of Christian Missions*; however, Neill's work surveys missions history from the early church through the twentieth century. As Neill completed his study in 1964 and thus does not treat the significant growth of global Christianity in the past forty plus years, and because Neill does not have a high appreciation for evangelical missions, *The Great Commission* is a much-needed contribution. Similarly, the volume also compliments J. Herbert Kane's short work *Concise History of the Christian World Mission* (1982). In fact, Tiénoú, in his article, detects and challenges Kane's subtle western hegemony in narrating missions history. *The Great Commission* is also comparable to Ruth Tucker's *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, though Tucker's biographical approach is distinct from the critical essays in this volume. By treating evangelical missions history since the Reformation, *The Great Commission* also overlaps with Timothy Yates's *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century*. Finally, the chapters on majority world missions relate very much to the recent works of Phillip Jenkins (*The Next Christendom; The New Faces of Christianity*), Lamin Sanneh (*Whose Religion is Christianity?; The Changing Face of Christianity*) and Samuel Escobar (*The New Global Mission; Changing Tides*). In short, this collection of essays focused on the history evangelical missions is a necessary contribution to the noted scholarship on missions history.

Supported by the contributions of various authors writing in their area of specialization, *The Great Commission* as a whole has many strengths, and several will be discussed here. Despite the overlap of material in some places—especially between Hinkson, George, and Nettles—the contributors have either collaborated well or the editors have done a good job in reducing redundant material.

First, the work is characterized by some compelling arguments. For instance, George makes a fine case for Christian literature—including Jonathan Edwards's *The Life of David Brainerd* and William Carey's *Enquiry*—being a catalyst for motivating the church toward a global missions commitment. Carey's status as the "father of modern missions" is moderated somewhat by George's insightful assertion that three other books by Protestants Thomas Coke, David Brown, and Charles Grant appeared in the decade prior to Carey's *Enquiry*. Nettles challenges the prevailing view (cf. Estep, *Whole Gospel, Whole World*, p. 7) that late eighteenth-century British Particular Baptists were anti-missionary. Through a careful re-examination of primary sources, Nettles offers the fresh perspective that the point of contention between Carey and John Ryland, Sr. was actually over the *means* of fulfilling the Great Commission—not whether the Lord's command was still relevant to believers in every generation. Finally, in what is arguably the best article in the volume, Tiénoú also challenges the work of missions historians who have failed to acknowledge the role of "native missionaries" in the spread of the gospel in Africa. Tiénoú responds with a well-documented, compelling, and beautiful account of the ministries of African indigenous missionaries, especially in West Africa in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

A second strength of *The Great Commission* is that, without sacrificing critical scholarship, a number of the contributors have proven to be excellent storytellers. In this sense, they continue the legacy of professor Woodbridge, a gifted history teacher partly because of his ability to spin effectively the historical narrative. In Hinkson's chapter "Missions among Puritans and Pietists," he recounts colorfully the experiences of John Eliot, David Brainerd, the Mayhews, Ziegenbalg and Plutshau, and the Moravians. Hinkson's narrative is also profitable because it raises a number of missiological issues and strategies that modern missionaries continue to face: spiritual warfare,

the necessity of language study, youth ministry, contextualization and Bible translation, and raising financial support for missions.

While Hinkson's chapter is perhaps more inspiring, Gundlach offers a sobering account of the failure of Indian missions in the hostile North American context. Indeed, reflecting on the negative aspects of missions history is a valuable exercise. Indeed, the contemporary church can learn from such mistakes and avoid them, and also realize that suffering is an expected part of the missionary endeavor.

A third important aspect of the work is that the significant missionary movement from the majority world (outside of North America and Europe) has been recognized. This is especially important for many North American Christians whose profile of a missionary is still limited to the likes of David Livingstone and Jim Elliot. Thus accounts of the missionary efforts of João Jorge de Oliveira and Bokari Saba offer a more balanced picture of nineteenth- and twentieth-century missions and inform readers that thousands of non-western missionaries are presently serving around the globe. The section on majority world missions is even more credible because two of three articles are written by non-North Americans—"The Great Commission in Latin America" is written by Daniel Salinas from Paraguay, and "The Great Commission in Africa" is authored by the recognized West African scholar Tite Tiénou.

Finally, while the authors skillfully interact with the history of evangelical missions since the Reformation, they also highlight the important place of a theology of mission. Sunshine and Hinkson reveal a Lutheran theology that was almost anti-missionary, while George and Nettles ably discuss the shift in mission theology that took place in England around 1792 (which, of course, was key to the birth of the modern missions movement). On the other hand, Beuttler correctly shows that liberal theology dealt a death blow to the missionary zeal of the Student Volunteer Movement. Though often subtle, reflections on theology of mission can be found throughout the work. Then, in the closing chapter, Carson bases his imperative for continuing to obey the Great Commission on a firm biblical and theological basis. Originally given as the conference banquet speech, Carson's contribution is by far the most passionate, and he does not refrain from criticizing those who threaten sound mission theology—especially Brian McLaren. Hence, in faithfully narrating missions history, the contributors to *The Great Commission* also make important assertions about the place of mission theology in mission practice.

Though overall *The Great Commission* is a very helpful resource, I do have some brief critiques. First, Sunshine asserts that the absence of a deliberate missions movement during the period of the magisterial Reformers was because physical access between the European continent and foreign fields was blocked due to the political situation. A creative thesis that Sunshine has endeavored to support, it nonetheless seems overstated. The consensus of scholarship is that the magisterial Reformers' inaction was due mostly to theology. Indeed, Sunshine himself shows that Calvin taught that Matthew's Great Commission text applies only to the apostles. Furthermore, Hinkson argues that the Pietists' commitment to missions was radical because they came from a Lutheran tradition that seemed quite averse to foreign missions.

In the period prior to the Reformation, the Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) succeeded in accessing the previously closed Chinese interior. Around 1300, Franciscan monks went East, penetrating the wall of Islam in order to minister to the nomadic Mongols. Hence, there have been and continue to be great physical and political barriers to the spread of the gospel; however, those with faith and Great Commission convictions have always found a way to negotiate these obstacles. We can certainly infer that if Martin Luther had had the same convictions about global missions that he had for *sola fide* and *sola Scriptura* (convictions that led to an audacious stand against Rome), then he would have traversed any barrier to fulfill the Great Commission.

Second, despite a fine and well-argued article, George concludes his piece by summarizing the main points of Van der Berg's 1956 dissertation on missionary motives from 1698–1815. While indeed Van der Berg's work is compelling, and George argues that mission scholarship has proven Van der Berg's theses, George's rhetorical "punch" at the conclusion of an otherwise fine article is diminished through this approach.

Third, though she is mentioned twice in the book (pp. 50, 55), there is no substantive reflection on Dorothy Carey—her apparent lack of missionary call, her reluctance to go, her going insane, and the certain aloofness and neglect on the part of her husband. Though George makes brief mention of her being "the wife of a missionary" as opposed to a "missionary wife," and while Nettles goes into great detail about Carey's theology of mission and work, some attention to Dorothy Carey would have strengthened the book.

Fourth, two articles in particular—by Beuttler and Cook—seem to be too broad in scope. Though Beuttler's twenty-six page chapter is the longest in the book, his attempt to cover the period of 1860 to the present is quite unfeasible. Similarly, Cook's chapter on "The Great Commission in Asia" is too broad simply because of Asia's vastness. Despite his nuance (p. 149) that much of the article will be concerned with East Asia (typically missionary code for that "big country"), Cook nevertheless uses "Asia" to describe India and other Asian countries. This point makes his article a bit hard to follow.

Finally, while Salinas and Tiéno both confront a history of bad historiography regarding national missionaries in the Latin American and African contexts, Salinas's tone sounds quite bitter, especially in comparison with Tiéno's winsome chapter. He complains that accounts of Latin American missionaries have only been preserved orally and, therefore, much historical knowledge has been lost. Is this indeed the case? Would it not be possible to interview evangelical leaders, pastors, and congregations (both in Latin American and abroad) and piece together an accurate oral account from the past century that would encourage the Latin American church in ongoing mission and also educate the North American and European church about the work of these missionaries? Perhaps he intends to stir his audience through provocation. If so, he has succeeded in stirring at least one reader to learn and tell the stories of Latin American missionaries who have gone before us and who faithfully serve today.

In conclusion, *The Great Commission* is an important and needed book that should be read by missiologists, seminary students in missiology and intercultural studies, and practitioners currently on the field. I personally plan to adopt it for a seminary course that I teach on the history of Christian missions.

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Opening the Covenant: A Jewish Theology of Christianity. By Michael S. Kogan. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008, xiv + 284 pp., \$29.95.

In an age of dialogue and pluralism, Michael Kogan wants to take things one step forward, as he sees it. With a survey of selected Jewish views of Christianity from medieval times to the present as his background, along with Christian views of Judaism, Kogan proposes that the time has come for each faith to fully recognize the other as a legitimate revelation from God. Specifically, Kogan wishes for Jews to view Christianity as the revelation of the God of Israel to Gentiles, thereby incorporating Christians into Israel itself. Similarly, he wants Christians to affirm the full validity of Judaism as a