

Contemporary Theologies of Missions

By Arthur F. Glasser & Donald A. McGavron ;
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When it comes to defining the nature of missions, one finds great differences of opinion. All thinking on missions, whether Protestant or Roman Catholic, is in the midst of tremendous changes. The new is applauded. Everything old has become suspect. The church has been bombarded by "isms" and "ologies." According to Arthur Glasser and Donald McGavran, who are affiliated with the School of World Mission of Fuller Theological Seminary, missionaries until the 1960s, "were united in a common belief that the great goal was to win men and women in faith in Jesus Christ with consequent forgiveness of sins, the gift of eternal life, and gradually thereafter the reformation of society." During the sixties totally new theories and theologies of mission were developed. The advocates of the new approaches are modifying and using the key words of classical mission in unbiblical and even Marxist ways. New ideas are promoted, while the supporters in the pew think that they are underwriting the cause of classical missions. The developments of the last two decades have saddled the church with four major theologies of missions:

1. *The evangelical or classical view.* Evangelicals are on the frontiers of missionary advance, finding whole segments of society more receptive to the Gospel than ever before.
2. *The conciliar mission, the World Council of Churches' approach following the 1961 Assembly of the WCC.* The latter framed a theology, which deliberately promoted the making of one world as the contemporary task of missions. Classical mission theory was looked upon as outdated. The emphasis was no longer on personal conversion and church growth but on humanization of society, temporal improvement, reconciling humans with one another.
3. *The Roman Catholic theology of missions.* Since *Vatican II*, the Roman Catholic Church has gone through a crisis of major proportions, including some of its schools of mission theology.
4. *Liberation Theology*, following the 1968 Medellin Conference of Latin American Catholic Bishops, is hotly debated not only within the Roman Catholic Church but also within Protestant circles. It appears to have transformed the mission of God into a socio-political program. The authors, who hold the orthodox view of Scripture, believe that what you think about the Bible determines your thinking on missions.

Arthur Glasser wrote five chapters dealing with the biblical basis for missions and the historical development of the four approaches. McGavran contributed eight chapters discussing the theology of the movements. Each contributed a final chapter on an issue

of particular importance to the evangelicals. They are entitled: "Inter-religious Dialogue" and "Religious Freedom." A bibliography and an index are included.

This excellent book is a major contribution to the current debate on missiology. It attempts to guide the reader through the various issues confronting missions today. Though the authors champion classical mission, they do not fail to enter into a dialogue with those of a different mindset. An enlightening, stimulating and important book! It encourages evangelical Christians to work towards a theology of mission which takes the whole Bible with utmost seriousness.