

# The *SBJT* Forum: Being Missions-Minded

*Editor's Note:* Readers should be aware of the forum's format. D. A. Carson, Christopher J. H. Wright, Michael A. G. Haykin, and Ted Cabel have been asked specific questions to which they have provided written responses. These writers are not responding to one another. The journal's goal for the *Forum* is to provide significant thinkers' views on topics of interest without requiring lengthy articles from these heavily-committed individuals. Their answers are presented in an order that hopefully makes the forum read as much like a unified presentation as possible.

**SBJT: You travel to quite a few different countries each year. Would you care to mention some of the mission trends you yourself see on your travels?**

**D. A. Carson:** You are asking a question that demands, at very least, several long essays, rather than a few paragraphs—partly because the trends themselves vary greatly from country to country. All I can do here is provide a rather subjective and impressionistic list of several things that instantly spring to mind.

(1) At one time, the overwhelming majority of missionaries came from the West (not least from English-speaking countries) and went everywhere else. No longer is this the case. More missionaries than ever before are being sent out from non-Western countries. Indeed, increasingly missionaries are from everywhere to everywhere. Korea (to mention but one prominent mission-sending country) sends out a formidable number of missionaries (at the moment, between 12,000 and 15,000). In addition, Korea sends “tent-makers” into other Asian countries that would otherwise be completely “closed.” Many African churches send missionaries cross-culturally to other tribes and to other African

countries—and, increasingly, to Western countries, primarily to serve those who have emigrated from African countries to the West. Worldwide statistics are complicated and not always easy to come by, and one is not always sure how accurate they are—but in any case, this first development is not in dispute, and one must rejoice over it, even if some of the reasons for getting to this point (e.g., the decline of the West) are disappointing. Jesus has told us he will build his church; he has not told us that such building will necessarily take place in our hometown or school district. It helps to get things into perspective if we take time to read up on worldwide developments in order to gain a worldwide appreciation for what God is doing.

(2) No less important is the array of related changes on the horizon. We are on the cusp of massive transformations of perspective. We have expected the majority of world Christian leaders to be white and Western, to be (relative to most of the world) affluent and capable. But there are now far more believers in the Two-Thirds world than in the West. I have preached in churches of 30,000 people in Asia; a big church in France draws 150

**D. A. Carson** is Research Professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. He is the author of numerous commentaries and monographs, and is one of this country's foremost New Testament scholars. Among his many books are *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility* (John Knox Press, 1981; reprint, Wipf and Stock, 2002), *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Zondervan, 1996), and *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church* (Zondervan, 2005).

people. The West still produces more well-trained vocational theologians than any other part of the world, but this owes much to economic factors, and I suspect it will change in the years ahead. It is only a matter of time until the leaders of the Two-Thirds world become better known around the world. Witness, for example, the courageous and influential stance of the Anglican Bishop of Nigeria on the debate over homosexuality in the world Anglican communion. Many churches in São Paulo, Brazil, have something to teach us about energetic racial integration. When we in the West go somewhere as missionaries, even if we ourselves come from humble backgrounds we are perceived as coming from the affluent world; our ministry is naturally read as a “reaching down.” When someone from a Two-Thirds world country becomes a missionary to a country of similar socio-economic class, that missionary is naturally read as a peer. When that same missionary serves in a more affluent country, he or she is naturally read as “reaching up.” As a result, expectations change, social dynamics change, modes of influence change. Moreover, for better and for worse, Christian missionaries bring some of their culture with them. In recent decades, there have been more efforts by our missionaries than in the past to disentangle the gospel from the export of American and other Western cultures, but the challenge is considerable. Now, however, with missionaries coming from many different countries, we are finding pockets of churches served by, say, Korean missionaries that have absorbed not only the gospel but also substantial dollops of Korean culture. It is all very fascinating, sometimes confusing, invariably complicated. It’s a grand thing that Jesus is

building his church—often by means of his people, sometimes despite us. What is undeniable, however, is that massive changes lie just ahead.

(3) God is sovereign, and he loves to overthrow human prognostications and expectations. The growth of the church in Korea during the past century has been utterly spectacular (though it is now at a standstill); during the same time, the growth of the church in Japan has been miniscule. Why? Oh, I know, after the fact we are prone to jump in and offer our after-the-fact sociological analysis. But no one predicted these divergences. How could they? God does what he does, and often in defiance of human expectations. When the last missionary came out of China about 1950, there were only just over one million Christians (with a generous interpretation of “Christians”) in that great country, and many pundits wondered how bad the situation would become. Instead, the church has flourished, with best estimates as to the number of Christians in the Chinese homeland hovering around ninety million. With the “war on terror” focusing on Afghanistan and Iraq, many have said that it would be decades (one pundit suggested one hundred years) before American missionaries would see any growth of the gospel in Muslim lands. And, indeed, there are some additional restrictions on Americans in some lands; there is also a growing turning to Christ in many of these same lands, as Muslims, fed up with the terrorism and not finding the resources to understand it, let alone stop it, in Islam, are turning to the good news of the King of Peace. It is simply too dangerous to pass on to you many stories and relevant statistics, but before the war on terror is over, we may yet see such an overthrow

of current expectations throughout the Muslim world that a new generation of pundits will be as astonished as the current generation is about the growth of the church in China.

(4) The astonishingly rapid expansion of digital technology is changing things for the better and for the worse. On the positive side: It is increasingly possible for students in remote parts of the world to tap into an array of sources that vastly outstrips what has been available in the past. Publishing possibilities are changing—from desktop publishing to digital journals to blogs. Not long ago I was speaking in an Asian country where the leaders who organized the event put the entire series onto streaming video that was simulcast, via cable, on large screen monitors in ten other cities. The same series was digitally recorded for later distribution in churches. As far as I could see, this was typical of this group's imagination and energy: They were comfortable with using technology to leverage the distribution of Bible teaching. On the other hand, the net can also be used for the distribution of the most amazing rubbish. Sinful addiction to pornography is on the rise in many parts of the world. One can visit remote hamlets and find people tuned in to porn (not to mention the mediocre junk of mindless "entertainment"). I recall a Slovak leader commenting to me that three weeks after the Berlin wall came down, for the first time in his life he saw porn openly sold on the streets of Bratislava, the capitol. Now it is available in every community by digital transmission. Globalization has both positive and negative features, of course, but the negative ones must not be overlooked. Moreover, the wrong kind of reliance on technology is in danger of

forgetting that if anything of spiritual value is accomplished, it is by the Spirit of the living God, not because we have money and techies. Unless one is careful, technology can end up depersonalizing Christian ministry. But for better and for worse, technology is changing mission, as it is changing everything else.

(5) It is perennially important to work hard at the proper relation between ministry of the Word and social concern. Exclusive focus on the former is in danger of fostering a docetic view of the Christian life; exclusive focus on the latter is in danger of abandoning the actual proclamation of the good news. Although there are some important principles to work out, the actual balance of time allotment must depend in part on the local situation. When people are crying on a devastated beach after a tsunami, it is not the best time to distribute Bibles, absent fresh water, food, and shelter. Yet an ostensibly Christian organization which, decade after decade, distributes tons of blankets and food, founds orphanages, and combats HIV, without ever offering Bible studies or explaining what doing this in Jesus' name *means*, and what the gospel is about, is indistinguishable from UNICEF or *Médecins sans Frontières*, and is no more Christian than they. Around the world, organizations are wrestling with these and related issues. I am most impressed by Christian witness that is full of the Bible, full of Jesus, full of excellent teaching, full of sacrificial service, full of ministering to the whole person, and, where possible, the community itself, in the conscious outworking of the transforming gospel. But what this looks like varies enormously around the world, for obvious reasons.

(6) In some ways, the most disquieting

region of the world, from a Christian point of view, is Europe—Western Europe, Central Europe, and Eastern Europe. Inevitably, God has not left himself without witness, and there are many wonderful examples of faithful and effective Christian witness throughout Europe. But the degree of raw atheism, the focus on materialistic hedonism, the condescending dismissal of and even revulsion against confessional Christianity, the rising numbers of Muslims (owing in substantial measure to a low birth rate and a high immigration rate), are transforming the continent which was at one time a powerhouse of Christian thought and mission into one of the neediest mission fields in the world. Doubtless this reflects God's judgment on faithlessness—but surely we must cry, "O Lord, in wrath, remember mercy."

(7) There is an urgent need to consider better ways of distributing missionary-designated dollars. Recently a large church in the US spent half a million dollars to send its very substantial number of high schoolers to a short-term summer project in a Latin American city. Doubtless these kids did some good; doubtless they were exposed (many for the first time) to a part of the world where they confronted real poverty for the first time; doubtless they were enriched by the lives of brothers and sisters in Christ who, regardless of their own temptations and failures, were not defined by endless Western toys. But that same Latin American city has a small but extraordinarily strategic seminary with a handful of teachers. The school is too poor to pay them more than a pittance. The result is that these professors, some of whom are well-trained, take on many speaking and pastoral responsibilities simply so that they can survive—and as a

result, they do not read much, they write nothing, they do not exercise the strategic kind of ministry that they *could* exercise if they were not burning themselves out in overwork. For \$50,000, three of these professors could be adequately supported. That would mean that the large church in America that spent half a million on their summer mission project would need to reduce that project by a mere 10% in order to make a massive strategic difference within the country itself. Or they could simply find the money elsewhere. Sadly, I doubt that they will even perceive the need. And as leaders increasingly emerge in these Two-Thirds World countries, there is going to be an urgent need to rethink a number of our mission spending priorities as we try and do *what is best for brothers and sisters elsewhere*, and not merely do good to our brothers and sisters at home.

**SBJT: In your writings, you have written about a "missional hermeneutic." What do you mean by this expression?**

**Christopher J. H. Wright:**<sup>1</sup> I remember them so vividly from my childhood—the great banner texts around the walls of the missionary conventions in Northern Ireland where I would help my father, Joe Wright, at the stall of the Unevangelized Fields Mission. "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," they urged me, along with other similar imperatives in glowing gothic calligraphy. By the age of twelve, I could have quoted you all the key ones—I knew my missionary Bible verses.

By the age of twenty-one I had a degree in theology from Cambridge, in which the same texts had been curiously lacking. There seemed to be little connection at all between theology and mission in the

**Christopher J. H. Wright** is the International Ministries Director of the Langham Partnership International, a group of ministries that provides literature, scholarships, and preaching training for pastors in Majority World churches and seminaries. Previously he taught Old Testament in India at the Union Biblical Seminary and served as Principal at All Nations Christian College, England. An ordained Anglican on the staff of All Souls Church in London, England, Dr. Wright has written commentaries on Deuteronomy and Ezekiel and is the author of *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (InterVarsity, 2004).

mind of the lecturers, or of myself, or, for all I knew, in the mind of God either. *Theology* was all about God—and what mostly dead people had speculated about him. *Mission* was about us the living and what we do since the Bible has told us (or some of us at least) to go and be missionaries.

“Mission is what *we* do.” That was the assumption. “Jesus sends me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” Many years later, (after teaching theology as a missionary in India), I used to teach a course called “The Biblical Basis of Mission” at All Nations Christian College—a missionary training school in England. The title makes the same assumption. Mission is the noun, the given reality. It is something *we* do, and we know what it is. And the basis on which we justify it, must be found in the Bible. What, then, is the biblical basis for mission? Roll out the texts. Add some that nobody else has thought of. Do some joined up theology. Add some motivational fervour. And the class is appreciative. Now they have even more biblical support for what they already believed anyway, for these are All Nations students after all. They only came because they are committed to doing mission.

Now don’t get me wrong, I do believe passionately that mission is what we should be doing, and I believe the Bible mandates it. However, the more I taught that course, the more I wanted to rename it: from “The Biblical Basis of Mission” to “*The Missional Basis of the Bible*.” I wanted students to see, not just that the Bible contains a few texts that happen to provide a rationale for *our* missionary endeavour, but that *the whole Bible itself is “missional.”* These writings are the product of, and they bear witness to, the ultimate *mission of God*. The Bible tells the story of *God’s mission* through God’s people in their

engagement with God’s world for the sake of the whole of God’s creation. The Bible is the drama of God’s mission—a drama that embraces past, present, and future; Israel, Christ, and the nations; life, the universe, and everything. Mission, like salvation, belongs to our God. Mission is not just one of a list of things that the Bible happens to talk about, only a bit more urgently than some. Mission is, in that much-abused phrase, “what it’s all about.”

Jesus comes very close to saying, “This is what the Bible is all about,” when he gave his disciples their final lecture in Old Testament interpretation.

“This is what is written:” he said, “The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem.” (Luke 24:46-47).

Now Jesus is not quoting a specific text here. Jesus says the whole of the Scripture (which we now know as the Old Testament), finds its focus and fulfilment *both* in the life and death and resurrection of Israel’s Messiah *and* in the mission to all nations, which flows out from that event. Luke tells us that with these words Jesus “opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.” This is how they were to read the Bible. The proper way for disciples of Jesus to read their Scriptures, is *messianically* and *missiologically*—i.e., pointing to Christ and pointing to global mission. We’ve been fairly good at the first, but pretty poor at the second.

Starting in this way with Jesus’ theocentric and teleological use of the Scripture (i.e., that the Scriptures reveal the “whole will of God”) also reminds us that handling the Bible in relation to mission is not merely a matter of identifying themes within it that justify and shape



our engagement in mission. For behind all human mission stands the mission of God. And the Bible itself (including of course the Old Testament) is a dimension of the mission of God. The whole canon of scripture is a missional phenomenon in the sense that it witnesses to the self-giving movement of this God, in revelation and redemption, towards his creation and towards us, human beings made in God's own image, but wayward and rebellious. The writings, which now comprise our Bible, are themselves the product of, and witness to, the ultimate mission of God for the redemption of humanity and creation.

In short, then, what I mean by the expression "missional hermeneutic" is a way of reading Scripture from its own assumption that the whole Bible renders to us the story of God's mission through God's people in their engagement with God's world for the sake of God's purpose for the whole of God's creation. Reading from that point of view, we find that the Bible shows us not only *God with a mission* that stretches from creation to new creation; but also *humanity with a mission* (ecological, social, economic and cultural); *Israel with a mission* (to be the people entrusted with the knowledge of the one true living God and to live accordingly as a light to the nations); *Jesus with a mission* (to fulfil the mission of Israel and bring the blessing of Abraham to the nations through the gospel of redemption centred on his cross and resurrection); and the *church with a mission* (to participate with God in the accomplishment of his purposes for his world).

Putting these perspectives together, then, a missiological hermeneutic means that we seek to read any part of the Bible:

- In the light of God's purpose for his whole creation, including the redemption of humanity and the creation of the new heavens and new earth;
- In the light of God's purpose for human life in general on the planet, and of all the Bible teaches about human culture, relationships, ethics and behaviour;
- In the light of God's historical election of Israel, their identity and role in relation to the nations, and the demands he made on their worship, social ethics and total value system;
- In the light of the centrality of Jesus of Nazareth, his messianic identity and mission in relation to Israel and the nations, his cross and resurrection;
- In the light of God's calling of the church, the community of believing Jews and Gentiles who constitute the extended people of the Abraham covenant, to be the agent of God's blessing to the nations in the name of, and for the glory of, the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### ENDNOTE

<sup>1</sup>This response is an abbreviated extract from Christopher J. H. Wright, "Mission as a Matrix for Hermeneutics and Biblical Theology," in *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Craig Bartholomew, et. al.; Carlisle and Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 102-43.

**SBJT: We live in a world that is very different from that of the great Baptist missionary hero William Carey. How can he help us think about missions today? What can we learn from him, both positively and negatively?**

**Michael A. G. Haykin:** What is amazing is that a man like William Carey (1761-1834), who lived in the very different world of the "long" eighteenth century and who first set foot on Indian soil in November, 1793, still has much to teach us. Consider four positive aspects of Carey's

**Michael A. G. Haykin** is Principal of Toronto Baptist Seminary in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, and a Senior Fellow of The Jonathan Edwards Centre for Reformed Spirituality. He also serves as Visiting Professor of Church History at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He obtained his doctorate at the University of Toronto and is the editor of *Eusebeia: The Bulletin of the Jonathan Edwards Centre for Reformed Spirituality*.

missionary legacy.

First of all, there was his missionary partnership at Serampore with William Ward (1769-1823), a skilled printer who became the best preacher at Serampore, and Joshua Marshman (1768-1837), the administrator and foreign secretary of the Serampore mission. In all of the extant literature and manuscripts of these three men there is amazingly no trace of mutual jealousy or severe anger. Henry Martyn (1781-1812), an Evangelical Anglican and missionary to the Persians, said that never were “such men . . . so suited to another and to their work.” This “band of brothers” is a solid reminder that many of the great missionary endeavors are accomplished as believers work in close union and harmony.

Second, there was the conviction that the non-Christian peoples of India had to be valued for what they were, immortal souls who had no knowledge of their Maker. As Carey, Marshman, and Ward wrote in 1805,

In order to be prepared for our great and solemn work, it is absolutely necessary that we set an infinite value upon immortal souls. . . . It becomes us to fix in our minds the awful doctrine of eternal punishment, and to realise frequently the inconceivably awful condition of this vast country, lying in the arms of the wicked one. If we have not his awful sense of the value of souls, it is impossible that we can feel aright in any other part of our work, and in this case it had been better for us to have been in any other situation rather than in that of a missionary.

Third, Carey was intentionally Christ-centred in his preaching. As he once said, we need to

make the great subject of our preaching, Christ the crucified. . . . The doctrine of Christ’s expiatory death

and all-sufficient merits has been, and must ever remain, the grand means of conversion. . . . So far as our experience goes in this work, we most freely acknowledge, that every Hindu among us who has been gained to Christ, has been won by the astonishing and all-constraining love exhibited in our Redeemer’s propitiatory death.

Fourth, Carey also serves as a model of “incarnating” the gospel in a culture one is trying to reach. Carey was wholly committed to learning the languages and cultures of the peoples of India so as to better reach them for Christ. By the time that Carey moved to Serampore he had acquired a remarkably extensive knowledge of Bengali. Moreover, as soon as he had mastered the elements of the Bengali language he began work on the translation of the New Testament. In time Carey would go on to prepare translations in five of the great languages of India: Bengali, Sanskrit, Marathi, Hindi, and Oriya. Although Sanskrit was no longer a spoken language at the time when Carey was in India, Carey soon realized that Indians regarded this language as the only language worthy of literary production. It was a classical language that functioned much like Latin did in Europe during the Middle Ages. Carey realized that if the Bible were to be taken seriously by Indian religious leaders, it had to be translated into Sanskrit.

It is also noteworthy that Carey and his colleagues were sensitive about not needlessly offending their hearers. They did not fail, when challenged, to point out to their hearers what they judged to be the weaknesses and imperfections of Hinduism and Islam; but they did not begin with such a critique. As Carey and his friends said, “the real conquests of the gospel are those of love.”

One key area, though, in which they were adamant about change was that conversion had to entail a renunciation of caste and the caste-system. When Carey baptized Krishna Pal in 1800, his co-worker William Ward wrote in his diary, "Thus the door of faith is open to the gentiles, who shall shut it? The chain of the caste is broken, who shall mend it?"

However, in noting the positive, it is also important to note a negative point that is instructive for us today. As a grammarian Carey was brilliant, but as a translator, though, it must be admitted that he lacked a keen sensitiveness to the finer shades and nuances of ideas and meaning, a failing which dogged all of his translations. Carey remarked frequently that he knew the translations were not perfect and he hoped that others would build on them. Carey's failure to understand at times the subtleties of translation was, it should be noted, a common failing of the day among translators. A good exception is Adoniram Judson's translation of the Scriptures into Burmese. His Burmese Bible is still in use, and has remained readable, whereas none of Carey's translations are still in use.

Driving Carey, though, was the correct conviction that the Word of God had to be available to the people-groups that he was trying to reach. He was rightly convinced that the Word of God is in itself the great instrument for the conversion of unbelievers. Yet, he would have probably achieved more if he had attempted less.

**SBJT: How important is the study of apologetics in preparing for missions ministry, and how does the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth at Southern Seminary prepare missionaries with**

**apologetics training? What is the role of apologetics in, for example, missions to Islam?**

**Ted Cabal:** Sound apologetics strategy is indispensable for biblical missions; therefore, the study of apologetics should be regarded as a necessary element in missions preparation. No one who evangelizes does so without apologetics, because apologetics comes into play whenever an unbeliever disobeys the gospel in an evangelistic encounter. As soon as the unbeliever provides a reason for rejecting the good news, a missionary also becomes an apologist.

When an unbeliever resists the gospel, a missionary inevitably applies apologetics theory, perhaps only intuitively. Even if the Christian simply decides to walk away from the resistant unbeliever, the disengagement is almost certainly due to some (perhaps appalling) subconscious apologetics theory. Happily, most gospel heralds do not walk away, but instead apply apologetics to the best of their ability (though they might not know this is called "apologetics"). Not all apologetic responses are created equal or are appropriate in every circumstance, but examples include philosophical (e.g., transcendental arguments), historical (e.g., trustworthiness of the Bible), scientific (e.g., design arguments), theological (e.g., why God became man), and/or incarnational (e.g., displaying Christ's love).

Unbelievers have reasons for their unbelief. These rationales may be deliberately dishonest and based on obstinacy, or highly intellectual and complex, or profoundly ignorant and confused. Certainly all reasons to reject Christ are bad reasons; but the unbeliever does have his reasons. The evangelist who ignores these reasons is careless in handling the gospel.

**Ted Cabal** is Professor of Christian Philosophy at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He brings to the classroom his years of experience in pastoral ministry, seeking to instill in his students a devotion to Christian apologetics. In addition to several published articles and lectures at numerous colleges, Dr. Cabal has participated in debates dealing with topics ranging from the existence of God to the ordination of homosexuals.



The Gospels and Acts are full of examples of Jesus and His great apologist, Paul, discussing gospel truth in differing ways that cut to the heart of specific unbelieving strongholds. Thus, all wise servants of the good news should pray that their careful use of apologetics be used by the Holy Spirit to undercut the weeds of unbelief in hopes that gospel seed will produce a harvest of salvation. Sound apologetics is simply indispensable to Great Commission faithfulness in seeking to undermine reasons for unbelief.

The divine means of salvation is the good news, and the divine means for responding to its rejection is apologetics. Apologetics saves no one, but its truth is the necessary corollary to the gospel. Apologetics should not serve to call attention to the missionary, but to unmask the unbeliever's trust in Satan's lie. No one can be intellectually arm-twisted into the kingdom, but God intends to deal with unbelief in the head and heart.

In a sense, virtually all facets of theological education should contribute to the general apologetics preparation for Great Commission obedience. The Graham School at Southern Seminary stresses the importance of the entirety of a missionary's seminary education, not just the "missionary" courses. The wise missionary-in-training will endeavor to become the best biblical scholar possible, not only to love and understand the Bible's message but to counter effectively unbelieving attacks on its credibility. The study of systematic theology is crucial for apologetics grounding in removing confusion about Christian doctrines under attack, and to exhibit the coherence and beauty of biblical truth. Philosophy should be studied not only to develop clear thinking and understand systems of thought, but

also to rebut rationalist attacks against the faith. And, of course, apologetics courses are vital for understanding the critical role the Holy Spirit, presuppositions, evidence, human reasoning and intuition, the effects of sin, and theories of truth play in evangelism and apologetics. Students should understand that broad-spectrum apologetics preparation is fundamental and intrinsic to much of their seminary curriculum.

Yet too often apologetics is confused with what may be called "stock" apologetics. Stock apologetic methods focus on a "one-size-fits-all" approach. But if little attention is paid to the unbeliever's concerns, the apologist may not effectively treat the source of his unbelief.

For instance, if someone rejects the biblical Jesus with the bogus contention that a church council removed His teaching on reincarnation from the scriptures, the apologist should stress the results of biblical textual criticism. Instead of presenting a cosmological, design, transcendental, or other kind of argument, the surety of essential biblical doctrine in the transmission of scriptural manuscripts is the proper antidote to this specific ground for unbelief. (One may invent a Jesus at odds with the New Testament, but such a Jesus is not based on sound historical evidence.)

Consequently the unbeliever may sneer at the missionary's application of apologetics. But this does not mean that apologetics has failed any more than the gospel fails when disobeyed. In both cases the unbeliever suppresses the truth, and will be held accountable on the Day of Judgment. The more clarity in a good news presentation, the more responsible is the unbeliever in rejecting it. Just so, the more clearly the apologist undermines the

reasons for unbelief, the more culpable is the unbelief. God is just as much the author of the truth that undermines unbelief as He is the author of gospel truth.

So, in addition to broad-spectrum training, specific preparation is necessary because apologetics must be fitted to specific grounds of unbelief. The Graham School, therefore, sees its role in missions preparation to include particular apologetics training tailored to individual callings. Our Master of Divinity and graduate programs are designed to include this flexibility. We have students whose intentional ministry preparations range from Mormons to Muslims.

Speaking of Muslims, it is important to note the importance of apologetics in our evangelism to the Muslim community. It is the sad fact that all non-Christians believe a false gospel that seems true to them. Their unbelieving and idolatrous worldview provides the lens through which they understand the world—and reject the gospel. For the devout Muslim, this is just as true as it is for the secular naturalist. Missionary apologists to Muslims must, thus, not only present the living Jesus in evangelism but also tear down Islamic strongholds via apologetics.

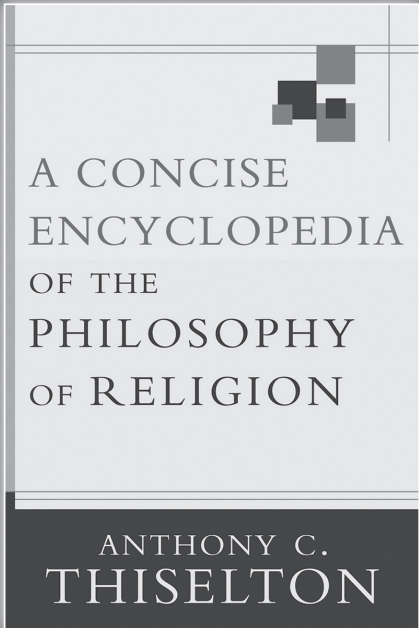
But again, not every gospel encounter with Muslims should be handled the same way. Certainly there are greater (and safer!) opportunities to discuss the historical veracity of the Bible and the Qur'an with American Muslims imbued with some sense of historical consciousness than with, say, illiterate counterparts in Somalia. Missionaries to "postmodern Muslims" in France must be ready to include refutations of metaphysical pluralism and discussions of the nature of truth, whereas apologetic strategies in rural Pakistan will include different

emphases. Missionaries to all Muslims should be prepared to provide winsome defense of the incarnation and Trinity, but even this must be handled in ways appropriate to such things as cultural and political variables.

I am well acquainted with a remarkable young man who dedicated two years to missions in an Islamic country. He experienced firsthand not only the significance of incarnational ministry to Muslims (including courage, character, and love), but also the need to preach the substantive content of the gospel in a unique way—through the parables of Jesus. In diverse situations where direct preaching from the Bible would have immediately endangered his and others' lives, he discovered the power and relevance of Jesus' parables for challenging dark strongholds and providing later opportunities to present the Savior.

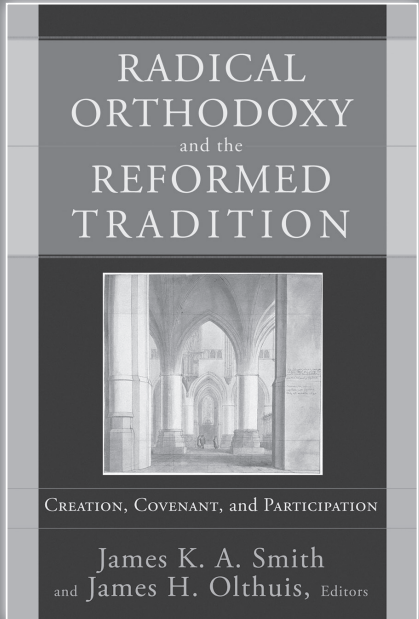
I have believed for many years that the church's ultimate power in missions to Islam is revealed when Christians are sacrificially ready to send sons and daughters with no promise of return. A dear friend of mine has spent virtually his entire adult life loving and living among Middle Eastern Muslims. He is one of my living heroes, never hiding the loneliness, frustration, and fear that has often engulfed him. But he has also enjoyed the rarified air of angelic rejoicing at the salvation of Muslims. The one constant for him in it all is that Christian missions and apologetics endeavors to keep the heart and mind of the unbeliever focused upon his need to receive the good news, because it alone is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (Rom 1:16).

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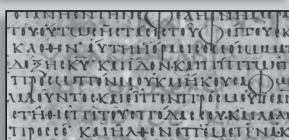
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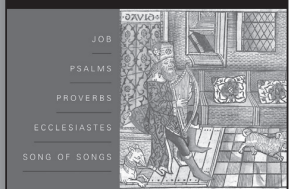
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