
Contemporary mission requires BOLD HUMILITY. This is how in 1991 David Bosch, the South African missiologist, described the challenge of evangelization in his popular “summa missiologica” (121) Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission. In this present volume editors Saayman and Kritzinger, both colleagues of Bosch in the Department of Missiology at the University of South Africa, collect diverse essays that explore and assess the work of Bosch, who died in a tragic auto accident in 1992. This second Festschrift follows the earlier Mission in Creative Tension: a Dialogue with David Bosch, a work that Saayman and Kritzinger also edited in 1990.

The thirteen chapters of this slim volume approach the Bosch corpus, particularly Transforming Mission, from diverse perspectives. Five essays focus on the African dimensions of Bosch as a missiologist and church leader (Saayman-Kritzinger, Verstraelen, Saayman, Pobee, and Sugden). In two contributions, the local context of mission is central: Cadorette on Latin America and Kavunkal on India. Important mission theamics integrate four chapters: the mission dynamic of missio Dei (Shenk): the impact of women (Robert): the theology of religions (Anderson): ecumenism (Castro).

Two significant essays explore “themes neglected by Bosch”: “a radical Catholic inculturation paradigm” (122) as a necessary complement to the six paradigms proposed by Bosch (Burrows); the “transformation of missionaries” (151) through formation programs preparing them to face the realities of the emerging “postmodern ecumenical missionary paradigm” (151) that Bosch envisions (Guidon). Within all these diverse essays, one finds great richness and complementarity (e.g. Kavunkal’s insight on eschatology and mission; Anderson’s emphasis on the centrality of a theology of religions in missiology). In addition, there is remarkably very little duplication or redundancy.

As stated by the editors, the aim of this collection is to have “a worthy first building block to a monument that will be a fitting memorial for the human being, our friend, David Bosch” (7). The editors also realize that “To a large extent the true value of David’s legacy will only become visible in the missiological endeavors of his younger colleagues and especially of his many post-graduate students” (7). Saayman and
Kritzinger are clearly dedicated to furthering Bosch’s scholarly and humanitarian contributions — “as a missiologist, as a man of the church, and as one who labored courageously on behalf of peace and justice in his native South Africa” (back cover).

As already noted, this is the second Festschrift in Bosch’s honor. Future books/collections will profit from having greater internal unity or a more clearly defined thematic focus than one finds among the very diverse essays gathered here. It is such focused and in-depth study that will be a fitting tribute of Bosch’s significant legacy to theology in general and missiology in particular.

Two helpful bibliographies are included: one is a chronological presentation of Bosch’s works (167-70); the other is an alphabetical union list of all the references cited in the collection (171-84). Unfortunately, no subject index is provided for exploring important themes of the Bosch corpus. A preface or introductory overview of the thirteen essays would have been helpful to readers. Although the subtitle is “David Bosch’s Work Considered,” the contributions are centered almost exclusively on Transforming Mission. This reviewer, for example, was awaiting some treatment of the significant theme of one of Bosch’s last speeches “The Vulnerability of Mission.”

Whatever may be the strengths or limitations of a particular presentation of the person and work of David Bosch, his contribution to mission and missiology in the twentieth century is clearly significant and praiseworthy. He remains known as “a man of sorrows and a man of courage” (53), one who “was unquestionably a bridge-crosoer” (39), “an ecumenical personality” (162), and one who always was “optimistic about mission” (72). He was a spiritual man with deep faith in God: “I am an anti-tragedy person, I am in the hope business... And, I am not alone in this” (39). It was David Bosch’s gifts generously shared that enable us “to look further and think more deeply about the Christian vocation to mission in the contemporary world” (121).

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