

Introduction

John Corrie and Cathy Ross

Collections of essays can sometimes seem like a random and arbitrary mixed bag of themes with little coherence. In this volume however there is a thematic structure which hopefully brings the chapters together with a mutually reinforcing complementarity. They are reflections inspired by Andrew's writing and teaching, sometimes engaging with him in depth and sometimes taking his thinking as the jumping off point for further discussion. We begin in Part I with three contributions which put Andrew's life and work in the wider context of the places where he has taught and ministered and the main themes of his writing and teaching.

It seems to us that there are three main areas around which Andrew's theology revolves, and which therefore give coherence to the overall structure of this volume. The first concerns the nature of mission, and perhaps his book *What is Mission?* published in 1999,¹ has been most influential in this regard, along with its sequel *Mission under Scrutiny*, published in 2006.² The chapters in Part II are one way or another related to this theme. *What is Mission?* is of course the question at the heart of missiology, and it continues to provoke debate. Perhaps missiologists should heed David Bosch's advice that it is impossible adequately to answer the question, since mission is by its nature both multifaceted and contextual. Bosch's approach of holistic or integral mission has undoubtedly been influential on Andrew's own mission theology, but Andrew had adopted this way of thinking a long time before *Transforming Mission*,³ as his mission theology was forged in the crucible of his experience in Latin America in the 1970s.

The second main influence on Andrew's thinking is in the area of apologetics, epistemology and the nature of truth in a pluralistic world. The chapters in Part III are inspired by these themes. Andrew's thinking reached its highest point with the publication of *The Future of Reason, Science and Faith* in 2007,⁴ although he had already worked with Kevin Vanhoozer and others in grappling with issues

¹ J. Andrew Kirk, *What is Mission? Some Theological Explorations* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1999).

² J. Andrew Kirk, *Mission Under Scrutiny: Confronting Contemporary Challenges* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006).

³ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (New York: Orbis, 1991).

⁴ J. Andrew Kirk, *The Future of Reason, Science and Faith: Following Modernity and Post Modernity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

of meaning and interpretation in a postmodern context.⁵ Andrew's involvement with epistemology and hermeneutics goes back to his engagement with Liberation Theology and the publications of his important contributions to this theme are widely acknowledged in this book.

The final cluster of chapters in Part IV revolve around the areas of culture, education and religion where again the themes of liberation, politics and contextualisation are not far away. This area of interest was nurtured by Andrew's involvement with the founding of the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity as well as through his involvement with the Gospel and Culture movement. But these broad areas still do not adequately encompass the reach of Andrew's influence. He has made further important contributions to the debates about theological education, globalisation and Islam, and in most recent times he has developed this latter interest into a book which explores the 'clash of civilisations' theory of Samuel Huntington.⁶ It is a pity that we have not had opportunity to respond to this important development in this present volume.

Part I: J. Andrew Kirk: His Life and Work

Cathy Ross briefly surveys Andrew's career as a missiologist with the aid of a very helpful interview conducted with Andrew in 2010. She focuses on the breadth of Andrew's contributions to the field of missiology and explores some in further depth – especially apologetics, liberation theology and Andrew's thoughts on lay ministry. It is her firm conviction that Andrew is a profound scholar who truly does test all things and holds fast to what is good.

Daniel Kirk, one of Andrew's sons, who at present has a teaching and training ministry in Chile, offers an affectionate and personal biography which has many fascinating insights into Andrew as a person and his pilgrimage in mission.

Samuel Escobar, a lifelong friend and associate, puts Andrew's considerable contribution to the church in Latin America into the historical context of the development of evangelical missiology in the continent. In so doing he offers some important perspectives on the theological ferment in Latin America and the way in which evangelical convictions were forged out of that context. This chapter is an important summary and commentary on this period of Latin American evangelical history.

⁵ J. Andrew Kirk and Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *To Stake a Claim: Mission and the Western Crisis of Knowledge* (New York: Orbis, 1999).

⁶ J. Andrew Kirk, *Civilisations in Conflict? Islam, the West and Christian Faith* (Oxford: Regnum International, 2011).

Part II: What is Mission?

Andrew made a significant contribution to Latin American evangelical theology through his association with René Padilla and Samuel Escobar when he was instrumental in the formation of the Latin American Theological Fraternity as well as in the establishing of the Kairos Centre in Buenos Aires in the 1970s. In this period Andrew taught and wrote about revolutionary politics, liberation theology and the importance of contextualisation. He helped many evangelicals to develop a biblical approach to contextualisation. He has maintained his interest and involvement in Latin America, travelling and teaching regularly. Out of his experience in Latin America came a strong commitment to holistic or integral mission, seeking to apply gospel principles to issues of social justice. In this way he made a significant contribution to the restoration of social justice to the evangelical mission agenda in the 1980s and 1990s.

René Padilla acknowledges this in his chapter and makes a compelling case for his own approach to a contextual and integral mission. This holistic approach has been strengthened in recent years as Andrew has added to it a commitment to environmental issues, conflict and reconciliation, inter-faith relations, and the gospel engagement with culture.

René's chapter sets the scene well for an in-depth discussion of the hermeneutics of liberation theology from John Corrie. John is picking up Andrew's suggestion of an 'alternative hermeneutic' which, it is argued, could form the basis of an evangelical liberation theology both faithful to scripture and fully engaged with the context of poverty and injustice. Liberation theology may be seen to be in decline in recent years and therefore may be considered something of an anachronism, but it established important and abiding principles which John believes must be taken seriously by evangelicals who are committed to mission as contextualisation. Andrew was a sympathetic critic of Liberation Theology and it is in that spirit that John seeks to re-energise the tradition of evangelical social justice with an approach that holds both orthodoxy and orthopraxis in creative tension.

If Liberation Theology takes seriously the theme of mission in the context of community then Peter Penner's contribution complements the previous chapters with a scholarly exegesis and exposition of the summary texts in Acts and what they have to teach us for our own ecclesiology. This is inspired by Andrew's commitment to the biblical text as intrinsically missional and by his view of the church as a community of the Kingdom called to make disciples who love one another. The idea of a 'community of shared goods' challenges our Western individualism, but 'missional communities' are springing up in the West attempting to revive this tradition and offer the world a counter-cultural model of a shared commitment to social transformation. Peter's detailed discussion of the elements of early church community life and the 'praxis of integrated fellowship' offers important insights to this movement.

From the very different context and perspective of Southeast Asia Hwa Yung discusses the ways in which evangelicals there can contribute to the important

task of nation building with all its socio-political challenges. We hear much about rapid evangelical growth in many parts of the 'Majority World' and yet too often the impact of that growth on the social and political structures of the nations is minimal, so that revival and personal conversion do not result in mission as social transformation. Hwa Yung sets out some of the elements of an evangelical approach to nation building, including the maintaining of a faithful moral compass and the refusal to be drawn into ethnic conflict based on tribal loyalties. Freedom, equality and human rights are rooted in a long tradition of christian principles and he argues that evangelicals in the Majority World need to listen to the history of the development of these ideas which will give them resources to engage with non-christian thinkers in working together on new ways of thinking about politics and government.

Part III: Truth in a Pluralistic World

Andrew has travelled and taught within Eastern Europe for many years, so it is good to have two contributions from that part of the world. In the first Parush Parushev identifies the challenges to epistemology and the justification of truth claims presented by the rationalism and secularism of post-Enlightenment cultures, a theme which Andrew has returned to time and again. Parush engages profoundly with Andrew's recent thinking, especially as it sets out what he calls a 'moderate foundationalism'. Beginning from an exploration of the differences between epistemological and experiential foundationalism, and how they might be held together, Parush discusses the possibilities of a non-foundationalist epistemology rooted in a constructive postmodern critique of the absolutism and reductionism of the modern project. His preference is for a convictional perspectivism that can avoid the charge of relativism by being rooted in a tradition of shared narratives which are communally owned. This is an important critique of Andrew's approach which at the same time is a creative contribution to the debate about foundationalism.

It is a testimony to Andrew's international significance that there are missiologists in different parts of the world who recognise his influence upon their thinking. Vinoth Ramachandra from Sri Lanka gives us a typically rigorous and trenchant discussion of religious pluralism which argues that we need to move beyond mere tolerance of difference to a much more engaged and mutually critical pluralism in the public sphere. He identifies strongly with Andrew's critique of institutional religion and advances 10 theses on religious pluralism which suggest a framework for a new approach to christian engagement with plurality. This recognises and affirms cultural and religious diversity, and encourages a critical and self-critical dialogue which does not avoid conflict by simply opting for the middle ground in the interests of peace.

The differences between cultural and religious plurality explored by Vinoth and the possibilities of meaningful dialogue are recognised in Darrell Jackson's

contribution on the relationship between intercultural and interreligious dialogue. He locates the discussion in the framework of the policies of the European Union and the Council of Europe, which tend to see religion as an aspect of culture and therefore try to subsume it within intercultural dialogue. European politicians struggle to define the relationship between culture and religion and seem to have viewed intercultural dialogue as a smokescreen for interreligious dialogue and therefore tend to resist it. If they were willing they might learn something from the Conference of European Churches with their five decades of experience of dialogue, but Darrell's detailed account underlines the frustrations for the church of being recognised as a legitimate dialogue partner. Darrell then brings Andrew into the discussion with his perspectives on interreligious and intercultural dialogue. The conversation explores the possibilities of meaningful dialogue with secularism, in which the church may need to recognise that it is participating from the social and cultural margins. But the alternative is that genuine intercultural dialogue may wither and die, thereby depriving Europe of the possibility of constructing a more comprehensive identity.

Finally in this section Andrew Walls offers a typically insightful contribution on the influence of worldview on christian conversion. He challenges us to recognise that there is no such thing as a single christian worldview, since worldviews are constructed in each context as complex 'maps' of reality incorporating many different elements. The Enlightenment of course was critical in the development of Western christian worldviews, and greatly influenced the preaching of missionaries to Africa and Asia. But these contexts have much bigger maps, reflecting larger, more populated universes; so what happens when a person in these contexts becomes a christian? And what happens to theology when it interacts with Majority World cultures that throw up new issues and frontiers for theology? Andrew's hope is that christian worldviews with open frontiers will give jaded theological activity new vision, especially in relation to the whole question of the nature of evil.

Part IV: Culture, Education and Religion

The breadth of Andrew Kirk's influence is illustrated well in this fourth part of the book, which brings together a range of concerns with overlapping themes. The relationship between Gospel and Culture is never far away, and Wilbert Shenk offers a fascinating historical survey of the attempts to develop a missiology of Western culture in which both Wilbert and Andrew have played significant roles. The Gospel and our Culture programme, inspired by Lesslie Newbigin, saw the West as the new mission field with the imperative of a meaningful missionary encounter with Western culture. The history of attempts at sustainable development of this initiative is salutary, for despite significant academic and missiological contributions, and many fruitful consultations and publications, it was difficult to sustain the momentum of the project and realise the original optimistic goals of its

founders. Other institutions, agencies and authors have taken up the challenge, but Wilbert's conclusion is that the magnitude of the task has yet to be fully grasped. The vision remains both for the church and the academy to pick up this baton and run with it if we are to see Western culture transformed by the gospel. Truly this is an 'unfinished agenda'.

Someone who faithfully ran with it was David Kettle, who coordinated the Gospel and our Culture Network in Britain from 1999 and did much to keep alive the vision and thinking of Lesslie Newbigin. David offers us a masterful analysis of Newbigin's thinking on the nature and meaning of freedom which provides the basis for an invitation to dialogue with secular liberal thinkers. This is not easy as liberals tend to deny the existence of 'fiduciary frameworks' which Newbigin, drawing on the work of Polanyi, argued were implicit in all truth claims. David discusses a way beyond this impasse which involves the willingness to examine self-critically our own presuppositions if we are to expect others to do the same. This is not to deny a prior commitment, but it is to ask liberals to re-examine their prior, dogmatic commitment to the principle of doubt and to replace it with more open critical enquiry which is attentive to the world. This proposal is offered as a starting point for dialogue between Christians and secular culture. David's knowledge of Newbigin's thinking is revealed as second to none in this chapter, and it is an appetising prelude to substantial work on the gospel and Western culture which he has bequeathed to the church. We are very sorry to report that David died in March 2011 after a long battle with cancer. The missiological community has lost an incisive and scholarly thinker in David, whose untimely death leaves the Gospel and Culture Movement without his faithful and committed advocacy. Before he died he was able to complete his 'magnum opus' on *Western Culture in Gospel Context: Towards the Conversion of the West – Theological Bearings for Mission and Spirituality* (Wipf and Stock, Cascade, 2011), and we warmly recommend his book as a significant contribution to the ongoing discussion of the relationship between gospel and culture.

After that we plunge back into history for an exploration from Alan Kreider of inculturation from the fourth century on the subject of mission and violence. The early church Fathers, Basil and Ambrose, were committed to the Christianisation of their culture, not merely the conversion of individuals. In order for this to happen they had to engage with the sensibilities of the aristocrats and senators who thought that Christian teaching about loving one's enemies would undermine the state's responsibility to provide robust military self-defence. Basil's approach was to find justification for Christian teaching in classical, pagan literature, and Ambrose more daringly Christianised a pagan handbook for the behaviour of aristocrats. Basil encouraged Christian disciples to engage with both pagan and Christian texts, learning in so doing how to discern what was 'useful'. He found examples of non-violence in the pagan thinkers which endorsed the Sermon on the Mount, but he was no supporter of the 'just war' theory and would never use pagan writings to justify Christian use of violence. Ambrose was much more audacious in replacing and not just critiquing Cicero's teaching. In explicit contrast to Cicero he

advocates an ethic of rigorous, personal non-violence, at the same time defending the use of violence to intervene on behalf of a third party on the basis that 'love demands the use of force'. This is the beginnings of 'just war' theory which springs out of an act of missional inculturation in which they drew upon what was already present in the society and sought to transform it in the service of the gospel.

A different kind of challenge for missional inculturation can be found in post-communist Eastern Europe, where Peter Kuzmic builds upon Andrew's commitment to the whole people of God developing for themselves an evangelical political theology, a idea which challenged much of the conservative thinking in the churches at that time. Peter's graphic story of the church under communist rule highlights the difficulty for today's church in coming to terms with all of that past, and he pays tribute to the way in which Andrew helped East European christians to build bridges across the ideologies. With the end of the communist era there was an uncritical euphoria in which many mistakes were made, not least by insensitive missionaries and agencies who flooded in to take advantage of the new freedom. Many institutions for theological education were started, but many of them are now in crisis. Peter suggests five priorities for theological education, intriguingly resonating with Alan Kreider's call for positive engagement with secular thinking which includes 'interdisciplinary learning opportunities' and active partnerships with those engaged in working for peace and social justice. Peter Kuzmic's experience and authority in commenting on the church in Eastern Europe is extremely valued.

Finally, but by no means least, we have another highly authoritative piece from a world recognised expert on Pentecostalism in Allan Anderson. Allan's masterful account of the relationship between Pentecostalism and mission takes as its premise that Pentecostalism is a mission movement *par excellence*. He analyses five main features of Pentecostalism and explores their missiological implications. He advocates a postcolonial reading of Pentecostal history which moves away from a Western missionary-centred approach to Pentecostal origins and identity, and highlights its ability to contextualise itself and democratise Christianity. Allan brings us the missiological challenge of this twenty-first century christian reformation with fascinating detail and a consummate grasp of the big picture.

Contextualisation is never far from any of these chapters, and this is because mission, as Christopher J.H. Wright reminds us in his Foreword, is intrinsically contextual. In each of the areas explored in these chapters Andrew's thinking has always been profound, biblical, radical, and often challenging and provocative to orthodox evangelical assumptions. His writing is able to command academic respect whilst being accessible to all thinking christians. We believe his approach should command more attention from evangelicals involved in mission who are sometimes inclined to bypass the need for serious theological reflection on missiology. It is for these reasons that it is our pleasure and privilege to offer this volume.