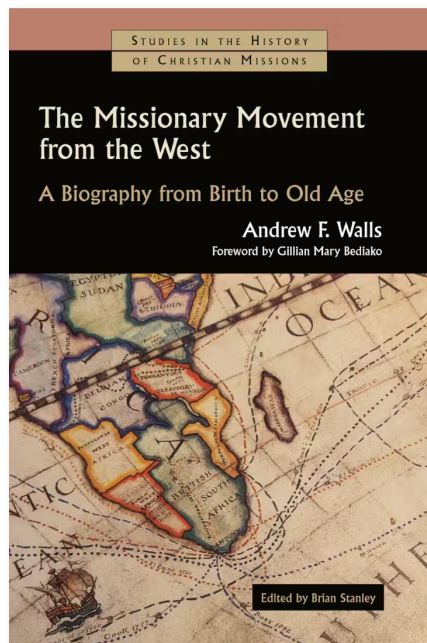


REVIEW: The Missionary Movement from the West by Andrew F. Walls (ed. Brian Stanley)

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REVIEWED BY
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Andrew F. Walls (ed. Brian Stanley), *The Missionary Movement from the West: A Biography from Birth to Old Age*. Michigan: Eerdmans. Pp 295, ISBN: 000-978-0-8028-4897-0 \$32.99 paperback.



The Missionary Movement from the West is the final published work from Andrew Walls (1928-2021), the father of the study of world Christianity. Walls served in mission, primarily in education, in Sierra Leone and Nigeria before returning to the UK where he held posts at the University of Aberdeen, University of Edinburgh, and Hope Liverpool University. At Aberdeen and Edinburgh, he pioneered the Centre for the Study of World Christianity.

Walls never wrote a monograph. Rather, his award-winning published works—*Missionary Movement in Christian History* (1996), *The Cross-Cultural Process in Mission History* (2002), and *Crossing Cultural Frontiers* (2017)—were all essays compiled by others into Walls readers. *The Missionary Movement from the West* follows this pattern. Walls originally gave the chapters in this book as lectures that trusted friends then transcribed. Since Walls passed away before the work was completed, his Edinburgh colleague Brian Stanley edited the book into a coherent whole.

The book is organized into four sections comprised of four chapters each. In part 1 (“Birth and Early Years: The Origins of Western Missions”), Walls shows how global mission followed what he calls “Greater European Migration”—Europe’s movement toward the world for economic and political gain (chap 1). He then discusses how Jonathan Edwards influenced western mission sending through the publication of the *Life of David Brainerd* (chap 2). Next, he narrates the rise of missions among German pietists and early mission societies from Britain (chap 3). Finally, he shows how

evangelicals were involved in social action and humanitarian work at an early point in the Protestant missionary movement (chap 4).

In part 2 (“Toward Middle Age: Western Missions in the Nineteenth Century”), Walls begins by showing how developing eschatology—particularly toward premillennialism—influenced mission theology and practice (chap 5). Next, by focusing on the work of Henry Venn, Walls navigates the relationship between western and non-western churches, including Venn’s famous three-self paradigm (chap 6). Using southern Africa as a case study, Walls probes the nineteenth-century understanding of race and culture (chap 7). Finally, he explores the work of key western missionaries in China and how an appreciation for indigenous culture changed the perspectives of western missionaries (chap 8).

In part 3 (“Midlife Crises: Western Mission in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries”), he first shows how western missions had become an acceptable enterprise by the mid-nineteenth century (chap 9). Next, he surveys the optimism and organization of the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh (chap 10). He then discusses the rise of missionary specialization, particularly the work of medical missionaries (chap 11). Finally, in contrast to Edinburgh 1910, he shows how the 1938 Tambaram (India) conference highlighted the voices and influence of non-western church and mission leaders (chap 12).

In part 4 (“Old Age: The Second World War and the Western Missionary Movement”), he surveys the developing post-colonial and post-missionary churches in India (chap 13), China (chap 14), and Africa (chap 15). He concludes the work with a call for local and contextual theology, arguing that western Enlightenment-influenced theology is too small for the needs of the global church.

Professor Walls’ work contains rich insights that often begin with a reading of Scripture (e.g., Daniel, Ephesians) about the realities of world Christianity. He also includes some framing motifs about the western missionary story that have certainly challenged and clarified my thinking. First, he juxtaposes the paradigm of a crusader versus that of a missionary. The crusader is prepared to compel while “the missionary can only demonstrate, explain, entreat—and leave the rest to God” (14). Though early western missions developed in a context of Christendom and western colonial expansion, missionaries do not base their gospel work on political or economic power.

Second, he asserts that the Protestant western missionary movement was fueled by Pietists and those who have experienced authentic spiritual renewal. Walls likens this

radical Christianity to the rise of monasticism in the fourth century—those who wanted to press on as spiritual martyrs even when Christianity had become an accepted way of life (21). Both monks and radical evangelicals contributed much to the story of global mission.

Third, the general trajectory of the second half of the book showed how western missions contributed to and became a part of the world Christian movement. Missionaries in China, for example, worked hard to understand and engage culture, which caused them to revisit Scripture with fresh eyes and change their theology and practice of mission.

I have just two lingering concerns after reading the book. First, structurally, there was much overlap. Though the origins of the work—a series of lectures given in various places over time—explain this, I do feel the editors could have done a bit more cutting on repeated themes such as Greater European Migration and the Enlightenment’s effect on western theology.

Second, Professor Walls asserts that the fourth-century Nicene Creed was largely a Greek product that addressed Greek concerns (242). Though the original creed was produced in the Greek language and certain terms in the creed such as *homoousios* were quite Greek, I’m reminded that the Arian controversy was birthed in Egypt and the key theologian who opposed Arius—Athanasius—was probably from a Coptic background. The heresy spread to Asia Minor where Arius had fled, which prompted the Roman Emperor (with the help of his Latin-speaking Spanish theological advisor) to call the first ecumenical council. Though the majority of the 300-plus bishops hailed from within the Roman Empire, Bishop John of Persia attended and signed the Nicene Creed on behalf of the churches of Persia and India. The building material for the creed had been the baptismal creeds of the early churches; a reflection of the rule of faith. Following the fourth-century council, global churches (e.g., Syrian, Persian, African) continued to affirm the Nicene Creed in their liturgies as a faithful summary of the gospel.

Quibbles aside, I really love this book. Professor Walls’ oral method, winsome voice, and rich insights offer a welcome invitation to the study of western missions in world Christian studies. Professors and students of mission history and global Christianity will greatly benefit from this study.

Edward L. Smither