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interpretation of the whole of Scripture, but which can over time blind us to the needs of others. He argues that we need a catholicity of interpretation within which we particularly welcome criticism from perspectives with which we sharply disagree.[52]

This catholicity of interpretation forces judgment on western interpreters of the Israeli-Palestinian situation. As we have noted earlier, there is a link between the establishment of the Jewish State and western Protestant missionary movement, and thus a link between such movements and the Palestinian oppression that has come out of establishing Israel as a state. McDowall comments on how a Protestant focus on the 'Holy Land' gives a view of the country as one 'in which time stood still, the inhabitants a passive but colourful backdrop to those in search of biblical truth'.[53] In contrast the inhabitants have much to say about Protestant involvement in mission, their use of the Bible and their approach to politics. Inasmuch as we in the West begin to reflect on and judge the Palestinian situation, so we will find ourselves being judged.

CONCLUSION

The Israeli-Palestinian situation has been outlined historically and in regard to key Christian voices. Reflecting on these voices suggests that in a divided land, mission and hermeneutics also appear divided. There need to be overlaps between the mission activities of different groups in order to reduce the injustices encouraged by division. However, it is possible to focus on such overlaps to the exclusion of justice issues, and so unity and justice need to be kept together in mission. Divisions in hermeneutics appear to arise out of over-contextualisation by different groups. This needs to be overcome through a greater catholicity of biblical interpretation. There is much to learn from and be challenged by in the Israeli-Palestinian situation.

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Minority Christians in the Church History Curriculum

John Roxborogh

[52] 52. Ibid., pp. 243, 247.

[53] 53. McDowall, op. cit., p. 6.

Keywords: Theological education, church history, historiography, curriculum, minority groups, globalization, contextualisation, discrimination, evangelism, conversion, missiology;

As the theological curriculum gets squeezed by new concerns, it is sometimes difficult to ensure that important aspects are not neglected. In the church history area this applies especially to the study of minority groups of Christians. Although pressures of time may tempt teachers and students to concentrate on global issues, a proper understanding of Christianity requires a robust commitment to the stories of minority groups. If the distinction between mission and church history has all but collapsed, the history of conversion remains important in its diversity as well as its common themes. It is only in relation to the particularity of Christian experience that valid generalisations can be made. This article discusses some of the factors which are important in understanding minority groups, the temptations and benefits of ensuring minority history is studied and how minority Christian stories may be integrated into the curriculum.

HISTORIOGRAPHY, GEOGRAPHY AND IDENTITY

The role of church historian commonly arises out of a relationship with a particular church. The task of answering questions about the past relates to the identity of the group arising out of the conflicts, personalities, events, and issues which contributed to its character. Geography and wider social and economic factors also contribute to the cultural and theological identity of any group. Churches may see themselves as primarily defined by theological conflict (for instance churches arising out of the Reformation); they may also see themselves as more primarily defined by place (the Church of England, the Church of South India). Some may see themselves as defined by association with a particular person, not only Jesus himself, but a founder or saint. Often a particular figure has a defining role which helps identify the group even if it does not always facilitate ongoing change. Many orders, mission groups, and churches have the equivalent of 'What would Jesus do?' as part of their story.

These questions 'Who are we?', 'What is our story?', 'Where did we come from?', 'Why are we different?', are powerful instinctive human responses arising out of self-awareness and the desire to engage with one's community and identity. They also present a demand for the validation of conflict, the creation of heroes and martyrs, and by implication the discernment of threatening forces against which the faithful must remain vigilant. These issues exist for dominant 'mainstream' Christian groups as well as for minorities who lack power or who are otherwise insecure.

History writing driven by these needs touches a deep emotional chord, but these needs do not represent the whole story. The development of history as a discipline has promoted awareness of social and geographical dimensions, and an appreciation of factual more than emotional accounts, as well as the value of allowing the human and the fallible their due weight. It is realized that whatever purposes hagiography may serve, it is self-limiting and makes it difficult for new questions to be asked.[1] The history academy also presents questions which Christians may feel less comfortable about. Replacing a providential and heroic view of the past with a secular and mundane one leaves something lacking. The desire for grand theories, often reductionist in their interpretation of religious experience, takes church history into the realms of debates about the

[1] 1. Alan Neely, 'Saints Who Sometimes Were; Utilizing Missionary Hagiography', *Missiology* 27.4 (October 1999), pp. 441–457.

significance or insignificance of religion in culture, and whether its influence is hostile, benign, or constructive. The church history of the academy may be legitimately concerned with the identity question of a secular society, but it is not concerned with the 'Who am I?' or 'What is the truth about Jesus?' questions of the Christian.

The missionary and ecumenical movements have contributed important dimensions. The assumption that active engagement in mission was a mark of a true church was something which the Reformers supported, despite the rather different agenda they faced in their time. History tended to be rewritten as the story of evangelistic mission and the spread of Christianity, not simply as the story of conflicts between theological traditions. In an age of ecumenism[2] however, the felt need was to seek understanding of the historical and social basis of conflict and to help provide a basis for working at resolving differences rather than perpetuating them. There has been a growing desire to seek to be fair to other parties and to take greater notice of figures who tried to prevent conflict. Ecumenism has usefully encouraged a quest for common interests across the divisions of the Christian church.

The early historians of the Protestant missionary movement were the administrators, editors and missionaries who documented what they found, wrote up what they thought their supporters needed to hear, and sought to justify their calling against the indifferent at home; at the same time they were learning the apologetics needed to engage with the faiths they discovered overseas. The needs of the emerging churches were long subsumed under the needs of the mission, but it was eventually appreciated that the identity of new churches should not be constructed out of the story of the mission and the missionaries. Instead they had to take account of their own leaders, cultures and world views.

In recent decades mission historiography has drawn attention to the processes of contextualisation (without which contextual theology has an uncertain grip on reality). An awareness of the multicultural diversity of Christianity has provided material for a deeper understanding of the processes of conversion, and given to church historians models of how to move beyond the mind-set which handles reports of spiritual phenomena by dismissing them.[3] Missionary historiography has also needed to engage with colonial history and interpretations given by it to Christianity as a European phenomenon; it now faces the challenge of post-colonialism. In places at least it is mature enough to learn from both. It has not been alone in being willing to recognize that both the missionary and the convert remain strong players in the story of religious and cultural interaction, and that the missionary and his or her culture are also changed by the experience.

A significant contribution of missiological historiography has been its awareness of the dramatic changes in the geography of world Christianity. Simply on the basis of numbers, Christians today are more likely to be African, Asian, and Latin American than they are to be North American or European. At the same time, missiology has been interested in the particular experiences of cultures as they have encountered the gospel, by whatever vehicle it has reached them.

In this situation the church in any particular area or culture needs an understanding of its local and regional history as well as the global and universal dimensions of the Christian story. There are also important connections between these dimensions. For instance, Lutherans in India need an understanding of Luther and of the Lutheranism that

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[2] 2. Timothy J. Wengert and Charles W. Brockwell, Jr. eds., *Telling the Churches' stories: Ecumenical perspectives on writing Christian history* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

[3] 3. Mark A. Noll, 'The challenges of contemporary church history, the dilemmas of modern history, and missiology to the rescue', *Missiology* 24.1 (January 1996), pp. 47–64.

came to India, as well as an understanding of Christianity in India in all its traditions, and of the particular history of Christianity in their locality.

THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF MINORITY HISTORIOGRAPHY

Whether the geographic focus is local, regional or global, the fact of being in a minority is a common Christian experience. Although Christians generally need to be concerned for the global and universal elements in the Christian story as well as the particular and regional, the danger of allowing a dominant particular experience to be taken as being global and universal, and therefore normative, is to be avoided. Recognition of the validity of local Christian history is important not only for people's ownership of their own history but also for the interpretive frameworks of the wider church.

The writing and teaching of church history needs to go beyond the emphasis on commonality, developed in situations of dialogue and ecumenism, to an awareness of difference. The localisation and globalization of history, like that of theology, needs discussion of its quality as an instrument for establishing Christian identity. The minority historian must understand a particular tradition in depth and relate it to wider pictures, also written by and out of the collective labours of minority historians.

Minority Christians have been the subject of historical treatment in relation to persecution, but interest has increased also with greater political awareness of indigenous peoples, the concern of Bible translators to reach every known language, the vision of mission strategists to plant churches in every people group and the growth of post-modernism and multicultural awareness. If the evangelistic strategies among these factors bear fruit, we can expect an increase in the Christian groups which are cultural and religious minorities.

Interest in minorities also needs to be driven not only by concerns about persecution, or about fears of western cultural dominance, but by a theology which takes cultural diversity seriously. Minority historiography is of at least equal significance to contextual theology. A commitment to understanding God's word out of 'theology from below' also requires a commitment to historical reflection on the 'below' out of which contextual theology is formulated.

The motif of being a minority may carry the danger of seeing persecution as the key to the Christian experience, and with it the temptation to sensationalist if not apocalyptic analysis of very ordinary Christian stories. Either way there are risks. Failure to take minority experience seriously may convey the impression that comfortable relations with political power should be considered normal. If political freedom and social persecution are both valid Christian experiences, it is the minority dimension which has further to go to be treated with adequate seriousness.

A victim mentality among the minority can be as distorting as the ignorance and prejudice of the majority. The power of politicians and media makes minorities vulnerable to fashions of idolisation or criticism for ends which have little to do with their right to exist or their contribution to society. What may be courted for votes one day may be condemned as dangerous another. If the scope for redress from unfair reporting is limited, and efforts to correct distortions sometimes counterproductive, a groundwork of quality scholarship is needed before there is a crisis. A scholarly exchange of opinion, and a culture of openness, may be a good investment in building trust as well as understanding.

WHO SHOULD WRITE MINORITY HISTORY?

Minorities often wish to reserve to themselves the writing of their own story, yet they need to be proactive in ensuring that their stories are represented in the history of a nation as fairly as possible. This requires that others as well as themselves be involved, even if some of those others may not be fully sympathetic. Christian historians who are not in minority groups have an obligation to include minorities in the larger story, even if they see some of these groups as rivals or even heretics. The experiences of minority groups in general are often indicators of dangers other Christians may also have to face.

For historians inside and outside minority there is a responsibility for fairness which is not diminished by the fact that they are not always heeded. Popular myth, and a feeling for how things ought to have been are powerful forces for both minority and dominant groups. Not everybody wants to know that heroes are not all saints and that saints are not necessarily easy to live with.[4] Not all can cope with complexities and ambiguities, or the fact that golden ages on examination are not all that they were said to be. At the same time the selective writing up of negative experiences distorts reality. It is not always easy to assess whether minorities are dangerous, difficult or just different.

Any historian is subject to pressures and temptations; the minority historian faces these from within—not just from outside his or her own community. There are always misunderstandings, errors and people whose interests are better served by the maintenance of stories than by their correction. There are temptations to arrogance, exaggeration and defensiveness, quite apart from failures at the level of training, competence, industry and the determination of an appropriate critical framework. In the interests of objectivity or the desire to relate to majority concerns, some may magnify the failings of their community. Some may be inclined, sometimes for the same reasons, to gloss over mistakes, personalities, and embarrassing evidence.

A wide range of people may study minority Christianity. A particular person, group or institution may be more or less sympathetic to the subject, more or less competent within their own terms, or very far from engaging in the sort of critical reflection one might like to see. Nonetheless they are part of the overall enterprise. This also applies to different levels of expertise. The 'professional' historian depends on the work of the amateur, not just that of colleagues or the sources provided by institutions. This is especially true for minority groups. Without those who informally record the experiences of family members, religious and social history are alike impoverished.

This diversity of involvement also applies between different parts of the minority group—which is seldom as unified as those without or within are apt to think. It applies between different churches, and also between different religions. Those within a particular group have questions which are different from those outside. It also applies on an international scale.

Those who research and write about minority groups, whether expatriates or members of other or majority communities, need to see themselves in positions of trust. That does not necessarily mean the suppression of the uncomfortable, but it does mean that outside researchers must be willing for others to question their ideas, query their facts, revise their conclusions and formulate alternative theses. All historians approach their task from a certain time, place and culture and there is something provisional about whatever we do. We write to say this is how, from these assumptions, things seem to be. Responsibility for a particular piece of historical writing is not ownership of the truth. Whatever the quality of our scholarship, our version of history will be handed on to others to draw their own conclusions and write their own version. No perspective is above critical comment or investigation.

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[4] 4. Alan Neely, ibid.

The historian of the minority also has the task of sharing lessons from the experiences of others and of reminding their own community that they may be wrong as well as wronged. The historian should aspire to a concern for human rights which extends beyond his or her own community. People need to be mindful of the freedoms of others as well as the freedoms they seek for themselves. This may include the not always welcome information that the persecuted can themselves become persecutors. Lessons from the experience of persecution elsewhere may equally be a warning about the proper treatment of other minorities, even in eras marked by good will and good intentions.

DOCUMENTING MINORITY EXPERIENCE

Minority Christians themselves have a responsibility to help ensure their story is told in ways which do justice to their concerns and perspectives. The documentation of events, preservation of archives, and provision of adequate interpretive frameworks cannot be left to accident, or be abandoned to the mercy of majority cultures. Surprisingly, it is possible for minorities to be complacent about the preservation of what is valuable to them, including their faith, language, culture and history. Yet the aim of totalitarian groups is frequently to obliterate the memory of those they persecute and to rewrite history accordingly.

Minority historians need to study the scenarios faced by other minority groups, how they recognized the forces which lead to oppression as they arose, how they responded in crisis, and how those who survived worked to rebuild their communities when it was over. People are likely to be damaged emotionally and spiritually. Not all are strengthened by the experience of being oppressed. Judgment may be distorted even if faith has grown. Getting stories down and distributing them at the time is as important as reflecting on events afterwards. It is wise to take advantage of internet transmission and electronic storage outside of the local situation itself. We need to encourage the electronic documentation of church life through the archives of discussion and newsgroups as well as the work of those concerned for freedom of religion and human rights. Attention should be paid to what is said in public media, as well as the preservation of personal letters, papers, analysis and reflection.

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Often the main questions which are assumed to be relevant for the minority Christian experience are those concerning personal courage and faith, but the community itself and the wider church also benefit from evidence of wisdom and discernment under pressure. While we may not be able to anticipate all that a later generation may wish to know, there are some basic things which will help make it possible for them to address their own questions in their time.

A chronology of events and a clear sense of place provides an important framework for interpretation of trends, issues and debates. Not every parish needs to write up every dimension of every issue, but records of the options and perceived consequences of different decisions helps provide depth. Leaders and hero figures need to be understood with sympathy if not always with agreement. It is important to uncover stories of laypeople, not just of leaders and of institutions. We need to see truth testified in failure as well as success, and to engage with ambiguity and uncertainty as well as faith and conviction.

The heat of conflict may not be an easy time for writing memoirs, but some of the participants at least need to be asked to record what was going on and what people learnt

of themselves and of God; they need to identify provisionally strategic decisions and their effect on the well-being, security and unity of the church. What were the arguments behind the decisions? What were the fears and assumptions? It may be possible to recall the folk sayings and prayers and Bible passages which guided people. Stories of survival, challenge, and courage are always important as are evidence of links across boundaries of faith, race, and class. Documentation of the ownership of institutions and property can be important. Preserving reliable evidence of bad treatment is not just a matter of refusing to let old issues die (though it may be that); it can be an essential foundation for justice and political credibility.

THE FUTURE

Where does this leave minority Christianity in the Church History curriculum? Any curriculum item can be incorporated as a topic in its own right and / or as a dimension of other topics. Minority Christianity has some claim to be included in the theology syllabus in both these ways, but it is of prime importance as part of the slice of the theological education cake that is called Church History. Church History itself may gain some space by leaving it to others to give the historical dimension to issues of theology which have often been assumed to be responsibilities for history more than theology. Theology is now a more diffuse subject than it used to, and the assumption that sorting out theology was the most important outcome of history has long gone.

The regional and the global dimensions of church history depend on the accumulative work of those concerned with minority history, whatever wider trends and patterns historians concerned for the larger pictures will wish to look for. The quality of all our theological and historical reflection, and potentially also of our discipleship, requires that due weight be given to the experiences of minority Christians.

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Ephesians 4:12 Once More: 'Equipping the Saints for the Work of Ministry?'

John Jefferson Davis

Keywords: hierarchical ministry, lay ministry, translation, exegesis, character, training

'Now it is most apparent from Ephesians 4 that all Christians are "in the ministry", wrote Ray Stedman in his widely read book of 1972, *Body Life: The Church Comes Alive*. 'The proper task of the … support ministries … is to train, motivate, and undergird the people to do the work of the ministry.'[1]

This understanding of the task of pastors and teachers based on a particular translation of Ephesians 4:12 ['to equip the saints for the work of ministry'] has become the dominant understanding of the text in evangelical and mainline churches today. In recent years, however, this popular interpretation has been challenged by a number of scholars.[2] It is the purpose of this study to examine the history of interpretation of Ephesians 4:12, to propose a new translation of the Greek text, and to relate this discussion to the growing interest in today's churches in 'marketplace ministries' and 'ministry in everyday life'.[3]

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[1] 1. Ray C. Stedman, *Body Life: The Church Comes Alive* (Glendale, CA: Regal Books, 1972), p. 78.

[2] 2. See, for example, Henry P. Hamann, 'The Translation of Ephesians 4:12—A Necessary Revision', *Concordia Journal* 41 (1988), pp. 42–48; Andrew T. Lincoln, Word Biblical Commentary: Ephesians (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990), pp. 252–256; T. David Gordon, ' "Equipping" Ministry in Ephesians 4?' Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 37:1 (1994), pp. 69–78.

[3] 3. The term 'ministry of the *laity*' is here intentionally avoided, in order not to perpetuate the unfortunate appearance of a dichotomy between the 'clergy' and the 'laity' which has plagued the church since the third century. For background on the historical development of this problematic distinction, see A. Faivre, *The Emergence of the Laity in the Early Church* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1990).