

theology that is internally and externally coherent on the basis of eschatologically defined realist metaphysics that bears similarity to the theology of Pannenberg. He draws together the various avenues of thought into a widely functioning ecclesiology in which the confessing community, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, experiences the depth and meaning of Scripture with a directness going beyond that of an earlier metanarrative approach. The focal point of truth for this community is historical in nature and looks forward to eschatological confirmation in the fulfillment of God's purposes. In this he moves beyond epistemological foundationalism and hard realism in the direction of a "chastened and softer" rationality that borrows selectively from postmodern epistemology.

Grenz does not go far beyond sketching what this emergent theology might look like, and it remains to be seen what shape these initiatives will take in a more fully developed theology. In the meantime, this reader feels constrained to ask whether Grenz perhaps follows the sensitivities of postmodern philosophers too closely. For instance, are the implications of a hard nonfoundationalist methodology for the functions of Scripture in theology dealt with seriously enough? How far should the demise of realism and the linguistic construction of reality be pushed in light of the undeniable givenness of created reality? Is there a danger that following postmodern sensitivities too closely may result in a theology that does not do justice to divine revelation and is too thin to satisfy the human need for assurance?

Notwithstanding, this book stands as a significant signpost between the evangelical theologies of two different eras. It looks backwards with unparalleled clarity, identifies key issues on the contemporary horizon, and indicates some possible avenues of approach. It may very well come to be regarded as a landmark study of the trajectory and crisis of evangelical theology, and it cannot be ignored by anyone seeking to understand the history, present shape, and current challenges faced by contemporary evangelical theologians.

Andrews University

RUSSELL STAPLES

Guder, Darrell L. *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*, Gospel and Our Culture Series, vol. 6. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000. xvi, 222 pp. Paperback, \$20.00.

In this book, Guder calls upon the North American church to throw off its cultural captivity, to rethink its theology and practice of evangelism, and to allow the gospel to continue its work of conversion both within the church and outside it.

Part I, "Foundations: The Church's Calling to Evangelistic Ministry," argues for a renewed focus on mission as witness. But when Guder and others speak of mission they mean much more than cross-cultural outreach, for mission is really the *missio Dei* involving the very nature and heart of God in all that he has done throughout salvation history to bring people into relationship with himself. The church is an instrument of that mission, but too often it has viewed mission and witness in a reduced form, seeing salvation in terms of personal benefits rather than as a corporate responsibility.

Guder suggests the use of the word "evangelization" instead of "evangelism" since evangelism for many has come to mean merely methods and programs. Evangelization suggests a process of witness in which the church not only fulfills

its God-assigned task of witness to others, but also continues to allow the gospel to do its work within the body of Christ. Part II, "Challenges: The Church's Need for Conversion," deals with the challenges of translating the gospel from one culture to another and the historical pattern of the gospel's reduction as each new group desires to control the gospel and calls its version orthodox or normative. In addressing the problem of reductionism, Guder uses some of his strongest words for the American church's tendency to reduce the gospel to personal benefit, seeing salvation in largely personal terms and separated from God's call on the lives of his followers to be his witnesses. This is the greatest reduction and must be rejected. Being called must always be connected with fulfilling the purpose of that call: witness and the evangelization of the world. Salvation as personal benefit trivializes God and is just another indication of the human tendency to try shaping and molding God into human likeness.

In Part III, "Implications: The Conversion of the Church," Guder stresses that evangelism, witness, and mission must all be accomplished in and through the local congregation, not by smaller groups acting as "evangelism committees." All the believers in the local body of Christ must participate in incarnational witness within the community. Guder's is a workable model as long as such witness is targeted toward people in the same culture. However, as the North American church evangelizes an increasingly multicultural society, Guder's model of the whole church involved in witness and evangelization is lacking in concrete, positive case studies. Local congregations have rarely been effective in crossing cultural or linguistic barriers. In reaching out to other ethnic groups in the local community, evangelizing teams may be the answer.

Guder's warning that culture is always at work to capture the church and its mission, that the gospel stands in danger of reductionistic satisfaction with less than God wants or intends, is extremely valid. Only as the church is willing to subject itself to a continuing conversion process will it be able to be truly incarnational.

Andrews University

BRUCE L. BAUER

Hastings, Adrian, ed. *A World History of Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000. x + 608 pp. Hardcover, \$35.00.

Most church history texts are primarily Eurocentric and North American in their focus. This is natural, for the history of Europe and Christianity is so intimately intertwined that Christianity has come to be seen mainly as a Western religion. It is no wonder that when Western imperialists set out to subjugate the world, Christianity was perceived as a tool of colonialism and imperialism by many non-Europeans. Many people wrongly assume that there is hardly any noteworthy history of Christianity outside of the West. *A History of World Christianity* sets out to dispel this notion. It is obviously a monumental task.

This book is a welcome change from the traditional church history texts. It is a multiauthored book edited by Adrian Hastings, who himself contributed the chapters on Latin America and the history of Christianity in the Roman world from 150-550 A.D. It is a plural history that looks at the story of Christianity from the viewpoint of different ages and continents, with little effort to impose a