



Revitalization

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Revitalization Consultations Scheduled

The first of three annual consultations on the dynamics of Christian revitalization movements has been scheduled for November 12-15, 2009 (Thursday evening through Sunday morning). The consultation will use facilities at Asbury College and Asbury Theological Seminary and will include both public events and focused consultative sessions.

Subsequent consultations are projected for November 2010 and 2011, venues yet to be determined. The overall theme for the three consultations (funded by the Henry Luce Foundation) is “Revival and Revitalization: Exploring the Cultural Dynamics of Religions Awakenings.” The focus of the first consultation, “Pentecost and the New Humanity,” introduces discussions of the way Pentecost and the reshaping of human experience has been a theme in renewal movements throughout history.

Scholars of revitalization and people involved in renewal movements, whether local, regional, or global, will share their experience, stories, music, and research during the consultation. Following this first gathering, the Center will coordinate ongoing research, data-gathering, and analysis leading to the publication of a volume of findings and other resources.

Books: New & Notable

Are We Rome? The Fall of an Empire and the Fate of America by Cullen Murphy (Houghton Mifflin, 2007; 262 pp.). Comparisons between the Roman and American empires abound—this is one of the better ones. Murphy, former managing editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, notes that the Roman Empire was “too big to fail,” but fail it did. Includes recommendations for the contemporary U.S.

Azusa Street: Mission and Revival: The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement by Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. (Thomas Nelson, 2006; 342 pp.). Long in preparation, this foundational book traces the many connections to and from Azusa Street—including the Wesleyan Holiness roots.

Being Salt: A Theology of an Ordered Church by George R. Sumner (Cascade Books, 2007; 109 pp.). This book will be of particular interest for Anglicans who continue to pray and hope for revitalization

within their communion. Sumner interprets the priesthood as a lifetime vow, as situated within the baptismal vows of all Christians, and as inseparable from the distinctive calling of the church to be the Body of Christ.

Christian Worship Worldwide: Expanding Horizons, Deepening Practices edited by Charles E. Farhadian (Eerdmans, 2007; 301 pp.). With numerous photos from around the world and contributions by Andrew Walls, Dana Robert, M. L. Daneel, Seung Joong Joo, Lamin Sanneh, Robert Priest and others, this volume examines cultural and theological issues surrounding worship in the growing global church. Includes a theologically rich essay by Michael Hawn which advocates “liturgical plurality rather than cultural uniformity” in worship.

Continued on page 2

In This Issue

Revitalization Consultations Scheduled	1
Books: New & Notable	1, 2, 4
From the Director	1
Strategic Planning and the Kingdom of God	2
Book Reviews	3

From the Director

This fall important steps are being taken to launch planning for the first annual consultation of the Center, scheduled for November 2009, and funded by the Henry Luce Foundation.

On October 29 the action committee met with our project consultant, Professor Bryan Froehle of Dominican University, to develop a design for the first consultation. The consultation will bring together from around the globe practitioners of revitalization and scholars representing many disciplines. We will receive the most current data on revitalization events and movements occurring in the world church, in multiple cultural settings. Bringing together the best minds of the church representing varied perspectives and movements should lead to significant new insights. Our intent is to learn what God is about in bringing new life to the world Christian movement.

The outcomes of the consultation will be made available in products that will be shared in future reports.

We are pleased also to report that one of the recent publications in our Revitalization Studies Series has won the 2007 Saddlebag Award of the United Methodist Historical Society, which is awarded to the year’s most important new book in Methodist history. The award went to John Tyson, author of *In the Midst of Early Methodism: Lady Huntingdon and Her Correspondence* (2006).

— J. Steven O'Malley, Director

The Center for the Study of World Christian Revitalization Movements contributes to the vitality of Christian mission and local congregations by synthesizing learnings from past and present revitalization movements worldwide. Its approach is interdisciplinary, combining biblical studies, theology, history, anthropology, and sociology. www.revitalizationmovements.net

Can Revitalization be Planned? —

Strategic Planning and the Kingdom of God

A chief aim of the Center for the Study of World Christian Revitalization Movements is to understand the dynamics of Christian renewal movements using a variety of tools and interdisciplinary approaches. A key question is this: Can renewal be planned, or does it happen spontaneously, the result of social forces and the unfathomable working of God's Spirit?

From a Christian standpoint, the ultimate goal of renewal is the kingdom of God—God's will being done on earth as in heaven, the church fulfilling its mission to that end. Yet the kingdom is in large measure a mystery. Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed" (Luke 17:20 NRSV) or "with observation" (KJV).

Christian leaders however, like most leaders, are planners. Institutions, especially, like to plan. Many Christian organizations have a planning process. Christian colleges and universities make medium- and long-range projections.

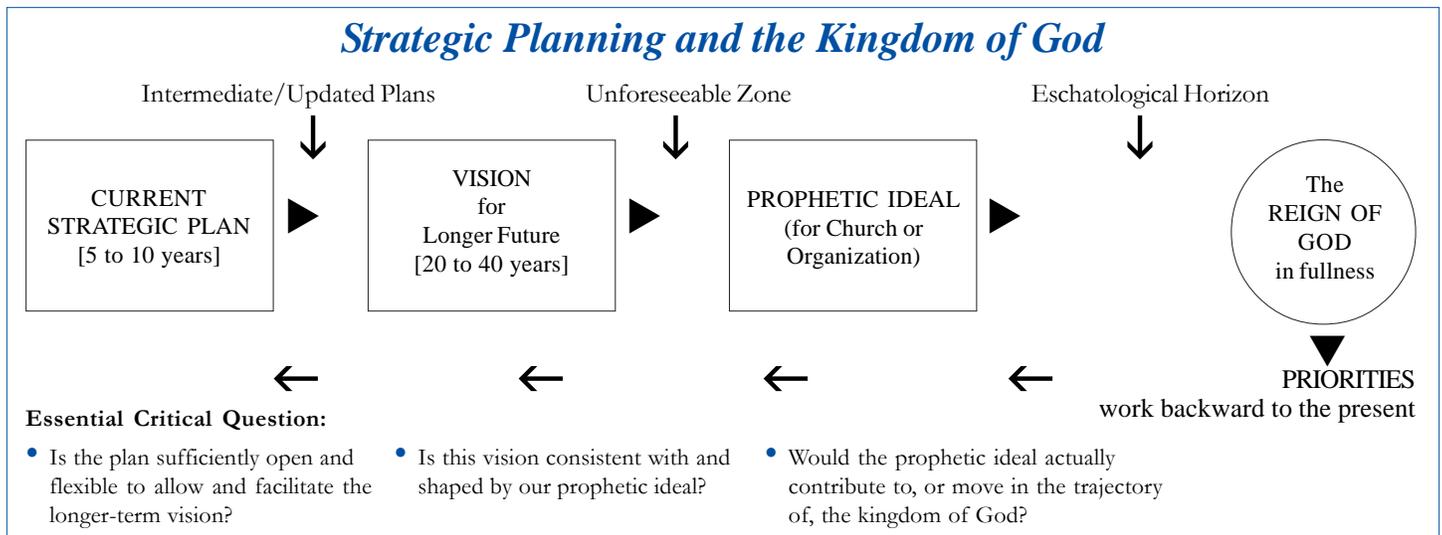
Is there any connection between planning and real, deep renewal? Or is planning a merely human or "secular" predilection?

Can strategic planning *in fact* contribute to the coming of the kingdom of God? If not, then for Christians it is a waste of time?

Here is a visual model of how planning and the kingdom of God might be strategically linked. The basic thesis is this: If Christian organizations think of their future in terms of the priorities of the kingdom of God (Mt. 6:33) and let those priorities shape their planning process, strategic planning *can* contribute to (not build) God's kingdom. The basic assumption is this: Planning, if done, should be an integral part of our discipleship, aimed not first of all at institutional success but at faithful witness to Jesus Christ and his reign.

Christian organizations typically elaborate successive plans through a strategic planning process. If a "prophetic ideal" that is faithful to the mission of God is developed, it could boost strategic planning beyond merely human dreams (or hubris) so as to begin to embody in some sense God's dreams.

— Howard A. Snyder



New & Notable (continued from p. 1)

Economics in Christian Perspective: Theory, Policy and Life Choices by Victor V. Claar and Robin J. Klay (InterVarsity, 2007; 254 pp.). The authors, both economists, discuss economic theory from a fairly traditional standpoint. Though the book includes a chapter on "Creation Care," it reveals a remarkably superficial understanding of ecology and therefore of the interplay between ecology and economics.

The End of Religion: Encountering the Subversive Spirituality of Jesus by Bruxy Cavey (NavPress, 2007; 265 pp.). Cavey is principal pastor of The Meeting House, a multi-site, rapidly growing "church for people who aren't into church" in the Greater Toronto Area (affiliated with the Brethren in Christ). The book however is not the story of the church but Cavey's understanding of the radical nature of the Jesus Way in postmodern urban society.

From the Margins: A Celebration of the Theological Work of Donald W. Dayton edited by Christian T. Collins Winn (Pickwick [Wipf

& Stock], 2007; 433 pp.). This significant volume brings together twelve of Dayton's key essays, with reflections by William Abraham, Dawk-Mahn Bae, David Bundy, Jeff Groh, Nancy Hardesty, Frank Macchia, Clark Pinnock, Doug Strong, Jim Wallis, and others.

A History of Christianity in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, 1450–1990: A Documentary Sourcebook edited by Klaus Koschorke, Frieder Ludwig, and Mariano Delgado (Eerdmans, 2007; 426 pp.). Useful for tracing the history of movements. The book includes documentary materials on St. Thomas Christians in India, Nestorian and Armenian Christians in Southern Asia (1508), Matteo Ricci, Xavier, the Rites Controversy, Christian Ashrams, the slave trade and abolitionism, national movements in Africa, B. Las Casas, a little about the Moravians, and much more.

Continued on page 4

Book Reviews

God's Continent: Christianity, Islam, and Europe's Religious Crisis

By Philip Jenkins

Oxford University Press, 2007. 289 pp., Footnotes, Index.

Having made the case that the center of Christianity has shifted to the Global South, then advised us that these new faces of Christianity read the Bible and embody the faith in more literal, communal, and spiritual ways than does the Western church, Philip Jenkins now completes the trilogy by claiming that reports of the death of Christianity in Europe are exaggerated.

Some claim that current church attendance rates will mean empty sanctuaries 20 years from now, while migration and healthy birth rates will make Islam the dominant religion of Europe shortly thereafter. Jenkins disagrees.

Jenkins' style is now familiar; present the range of arguments, begin to nuance them by asking if the definitions of "Europe," "Christianity," and "Islam" are really clear, and then provide data and rationale for other possible outcomes.

For example, Europe as a concept includes a range from secularized France to religious Poland. Christianity ranges from the old-line churches in decline to new churches that resemble megachurches. And Islam ranges from centuries-old Muslims in Bosnia to Pakistanis in Britain, North Africans in France, and Turks in Germany.

Jenkins sums up the evidence of Christianity's decline in Europe: Near-empty cathedrals, declining vocations in religious orders, and silent seminaries. But perhaps it is *Christendom* that is dying, while Christianity is alive and well. Jenkins quotes Greeley's observation: "Religion is always declining and always reviving" (57).

Newly resurgent Christianity is coming at the hands of immigrants. Not all immigrants to Europe are Muslims; a great number of African and Asian Christians have established communities and churches in Europe. Another fact: New renewal movements. Jenkins notes that "roughly, Europe's evangelicals, charismatics, and Pentecostals outnumber Muslims by almost two to one, and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future"

(74). There are signs also of renewal within the Catholic Church. Sunday Church attendance is not the only marker of religious life, contrary to the American perception.

Jenkins notes the increased migration of Muslims, the high birth rates, and the tendency to leave behind village roots and find identity in pan-Islamic movements, all of which work against assimilation. On the other hand, Jenkins sees signs of variety and moderation within Europe's Islamic community. Will the European system that changed Christianity fail to change Islam? Put differently: Will Muslims Islamicize Europe, or will Europeans Europeanize Islam? That is the question. — *Michael Rynkiewicz*

An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches

By Ray S. Anderson; Foreword by Brian McLaren.

InterVarsity Press, 2007. 227 pp.

Before you skip this review, thinking "Oh no, another book about the Emerging Church," let me assure you this one is different. Endorsed by some of the "leading voices" within the emergent conversation—Brian McLaren, Dan Kimball, Tony Jones, Doug Pagitt—this is a book about theology that is actually written by a theologian!

The issue addressed by Ray Anderson, senior professor of theology and ministry at Fuller Theological Seminary, is this: "If the Emerging Church movement is looking for a theology . . ."

Anderson has written not just another trendy book, more journalistic than theological, more self-referential than ecclesial, more culturally relevant than scriptural. This is a serious work of theology that situates its discussion of the church within the mission of the Triune God, the *missio Dei*, drawing its primary focus from the narrative of the Book of Acts. Anderson's argument goes like this: Emerging churches that seek an authentic biblical and theological foundation are genuinely mission-focused while also grappling with theological issues. This book is thus "a contribution to the emergent theological discussion with a deep desire to be part of an emerging dialogue within the emerging church community."

Anderson's key paradigm is Acts 11. Here, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, a church emerges at Antioch, where disciples were first called Christians. Anderson's approach is to "go to the root of the church that emerged out of Antioch . . . in order to anchor the church that is emerging in our contemporary culture with a theology that emerged in the original church."

What Anderson discovers: Emergent theology is messianic, revelational, kingdom-coming, and eschatological; Emergent churches are missional, reformational, stress kingdom living, and incarnational.

The refreshing note here is the way theology and ecclesiology, God and the church, are partnered—the author being an experienced theologian and pastor. I commend the book to readers in mainline, mega, evangelical, and emergent churches. — *Michael Pasquarello*

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New & Notable (continued from p. 2)

Life After Church: God's Call to Disillusioned Christians by Brian Sanders (InterVarsity, 2007; 190 pp.). The author, leader of Tampa Underground (“a missional network of microchurches”), offers an ecclesiology especially attuned to people who have left traditional churches. His last chapter is on “Re-forming Church” and describes “Third-Place Churches.”

Nexus: The World House Church Movement Reader edited by Rad Zdero; Foreword by Ralph Neighbour (William Carey Library, 2007; 520 pp.). The author of *The Global House Church Movement* here assembles contributions by Del Birkey, Robert Banks, John Noble, John Driver, Frank Viola and others, some case studies, and selections from the likes of Tertullian, St. Patrick, Francis of Assisi, George Fox, and John Wesley.

Red Moon Rising: How 24-7 Prayer is Awakening a Generation by Pete Greig and Dave Roberts (Relevant Books, 2003; 255 pp.). Key source on the relatively new 24-7 Prayer movement by two of its leaders. In his foreword Floyd McClung compares the movement to the beginning of the Moravian prayer emphasis at Herrnhut in the 1720s.

Revival in the City: The Impact of American Evangelists in Canada, 1884–1914 by Eric R. Crouse (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005; 230 pp.). Canadian Crouse (Tyndale University College) documents the impact of Moody, Sam Jones, R. A. Torrey, J. Wilbur Chapman, and others during the period studied. Includes photos and newspaper illustrations.

Rising from the Ashes: Rethinking Church by Becky Garrison (Seabury Books, 2007; 177 pp.). What does it mean faithfully to

be “church” in the twenty-first century? Here over 30 leaders from the U.S., the United Kingdom, and Australia give their answers in interview format. Contributors include Phyllis Tickle, Ian Mobsby, Brian McLaren, N. T. Wright, Shane Claiborne, Kester Brewin, and Karen Ward. With a list of “Churches, Organizations, Groups, Places to Visit,” this book gives a pretty good overview of “what’s happening,” especially with regard to worship.

Shaking the System: What I Learned from the Great American Reform Movements by Tim Stafford (InterVarsity, 2007; 176 pp.). Stimulated by a remark by Ralph Winter, Stafford here examines abolitionism (particularly), women’s rights, civil rights, and other U.S. reform movements.

The Upside of Down: Catastrophe, Creativity, and the Renewal of Civilization by Thomas Homer-Dixon (Island Press, 2006; 429 pp.). Hugely insightful book by a leading Canadian political scientist and futurist. Describes key “tectonic stresses” on global civilization today; cycles of stress, catastrophe, and renewal; and “catagenesis” by which societal breakdown can lead to creative renewal, given wise leadership. Well informed by history and science, though not Christian in perspective.

The World Without Us by Alan Weisman (St. Martin's, 2007; 311 pp.). A fascinating account of what would happen to earth if humans suddenly disappeared. “One of the grandest thought experiments of our time” (Bill McKibben), the book provides insights on ecology, history, and civilization of relevance for revitalization studies.