

MISSIONS METHODS AND PRINCIPLES



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Editorial

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This issue of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology* is devoted to the topic of “Missions Methods and Principles” and may be one of the most important issues that the seminary has ever published. The matters discussed in this volume go to the very heart of Jesus’ Great Commission to “go and make disciples of all the nations” (Matt 28:19). Unfortunately, in recent years biblical, missiological principles have been misunderstood and misapplied in several spheres of influence. Even Matthew 28:18–20 has been misread by key Convention leaders who have based international missions policies and strategies on a misunderstanding of this text, which, in an unbalanced fashion, emphasizes obedience and de-emphasizes thorough discipleship that includes, among other things, detailed study of biblical texts. This misconception of what all the Great Commission entails has arguably led to what may be seen as the logical outcome of de-emphasizing thorough discipleship. For example, women have been serving as team strategy leaders, positions which are more than administrative jobs, for they also involve spiritual leadership of team members, including men. Some leaders have also crossed lines by embracing insider movements, compromising too much with the religions and philosophies of the lost persons they are attempting to reach with the Gospel. Further, unprepared and unqualified new converts are being appointed as pastors on the mission field in violation of 1 Timothy 3:6. Contrary to the theology and thinking of those who see no problem with placing new converts in pastoral leadership, Titus 1 does not provide a basis for using neophytes as pastors.

Readers should know that the writers in this journal issue respect those with whom they disagree. They understand that those with whom they differ have good intentions and also recognize the urgency of world evangelization. The existing missiological divide which this volume addresses, however, is quite serious in regard to its effects on strategies and priorities, specifically those currently used by the International Mission Board. Lest there be any misunderstanding, readers need to know that the articles in this journal were not written in a spirit of belligerence, but rather one of concern. They were not composed to criticize personally those who are mentioned, but rather to scrutinize their public strategies and policies—and there is nothing wrong with doing that. Just like Bible translations from time to time need to be re-

viewed, critiqued, and even revised, so also do missions policies and practices.

We offer our congratulations to David Platt, who has recently been chosen as the new president of the International Mission Board. Our prayer is that he will carefully examine the pervasive missiological and ecclesiological practices of the IMB and the theology on which they have been based. Platt did not come from within the IMB; he comes from outside the agency, and hopefully he will be able to analyze objectively existing policies that were put into place during previous administrations. Southern Baptists especially need to pray for Platt as he leads and trust that he will make any changes necessary after thoroughly evaluating the strategies and policies of the IMB.

This journal issue features eight insightful articles. The first article is presented by John Massey, associate professor of Missions at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. In his essay titled, "Theological Education and Southern Baptist Missions Strategy in the Twenty-First Century," he looks at the evidence for the global need, the historic departure of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board away from integrating theological education in its field strategy through appointing cross-cultural theological educators, the fallout from this departure, and the current disposition of the IMB to theological education. He offers a few suggestions for change in strategy for the twenty-first century regarding theological education.

Robin Hadaway, professor of Missions at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri, also contributes a paper called, "A Course Correction in Missions: Rethinking the Two-Percent Threshold," in which he scrutinizes the practice of mission societies to concentrate their personnel and strategic resources on unreached people groups composed of less than two-percent evangelical believers in number, and then he encourages a return to twenty-percent or at least ten percent.

Dean Sieberhagen, assistant professor of Missions and Islamic Studies at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, provides an article titled, "Two Approaches to Contextualization," in which he examines three specific aspects in contextualizing the Gospel to Muslims taking the approach that the correct understanding of the biblical text has authority over any approach used in any particular Muslim context. Scrutinizing insider movements, he maintains that a detailed blueprint exists in the Bible for how to share the Gospel and start churches within an unreached people group.

David Sills is A. P. and Faye Stone Professor of Christian Missions and Cultural Anthropology and director of Global Strategic Initiatives and Intercultural Programs at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He furnishes an article called, "Competing and Conflicting Mission," in which he maintains that as we step into the future, we must find creative ways to minister in new situations that often challenge and impede traditional missions efforts. He insists, however, that we must remain faithful to God's Word in every respect.

Keith Eitel is dean of the Roy Fish School of Evangelism and Missions,

professor of Missions and World Christianity, and director of the World Missions Center at Southwestern Seminary. He contributes a paper titled, "Contending for Southern Baptist Biblical Missiology: Does Doublespeak Live?" "Doublespeak," a term used by some Southern Baptists just prior to and during the efforts that led to the Convention's conservative resurgence, is to say one thing yet believe the opposite in order to protect oneself. Eitel asks whether doublespeak persists and is it found in historically core institutions, the agencies, and boards of the SBC. If so, what, if any, trace evidence exists of this as a continuing practice? In his examination he takes a narrow core sample of selected influences and practices of the Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board to ascertain the degree to which doublespeak may live on.

Dorothy Patterson, first lady of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and professor of Theology in Women's Studies, contributes an essay titled, "The Role of Women as Missionaries." She is primarily concerned with women who serve in spiritual leadership of team members, including men, on the mission field. She maintains in her analysis that the question has never been whether or not women can make a difference in the work of the kingdom on the international mission field and certainly whether or not they are needed. Rather, one must ask if how they do their service for Christ overrides their commitment to the clear boundaries of Scripture.

Scott Robertson, a PhD student in New Testament at Southwestern, provides an article called "Neophyte Pastors: Can Titus 1 Be Used to Justify Placing New Converts in the Office of Pastor?" He argues that the idea that new converts may serve as pastors in a setting where missionaries are surrounded by only neophytes finds no historical or exegetical support in the Pastoral Epistles.

Mike Morris, assistant professor of Missions and associate dean of Applied Ministry and Mentorship, furnishes an essay titled, "Contrasting Missiological Positions in Regard to Matthew 28:20," in which he discusses contrasting interpretations of the Great Commission. Morris issues a clarion call for a return to the thorough discipleship model rather than a model of simple obedience to what one may know or remember at the moment.

This issue also contains for your perusal several reviews of recent books. Some abstracts of recent doctoral dissertations completed at Southwestern Seminary are also included.

We pray that these articles increase your missions awareness and help equip you with knowledge in your preparation for engagement in ministry at home and abroad. If you would like to have any of our faculty members or students speak in your church, please do not hesitate to contact us. We aim to serve the church and are more than happy to serve you. Further, if God has called you into his service please consider allowing us the privilege of preparing you at Southwestern for a lifetime of ministry. These are exciting times at the seminary! God bless you.