THEOLOGY OF MISSION OR MISSIONARY THEOLOGY

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Category: Bible & Mission

> *At the same time, the traditional Western approach to theological education has been widely rejected elsewhere in the world. By now we are all familiar with the critiques developed in South America, but elsewhere around the globe voices are raised against an approach to theology that is perceived to be too academic, too abstract and too remote from the actual tasks of mission and witness in a religiously plural world. Thus, some years back John Mbiti observed that the curricula used in theological seminaries in Africa showed them to be 'very much out of touch with the realities of African culture and problems'. Mbiti asked,*
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> > *Have we not enough musical instruments to raise the thunderous sound of the glory of God even unto the heaven of heavens? Have we not enough mouths to sing the rhythms of the Gospel in our tunes until it settles in our bloodstream? Have we not enough hearts in this continent, to contemplate the marvels of the Christian faith? .... Have we not enough intellectuals in this continent to reflect and theologize on the meaning of the Gospel? Have we not enough feet on thjs continent, to carry the Gospel to every corner of this globe?*
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> *Mbiti' s words clearly imply that Christian theologyÂ developed in Africa will be inextricably bound up with mission. Indeed, they reflect an awareness that a fundamental shift has occurred by means of which the real centres of spiritual vitality and missionary expansion are now located in the Southern hemisphere. Consciousness of this change is widespread in the Third World, and theologians in Africa, Latin America and Asia increasingly ask whether the churches in the West have yet awoken to the reality of this new era in Christian mission.*

This quote comes from A Theology of Mission or a Missionary Theology by David Smith. From the Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology 13:1 (Spring 1995). The paper is very accessible and rather short (9 A5 pages). I can't think of a reason why anyone interested in mission or the growth of the Church would not read it. Twenty years after its publication, this paper has proved to be remarkably prescient.

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