

Witness To The World The Christian Mission In Theological Perspective

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Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective

Introduction

witness to the world the christian mission in theological perspective is a fundamental concept rooted deeply in Christian doctrine and practice. It encapsulates the call of Jesus Christ to His followers to proclaim the Gospel, serve others, and embody the love of God in the world. This mission is not merely a task but a divine mandate that has shaped the identity and purpose of the church throughout history. Understanding the theological foundations of this mission offers believers a profound insight into their role within God's overarching plan for creation and humanity. In the context of a rapidly globalizing world, where cultures, religions, and ideologies intersect more than ever before, the Christian mission takes on renewed significance. It challenges believers to reflect on how they witness to Christ in diverse contexts while remaining faithful to biblical truths. This article explores the theological perspectives that underpin the Christian mission, examining its biblical roots, doctrinal foundations, and practical implications for contemporary faith communities.

The Biblical Foundations of Christian Mission

The Great Commission: The Mandate from Christ

The primary biblical basis for the Christian mission is found in Matthew 28:18-20, often referred to as the Great Commission. Jesus, after His resurrection, commands His disciples: - "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." - "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." - "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." This passage underscores several key aspects: - Christ's authority as the foundation of the mission. - The universal scope—"all nations"—emphasizing a global outreach. - The ongoing presence of Christ with His followers.

The Great Commission is the theological cornerstone that affirms the church's calling to evangelize, disciple, and serve across cultural boundaries.

2 Other Biblical Texts Supporting the Mission

Beyond Matthew, numerous scriptures reinforce the mission: - Mark 16:15: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." - Acts 1:8: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." - John 20:21: "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." These passages collectively emphasize the divine initiative, the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit, and the universal scope of the mission.

Theological Perspectives on Christian Mission

Missio Dei: The Mission of God

One of the most influential theological frameworks for understanding Christian mission is the concept of Missio Dei—Latin for "the mission of God." This perspective shifts the emphasis from human activity to God's initiative in salvation history. - Definition: Missio Dei refers to God's ongoing work to redeem, restore, and reconcile creation to Himself. - Implication: The church's mission is a participation in God's divine mission, not an independent endeavor. - Key Scripture: Ephesians 1:9-10 speaks of God's plan to unite all things in Christ. This framework reminds believers that mission originates with God's love and purpose, and the church's role is to cooperate with divine activity rather than initiate it.

Christocentric Focus of Mission

Another vital perspective is the centrality of Christ in mission theology: - Jesus as the ultimate revelation of God's love and salvation. - The church's mission is to point others to Christ, embodying His teachings and example. - The Incarnation as the model for engaging with the world—God becoming flesh to relate to human suffering and hope. This Christocentric approach ensures that the mission remains rooted in the person and work of Jesus Christ, emphasizing the importance of proclamation, discipleship, and holistic service.

Salvation and Reconciliation

Theological

understanding of mission also emphasizes salvation and reconciliation: - Salvation: The invitation to participate in God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ. - Reconciliation: Restoring broken relationships—between humans and God, and among humans themselves. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 articulates this: "God reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." The church's mission involves actively working toward justice, peace, and healing in society. 3 Practical Implications of Christian Mission Evangelism and Discipleship Theological perspectives inform practical aspects such as: - Sharing the Gospel message with clarity and love. - Nurturing new believers through discipleship programs. - Recognizing cultural sensitivities and contextualizing the message without compromising biblical truth. Holistic Mission: Serving the Whole Person Christian mission extends beyond word to deed: - Addressing physical needs—hunger, poverty, health. - Promoting social justice—equity, human rights. - Advocating for environmental stewardship. Holistic mission reflects the love of Christ in tangible actions, embodying the Gospel in service to others. Global and Local Perspectives Theologically grounded mission encourages: - Global outreach: Engaging with unreached peoples and nations. - Local engagement: Addressing community-specific issues and needs. Both dimensions are essential, rooted in the biblical call to serve "the least of these" (Matthew 25:40). Challenges and Opportunities in Contemporary Christian Mission Contextualization and Cultural Sensitivity Navigating cultural differences while remaining faithful to biblical doctrine is a significant challenge. Effective mission requires: - Respect for local customs and traditions. - Avoiding cultural imperialism. - Communicating the Gospel in culturally relevant ways. Interfaith Dialogue and Religious Pluralism In a pluralistic world, Christian mission must balance proclamation with respectful engagement, fostering dialogue rather than confrontation. Technology and Media Modern tools offer unprecedented opportunities: - Digital evangelism. - Social media outreach. - Online discipleship. These avenues expand the reach but also demand theological discernment to maintain integrity. 4 Conclusion Witnessing to the world through the Christian mission in the theological perspective reveals a divine calling rooted in the heart of God's redemptive plan. From biblical mandates like the Great Commission to the overarching framework of *Missio Dei*, the mission of the church is both a response to God's initiative and an active participation in His ongoing work of salvation, reconciliation, and renewal. As believers engage in the mission, they are called to embody Christ's love through evangelism, social justice, and holistic service, always guided by biblical truth and cultural sensitivity. In a complex and interconnected world, understanding the theological foundations of the Christian mission empowers the church to be faithful witnesses, transforming lives and communities for the glory of God. By remaining rooted in Scripture, attentive to the Holy Spirit, and committed to God's purpose, Christians can effectively fulfill their divine mandate to witness to the world—bringing hope, love, and salvation to all creation. Question Answer What is the central focus of 'Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective'? The central focus is to explore the theological foundations and implications of Christian mission, emphasizing how the church bears witness to the world through its faith, actions, and global outreach. How does the book interpret the concept of 'missio Dei' in relation to Christian mission? It interprets 'missio Dei' as God's own mission to the world, emphasizing that the church's mission is participation in God's divine initiative to reconcile and redeem creation. In what ways does the book address cultural contextualization in Christian mission? The book discusses the importance of contextualizing the gospel message to different cultural settings, ensuring that mission efforts are respectful, relevant, and transformative within diverse societies. What role does eschatology play in the theological perspective of Christian witness presented in the book? Eschatology underscores the hope of ultimate redemption and the inaugurated but not yet complete kingdom of God, motivating Christians to faithfully witness in anticipation of Christ's return. How does the book reconcile the universality of the Christian mission with cultural diversity? It advocates for a universal mission rooted in the core message of Christ, while embracing cultural diversity as a means to enrich and contextualize the proclamation and practice of faith. What insights does the book offer regarding the relationship between social justice and evangelism? The book emphasizes that authentic Christian witness includes advocating for social justice, recognizing that acts of love and justice are integral to the

mission of transforming both individuals and societies. 5 How does the book address the challenges faced by the church in a pluralistic world? It highlights the need for dialog, humility, and respect in engaging with other faiths and ideologies, encouraging the church to witness authentically while fostering mutual understanding. What practical implications for contemporary Christian mission does the book propose? It encourages churches to adopt holistic approaches that combine evangelism, social action, and intercultural engagement, all grounded in a robust theological understanding of mission as participation in God's work.

Witness to the world: the Christian mission in theological perspective

The concept of Christian mission has historically been one of the most defining and dynamic aspects of the faith, shaping its identity across centuries and continents. At its core, the Christian mission embodies the divine calling to proclaim the Gospel, serve humanity, and foster the realization of God's kingdom on earth. From a theological standpoint, this mission is deeply rooted in biblical revelations, ecclesiastical doctrines, and the interpretative frameworks that have developed through church history. Understanding the Christian mission through a theological lens involves exploring its biblical foundations, doctrinal articulations, the nature of evangelism and social witness, and contemporary challenges and opportunities. This article aims to provide a comprehensive, analytical review of the Christian mission in theological perspective, highlighting its multifaceted nature and ongoing relevance.

Foundational Biblical Perspectives on the Christian Mission

The Great Commission: The Mandate from Christ

The starting point for understanding the Christian mission is the Great Commission recorded in Matthew 28:18-20, where Jesus commands His disciples to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." This passage underscores several critical elements:

- Universal scope: The mission is directed to all nations, emphasizing inclusivity.
- Discipleship: The focus extends beyond mere conversion to ongoing spiritual formation.
- Trinitarian authority: The mission is rooted in the authority of the Triune God.
- Ongoing presence: Jesus assures His continual presence ("I am with you always"), affirming divine support.

Other biblical passages reinforce this mandate:

- Mark 16:15 emphasizes proclaiming the Gospel to all creation.
- Acts 1:8 describes the empowerment by the Holy Spirit to be witnesses "to the ends of the earth."
- John 20:21 echoes Jesus' statement, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

These scriptures collectively establish that Christian mission is rooted in divine commissioning, rooted in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, and driven by the Holy Spirit's empowerment.

Witness To The World The Christian Mission In Theological Perspective

6 Mission in the Old Testament: Roots of God's Global Purpose

While the New Testament emphasizes evangelism and discipleship, the Old Testament lays the groundwork for understanding God's universal purpose. Key themes include:

- God's sovereignty over all nations: Passages like Psalm 2 and Psalm 67 highlight God's authority over the entire earth.
- Blessing to the nations: Genesis 12:3 records God's promise to Abraham that "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you," indicating a divine plan for the nations.
- God's desire for worship from all peoples: Isaiah 45:22 states, "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth," emphasizing the inclusive scope of God's salvation plan.

These themes suggest that the Christian mission is a continuation and fulfillment of God's longstanding desire for global worship and blessing.

Theological Foundations of the Christian Mission

God's Mission as Trinitarian Activity

A central element in theological understanding is the recognition that mission is inherently Trinitarian. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each participate in the divine mission:

- The Father initiates the plan of salvation and sends the Son.
- The Son accomplishes the mission through His incarnation, death, and resurrection.
- The Holy Spirit empowers believers to participate actively in the ongoing mission.

This trinitarian model emphasizes that mission is not an optional activity but an essential expression of God's internal life and external purpose.

Christocentric Focus

The person and work of Jesus Christ are at the heart of Christian mission. The incarnation demonstrates God's commitment to entering into human history and suffering, setting a pattern for believers to emulate:

- The mission is centered on the proclamation of Christ as Lord and Savior.
- Salvation through Christ's death and resurrection is the core message that must be communicated.
- The incarnation exemplifies God's identification with human suffering, inspiring the social dimension of mission.

Salvation and Reconciliation Theological understanding of mission is deeply linked to the concepts of salvation and reconciliation: - Salvation: The deliverance from sin and death offered through Christ. - Reconciliation: Restoring broken relationships—between God and humanity, and among humans themselves. - These themes highlight that mission involves both evangelism (proclaiming salvation) and social justice (restoring harmony in communities).

Witness To The World The Christian Mission In Theological Perspective 7 Dimensions of the Christian Mission

Evangelism and Proclamation The primary outward expression of Christian mission is evangelism—sharing the Gospel message. Theologically, this is viewed as: - An act of obedience to Christ's command. - A means of divine grace operating through human witness. - An invitation to participate in God's redemptive plan. Effective evangelism involves contextualization—adapting the message to different cultural settings without compromising its core truth.

Social Justice and Compassionate Service Beyond words, Christian mission encompasses tangible acts of love, justice, and mercy: - Addressing poverty, inequality, and oppression. - Advocating for human rights and dignity. - Providing holistic care that meets spiritual, emotional, and physical needs. Theological justifications for social engagement include: - The imago Dei (image of God in every person). - The example of Jesus' ministry to the marginalized. - The belief that authentic faith manifests in love and service.

Cultural Engagement and Inculturation Recognizing the diversity of cultures, Christian mission involves engaging with different cultural contexts: - Respecting indigenous traditions while sharing the Gospel. - Avoiding cultural imperialism. - Encouraging local expressions of faith that resonate with cultural identities. The goal is to foster a genuinely contextualized faith that is both faithful to Scripture and relevant to local communities.

Historical Developments and Theological Reflections

Early Church and Missionary Expansion The early Christian church, driven by the apostles and early saints, spread rapidly across the Roman Empire, emphasizing both evangelism and social cohesion. Notable figures like Paul, Augustine, and Patrick exemplified the missionary spirit, adapting the Gospel for diverse audiences.

Reformation and Modern Mission The Reformation rekindled a focus on Scripture and personal faith, influencing mission strategies. The rise of Protestant missions in the 18th and 19th centuries, often intertwined with colonial expansion, raised theological questions about cultural superiority versus genuine evangelism.

Witness To The World The Christian Mission In Theological Perspective 8 Contemporary Theological Reflections Modern theologians have emphasized: - The universality of salvation. - The importance of contextualization. - The critique of imperialistic missions, advocating for partnership and mutual respect. - The dialogical approach, engaging with other religions and worldviews. This evolving understanding underscores the need for humility, respect, and a focus on genuine transformation.

Challenges and Opportunities in Contemporary Christian Mission

Globalization and Cultural Pluralism The interconnected world presents opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue but also challenges related to cultural sensitivity and religious pluralism. Theological reflection encourages: - Respect for cultural diversity. - Witnessing without coercion. - Recognizing the sovereignty of God's work beyond Christian boundaries.

Secularization and Religious Plurality In increasingly secular societies, Christian mission must adapt: - Emphasizing personal relationships and community engagement. - Using media and technology for evangelism. - Addressing questions of faith in pluralistic contexts.

Environmental and Social Justice Concerns Contemporary mission also involves ecological stewardship and social activism, reflecting biblical themes of creation care and justice.

Conclusion: The Ongoing Theological Journey of Christian Mission The Christian mission, understood through a theological perspective, remains a vibrant and complex enterprise. It is rooted in biblical mandates, inspired by the Trinitarian movement of God's love, and expressed through evangelism, social justice, cultural engagement, and ongoing dialogue. As the world continues to evolve, the church's understanding of its mission must adapt, guided by Scripture, tradition, and the Spirit's leading, always striving to embody Christ's love and truth in diverse contexts. Theological reflection not only sustains the integrity of the mission but also challenges believers to see their calling as part of God's grand narrative—a mission that witnesses to the world the transformative power of the Gospel and the inclusive love of God for all creation. Christian mission, theological perspective, evangelism, discipleship, church growth, missionary

theology, gospel proclamation, spiritual outreach, cross-cultural ministry, divine commissioning

God of Salvation Anthropology in Theological Perspective The Family in Theological Perspective Personal Identity in Theological Perspective The Reciprocating Self Methodism and Society in Theological Perspective The Logic of the Spirit Volume 10, Tome I: Kierkegaard's Influence on Theology Text, Church and World. Biblical interpretation in theological perspective Cosmology in Theological Perspective The Noetic Effects of Sin Adventures in Evangelical Civility Witness To The World America in Theological Perspective The Logic of the Spirit in Human Thought and Experience Trained in the Fear of God Witness to the World Women in World Christianity The Secular City Marketing and Christian Proclamation in Theological Perspective Murray A. Rae Wolfhart Pannenberg Stephen C. Barton Richard Lints Jack O. Balswick Sylvester Paul Schilling James E. Loder Jon Stewart Francis Watson Olli-Pekka Vainio Stephen K. Moroney Richard J. Mouw David J. Bosch College Theology Society Keith J White Randy Stinson David Jacobus Bosch Gina A. Zurlo Harvey Cox Emily Beth Hill God of Salvation Anthropology in Theological Perspective The Family in Theological Perspective Personal Identity in Theological Perspective The Reciprocating Self Methodism and Society in Theological Perspective The Logic of the Spirit Volume 10, Tome I: Kierkegaard's Influence on Theology Text, Church and World. Biblical interpretation in theological perspective Cosmology in Theological Perspective The Noetic Effects of Sin Adventures in Evangelical Civility Witness To The World America in Theological Perspective The Logic of the Spirit in Human Thought and Experience Trained in the Fear of God Witness to the World Women in World Christianity The Secular City Marketing and Christian Proclamation in Theological Perspective *Murray A. Rae Wolfhart Pannenberg Stephen C. Barton Richard Lints Jack O. Balswick Sylvester Paul Schilling James E. Loder Jon Stewart Francis Watson Olli-Pekka Vainio Stephen K. Moroney Richard J. Mouw David J. Bosch College Theology Society Keith J White Randy Stinson David Jacobus Bosch Gina A. Zurlo Harvey Cox Emily Beth Hill*

the theology of salvation stands at the heart of the christian faith very often the structure of christian salvation is seen in terms of a single theme such as atonement for sins forgiveness liberation or friendship with god it is easy to reduce soteriology to a matter of merely personal experience or to see salvation as just a solution to a human problem this book explores a vital yet often neglected aspect of christian confession the essential relationship between the nature of salvation and the character of the god who saves in what ways does god s saving outreach reflect god s character how might a christian depiction of salvation best bear witness to these features what difference might it make to start with the identity of god as encountered in the gospel then view everything else in the light of that in addressing these questions this book offers fresh appraisals of a range of major themes in theology the nature of creaturely existence the relationship between divine purposes and material history the holiness love and judgement of god the atoning work of jesus christ election justification and the nature of faith salvation outside the church human and non human ends the nature of eschatological fellowship with god in looking at these issues in the light of god s identity the authors offer a stimulating and tightly argued reassessment of what a christian theology of salvation ought to resemble and ask what the implications might be for christian life and witness in the world today

in this comprehensive study a renowned theologian examines the anthropological disciplines human biology psychology cultural anthropology sociology and history for their religious implications the result is a theological anthropology that does not derive from dogma or prejudice but critically evaluates the findings of the disciplines pannenberg begins with a consideration of human beings as part of nature moves on to focus on the human person and then considers the social world its culture history and institutions all the elements of this multi

faceted study unite in the final chapter on the relation of human beings to their history

brings together a range of theological disciplines to provide a comprehensive modern resource for theological reflection on the family

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on the basis of a theologically grounded understanding of the nature of persons and the self jack o balswick pamela ebstyn king and kevin s reimer present a model of human development that ranges across all of life s stages this revised second edition engages new research from evolutionary psychology developmental neuroscience and positive psychology

a leading authority on faith development explores the mysteries of existence poignantly connecting the study of a lifetime to its place in the universe loder provides moving case studies and integrates the preeminent psychological models of human development with seminal christian theological perspectives

kierkegaard has always enjoyed a rich reception in the fields of theology and religious studies this reception might seem obvious given that he is one of the most important christian writers of the nineteenth century but kierkegaard was by no means a straightforward theologian in any traditional sense he had no enduring interest in some of the main fields of theology such as church history or biblical studies and he was strikingly silent on many key christian dogmas moreover he harbored a degree of animosity towards the university theologians and churchmen of his own day despite this he has been a source of inspiration for numerous religious writers from different denominations and traditions tome i is dedicated to the reception of kierkegaard among german protestant theologians and religious thinkers the writings of some of these figures turned out to be instrumental for kierkegaard s breakthrough internationally shortly after the turn of the twentieth century leading figures of the movement of dialectical theology such as karl barth emil brunner paul tillich and rudolf bultmann spawned a steadily growing awareness of and interest in kierkegaard s thought among generations of german theology students emanuel hirsch was greatly influenced by kierkegaard and proved instrumental in disseminating his thought by producing the first complete german edition of kierkegaard s published works both barth and hirsch established unique ways of reading and appropriating kierkegaard which to a certain degree determined the direction and course of kierkegaard studies right up to our own times

olli pekka vainio a leading expert in science and theology explores questions concerning the place and significance of humans in the cosmos vainio introduces cosmology from a state of the question perspective examining the history of the idea in dialogue with c s lewis this work which is related to a nasa funded project on astrobiology ties into the ongoing debate on the relationship between christian theism and scientific worldview and shows what the stakes are for religion and theology in the rise of modern science

stephen moroney's fascinating study examines the frequently neglected topic of the noetic effects of sin a phenomenon in which sin distorts human thinking drawing on the detailed models formulated by john calvin abraham kuyper and emil brunner moroney sets forth a more contemporary model of the subject he extends beyond all previous views by relating the noetic effects of sin to the complex and unpredictable interaction between the object of knowledge and the knowing subject moroney also further examines some of the implications of the noetic effects of sin for the rationalist theology of wolhart pannenberg and the reformed epistemology of alvin plantinga and nicholas wolterstorff lastly moroney undertakes an interdisciplinary study of what social psychology and christian theology contribute to our understanding of the noetic effects of sin an invaluable addition to current conversations on theology and epistemology the noetic effects of sin will be of interest to scholars of theology religion and social psychology

a hopeful calvinist's quest for common ground richard mouw one of the most influential evangelical voices in america has been on a lifelong quest for commonness engaging with others in a positive manner and advocating for a convicted civility when conversing with those with whom we disagree through nearly half a century of scholarship leadership and ministry mouw has sought to learn from non christian scholars and other faith traditions and to cultivate a civility that is compatible with his calvinist convictions in adventures in evangelical civility mouw reflects on his almost fifty years of christian public life which provides a unique lens for understanding twentieth century evangelicalism he explores themes such as common grace the imago dei and interfaith dialogue offering a critical assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of what he has accomplished as a spokesperson for evangelical and reformed perspectives

a great deal of uncertainty exists in the church as to what mission really is the shifts in political power away from the traditionally christian west the call for a moratorium and the other critical voices from the third world churches and the increasing self assurance and missionary consciousness among adherents of non christian religions all these have given rise to the question whether christian mission work still makes sense and if it does what form it should take is mission identical to evangelism in the sense of proclaiming eternal salvation does it include social and political involvement and if so how where does salvation take place only in the church or in the individual or in society or in the world or in the non christian religions the picture is one of change and complexity tension and urgency the answers we give to these questions must be consonant with the will of god and relevant to the situation in which we find ourselves

a crossroad book all essays were with two exceptions delivered at the 1975 convention of the college theology society at boston college includes bibliographical references

in march 2012 a small consultation convened on the campus of princeton theological seminary where james e loder jr had served for forty years as the mary d synnott professor of the philosophy of christian education members from the child theology movement had begun to read loder's work and they wanted to go further so they invited former students of loder's to meet with them for conversations about things that really mattered to them and to loder human beings and especially children the church's witness to the gospel of jesus christ and discerning the work of spiritus creator in the postmodern world the conversations proved rich and rewarding and some would even say they took on a life of their own serious scholarship set to the music of the spirit's communion creating artistry forming new relationships inspiring new ideas and sustaining all of it amid much laughter joy and hope these essays taken from the papers delivered at the consultation are offered as a means of extending that conversation inspired by loder's interdisciplinary practical theological science and his discernment of the

dr randy stinson and dr timothy paul jones have been the primary architects of the theological foundations for what has become known as family equipping ministry a recognition that the generations need one another and that parents have an inherent responsibility for the discipleship of their children

a groundbreaking comprehensive and interdisciplinary analysis of women's experiences in world christianity women in world christianity building and sustaining a global movement is the first textbook to focus on women's experiences in the founding spread and continuation of the christian faith integrating historical theological and social scientific approaches to world christianity this innovative volume centers women's perspectives to illustrate their key role in christianity becoming a world religion including how they sustain the faith in the present and their expanding role in the future women in world christianity features findings from the women in world christianity project a groundbreaking study that produced the first quantitative dataset on gender in every christian denomination in every country of the world throughout the text special emphasis is placed on women in the twentieth and twenty first centuries the period of christianity's shift from the global north to the global south easily accessible chapters organized by continent tradition and select topics introduce students to the wide variety of christian belief and practice around the world the book also discusses issues specifically relevant to women in the church gender based violence ecology theological education peacebuilding and more this textbook provides a balanced view of women's involvement in christianity as a world religion and how they sustain the faith today introduces students to female theologians around the world whose scholarship is generally overlooked in western theological education discusses women's essential contributions to christian mission leadership education relief work healthcare and other social services of the church complements the growing body of literature about christian women from different continental regional national and ecclesiastical perspectives explores the contributions of contemporary christian women of all major denominations in africa asia europe latin america north america and oceania helps students become more aware of the unique challenges women face worldwide and what they are doing to overcome them women in world christianity building and sustaining a global movement is an excellent primary textbook for introductory courses on world christianity history of christianity world religions gender in religion as well as undergraduate and graduate courses specifically focused on women in world christianity

since its initial publication in 1965 the secular city has been hailed as a classic for its nuanced exploration of the relationships among the rise of urban civilization the decline of hierarchical institutional religion and the place of the secular within society now half a century later this international best seller remains as relevant as when it first appeared the book's arguments that secularity has a positive effect on institutions that the city can be a space where people of all faiths fulfill their potential and that god is present in both the secular and formal religious realms still resonate with readers of all backgrounds

in today's market driven world the contemporary church faces pressing questions as it continues to be formed by the powerful forces of neoliberal capitalism this book builds on theological examinations of capitalism and consumerism to develop a theology of marketing that addresses two key questions first even though church marketing seems to help churches grow amidst a climate of declining church affiliation should the church use it second considering the church's indistinguishability from culture in relation to consumption how should christians relate to material goods to address these questions emily beth hill develops a framework that draws on the concrete practices of marketing such as focus groups big data branding and advertising and

the trajectory of their use over time along with martin luther s theology of the word combining martin luther s pro me for me theology with marketing concepts hill shows that while marketing and the gospel have formal pro me similarities materially they are quite different marketing operates as a word of law distinct from the effective liberating word of the gospel proclaimed for us and thus the two produce different human identities while existing examinations of capitalism primarily rely on theologies and discourses of desire hill reveals that a theology of the word illuminates a fruitful new area for reflection on how the church can resist the deformations of capitalism

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Introduction

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