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Book Review: Understanding World Christianity: The Vision and Work of Andrew F. Walls by William R. Burrows, Mark R. Gornik, and Janice A. McLean, eds.

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Baker: Book Review: Understanding World Christianity: The Vision and Work and brief pastoral narratives to illustrate every cure. These short stories will be particularly beneficial for pastors and church T.E.A.M.s in grasping each growth cure and contextualizing it to their congregation.

If the church is dealing with an impending malady, a read through the “Quick-Start Guide” will indicate which chapters to go to for immediate help and suggested cures for restoring health. Figure A, “Identifying Your Church Problems and Your Cures,” is an invaluable tool that can be referred to several times as the church continues to grow and change through the years. Issues charted include what to do when there has been a recently fired staff member as well as corrections for worship that is dated and not reaching younger generations.

In addition, Whitesel includes several graphics, tables, discussion questions, and summary points to aid the readers in their partnering with God to lead their church to growth. These additions are perhaps the greatest strength of the book, for they take the theological and ecclesiastical components and help build the muscle on the bones of the body.

Cure for the Common Church captures the missional mindedness of Donald McGavran and the Church Growth Movement along with the practical implications for administering cures that can only come through the years of Whitesel’s consulting experience. As someone who serves in a church consulting ministry, I particularly appreciated Whitesel’s beginning caution that “a true cure will only be effective if it is driven by the church members . . . thus, the most effective way to get a church back on the road to long-term health is for these churchgoers to identify the problem and administer the cures themselves” (p. 11–12).

I highly recommend Whitesel’s book and pray the Lord uses it to help inform and inspire those in the church to action. May the *Missio Dei* be fulfilled as we share the reconciling message of Jesus Christ with others and lead wayward people back into the holy relationship God is intent on having.

William R. Burrows, Mark R. Gornik, and Janice A. McLean, eds. *Understanding World Christianity: The Vision and Work of Andrew F. Walls*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2011, ix + 294 pp., \$30.00.

Reviewed by Dwight P. Baker, Ph.D., Senior Associate Editor, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Overseas Ministries Study Center, New Haven, Connecticut.

If they are physically, intellectually, and spiritually alive, missionaries in the field undergo conversion—always with significant personal effect. Faith is

Great Commission Research Journal, Vol. 4, Iss. 2 [2013], Art. 11 deepened; understandings of God, God's power, God's patience, and God's provision are expanded and enlarged; theological assumptions and presumptions are called into question, sifted, and refined; assumed verities are tested against bedrock realities and new experiences that open larger vistas on the breadth of God's grace, love, forgiveness, and ability to make all things—including persons—new.

It is in this vein that the story is told of the Scottish churchman who spoke of his delight in helping to send newly trained and commissioned workers to the mission field, for they “always make such spiritually alive pastors when they come back home.” They may have left the mission field early due to health problems or other reasons, but spiritually, theologically, and in insight, their experience on the mission field had given them depth and maturity, including a breadth in world outlook, in ways that were profitable to the congregations they served back in the homeland. They learned things and acquired attitudes of mind and heart through being on the mission field that would not have been part of their makeup if they had remained at home and ministered only there.

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But sometimes the conversion of the missionary has consequences far beyond personal spiritual growth and reaches well beyond the bounds of ministry within a single community, though those are richly present and evident to observers. The conversion is personal, but the entailments are profound. Their influence is destined to span continents and to live well beyond the years of their earthly sojourn. Such is the case with Andrew Walls.

Born in England of Scottish parents, Walls moved to Sierra Leone in 1957 to teach at Fourah Bay College. His assignment was to teach church history, a role for which he had prepared himself by study of patristics at Oxford and by heading Tyndale House, an Inter-Varsity-related center located at Cambridge. Once in Sierra Leone, he was not content simply to stay on station, but he visited and observed churches in the region around Freetown. It was there that he made the life-changing discovery that while teaching the “patchwork of diverse fragments that constitutes second-century Christian literature,” he was “actually living in a second-century church” (Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, p. xiii). Here was a church, a part of the body of Christ, that was in process of going through the crucial formative and defining transitions that molded and marked the early church's transition from its Jewish setting into a predominantly Gentile body residing in a Hellenistic context. That insight became the basis, first in Sierra Leone and later in Nigeria, of an extensive and pathbreaking program of research, teaching, and publication. When Walls's time in Nigeria was cut short by tensions leading up to the onset of the Biafran War, he taught at the University of

Baker: Book Review: Understanding World Christianity: The Vision and Work of Andrew Walls (1966–85), where in 1982 he founded the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World.

In 1986 Walls and the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World moved to the University of Edinburgh, where he remained until retirement. Post-retirement he has consistently been on the move, lecturing at Princeton Theological Seminary and Harvard University and at conferences and study centers throughout the world. In high demand as the foremost interpreter of world Christianity and the modern missionary movement, Walls, now in his eighties, holds academic appointments at several universities but gives priority to teaching African students at the Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission, and Culture, in Ghana.

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The ideas and insights of Andrew Walls and their consequences for thinking about, teaching about, and doing research on the history of Christianity—as well as about the character of conversion, the dynamics of the spread of Christian faith across cultural divides and across generations, the role of theology, the place and role of the missionary movement from the West, and the interrelatedness of world Christianity—are the meat and substance of the volume. This book does not replace reading Walls’s own essays, some of which are collected in *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Orbis Books, 1996) and *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (Orbis Books, 2002), but it shows the influence and outworking of his thought across a broad swath of contemporary Christian reflection and suggests directions for the future.

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Organized in five sections—"A Man with a Large Map," the most personal; "Breaking Boundaries, Building New Ways of Scholarship"; "Themes in the Transmission of Christian Faith"; "Transformations in Understanding Christian History"; and "Africa's Place in Christian History"—the book consists of sixteen chapters by seventeen authors plus a concluding essay by Kwame Bediako. The contributors include peers and colleagues who have known Walls well and who have worked with him or followed his work closely. It is rich, filled with insight, thought-provoking, and suggestive of new steps to take in the road ahead. The book concludes with a twenty-one-page bibliography (compiled by Mark Gornik and limited to Walls's publications in English) and a helpful index.

Reflecting on and extending the thought and life engagement of a singularly gifted and equipped individual as it does, *Understanding World Christianity* is remarkably highly integrated despite being a multi-author work. Due to its cohesive focus, attentive readers will find that it yields rewarding dividends.

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Bird, Warren., ed. *Wisdom from Lyle E. Schaller: The Elder Statesman of Church Leadership*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2012, pp. 200, \$12.98.

Reviewed by James R. Farrer. James is the founder of Vital Signs Church Consulting and has worked with 17 different denominations leading seminars coast to coast.

Hallelujah! Finally a newer generation can become quickly acquainted with insights gathered by Lyle E. Schaller, the Peter Drucker of the church (4). The church of Jesus Christ can be grateful to Abingdon Press and to the editor, Warren Bird. Bird's wide background includes teaching at Alliance and Asbury Seminaries, directing the research department of Leadership Network, and co-authoring more than twenty-five books for church leaders. Bird's connections with so many people who were influenced by Schaller make this a superbly informative book. It is a combination mini-biography, informal *festschrift*, and collection of quotes from Schaller's vast writings.

Schaller, who wrote in longhand, and Agnes (his wife, typist, and advisor) proved to be a two-person cottage industry, producing 96 books, more than 500 magazine articles, and 300 issues of *The Parish Paper*, as well as reports to the congregations for which he did in-depth consultations. His books have sold over two million copies. Schaller interviewed and listened to more adults and teens in more congregations than anyone in history. While the most seasoned, currently active church consultants have visited as many as 1,200 congregations, Schaller's