

Jackson are to be commended for their thoughtfulness, insight, and commitment to educate the church on this most crucial segment of society, the hip-hop culture.

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Muck, Terry, and Frances S. Adeney. *Christianity Encountering World Religions: The Practice of Mission in the Twenty-first Century*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009. 416 pp. \$26.99.

Reviewed by Will Brooks. Will is the senior pastor of Thompsonville Baptist Church in Springfield, Kentucky. He is a former missionary to East Asia and is currently working on his Ph. D. at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

How should Christians interact with adherents of other world religions? In former generations, this question would be reserved for those living in the faraway mission fields of the world. In today's world, however, this question is one that must be faced by all believers, even those in the West. Globalization, ease of travel, and enhanced communication capabilities have substantially increased the amount of contact that believers have with other religions and make the question a more urgent one for this generation.

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In their book *Christianity Encountering World Religions*, Terry Muck and Frances Adeney have sought to provide an answer to this pressing question. Muck is Dean of the School of World Missions and Evangelism at Asbury Theological Seminary. He has written extensively on issues related to world religions, missions, and global theological concerns. Adeney is a Professor of Evangelism and Global Mission at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. She has authored numerous books and is a former missionary to Indonesia.

The thesis of the book is that mission efforts to adherents of major world religions would be more productive if they were understood as “giftive” mission. Unlike traditional mission efforts that have utilized the imagery of harvesting souls or conquering peoples, the authors argue that the metaphor of gift giving better personifies the missionary task. This new way of understanding mission as the bringing of gifts to the world is especially relevant in the unique world context of the twenty-first century.

In a potentially controversial section, the authors argue that given the current world conditions, the goal of missions and evangelism is best understood as cooperation and competition instead of conversion. The authors are quick to explain that in no way are they anticonversionist, but that the complex dynamics of interreligious interaction have created a new situation in which conversionist language is unhelpful. The authors emphasize that cooperation with other

religions is necessary as Christians seek to make a better world, and competition is necessary given the unique nature of biblical revelation.

Muck and Adeney focus on eleven practices that are present in giftive mission. In doing so, they give a brief glimpse of Christian mission history as they explain these various strategies by looking at the missionary hero, who not only personified the approach, but seemingly invented it. The practices they discuss include universality, fellowship, localization, commitment, freedom, effectiveness, consistency, variety, respect, charity, and missional ecumenicity.

The authors close the book with a focus on the method and overall characteristics of giftive mission. They explain that giftive mission is accomplished through a spiral of knowledge acquisition that includes experiencing, bracketing, encountering, evaluating, and integrating. They state that although gift giving has been at the heart of much missionary effort throughout church history, little conscious reflection has taken place on this critical theme by mission theorists. For the effectiveness and well being of the mission task in the twenty-first century, more attention must be given to understand the missionary as a gift-bearer to a world in need.

One of the strengths of the book is its overall thesis. The metaphor of gift-giving is a helpful way to understand the missionary task. This metaphor is thoroughly biblical in nature, and it corrects several dangers inherent in mission work. The authors are correct in noting that utilizing the gift giving metaphor negates pride on the part of the missionary. Being the humble gift bearer as opposed to the triumphant culture changer is a much more effective mission strategy. This metaphor also enhances the missionary's ability to interact with and learn from those of other cultures. Whereas missionaries are sometimes prone to only consider what they have to offer other cultures, focusing on gift-giving will remind them of the interactive nature of the task, where both giving and receiving gifts are necessary.

The authors also provide a helpful study of the history of Christian missions. Their examination of key historical figures is beneficial for two reasons. First, they focus on several of the less known missionary heroes. By studying the lives of Cyril and Methodius, Bartolomé de Las Casas, Matteo Ricci and others, the presentation of the material is unique and refreshing. Second, by focusing on key innovators, the authors help the reader to understand how mission strategy is always being refined and reshaped to meet the needs of the day.

A third strength of the book is the method the authors give for interacting with those of other religions. The spiral of knowledge acquisition is helpful because of

its focus on learning the language and culture prior to gospel engagement. While missionaries are often burdened to begin evaluating and engaging once they step off the plane, the authors display keen wisdom in encouraging future missionaries to first learn as much as possible about the language, culture, and religion of the people before evaluating.

While the book is helpful in that it expounds a unique approach of interacting with adherents of other world religions, there are limitations in their explanation of the approach. The first limitation is the implication that the gift giving metaphor is *the* biblical metaphor that should be utilized for engaging the unique challenges of today's world. While this metaphor is an important biblical concept that has numerous benefits, it is not the only metaphor that should be used to understand the missionary task. While the authors do say that "giftive mission does not invalidate the other biblical metaphors for mission" (11), they later contradict themselves when they explain why other biblical metaphors for mission are inappropriate for today's mission task (310–316). The reality for those who have a high view of Scripture is that none of the biblical imagery should be laid aside or considered inappropriate. Every biblical image has something to say to today's missionary.

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Another limitation is the somewhat unclear relationship this theory has with gospel proclamation. While the authors seem to understand the missionary task holistically as including both meeting needs and proclaiming the gospel, they do not make their exact position clear. When they make statements of the gospel being preached "not in words but in actions," (262) dirty waters are further muddled. The reader is left wondering, "Is gospel proclamation a clear part of this strategy?" In addressing a subject as potentially unclear as interreligious interaction, the authors were simply not clear enough.

A final limitation is related to the cohesiveness of the book. While the book is well written, and each section of the book is helpful in its own way, at times one is left wondering how each individual section connects with the whole work. For example, while the section on practices that looks at historical figures is interesting and enjoyable, it is not clear how each historical figure practices giftive mission. The authors attempt to make this connection more understandable in the final chapter of the book, but the reader is left hanging until then.

Despite these limitations, the authors do make a clear case that understanding the missionary task as a gift-giving enterprise is a helpful metaphor for the twenty-first century context. Given the nature of today's globalized world, the question of how believers should interact with adherents of other religions is one that will

certainly continue to be asked. Despite the few limitations of their work, Muck and Adeney have provided Christians an insightful approach in answering this difficult question.

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Nelson Searcy with Jennifer Dykes Henson. *Ignite: How to Spark Immediate Growth in Your Congregation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009. Pp 203. \$14.99.

Reviewed by James Cho. James is the Distance Learning Administrator for the Cook School of Intercultural Studies at Biola University and has served as church planter at New Life Oasis Church in downtown Los Angeles.

One of the lingering questions of church planters and pastors is “Is my church growing?” We wonder if we could do more to help the church grow. In the book, *Ignite: how to Spark Immediate Growth in Your Congregation*, Searcy and Henson gives us a straightforward guide to developing a church with a passion to grow.

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The authors’ central concern is how to grow the church through a system of targeted outreach opportunities to the community. These events are called “A Big Day” (26). They summarize this concept as: “an all-out push toward a single Sunday for the purpose of breaking the next growth barrier and setting an attendance record in order to reach as many people as possible for Jesus” (26). The reasoning for the Big Day is fourfold: 1) to reach new people; 2) to make the devil mad; 3) to grow Christians in the church; and 4) to build momentum in the church.

The authors note that there are four areas that lend much support to the Big Day. The majority of the book’s contents address these four aspects: 1) pastor’s role; 2) significance of personal evangelism; 3) promoting; and 4) preserving.

In the section concerning the pastor, the authors note that the leader cannot simply be a cheerleader, but must exemplify to the congregation how to reach out to the lost. He must set the stage by providing the environment for evangelism. This includes sharing personal testimonies of evangelism, teaching the members how to evangelize, and creating a teaching schedule that works in conjunction with the members personal evangelistic endeavors.

The pastor must also challenge his staff and keep them accountable for being active in evangelism. The staff must be praying and fasting for the lost and the Big Day. They must also be participating in any evangelistic activities and bring their own lost friends to the Big Day.

In the second section addressing personal evangelism, the authors note that a good environment for such ministry must be provided. People must be given the right tools, proper training, and good timing must exist. Missing one of the items