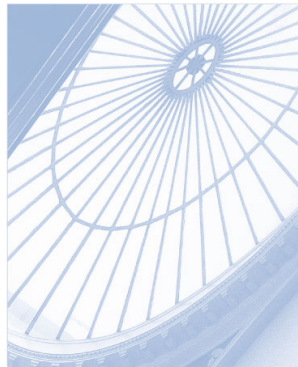


Zitierhinweis

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NORBERT FRIEDRICH, UWE KAMINSKY, and ROLAND LÖFFLER (eds.), *The Social Dimension of Christian Missions in the Middle East: Historical Studies of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Missionsgeschichtliches Archiv, Studien der Berliner Gesellschaft für Missionsgeschichte, 16 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2010), 252 pp. ISBN 978 3 515 09656 0. €46.00

This collection of studies of nineteenth- and twentieth-century missions to the Middle East is a welcome addition to the field of missiological scholarship. It comprises a wide-ranging set of papers that consider the social dimension of Protestant and Catholic missions in the Middle East: what the blurb terms ‘the trademark’ of missions to Islam. The ‘social dimension’ refers to the educational, medical, social, and scientific work that was carried out by the missionary organizations. While it was not explicitly evangelistic it was deemed to be one of the most effective ways of teaching Christian beliefs and practices to non-believers. The various chapters trace the impact of the social dimension of missionary work on the communities and nations with which the missionary project was engaged—both the countries that sent them and the places to which they went. Palestine as a mission field has been described as ‘a market place of different groups looking for a presence in the Holy Land’. It is this marketplace of ideas, objectives, personalities, and institutions that is so deftly dealt with in this book. The book presents a feast of novel approaches and a number of the chapters begin by emphasizing the ‘newness’ of the topic addressed. Inter- or intra-denominational and national rivalries are highlighted in a number of contributions. There is repeated reference to the lack of ‘success’ in terms of conversions; this is presented as one of the distinguishing features of Middle East missions compared with other missionary milieus. The reader is called to go beyond the standard approaches to mission history and look at the same questions through different historiographical lenses. Underlying this is a challenge to consider how we *use* the study of mission.

This volume was published following an international conference on ‘The Social Dimension of Missions in the Orient’, which took place in Kaiserswerth, Düsseldorf in 2006. It comprises contributions by scholars who address the question from a number of different angles. Some focus on the reception of the missionary project by local popu-

lations; others tackle the impact of missions on the 'sending' country. Some papers examine inter- or intra-denominational disputes whilst others look at the question from the political angle. The papers are introduced by two overviews of the methodology and history of mission studies, which set the rest of the papers in context. Roland Löffler's chapter presents an introduction to the particular approach to mission studies found in this collection. Highlighting the rediscovery of mission history in its own right rather than as a by-product of imperial studies, anthropology, and social science, Löffler proposes that mission history itself has become a multi-disciplinary field of scholarship, an idea to which the diverse papers that follow testify. Löffler points to the 'new cultural approach' to history exemplified in these studies, which seek to examine practices, behaviour, and formative attitudes in a particular social group. His overview of German Protestant activities in Palestine in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries shows the extent to which they can be seen as part of the formation of German Protestantism more widely, as he draws out the effect of the development of independent faith-based Protestant institutions on the German Protestant experience in both Europe and Palestine. Löffler applies a combined methodology of the 'history of mentality' and 'milieu theory' to frame his discussion of the German Protestant experience and show that it was the social dimension of mission that formed the reality 'on the ground'.

Heleen Murre-van den Berg's treatment of the study of Western missions in the Middle East is an ideal *tour d'horizon* of the whole field of scholarship. Her expertise in the topic is generously shared with the reader both through her account of the history of the subject and her detailed bibliography of the study of missions. As well as furnishing us with an overview, Murre-van den Berg touches on some key issues in the development of the field, which frame the other contributions. She tackles the questions that many may be inclined to ask: why has mission studies enjoyed this resurgence, and why the Middle East? For Murre-van den Berg the answer lies in the way that the subject touches on so many other disciplines and, as Michael Marten argues in his paper, illuminates the questions and challenges faced today. The contribution that missions made to issues of modernity in the Middle East, and the political developments of the nineteenth century that we glean from them, are invaluable for understanding the geopolitical fluctuations of the region

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today. Had our appetite for what follows not been sufficiently whetted, Murre-van den Berg underscores the newness of the specific approach that is presented in this book. Questions of reception and the impact of Middle East missionary work—both on the missionary country and its target population—have been largely overlooked, no doubt because of the lack of conversions compared with other parts of the world. But as Murre-van den Berg suggests and the rest of the book demonstrates, the ‘less tangible’ influences of the missionary purpose have much light to shed on our understanding of the subject as a whole.

Dominique Trimbur, Haim Goren, and Barbara Haider-Wilson address the question of Catholic activity in Palestine in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Trimbur traces the evidence of German and French scientific, cultural, and pedagogical values in the institutions of Palestine and Israel today back to the influence of Roman Catholic networks established in the middle of the nineteenth century. He offers a fascinating account of a century of rivalry between the French and German Catholic churches as each sought to maintain its position in the Holy Land, offering the reader a clear sense of the tensions—*inter muros* and *extra muros*—that dominated the period. Focusing on a few German Catholic missionaries whose work shaped the German Catholic presence in Palestine, Haim Goren gives a sense of the distinctive contribution of German Catholic activity, an area of scholarship hitherto neglected. The different kinds of missionary and other activity in which the German Catholic Church engaged in the Holy Land are discussed, such as the call in the late nineteenth century for German Catholic missions to focus initially on the need for tradesmen such as bakers, locksmiths, and carpenters. Goren gives the reader a sense of the multiplicity of approaches and engagements that occurred between the German Catholic Church and the Holy Land at this critical time. Barbara Haider-Wilson reminds us of the varied national interests that were competing for space and authority in Palestine up to the First World War. Looking at the Habsburg monarchy she introduces the reader to the ‘home mission abroad’. Her discussion presents the missionary country as itself the object of mission and explores how the social dimension of Christian work, which stimulated the ambitions of the Church, thrived off the phenomenon of ‘longing for Jerusalem’, whereby the significance of the Holy Places for the Catholic Church became a

mark of Catholic belief in general. The concern here was not with the evangelistic effort in Palestine, but rather with how the experience of the Holy Land could stimulate the life of the Church at home. The 'home mission' was developed in a number of ways: through pilgrimages that were made to the Holy Land and then written up and shared with congregations in Austria; through networks that were established between pilgrims who would share the experience of their spiritual journey with others; and through an active publishing industry, which issued magazines to inform and mobilize the public. In highlighting the different power-political considerations that were at play amongst the different crownlands of the Austrian and Austro-Hungarian 'Jerusalem' milieu, Haider-Wilson issues some timely challenges to the mission historian, including a call for a closer historiographical examination of Europe in research on mission history.

In her examination of the work of the Anglican Bishop Samuel Gobat, Charlotte van der Leest offers a clear and concise account of the factors that shaped and drove the social dimension of Protestant Evangelical work. Contrasting the approach of the Christian Mission Society adopted by Gobat with that of other Protestant and Catholic missions, she analyses the extent to which the 'social dimension' of the evangelical mission was centred on one of the four features which David Bebbington identified as defining late nineteenth-century evangelicalism: biblicism. This enabled the other features which Bebbington ascribes to an Evangelical understanding of 'true' Christian belief to flourish: crucicentrism, conversionism, and, to a lesser extent, activism. In her final paragraph, van der Leest refers to how unsuccessful Gobat's methods were in terms of numbers of actual converts. This leaves the reader with a question: how does van der Leest explain why thirty-seven Bible Schools yielded so little fruit?

Ruth Kark's and Shlomit Langboim's consideration of the formation of Jewish identity in the light of missionary activity in the Holy Land is well placed in the middle of the book, moving our attention to the impact of missions on community identity. This chapter presents the other side of mission: the reception and perception of mission by the so-called 'target' audiences. The role played by missionary organizations in the shaping of Jewish identity at the turn of the century is outlined and the social dimension of the missionary work remains most pertinent. Competition and rivalry are once again the

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theme, but this time it was expressed by the Jewish establishment vis-à-vis the work of the missionary societies. As missionaries opened hospitals, schools, and welfare services across the country, the Jewish establishment responded: schools were established, welfare and aid offered for free, and efficient hospitals opened. All of this contributed to shaping a stronger sense of identity amongst the Jewish population. Engaging with these questions not only alerts us to the impact of missions in local contexts (the history of mentalities in Löffler's method), but also enhances our understanding of the wider and longer term impact of their work and its social effect in shaping other institutions and identities.

Yaron Perry's and Michael Marten's research into the work of the Protestant missionary societies addresses medical missions to the Jews. Perry examines the Protestant London Jewish Society's (LJS) engagement with social missions through their medical work in Palestine. His comparison between the failures of the enterprise in Jerusalem and the more successful efforts of the LJS's hospital work in Safed relates the question of missionary and welfare 'success' to the social and economic climate of the target population. Marten gives a helpful account of the theological basis of Scottish missions in Palestine, several aspects of which also help to frame some of the other contributions. The sense that if it were possible to convert Jews in Palestine to Protestantism, conversions elsewhere would follow is presented as one reason for the Scottish Church's decision to go to Palestine. The theological justifications for this are fleshed out with an account of the prevailing evangelical priorities of the period. In a helpful turn Marten explores the question of why medical missions were so popular. A discussion of the methodology of mission study underscores Marten's paper. He concludes with a call for the 're-historicising' of missions in Palestine and exhorts his colleagues to address mission history through multiple lenses: 'mission history needs to see *all* the actors involved in the fusing of histories.' This, he suggests, happens through analyses of the social dimension of missions.

Jakob Eisler approaches the missionary question by looking at mission propaganda and film in European missionary efforts in Palestine. He discusses two films which, he argues, typify the German Christian missionary films of Palestine in the nineteenth century: the film of the Syrian Orphanage in Jerusalem and a film that

recorded the work of the Kaiserswerth deaconesses in the Holy Land. Both are reported to have been well received by parishes in Germany and played an important part in 'selling' the missionary project (although Eisler nuances this claim by referring to some negative criticisms and to a lack of substantial archival evidence in the case of the Kaiserswerth film). This article opens up a fascinating field of research, from which we can only hope to hear more. It would be interesting, for example, to ask how this kind of propaganda work by the churches ties in with the wider missionary effort, both at home and abroad.

With Christine Pschichholz's essay we change location and community studied. The question is addressed here through the experience of German Protestant communities in Turkey against the background of European migration under the Ottoman Empire. Pschichholz raises the pertinent question of the impact of social Protestantism on the development of German cultural and educational policy abroad in terms of the care of its own people. She invites the reader to look at the 'home missions abroad' question the other way around: where 'home' has travelled 'abroad' and Diaspora care becomes another avenue for exploring these questions.

The relationship between German Protestantism and the state of Israel is presented in Gerhard Gronauer's account of the various projects and engagements that characterized engagement between 1948 and 1967. Alongside the traditional missions to the Jews that continued to use salvific history and the perception of the Jews as the biblical people of God to justify the state of Israel, Gronauer identifies 'the "progressive" voices' (p. 214) that emerged after 1948 where the notion of the state of Israel as a sign of the end times is introduced. The German-Israeli reparations agreement of 1952 was another stage in the process, which was followed by the emergence of a touristic relationship between Germany and the state of Israel. Further 'official' visits stemmed from this new tourism. One of the points to emerge from Gronauer's work is that Protestantism helped the German Federal Government to open up to Israel as part of a process in which the reception of the state of Israel moved from being a primarily theological one to what Gronauer describes as the 'golden period' of pro-Israeli engagement within the Church, when Protestants became more willing to accept Israel as a consequence of the Shoah. These changes, Gronauer suggests, also opened the door for Jewish-

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Christian dialogue. Gronauer's knowledge of the subject in this period is extensive and covers an impressive number of bases.

Uwe Kaminsky's chapter on the contribution of the *Palaestinawerk* after the Second World War is a fitting conclusion to the book. His account of the creation of this organization, a loose and temporary association of the German boards, records the last in the line of German social missionary work in Palestine following the confiscation of German Protestant institutions by the British at the end of the war. The *Palaestinawerk* emerged out of negotiations between the state of Israel and the Lutheran World Federation over compensation and ownership of property. Through successful negotiations the organization oversaw the material rebuilding of German Protestant institutions in Palestine as well as the payment of compensation. It later gave rise to new Protestant initiatives in Palestine including hospital and educational work. The final piece in the reconstruction of German Protestant institutions was the establishment of a native church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan, which was founded in 1957. The *Palaestinawerk* began to disband as the mission organizations integrated into the Protestant Church in Germany. In tying up the ends, Kaminsky subtly reminds the reader of some of the threads running through the book. Chief amongst these are the competition between the various missionary endeavours; the lack of any apparent concern among missionaries about the paucity of conversions; and the extent to which the social dimension of the work of these institutions shaped the nature of the missionary engagement with Palestine.

This book is a valuable addition to the history of missions and it heralds a new departure for this expanding field. Only with interdisciplinary, trans-national, and trans-era studies such as the ones collected here can we begin, as Marten puts it, to see how mission history relates 'the *past* to the potential *presents* that there might have been, a way of perhaps appreciating the *futures* that there might now be' (p. 177).

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