

VIABILITY IN CONTEXT: The Theological Seminary in the Third World—Seedbed or Sheltered Garden? By Herbert M. Zorn. Bromley, Kent, England: The Theological Education Fund, 1975. 108 pp. Paperback. OUT OF PRINT, but available in seminary libraries worldwide and can be obtained through inter-library loan.

I stumbled into this little treasure trove while researching some mission history. As happens more frequently than I'd like to admit, here was a study that already answered a host of questions that have churned in the back of my mind for years. Further to my embarrassment, I came to realize that the book had already been reviewed, at least once, by our own Dan Mattson in this very journal (see *Missio Apostolica* 23 no. 2, November 2015, 375–379). So, this little exercise is a reminder that we often know much less than we think we know, and what's more, that much of what we'd like to know is already known to others if we only look and listen.

Dan Mattson's review is far better than I can summarize, but in short, Zorn studied the development of theological and pastoral education in the young mission churches of Asia, Africa, and Latin America now a full generation ago (early 1970s). His analysis covers a host of pragmatic but very real factors as well as the theological impetus of both pastoral ministry and aggressive mission and outreach, all within the parameters of appropriate social, cultural, and economic factors. These latter parameters are important in harnessing the help of external forces (i.e., largely Western missionaries and money) in ways that avoid the lingering temptations toward colonialist efforts or building dependencies. His basic metaphor is that of a greenhouse in which young plants are nurtured, but if this becomes a "sheltered garden" that cannot be sustained within the hostile environment of the real world then the plants will likely fail. Zorn's own service as an LCMS missionary in India for twenty-five years, seventeen of which were at the seminary of the India Evangelical Lutheran Church in Nagercoil, spanned the early years of the post-colonial period. He understood the problems that occurred when Western seeds of ideas that were planted in such sheltered gardens were then expected to take root in other cultural soils. Sadly, though it has been fifty years since the publication of this study, we still witness these same forces and factors establishing forms that are unsustainable without a steady influx of outside money.

Zorn is not against full-bodied seminaries. Quite the opposite. But he provides a map to get there by building ownership and sustainability from within the indigenous church, and he actually presents a workable "viability test" for various models. For example, his analysis and detailed statistics reveal certain constants needed to run a full-time school (fixed costs in buildings, overhead, minimal faculty), such as 120 students, eight full-time faculty, a supporting church body of 300,000, and no more than 25% of financial support from sources outside the local church body.

Just that one example, if even only approximately accurate, should provide some realistic considerations for mission planting supported by viable mission planning. Of course, the Holy Spirit gives the growth, but God has also provided us with social science resources that fall within the ministerial use of our reason. Like all human agencies, when ministerial becomes magisterial, we lose our theological moorings very quickly. But such misuse should not negate the helpful use of such resources.

Zorn's work was funded by the Theological Education Fund (TEF) of the World Council of Churches. This in itself might raise questions in many of our circles, but he was working when such "cooperation in externals" allowed for those in the broader theological world to recognize the abilities of an LCMS missionary like Herbert Zorn, who was actually "seconded" to the TEF for the 2.5 years of the study. The research and analysis, of course, are grounded in the realities of God's created order, coupled with the solid theological foundation of being wise and careful stewards of God's gifts.

The study concludes that no approach can work as a "one size fits all" model. Zorn also offers a very helpful evaluation of the spectrum that was already available in his world of the 1960's and early 70's. The temptation for Western mission leaders to export "what works for us" remains a very real issue, and, if nothing else, Zorn reminds us to count the cost and at least have some awareness of what it means to bring the message of Christ and to do theology in other cultures.

Dan Mattson's review noted that he first read the book not long after its publication in 1975 and at the beginning of his own ministry and missionary service in African seminaries. At that time, his conclusion was that "no one in the West should make decisions about pastoral education in mission lands without first reading this book." His more recent review in 2015, on the fortieth anniversary of publication, affirmed that this is "an opinion [he] still hold[s] today." My little summary is less a review and more an extended bibliographic notice, not only about this one resource but also about the need for wider discussion of the complexities of pastoral-missional formation in today's world. I am only an interested outsider to the study of missiology and leadership in field mission work, but this little book, now close to its fiftieth anniversary of publication, seems as relevant in today's conversations as ever.

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