



RECENSIONI

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Il Concilio Vaticano II e le religioni non cristiane

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in Australasia

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FRANCESCO IANNONE

Una Chiesa per gli altri.

Il Concilio Vaticano II e le religioni non cristiane

Cittadella Editrice, Assisi 2014, 260 pp.

Francesco Iannone, presbitero della diocesi di Nola e Direttore dell'Istituto Superiore di Scienze religiose della stessa città, dando seguito al suo dottorato in teologia, ha dato alle stampe un volume che ricostruisce la storia redazionale dei vari testi conciliari dove vengono trattate le tradizioni di fede sviluppatesi fuori dall'orizzonte cristiano: *Lumen Gentium*, *Nostra Aetate*, *Gaudium et Spes* e *Ad Gentes*. L'aver affrontato non uno ma tutti i documenti nei quali il Vaticano II ha preso in esame il tema, è un primo titolo di merito del volume, perché permette una valutazione corale e completa di quale sia stato il giudizio complessivo del Concilio sulla questione.

Va detto, al riguardo, che è condivisibile la convinzione di Iannone secondo cui il Concilio non ha chiuso la questione delle religioni non cristiane (cf. 235). Il teologo campano, quasi a voler delimitare i limiti della propria ricerca, ma anche quella della stessa assise conciliare che, in fondo, ha solo aperto il problema senza scrivere su di esso una parola conclusiva, afferma che «se si volesse chiedere al Concilio una definizione delle religioni non cristiane e del rapporto che la Chiesa intrattiene con esse, si tratterebbe il Concilio come non vuol essere trattato: i documenti conciliari non sono e non vogliono essere un manuale di teologia, un nuovo Denzinger riveduto e corretto» (232).

Anche dopo il Vaticano II, quindi, le religioni rimangono un tema aperto, e la necessità di chiarire sempre meglio come, e in virtù di che cosa, le tradizioni non cristiane posseggono valore spirituale e soteriologico, è uno dei compiti della moderna teologia delle religioni, la quale, però, non può assolutamente prescindere da quanto discusso all'interno dell'aula conciliare. È questo il motivo per il quale lo studio storico e teologico di Iannone riveste una grande importanza per i futuri sviluppi di questa disciplina, che è chiamata ad articolarsi sempre meglio, ma che non può farlo a prescindere da quanto è stato discusso e deliberato nei quattro autunni che fanno da sfondo al principale evento ecclesiale del Novecento.

Il volume, pertanto, è destinato a diventare uno strumento prezioso per il teologo delle religioni che si interroga sul valore soteriologico delle religioni non cristiane. Di ciò non dubitiamo nella misura in cui il libro possiede una qualità abbastanza rara – persino tra i testi dedicati al Conci-

lio –, quella di essere corredato da una documentata ricerca di archivio. Molti testi dedicati al Vaticano II, cioè, sono sì teologici, ma poco storici, trascurando il faticoso confronto con gli *Acta et Documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano apparando* e con gli *Acta Synodalia*.

Iannone, invece, dimostra una grande consuetudine con i numerosi tomi nei quali sono stati verbalizzati i lavori conciliari, che egli ha ulteriormente integrato con ricerche personali in vari fondi di archivio, come quelli di Gagnebet o Philips. Da questo punto di vista la ricerca dell'autore è stata non soltanto teologica, ma anche storica. Con il cardinale Walter Kasper che ha firmato la prefazione del libro, occorre quindi riconoscere i molti meriti del libro che non soltanto ha studiato il Concilio con rigore storico-teologico, ma ha anche colmato una lacuna editoriale. Sono assai pochi, infatti, anche in inglese, in francese o in tedesco, i saggi che hanno studiato il tema delle religioni con un tale piglio metodologico e con un simile ancoraggio agli atti.

Strutturato in quattro capitoli, il volume analizza il modo in cui il Vaticano II ha affrontato il pluralismo religioso. Tale tema, però, viene svolto non nell'ottica del dialogo interreligioso, ma in rapporto alla questione della salvezza. Sotto questo aspetto, il libro rientra nell'orizzonte della teologia delle religioni non del dialogo, e la soteriologia fa da sfondo a tutti i suoi quattro capitoli.

Il primo di essi tratta il problema della salvezza dei non cristiani alla vigilia del Vaticano II citando direttamente documenti come la *Mystici Corporis* di Pio XII e la *Lettera Suprema haec sacra*. In questo modo il saggio contestualizza il problema e chiarifica quale sia stato il punto di partenza da cui hanno preso avvio le discussioni conciliari. Nel secondo, l'autore passa ad analizzare i testi conciliari approfondendo la genesi ed i contenuti di *Lumen Gentium* 16. La storia redazionale di questo capitolo è ricostruita con grande cura, e particolare attenzione viene data alla “questio de membris”, ovvero a tutte le varie discussioni svoltesi in aula nelle quali si è ponderato quali siano o quali possano essere le condizioni di appartenenza alla Chiesa. Il terzo capitolo prende in esame la storia di *Nostra aetate* ricostruendo le vicende legate alle sue quattro stesure, di cui vengono riportati ampi stralci di testo. Il quarto analizza insieme sia *Gaudium et spes* 22 che *Ad Gentes* 7, capitoli nei quali la tematica soteriologica è affrontata toccando tematiche più ampie, come quella della missione e della inculturazione.

Il volume di Iannone ha dunque il grande merito di aver documentato con rigore i percorsi concettuali attraverso i quali il Concilio ha supera-

to la prospettiva esclusivistica dando corpo ad un nuovo atteggiamento ecclesiale improntato all'inclusivismo teologico. Tuttavia, se la coralità è un merito, è anche un limite. Ciascuno di questi testi, infatti, meriterebbe uno scavo approfondito a sé. Da questo punto di vista nel libro si può notare un certo squilibrio, perché è evidente che *Lumen gentium* sia stata analizzata con una cura ed un'attenzione maggiore rispetto a *Nostra aetate*. Certamente, inoltre, il volume avrebbe potuto dare un po' di spazio anche alla dichiarazione affine *Dignitatis humanae* e alla questione della libertà religiosa. È ovvio, però, che allargare ulteriormente il numero delle pagine della pubblicazione avrebbe appesantito un testo che ha tra le sue ambizioni quella di divulgare i testi del Concilio e renderli accessibili ad un ampio spettro di persone. Esso, infatti, non è destinato ai soli specialisti della materia, ma a tutti gli studenti e studiosi di teologia che si interessano ad esso, ed in particolare alla comprensione cristiana del pluralismo religioso. Uno dei vari meriti del libro, infatti, è anche la scrittura gradevole e fluida che non affatica e rende comprensibile e stimolante il confronto con i documenti conciliari.

Una menzione a parte la meritano le considerazioni teologiche di Iannone e le sue valutazioni personali sugli esiti finali dei dibattiti conciliari dedicati al tema. È condivisibile, per esempio, la sua opinione che il Concilio manchi di categoricità rispetto al problema della salvezza nelle religioni non cristiane. L'autore sottolinea che, «rinunciando a definire e a pronunciare parole ultime, il Concilio ha perciò deciso non di risolvere, ma di mantenere, di abitare la tensione facendone il luogo fecondo dell'incontro e della ricerca» (229). Precisando meglio il suo pensiero, egli aggiunge che «trascurare – fino a condannarle – le religioni dei popoli avrebbe reso tutti, anche i cristiani, più poveri e soli e avrebbe privato il Sommo Bene della sua caratteristica più entusiasmante, quella di essere *diffusivum sui*. Perciò il Concilio non ha chiuso, ma ha deciso di mantenere aperta la tensione» (233).

La lettura che Iannone dà dei documenti conciliari rispetto alla questione soteriologica è quindi improntata all'equilibrio: «il Concilio Vaticano II non autorizza a riconoscere le religioni non cristiane come vie di salvezza. Esse possono, di fatto, attraverso quanto di vero e di buono il Verbo ha seminato in loro e purificate da ambiguità e contraddizioni, rappresentare per i loro seguaci una pedagogia che li conduca al Dio vero e una preparazione ad accogliere il vangelo di Cristo» (232). Questa chiave interpretativa dell'autore, che si mantiene nell'ambito dell'inclusivismo, è suppor-

tata dalla sua personale convinzione che il Concilio non ha voluto dare definizioni, ma piuttosto inaugurare uno nuovo stile, e proprio in questo, come scrive, risiede la sua forza e la sua modernità.

In conclusione dobbiamo essere grati al teologo campano per il suo lavoro, di cui già stanno beneficiando vari studi che non hanno potuto fare a meno di citare la sua ricerca. In un momento storico che amplifica e rende stringente il confronto con la diversità religiosa, è quanto mai importante un saggio che scavi e raccolga la ricchezza di pensiero prodotta dal Vaticano II. Dal punto di vista di questa urgenza storica, a prescindere dagli indubbi meriti scientifici del volume, gli sforzi fatti da Iannone per approfondire il modo in cui il Concilio ha contestualizzato e compreso il valore delle religioni sono finanche provvidenziali.

Paolo Trianni

IAN BREWARD

A History of the Churches in Australasia

(The Oxford History of Christian Churches)

Oxford University Press, Oxford – Melbourne 2001, Reprinted 2008, 474 pp.

From the beginning it must be clarified that the author opted to use the term “Australasia” for his history of the churches in the islands of the “liquid” continent of Oceania together with Australia and New Zealand since not all people will be familiar with this somewhat unusual terminology.

This unique book was edited in the prestigious Oxford History of the Christian Church series, by Henry and Owen Chadwick. After a couple of years of intensive research, Ian Breward, emeritus Professor of Church History at the United Faculty of Theology, and Senior Fellow in the History Department at the University of Melbourne, published his book *A History of the Churches in Australasia* in 2001 in the Oxford University Press; in 2008 the work was reprinted.

The author showed already in 1993 his outstanding qualities of writing modern church history with his book *A History of the Australian Churches*, which was the first general history about the role and contribution of churches in Australian society. In 1988 he surprised the Australian readership with his book on Christian Churches and religion in the Australian

context with the provocative title: *Australia: The Most Godless Place under Heaven*. His first scholarly work *Godless Schools? A Study in Protestant Reactions to the Education Act of 1877* was published in 1968.

This book is the result of a thorough investigation and research, during which Ian Breward travelled in one decade widely to the churches, their archives and theological institutions in the Pacific countries and to New Zealand and in his home country Australia not only to find the archival sources, but also to meet the people of the South Pacific Islands and New Zealand and Australian Christian Communities in order to explore more deeply about their Christian identity and way of life, as Christians imbedded in their own cultural heritage and tradition. The author is aware of the increasing number of Pacific Islanders and Aborigines who are able to write the academic history from within their own culture. The outcome of the work shows Breward's sensibility and respect for the people of the Pacific and the various communities in New Zealand and Australia, especially its indigenous population. He listens carefully to their perspectives; nevertheless he admits that understanding such societies poses many challenges for someone raised and educated in a Western context. Therefore his work contributes to a process of mutual understanding among a Pacific/Aboriginal and Western cultural worldview.

Breward has organised his pioneering study in seven chapters.

The first chapter – *From Missions to Churches* (1-64) – deals with the history of foreign mission societies settling down in “Australasia” and slowly building up local Christian communities among the Pacific islanders, the Maoris in New Zealand and to a limited degree among the aborigines in Australia. Breward is convinced that «missionaries often confused Christianity and their own culture» (2) by applying their model of Christianity and church in building local Christian communities. The first chapter starts chronologically with the encounter of Europeans and aborigines in Australia. The first permanent settlers in Australia were British convicts, followed later by farmers, who always occupied more and more of the land traditionally owned by the aborigines. Breward concludes that «convict beginning and British cultural blindness made mutual religious learning between Aborigines and invaders all but impossible» (4). The British immigrants brought their various denominational Christianity to Australia; first of all the official Church of England, together with the Methodist, Congregationalist, the Scottish Presbyterians and the Irish Catholics, who had the lowest legal status and recognition from the administrators of the British colonies

in Australia. From the sixteenth century onwards European sailors had already made contact with the Pacific islanders. With the landing of the first group of missionaries from the London Mission Society (LMS) in 1797 in Tahiti, Polynesia, a new chapter of cultural and religious encounter started in the South Pacific, one which had a lasting impact on the culture and religious belief of the Pacific islanders. In 1834 French Catholic Picpus missionaries began their work on Mangareva, Polynesia. In 1838 another French Catholic missionary group, the Society of Mary, came to Oceania, entrusted with the Vicariate of Central Oceania. The Marists contributed also a lot to the establishment and development of the Catholic Church in New Zealand and the evangelisation of the Maori population, where the Anglican Church Mission Society (CMS) had started earlier evangelisation work. Since Polynesia was the first region of Oceania being evangelised in the first half of the nineteenth century, their locally bred Polynesian Christians had already been employed since 1821 by the LMS as evangelisers for the not yet evangelised part of the continent like the Cooks Islands, Tonga up to the newly opened mission of the LMS in Papua in 1871. An approach also used by the Methodist, the second most important Protestant missionary group in the South Pacific, who started missionary work in 1821 in Tonga, 1828 in Samoa and in 1835 in Fiji. Rivalry and competing attitudes among different missions became part of all missionary work in the 19th and 20th century up to the paradigm change made in the World Council of Churches and the Second Vatican Council of the Catholic Church in the 1960s. Methodist spirituality and language had a great impact on Fijian and Samoan religiosity since it gave them a way of speaking about a new language for the way of life they had found in Jesus as Lord of their lives.

The second chapter – *Organizing Christian Churches from 1830s to the 1870s* (65-125) – treats the important period of expansion and consolidation of mission churches in Oceania, and of settler churches in Australia and New Zealand. The missionaries of the CMS were gradually successful in building up a Maori church among the indigenous population of New Zealand. Christian churches could build up their structures in Australia and develop missions among the Pacific islanders to such a degree that local Christian communities got increasingly involved in evangelisation work in non-evangelised areas of Oceania. France played, beside Britain, an important role in Oceania, since it not only colonised some parts of Polynesia, but in 1853 also annexed New Caledonia part of Melanesia. LMS missionaries had worked together with Polynesian evangelists since 1839 in

some islands of Melanesia; they came in 1841 to the Loyalty Islands and in 1842 to Caledonia where a year later also Catholic Marist missionaries also started their evangelising activities. The emerging Samoan Christianity absorbed strong features of LMS and Methodist understanding of worshipping and being church.

The third chapter – *The Making of Christian Societies* (126-183) – starts again chronologically with Australia and continues with New Zealand to explore finally the situation of the Pacific Islands. In each of those countries and region, the socio-economic and cultural religious context differs tremendously from that of others. In the predominantly Protestant settler society of Australia, the State-sponsored Anglican Church was leading, followed by Presbyterians, Methodist, Baptist and Congregationalist, but also the Catholicism as a minority also played a significant role in creating a Christian society. This was especially seen in the field of education where especially Protestant churches pioneered in establishing schools at all levels up to university colleges. Breward notices that the role of women in establishing and running the churches in Australasia «have not yet fully and adequately dealt with» (141), even though their contribution was always of high significance.

The fourth chapter – *New Opportunities for Mission and Service* (184-239) – deals with the changing societies from the 1880s to the end of the First World War, a time marked by a number of important developments in economy, society, politics and religion, especially women gained a new status in society and in the churches. It was a period where «churches still saw themselves as moral guardians, for they were interpreters of the Christian ethics for a Christian people» (186). The churches in Australia were able to expand their activities in society, especially in the field of education and in health ministry. In the Pacific, the expansion of missionary work in Melanesia, especially Papua New Guinea, made a lasting impact with the arrival of the LMS in 1871 on the Papuan coast, the Methodist in 1875 in New Britain, the Lutheran Missionaries in 1885, the French Sacred Heart Missionaries (MSC) in 1882, the Divine Word Missionaries in 1896, the Marist in 1898. These many missionary societies gradually covered all coastal parts of New Guinea mainland and its islands and later also pioneered into the unknown inland and especially since the 1930s into the just discovered highlands of PNG.

The fifth chapter – *Wars and Depression* (240-299) – shows that the outbreak of war in 1914 in Europe changed the political map of Oceania, since

the German Empire was no more one of the colonial powers in Oceania, a fact that gave new administrative power to Australia to run the former German colony of New Guinea as a mandated territory. Australians and New Zealanders had to serve as soldiers in the war, a fact that had great repercussions in their home society and the churches back home. New Zealand witnessed the emergence of an important Maori renewal movement. Australian society became increasingly secular, a movement that helped to secularize politics and privatized religion. As a result churches experienced a turn inwards. The Protestant Pacific Island churches in Samoa and Fiji experienced a transition period which brought them to be more rooted in their own cultural context.

The sixth chapter – *Creating New Societies* (300-360) – looks at the major changes which the whole region has experienced between 1960 and 1980. From the 1960s the Catholic school system underwent a growth it had never seen before; simultaneously Australia experienced a growth of government-run secondary schools and an increase of state aid to the church run educational institutions. New waves of migrants from non-Anglo-Celtic background, as it was the case up to the 1960s, changed the composition of the Australian society. Australian and New Zealand churches reached their peak in the 1960s in terms of the absolute numbers of worshippers. Church membership was in steady decline in most mainline churches since the end of the 1960s. In the 1960s the Pentecostal movement made more inroads in Pacific Island, Australian and New Zealand societies. Mainline churches underwent substantial renewal processes as was experienced by the Catholic Church with its centennial event of the Second Vatican Council. The ecumenical movement changed the interrelationship among the mainline Christian churches in the region from being reserved and competitive to an attitude of mutual respect and increasing collaboration. The mainline churches in PNG pioneered ecumenism by running together the Melanesian Institute, founded in 1969 by the Religious Higher Superiors Conference of PNG with the strong support of the Divine Word Missionaries, as an ecumenical institute for Pastoral and Socio-Cultural Services for the churches and societies in Melanesia. The decision of the Divine Word Mission and the Sacred Heart Mission to dignify Pidgin English as a new church language in the 1930s was followed thirty years later by the Lutheran Church in PNG. Wantok, the weekly newspaper in Pidgin English, founded by Fr Frank Mihalic SVD (1916-2001) in 1970, his Pidgin-English dictionary in 1957 and the translation of the Bible into Pidgin English in the 1970s and

1980s helped to make *Tok Pisin* to the national language in a country with around 800 indigenous languages. The development of a Secondary School founded in 1968 by Divine Word Missionaries (SVD) in Madang to a government recognized Divine Word University (DWU) in 1994 gave the Catholic Church a new way to contribute towards the education and the formation of socially responsible leaders for the country. The ecumenical openness of DWU allowed Christians of all churches to get involved in teaching and studying there. The independence movement which gave birth to the new state of Papua New Guinea in 1975 and in the same period to the majority of countries in the South Pacific, except to French Polynesia and New Caledonia, gave rise to new indigenous societies and nations.

The seventh chapter – *Searching for Credibility* (361-420) – brings the last three decades of the twentieth century to the fore. These have been testing times for all the churches in the region. The Theological Institutes of the various churches trained a new generation of ministers, which helped to substitute for the shrinking number of foreign missionaries and to localize the churches in the Pacific. Indigenous clergy made an increasing impact not only inside their own churches but also in their respective society.

The *Conclusion* (421-442) shows that Christianity in Australia and New Zealand among indigenous people and settlers underwent many changes in the last two centuries. The newly emerged Christian communities churches in the South Pacific have manifold expression combined with a common *Pacificness*. They had undergone different stages in pre-colonial contact situations, to the period of evangelisation under the protection of colonial Western powers up to reaching the stage of local churches with its own ministers who are now able to contribute to the well-being of the newly born independent nations. The role of the Christian churches in Oceania is not only of great significance for the development of self-reliant societies, but also for the mediation of reconciliation in those societies.

The rich *Bibliography* (443-458) and the *Index* (459-474) help the reader to have access to the sources and easily find the issues dealt within this book. The numerous maps found in this volume are precious indications to many unknown places of the Pacific and give helpful orientation to the reader.

The research approach that Ian Breward has creatively developed and applied in his historical study can rightly be called missiological of itself, since it is not only built on the missionary perspective, but it also includes the indigenous and local perspective. He does not underestimate the active contribution which indigenous and local Christians have made in building

up authentic local churches. Breward was only to do justice to the complex religio-cultural identity of the indigenous peoples he treats in his book by combining anthropological, historical and theological knowledge of the peoples and by acknowledging their cultures and inherited religiosity. John Garret's (1920-2011) three volumes on Christianity in Oceania, published in 1982, 1992 and 1996, was the first time an attempt was made to research the history of all churches of Oceania. Ian Breward had accepted a very challenging and even risky task, but it has to be admitted that he was able to do justice to this task. Breward's one volume history of the churches in Australasia can serve as a guide to a new generation of historians to dig more into this yet uncompleted history.

The book can be warmly recommended to all interested in the history and present situation of Christianity in Oceania including Australia and New Zealand.

Paul B. Steffen

URBAN SCHWEGLER

Johannes Beckmann SMB (1901-1971) Leben und Werk
(Studia Instituti Missiologici SVD 85)
Steyley Verlag, Nettetal 2005, 504 pp.

This opus on the life and work of Johannes Beckmann, an outstanding figure in Catholic missiology in the 20th century, is the result of the dedicated research by Urban Schwegler for his doctoral dissertation under the guidance of Prof. Mariano Delgado at the Theological faculty of Fribourg, Switzerland. The thesis was successfully defended on July, 1st, 2003. The published work is a slightly shortened version of the dissertation and was accepted by the well-known Missiological series *Studia Missiologici SVD* as number 85 in 2005. Johannes Beckmann was born in 1901 in Essen, in the centre of Germany's most flourishing industrial region called "Ruhrgebiet", where his father was working as a locksmith for the Krupp steel factory. His decision to enter the apostolic school of the Swiss Mission Society of Bethlehem at the age of thirteen in Immensee in Switzerland gave him a new orientation that determined his whole life.

In 1921, at the age of twenty-one, he joined the Swiss Mission Society of Bethlehem (SMB). After completing his theological studies in Switzerland he was ordained a priest in 1926. His superior sent the intellectually gift-

ed new priest to the Catholic Theological Faculty at Münster University in Germany where he did his doctorate. Münster was selected because since 1910 this University offered missiological courses given by Josef Schmidlin, the founder of Catholic missiology. With his strong mission-historical orientation he had a strong influence on the first generation of Catholic missiologists like Giovanni B. Tragella PIME (1885-1968), a faithful follower of Schmidlin who translated Schmidlin's major works into Italian and Anton Freitag SVD (1882-1968) who became the first student achieving a doctorate under Schmidlin in 1915. Also Beckmann wrote his dissertation on the Catholic missionary method in China (1842-1912) under Schmidlin, a topic of great interest for his Mission Society, since the SMB had opened their first mission in China in 1926. After the defense of his thesis in 1930 at the age of thirty Beckmann started his lifelong ministry teaching church history and missiology at the seminary of the SMB in Switzerland. It was the beginning of his lifelong commitment to research and publication in mission-historical, missiographic and mission-theological topics at the service of the young academic missiological discipline and for his Mission Society.

The book Urban Schwegler has published is not only a profound study on the life and work of Johannes Beckmann, it is at the same time a study of the development and growth of Catholic Missiology as it was initiated by Joseph Schmidlin and continued by his outstanding students and by the competing Catholic missiological chair holders, especially those from Louvain, Belgium in the 20th century before the Second Vatican Council. A lot of what Beckmann and similar colleagues of him published in the years between the two world wars and up to the 1960s seems to be taken little notice of nowadays, a lot of the writings of those years are considered out-dated and no more relevant for the challenges of contemporary missiological studies. Beckmann's historical studies and the Missiological Journal *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* that he had founded in 1945 and edited for many years may be an exception, since they have kept their value up to 2004, the last year of its publication.

The book has three main parts. The first one is dedicated to the historical-scientific context of Beckmann's life as missiologist, the second one investigates the context of his life and the third part analyses his work. The last section is considered the main part of this study, which wants to focus on the content and significance of Beckmann's work.

The author is convinced that theology and science or academic studies

are not developed in a vacuum, but that they are developed in a biographical context in permanent and mutual dependency under the influence of many given conditions and events. This understanding has impacted the way the author has carried out his study.

The first part (24-86), which elaborates the context of missiological science and studies (Wissenschaftsgeschichtlicher Kontext) is really a solid introduction to the renaissance of Catholic mission since the 19th century and to the beginnings of Protestant and Catholic missiology in Germany and more specifically under Josef Schmidlin in Münster. Furthermore, this section treats the development of mission and mission studies up to the Second Vatican Council as it was done not only in Münster but also in Louvain, Paris and other places and how mission and mission studies are reflected in the Papal mission encyclical since *Maximum Illud* of Pope Benedict XV in 1919 and in Protestant missiology. An additional section reflects on the mission decree *Ad Gentes* of Vatican II and on mission in other Vatican II Council documents. Furthermore, the author explores the situation and understanding of mission since Vatican II, where mission was questioned critically and new elements for constructing a theology of mission emerged. From the understanding of a missiology undergoing a transition period the author indicates finally the task and themes of missiology nowadays.

In the second part, the author continues his careful and detailed studies by exploring the stages and influential events of Beckmann's life. In three main sections, the youth and education/formation in the years from 1901 to 1930 are explored. Then Beckmann's years as lecturer and missiologist from 1930 to 1961 receive sufficient space to be elaborated in their rightful significance. The last section covers his final years from 1962 to 1971 in Freiburg, Switzerland.

The third part (158-431) of Schwegler's book has the title "Werk", work, and is the most important and the longest part of this study. Here Schwegler elaborates firstly in the section "A. Missionstheorie – Begriffe und Grundlagen" (162-250), the mission theory, notion and foundation of Beckmann's understanding and definition of mission. In the section "B. Missionsmethode und – pastoral – Die einheimische Kirche" (251-357), the author dedicates to Beckmann's understanding of the missionary method and missionary pastoral and the understanding and promotion of the local church in Beckmann's teaching and writings. The third section "C. Missionsgeschichte" (358-431) finally elaborates Beckmann's lifelong research and publications in the field of mission history. The fourth part of this book "IV.

Kritische Würdigung” (432-445) brings forward a critical evaluation of Beckmann’s work.

For Schwegler, Beckmann’s most outstanding contribution to science is the foundation of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* or *Nouvelle Revue de Sciences Missionnaires* (New Journal of Missiology) in 1945. His interest and outlook in all his occupation with mission was specifically Catholic. His orientation and interest was focused on practical and historical questions in Catholic missions. Therefore, he neglected theoretical and theological and systematic research of missiological issues. For Beckmann, mission is foreign mission with the aim to initiate a process of conversion and church planting among non-Christian peoples. The author noticed a certain development in Beckmann’s ecclesiocentric missiology which always favored the promotion of indigenous priests, bishops and religious in the missions, but which since the 1930s increasingly saw the need for more missionary accommodation and the urgency to overcome all Eurocentrism in missionary work. Beckmann favors even a contextualized local church and understands Catholicity not as uniformity, but as pluriformity. He acknowledges the transforming power of the gospel. Beckmann is also open to the employment of lay missionaries. Beckmann is not free from paternalism, when he reflects on the problems of missionary only from the perspective of the missionaries and hardly considers the perspective of the recipients of that missionary work. Even all his mission historical writings are done from the perspective of the missionaries. The history of the indigenous Christian community is not treated by him. Beckmann’s mission theology can be called affirmative, since it is mainly built on mission encyclicals and instructions of the Propaganda Fide. But it has to be said that Beckmann had a great respect for non-Christian religions and cultures at a time when this position was hardly found in the Western world and its churches. The theology of local churches of the Vatican II Council would possibly not have developed without missiologists like Beckmann. Even the post-council development of a theology of inculturation was only possible because of such missiologist like Beckmann who helped to prepare the ground for such a new theology with their promotion of missionary accommodation. Beckmann was already convinced of the need for indigenous theologies and the need to adopt and accommodate liturgy, music, architecture and art in the mission countries. Johannes Beckmann is a good example of his generation of missiologists and mission historians at the threshold of a new era of mission theology. He helped to prepare this change but like Moses he could not

enter into the new land. But his contribution to the development of missiology deserves to be recognized and appreciated. Urban Schwegler has done missiology a great favour by filling a gap in the understanding of the contribution of pre-Vatican Council missiologists like Beckmann by analyzing and evaluating his work. The fifty years of post-Council development of Catholic missiology is built on the work of people like Beckmann and can be understood only when we know what contribution they have made to Catholic missiology.

Paul B. Steffen