

# **ANTIOCH AGENDA**

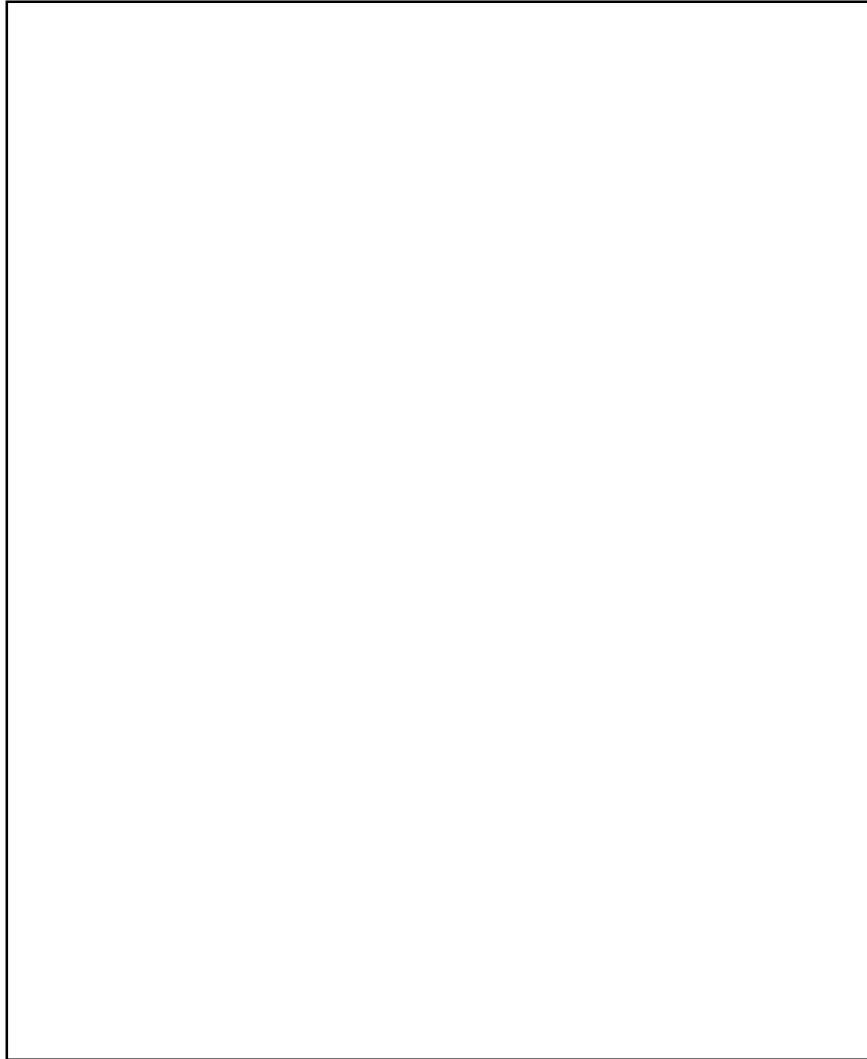


**ANTIOCH AGENDA**  
**ESSAYS ON THE RESTORATIVE CHURCH**  
**IN HONOR OF ORLANDO E. COSTAS**

Edited By  
Daniel Jeyaraj, Robert W. Pazmiño  
and Rodney L. Petersen

Printed by  
Indian Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge  
for  
Andover Newton Theological School  
and the Boston Theological Institute

New Delhi, 2007



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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

An important lesson that mission teaches is related to gratitude both for what God has done in and through Jesus Christ and also for the reality of mutual support and interdependence. The first Christian congregation in Antioch was fully aware of this kind of gratitude. And the editors of this book, fittingly entitled *Antioch Agenda*, are also gratefully conscious of various helps received from different sources. In spite of their heavy schedules, the authors have written these learned articles and sent them to us in a timely fashion. The editors thank the authors for their contribution. In addition, they thank the Reverend Dr. Nick Carter, the President, Andover Newton Theological School, the Reverend Dr. Rodney Petersen, the Executive Director, Boston Theological Institute, for providing financial assistance for the publication of this book. The editors record their gratitude to Mr. Marian Gh. Simion, the Assistant Director of the Boston Theological Institute for painstakingly preparing the camera-ready-copy of the entire manuscript for this book. They thank Ms Michelle A. Burrill for the cover picture and design. They also are grateful the Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, New Delhi, India, for their co-operation in bringing out this book. We, the editors, hope that this book will help the readers to understand the deeper meanings and implications of what it means to be a church with Antiochen mission in our world.

Daniel Jeyaraj,  
Robert W. Pazmiño,  
Rodney L. Petersen  
*Editors*

Dedicated to

*Rosa L. Feliciano Costas*

Wife and Companion of Orlando  
whose ministry continues at  
Andover Newton Theological School

# INTRODUCTION

*Daniel Jeyaraj*

Christian mission is deeply concerned with establishing new relationships that transcend cultural, social, economic, political and other boundaries. Its cross-cultural communication enables people to overcome deep-rooted prejudices by providing an alternate lifestyle that bridges the gap between outsiders and insiders. It brings together people with differing worldviews, and helps them to learn from one another.

This book appears on and acknowledges the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Andover Newton Theological School. It recognizes a history of cross-cultural conversations transcending national boundaries.

## **Antiochian Agenda**

The ancient Roman city of Antioch, now situated on the eastern side of the Orontes River in southern Turkey, played an important role in the formation of the first multicultural and multiethnic Christian congregation outside of Jerusalem. In all probability, early Jewish Christian converts from Palestine founded a congregation there. They seem to have invited both Jewish and non-Jewish peoples to accept Jesus Christ as their savior and lord. This meant a complete orientation of life around the ministry and person of Jesus, understood to be the messiah or anointed one (Christ) of God. They encouraged them to become full-fledged members of the newly established congregation. It is truly astonishing that the first Jewish Christian converts in Antioch did not require the non-Jewish Christian converts to first follow the characteristic ethos of Judaism (e.g., adherence to the Mosaic Law, circumcision, Jewish dietary habits, and the like), and then to become Christians. Instead they encouraged them to be what they were before with the

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exception of consciously developing Christian worldviews and evaluating their cherished socio-cultural values from the perspective of Jewish monotheism, the one God whom Jesus Christ had further revealed and whom His apostles proclaimed.

As a result, the followers of Jesus Christ in Antioch were known as *Christians* (“Christ-bearers,” Acts 11:26).<sup>1</sup> They placed their commitment to Jesus Christ in the center of their belief and life. Their devotion to Jesus Christ did not eradicate their previous socio-cultural identities, but they did not become the constitutive factor of their new identity as Christians. Their new identity drastically changed their former concepts about ritual purity and pollution, interpersonal relationships, religious communion and table fellowship between Jewish and non-Jewish Christians. This change of worldviews and lifestyle enabled them to effectively communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ with people belonging to diverse cultures, religions and other ideologies. As a result, they established intercultural and multiethnic relationships and formed an alternate community that welcomed inquirers, converts, and trainees for cross-cultural ministry.

The recorded text of the New Testament highlights Paul and Barnabas as the prominent intercultural missionaries who were trained by the Christians in Antioch. The multicultural and multiethnic context of this congregation seems to have impressed Paul so much that he eventually decided to become an apostle to the non-Jews (i.e., Greeks, Romans and others, as mentioned in Romans 11:13). David G. Horrell observes Paul was quick to realize that non-Jewish Christian converts were not required to “adopt the marks of Jews legal obedience and Jewish identity, specially circumcision, food laws, and Sabbath observance,” but all Christians were encouraged to mix freely without upholding the purity-pollution concepts and behaviors, and re-interpreting the norms of their covenant communities.<sup>2</sup> After all, the God whom Jesus Christ had revealed was not partial towards a particular group of people. He was the God for all peoples (Acts 10:34–36).

Reinterpretations and reformulations of inherited social and religious identities became understandably a breeding ground for contentions because “old things die hard.” Few Jewish Christians from Jerusalem, who were not exposed to multicultural and multiethnic realities of the Christian congregation in Antioch, were not prepared to accept what they witnessed. Their unfamiliarity with the newness of multicultural Christian identity in Antioch, their veiled ethnocentric and paternalistic attitudes, and their self-understanding as *the* ‘people of God’ caused problems, and made them insensitive to the multicultural nature of the Antiochene church. Therefore

they found the mixed table fellowship of Jewish and non-Jewish Christians unacceptable, and they withdrew from them (Galatians 2:11–14).

Paul noticed their suspicion and separation of the Jewish Christians from the non-Jewish Christians. Hence he rebuked the Jewish Christians by pointing out that the new identity of this multicultural and multiethnic congregation rested not in their faithfulness to Jewish observances, but in their commitment in and belonging to Jesus Christ. Horrell underlines this fact by stating that their “*common group identity is fundamentally defined by Christ and their faith in him*” (italics in the original text, Horrell, 319). Consequently, Paul taught that “in Christ” both the Jewish and the non-Jewish Christians were equals members who were truly Jews and Greeks transcending conventional boundaries.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the Christian congregation in Antioch set a timeless example for all other Christian congregations that would emerge in almost every known human culture.

Additionally, the Christian congregation in Antioch produced several remarkable leaders. “Nicholaus, a proselyte from Antioch” (Acts 6:5) was one of the deacons who was chosen to serve in the Christian congregations in Jerusalem. He was a Greek who had adopted Jewish values and had become a Christian. His familiarity and experience with Greek and Jewish ways of life strengthened his ability to serve as a deacon in Jerusalem. Another leader of the congregation in Antioch was an unnamed Greek-speaking Jew from the North African city of Cyrene (i.e., modern Tripoli in upper Libya). He was also associated with Simon whom the Roman soldiers compelled to carry the cross of Jesus for some time (Acts 11:19–20, cf. Mat. 27:32).<sup>4</sup> After the death of Stephen (Acts 7) several Jewish and non-Jewish Christians migrated to Antioch and found there relational healing and reconciliation.

The growth of this Antiochene church caught the attention of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. They authorized Barnabas, one of their leaders, to pay a pastoral visit. His experience of “the grace of God” at work in Antioch (Acts 11:22–23) helped him to appreciate the fact that the Gospel of Jesus Christ was not the property of the Jewish Christians; instead it could get incarnated into any culture, not to be absorbed by it, but to transform it for the good of all people. It was restricted neither to a particular geographical location nor to a particular people. No one culture could monopolize and domesticate it. This realization strengthened Barnabas and expanded his missionary vision. Soon he proceeded to the Roman city of Tarsus. There he met another fellow Jewish Christian convert Saul, a Roman citizen, and brought him to the church in Antioch. Saul, a former persecutor of Christians, was now fully devoted to the cause of Jesus Christ.

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He changed his Roman name “Saul” and was known by his Greek name “Paul.” One of his missionary goals was to reconcile the Jewish and Greek Christians.

The Christians in Antioch knew Saul before his conversion; yet they welcomed him as their Paul, and gave him an opportunity to learn multicultural skills. His fellow Jewish Christian Barnabas, an African Christian named Simeon, another African Jewish Christian Lucius from the North African Roman city of Cyrene, a Greek-speaking Jewish Christian Manaen (Greek form of the Hebrew name Menahem), and Saul were known as the “prophets and teachers” (Acts 13:1–2). The more they practiced Christian fellowship and engaged in worship, the more they desired to invite other non-Christian women and men to become responsible followers of Jesus Christ.

In one of their worship services the Holy Spirit moved the Antiochian Christians to set apart Barnabas and Paul as their fulltime cross-cultural missionaries. The members of this congregation, consisting of Aramaic-speaking Jewish Christians from Palestine, Greek-speaking Roman Christians from North Africa, and perhaps local Antiochian Christians, laid their hands on Barnabas and Paul, and sent them out to introduce the Gospel of Jesus Christ to those non-Christians who at that time lived in major cities such as Salamis and Paphos in Cyprus, the coastal cities of Perga and Attalia, and the major cultural cities of Iconium, Lystra and Derbe in Asia Minor. Later, these missionaries went westward to the European cities of Athens, Corinth, Thessalonica, and Philippi. Wherever they went and ministered for a period time, new Christian congregations emerged.

Just like Barnabas and Paul other Christian missionaries seem to have proceeded from Antioch eastward along the trade and immigration routes. Soon Christian congregations emerged in several key cities. The Syriac-speaking city of Edessa, for example, was situated on the eastern side of Euphrates. The Silk Road from China to the Mediterranean cities and trade routes from Arabia to Armenia passed through Edessa. A flourishing Christian church emerged there which in turn sent out missionaries to evangelize many Persians.

The Antiochian congregation reveals several mission principles: once the Antiochian congregation was in the margins outside of Jewish Christianity, instead of being weighed down by the feelings of insignificance it now emerged as a champion of opportunities: it welcomed people of various cultural and religious identities, and helped them to understand themselves from the perspectives of Jesus Christ. These transformed Christians became Christ’s ambassadors. In the course of time, the church in

*Daniel Jeyaraj*

Antioch would evolve into a mighty patriarchate that would stand on equal terms with the patriarchates of Jerusalem, Rome, and Alexandria. The Antiochian School of theology highlighted the humanity of Jesus Christ who was deeply interested in the total welfare of all peoples in general and the poor and the marginalized in particular. Antiochian Christians were mission-minded; they sent out missionaries to evangelize their neighbors. They received guests from Jerusalem and other places, and helped them to realize the multicultural reality of Christ's church. Their church remained authentically local and particular, and yet intentionally, multicultural and international. They supported intercultural learning, relational healing and reconciliation. The missionary agenda of this church has inspired numerous Christians including Orlando Enrique Costas.

### **Orlando Enrique Costas**

Orlando Enrique Costas (June 15, 1942 – Nov. 5, 1987)<sup>5</sup> was a well known Hispanic theologian. In 1957 he experienced the transforming power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and was ever since committed to preach the various aspects of this power. He served the churches across doctrinal, national, and cultural boundaries: he ministered to the Congregationalists, the Methodists, the Disciples of Christ, and the Baptists. He was convinced that denominational institutions have indeed their values and identities that should be used to communicate the message of Jesus Christ to wider communities. His Puerto Rican origin, training and work in several seminaries in the United States, his experience of the United States taking control of the Dominican Republic in 1965–1966<sup>6</sup> strengthened his commitment to work as a bridge-builder between peoples of various cultures.

Costas focused his work among those who were at the margins of society suffering oppression, neglect and exploitation. He believed that those Christians who derive their energy from biblical, theological, historical, and practical reflections are effective ministers. During the 1970s he lived intensely “as witness or participant in the flourishing of liberation theologies, the foundation and development of the Latin American Theological Fraternity, the launching and growth of the Lausanne movement, the development of the church growth movement, and the return of evangelism to the agenda of both the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church” (Escobar, 51 f.). He challenged the way mission-sending organizations in the west and the mission-receiving agencies in the Southern Hemisphere perceived each other. In his opinion, they should not view themselves as givers and receivers, but as equal partners participating in God's

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mission.

Costas' work in Amsterdam, Birmingham and Costa Rica enabled him to emphasize the fact that the whole Gospel should be preached to the whole world. He studied the cultures, institutions and structures of several societies, and tried to see how the Gospel of Jesus Christ could be presented to the people of these cultures in an authentic way. His work at the *Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary* (1980–1984) in Pennsylvania and at the *Andover Newton Theological School* in Massachusetts as the *Adoniram Judson Chair of Missiology* (1984–1987), and his outstanding book entitled *Christ Outside the Gate* (1982) contributed to new patterns of missiological thinking.

Plutarco Bonilla has identified other influential aspects of Costas' missiological thinking: missiology should be done "from the ground of commitment to the church; it made sense because it started with commitment to Jesus Christ; it was grounded in the human reality in which the church was immersed; it was carried on within the frame of ecumenicity; and it was done from a stance of commitment to those to whom Jesus Christ himself was committed" (as quoted in Escobar, 54). A brief survey of the bibliographical details pertaining to extensive writings by and on Costas, as provided by Elizabeth Conde-Frazier in this work, shows the breadth and width of Costas' interest and influence. His legacy continues to challenge mission thinkers and practioners alike.

### Costas Consultation on Global Mission

Since 1990 the *Boston Theological Institute*, a consortium of nine theological schools in the Greater Boston in Massachusetts, honors Costas' continuing legacy by organizing an annual consultation on a particular mission-related theme. These consultations have brought together scholars, students and mission-minded people from different walks of life. A glance at the keynote speakers and the topics of these consultations show the relevance of Costas' mission principles.

1990–1991	Mission scholar Robert Schreiter at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, conducted this consultation entitled <i>Reconciliation, Mission and Ministry In A Changing Social Order</i> .
1991–1992	Mission scholar Christopher Duraisingh at Episcopal Divinity School conducted this consultation on <i>Gospel and Culture</i> .
1992–1993	Lamin Sanneh at Yale University conducted this consultation on the <i>African Church</i> .
1993–1994	Mission scholar Andrew Ross at the University of Edinburgh con-

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- ducted this consultation on the *History of the African Church*.
- 1994–1995 Mission scholar Bishop Francisco Claver, S.J. from Malabalay in Philippines, conducted this consultation on *Human Rights Agenda*.
- 1995–1996 Mission scholars Elisabeth Lowe, Franklin and Gene Woo and Jean-Paul Wiest conducted this consultation on the *Church in China*.
- 1996–1997 Andrew Walls at the University of Edinburgh conducted this consultation on *What, Whence, Whither? Understanding Mission Studies at the End of the 20th Century*. At this consultation the first *International Mission and Ecumenism Certificate* program was inaugurated.
- 1997–1998 Mission scholars Joan Campbell, Albert Pennybacker, J. Bryan Hehir and Kent Hill conducted this consultation on *Religious Persecution*.
- 1998–1999 In collaboration with the Andover Newton Theological School, mission scholars Vinay Samuel, Mary Motte and Eldin Villafaña conducted this tenth anniversary commemoration consultation on Costas' legacy.
- 1999–2000 Mission scholars Dana Robert, Bonnie Sue Lewis, Catherine B. Allen, Margaret Eletta Guider, OSF, Frances S. Adeney conducted this consultation on *Missions and Gender*.
- 2000–2001 Mission scholars Andy Crouch and Manda Bohannon conducted this consultation on *Global Mission: Mission, Development and Justice*.
- 2001–2002 Faculty and Friends of the Boston Theological Institute conducted this consultation on *the coming church! the neXt-generation and global Christianity*.
- 2002–2003 Mission scholars Calvin DeWitt, Marthinus Daneel and Roger Gottlieb conducted this consultation on *EarthKeeping as a Dimension of Christian Mission: The Missiology and Spirituality of Earthkeeping*.
- 2003–2004 Diana Aubourg, Iani-Sheila Newsome-Camara, M. Shawn Copeland, David Daniels, Casely Essamuah, David Goatley, Glenn Mason, Oscar Pratt, Liz Walker, Alberta Ware, and Dennis Wiley conducted this consultation on *The Lord Will Make a Way Somehow: Africa in the Global Witness of the Black Church*.
- 2004–2005 Darrell L. Guder, Daniel Jeyaraj, and John B. Kauta. This consultation focused on this question: *Is North America a Mission Field? What Does the World Church Say?*
- 2005–2006 Sathianathan Clarke, Susan Abraham, John Webster, Frederick Downs, Todd Johnson, Daniel Jeyaraj, and Rodney Petersen on the theme *Castes, Tribes and Conversions: Christian Identities in India Today*.
- 2006–2007 Philo Kim, Jung-Woon Suh, S. Steve Kang, Moonjang Lee, Hee

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An Choi, and Yim Hee-Mo on the theme *Mission and Reconciliation in the Korean Church*.

These consultations have provided appropriate forums for scholars, students and others to reflect on Costas' vision of the *Whole world for the whole Gospel*, especially in post-modern and post-Christian societies in the west, and other societies in non-western parts of the world. Particular attention has been given to those who remain "outside the gate," "in Galilee" and "in the shantytown." Originally, Costas used these three images to explain the experiences of the *mestizaje* (desperate people) in the peripheries (Martell-Otero, 2). Their experience stems not necessarily from their "personal sin," but above all from the structural sin that causes "hunger, shortage of housing, [...] unemployment, poverty, *los desaparecidos* (the disappeared), torture, child abuse, wars, invasions, military threats, dictatorships, spiritual alienation, and so on" (Loida Martell-Otero, 3). Hence, Costas insisted that holistic salvation that is intensely personal has inescapable social relevance. It opposes all dehumanizing forces, and seeks to enhance the quality life for all people. The annual *Costas Consultations*, sponsored by the Boston Theological Institute, keep on reminding Christians to explore the Costas' multifaceted missiological insights and praxis.

### End Notes:

- <sup>1</sup> Not all followers of Jesus Christ were/are known as Christians. The *Nazarenes* in some parts Iran and India and the *Malankara Nazranikal* in southwestern India are different from traditional understanding of being Christians. In addition, numerous "unbaptized Christians" live in many parts of India. Due to certain social, cultural, political and communal reasons they do not want to be baptized, and formally join a church. Similarly, the "anonymous Christians" claim that they live in God's grace and that they will attain "salvation" in their own religious traditions because they believe that the Holy Spirit is present and active in these traditions. It is evident that these and many other similar faith communities live somewhere in the *in-betweenness* of cultures and human systems.
- <sup>2</sup> David G. Horrell: "'Becoming Christian': Solidifying Christian Identity and Content," *Handbook of Early Christianity: Social Science Approaches*, eds. Anthony J. Blasi, et al., New York: Altamira Press, 2002, 309–336, here quoted from page 319.
- <sup>3</sup> Nicholas H. Taylor: "Conflicting bases of identity in early Christianity," *Handbook of Early Christianity: Social Science Approaches*, eds. Anthony J. Blasi, et al., New York: Altamira Press, 2002, 577–597, quoted below from pages 589 and 591: "Galatians was written in the aftermath of Paul's confrontation with Peter at Antioch (Gal. 2:11–14) and in response to the situation

this episode occasioned in Paul's life and in the Galatian churches. [... The creedal formula that in Christ there was no Jew or a non-Jew as in Gal. 3:28 reflects] a Jewish perception of the composition of the population of a Greek city. This perception would seem to have had little grounding in the Galatian churches, which appear to have been overwhelmingly gentile in composition. An Antiochene origin of the creedal formulary could account also for Paul's citation of what was an authoritative statement despite his lack of immediate interest in the issues of slavery and gender."

<sup>4</sup> *The New Oxford Annotated Bible — New Revised Standard Version with Apocrypha* (3rd ed., Oxford: OUP, 2001, p. 53) identifies the city of Cyrene with "the capital of the north African district of Cyrenaica, on the southern Mediterranean coast west of Egypt."

<sup>5</sup> The information of this part of the introduction is based on the following three essays: 1) Conde-Frazier, Elizabeth's essay on Castas found in this work; 2) Escobar, Samuel: "The Legacy of Orlando Costas," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2001, 50–56; and 3) Martell-Otero, Loida.: "Rev. Dr. Orlando E. Costas: Theologian of the Crossroads (Liberating News from the Periphery)," lecture manuscript, distributed on March 27, 2003 at Andover Newton Theological School for the Orlando E. Costas Latin American and Hispanic Ministries Program.

<sup>6</sup> In an email message (of March 31, 2004) to the author of this introduction, Mrs. Rose Costas indicated that she could vividly recall her husband's "energy and anger every time the weak or poor felt a deeper blow from the strong."