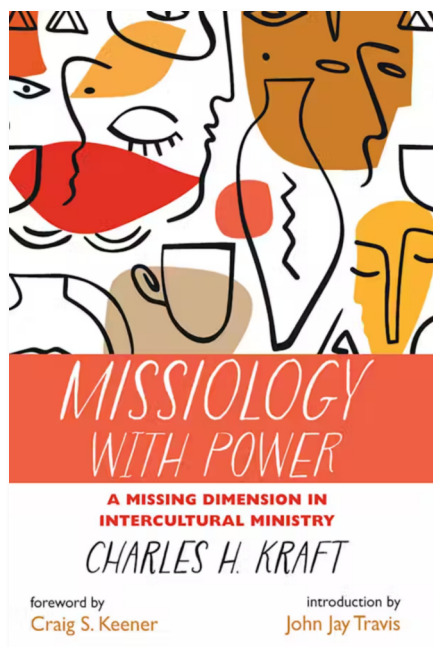


REVIEW: *Missiology with Power: A Missing Dimension in Intercultural Ministry* By Charles H. Kraft

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Charles Kraft has long been a name associated with the academic discipline of Missiology. His previous works have been seminal texts in the development of cross-cultural ministry in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Now, in his nineties, Kraft has published a new work, *Missiology with Power*, to pass along important lessons he has learned to current and future cross-cultural workers. The thesis of this book is that much of missiological training is deficient in its treatment of the realm of spiritual power. Rather than simply restating the concept of the Excluded Middle, which Kraft's contemporary Paul Hiebert posited, Kraft's points illuminate that the middle area continues to be excluded in missiological training.

This short book is broken into four main sections. In the first section, Kraft recounts his own journey as a missionary in Africa, and his beginning to experience the necessity of power in missions. In the next section, Kraft explains how animism, shamanism, and other folk religious practices are empowered by demonic forces to counterfeit God's power. Kraft gives a very clear distinction between animistic power and Christian power; while both may be real, the source of the power for the animist is ultimately Satan, while the source for the power of Christians comes from the Holy Spirit. The third section contains advice and guidance on how to pray for people who have been demonized through the occult or other practices aimed at gaining spiritual power. The final section recommends actions for cross cultural workers on how to appropriately address spiritual power in communities, and ideas for contextualization.

The book is very readable and contains nuggets of wisdom to be gleaned by both the laity and the academy. While not absent, the lack of literature included and cited is perhaps less than what would be expected in an academic textbook. However, the seminal works in power encounter and missions are almost all included, firmly cementing the book in the literature. Additionally, the book relies on deliverance ministry literature for some specifics in understanding the nature of demonization. This book would be appropriate for a mature Christian leading a team or training through spiritual power issues in missiology. Some may bristle at the typology and terminology that Kraft develops and uses when discussing demons. However, much of the content is based off Kraft's own extensive deliverance ministry experience.

The final section of the book will certainly draw some controversy, specifically when Kraft discusses functional substitutes for traditional religious practices. For example, Kraft suggests that in cultural contexts where divination is common, those with the gift of prophecy may fill the role the diviners used to fill, except empowered by the Holy Spirit. The ever-looming question of syncretism looms large in the section, as it usually does when missionaries get real about what they have seen and experienced on the field.

While I do not agree with everything in the book, Kraft has revitalized an important conversation for missiology. Based on his experience, Kraft offers the next generation of cross-cultural ministers a launching point to discuss how to engage with the spiritual battle that is before us. The question that remains is how we will choose to engage or ignore the spiritual realm in missiology.

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