

Jungle Myths, The Story of ABWE's Medical Work On The Amazon

Keith Kaynor, ABWE Publishing, P.O. Box 8585, Harrisburg, PA 17107, 1999, 140 pages, \$8.95

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In light of those critics who condemn mission work as exploitive, damaging to culture, manipulative, irrelevant and a host of other terms, it is good to see a popular book that sets out to answer those charges.

Veteran pastor Keith Kaynor has woven the truth concerning 15 myths about mission work into a fascinating account of the development of a mission hospital in the inhospitable Amazon jungle of Brazil. This is not a missiological theoretician writing here, but a practitioner who has ministered in Bangladesh, Brazil, Europe and other regions, and his observations come from missionaries in the trenches—those who were a part of building the Amazonas Baptist Hospital.

Among the myths he exposes are the alleged role of missionaries in destroying the rain forest, the perceived openness of governments to have foreign doctors serve their people “for free,” legendary native hostility to foreign workers, the supposed decline in need for missionary work and the common charge that missionaries are destroying native culture.

Kaynor lets indigenous Brazilians answer that last one for themselves. “Where were you (the anthropologists) when we needed help? When we had no rights and no others were helping us? When non-Indian peoples wanted to steal our fields, take our money, get us drunk and rape our women? The missionaries love us and take care of us....As long as I am alive, the missionaries can be here.”

Most missionaries desire to respect the music, language and customs of the indigenous people, Kaynor writes. “They do, however, seek to teach them about the God of the Bible and the biblical way to salvation.”

Referring to what he calls 20th Century Conquistadors, Kaynor says, “Businessmen, combing the globe, are going to invade whatever domains exist to achieve their goals.” These, along with environmentalists, loggers, drug traffickers, tourists and others are moving through the urban and rural cultures of the developing world, bringing their own worldview and cultural practices with them. “Better some missionaries and others who really care, than only the 20th-century *conquistadors*,” Kaynor writes.

While not written for a secular audience, nor to answer critics in an academic manner, Kaynor’s book goes a long way in helping students and lay people get a handle on oft-heard criticisms. Throughout its pages, he also takes the reader through the struggles of launching a medical facility far from modern medical technology and in the face of skepticism and, sometimes, hostility.

Other books related to the subject:

When God Chooses, A Life of David, by Keith Kaynor, Regular Baptist Press
Bridge to the Rain Forest, by Eleanor Boyes, Published by HCJB, Colorado Springs, CO.

Jungle Myths, The Story of ABWE's Medical Work On The Amazon, *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, Jan 27, 2000