

**Kenneth L. Pike: *An Evangelical Mind*. By Boone Aldridge. Pickwick Publications: Eugene, Oregon, 2021. xix + 240 pp. \$46.00 cloth; \$31.00 paper.**

Growing up on the mission field, as I did, and in the mission that Ken Pike led, I was aware of Pike's reputation as a linguistic genius. Stories of Pike communicating with a non-English speaker in their native tongue within 20 minutes of meeting them circulated regularly. So, many years later, when it was announced at the evangelical seminary I was attending that Pike would speak in chapel, I was thrilled. I urged all my friends to attend. The chapel promised to be memorable. It was. Pike's topic was a linguistic analysis of the sermon on the mount. I watched in horror as the great linguist fumbled with his overheads, seeming to never quite find the correct one to illustrate some arcane connection between various words in the text, with the end result that his message sailed quite over the heads of the eager future pastors in attendance. My friends held that hour over my head for quite some time!

This story illustrates the challenge facing Boone Aldridge in writing a biography of Pike. How do you interest readers in the life of a genius, and a genius in a field remote to the lives of even most academic readers? As Aldridge humorously points out, mine was not the first audience to be befuddled by Pike's chapel talks.

But the story also illustrates Aldridge's thesis. Pike, Aldridge argues, moved smoothly through two worlds, academia and evangelicalism, uniting in his person and his ministry the life of the mind and the arena of the heart, in ways almost unique in his time, but that perhaps helped to move evangelicalism, at times kicking and screaming, out of its fundamentalist past into at least a furtive embrace of the modern world. While future pastors may not have been his ideal audience, in the world of missions, at least in so far as Bible translation was concerned, a world that uniquely combines the academic with the spiritual, Pike was essential.

First, the challenge. How do you make Pike's life interesting? The obvious answer here is that Aldridge's biography will be of interest primarily to scholars of the histories of linguistics and missions. I say the *history* of linguistics, because, as Aldridge points out, Pike's contribution to the discipline through his theory of tagmemics, while monumental, has been eclipsed by the theories and approaches of Noam Chomsky. (And if that sentence didn't get your juices flowing, this may not be the book for you.)

The book will perhaps be of more interest to scholars of missions, particularly to those interested in the Summer Institute of Linguistics and the Wycliffe Bible Translators. Perhaps the most significant evangelical mission of the 20th century, Pike's leadership here, while not as central as that of Cameron Townsend, certainly was enormously important. Townsend's interest in linguistics and academia was rarely more than pragmatic, and it is safe to say that WBT/SIL would never have become the player that it became around the world without Pike's work fashioning the mission into a legitimate linguistic powerhouse. Townsend sought access to the nations of the world to save souls. Few of those nations cared about such things. They wanted the linguistic expertise Townsend promised. Without Ken Pike, Townsend's promises would have proved hollow, and WBT/SIL's impact on the history of missions would likely have been minimal. Aldridge tells this story well, following Pike from his youth through his discovery of a love for linguistics to his numerous triumphs in the world of secular academics and Christian missions.

Aldridge had access to Pike's letters and papers, and he finds space in his intellectual biography, particularly in the letters, to bring some human interest to his story. Pike's mind operated at a level unreached by most humans. But he had feet of clay, and Aldridge is often at his best using Pike's own words to demonstrate his struggles with "nerves," what would likely be diagnosed as depression today, his short temper, and his health. But Pike also had a wonderful sense of humor, which Aldridge also weaves into his narrative from time to time. Pike's admirable championing of women in missions, precisely because their minds were the equal of any man's, is another area where the human side of the story comes to the fore.

Aldridge's subtitle, *An Evangelical Mind*, positions Pike's story and Aldridge's thesis as a minor corrective, if not a challenge, to Mark Noll's seminal work, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*. Writing in the mid-90s, Noll began, "The scandal of the evangelical mind is that there is not much of an evangelical mind." Aldridge places Pike in the tiny bit of wiggle room left in Noll's "not much." There was at least room for Ken Pike. Aldridge further argues that Pike's scholarship and his faith were integrated—not compartmentalized. There has been much discussion among evangelical academics in the past several decades about the meaning of Christian scholarship. Is there anything unique about it? Or is it simply committed scholarship that tends to focus on communities or issues of faith? Aldridge wants to argue, for Pike at least, that his faith profoundly influenced his theory of linguistics. Where other linguists took a mechanistic approach to language, Pike's more fully orbbed humanistic approach was influenced by the importance his faith placed on individual human beings.

My only real criticism of Aldridge's biography is that he assumes, in his readers, a fairly substantial knowledge of the history of evangelicalism. While that is likely a fair assumption for most readers, with the addition of a few more pages of background in the history of evangelicalism and of missions, the book might have been made more accessible to non-academic readers, and Aldridge's thesis of Pike's influence on the evangelical mind as it transitioned out of fundamentalism may have been rendered even more persuasive.

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***The Blessings of Liberty: Human Rights and Religious Freedom in the Western Legal Tradition.* By John Witte, Jr. Law and Christianity Series. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022. 300 pp. \$110.00 cloth; \$29.99 paper.**

This elegantly written volume is the latest of John Witte's many, many contributions to the study of law and religion. *The Blessings of Liberty* addresses the principal themes of his three decades of scholarship: "(1) that religion has long been a critical foundation and dimension of human rights; (2) that religion and human rights still need each other for each to thrive; and (3) that robust promotion and protection of religious freedom is the best way to protect many other fundamental rights today" (xi).