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Anderson, Sir (James) Norman Dalrymple (1908–1994), missionary, jurist, and writer on religion, was born on 29 September 1908 at Aldeburgh, Suffolk, the second son and last of the four children of William Dalrymple Anderson (*d.* 1946), grain merchant, and his wife, Lilian Maud, *née* Cohen (*d.* 1961). As a child Norman Anderson grew up in an environment shaped by his parents' evangelical Presbyterianism as well as their political conservatism. His early education included boarding school first at Hayward's Heath and later at the small evangelical public school, St Lawrence College, Ramsgate. In 1927 he entered Trinity College, Cambridge, to read law. After an idle first year he surprised his supervisor and himself by earning three consecutive firsts, the last for an LLB in international law. He spent his spare time engrossed in the activities of the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union, of which he became president in 1931.

Gradually, through the influence of missionary breakfasts sponsored by the union and exhortations at the annual Keswick convention, Anderson began to consider evangelistic work among Muslims. In 1932 he volunteered to serve with the Egypt General Mission. His fiancée, Patricia Hope Givan (*d.* 1996), whose parents lived and worked in Alexandria, followed suit. They married in Alexandria in 1933. They had two daughters and one son. Anderson's first few years in Egypt were spent learning Arabic and working with senior missionaries. However, he was a quick learner and within a short period of time he was preaching in Arabic. After his apprenticeship he developed an innovative plan of outreach to students at Fuad I University in Cairo. As a part-time student at the university he continued his study of Islam more systematically and forged contacts with other students. He attended lectures on Arabic literature and history in the faculty of arts and Islamic family law in the faculty of law. The reformist attitudes of Egyptian Muslim intellectuals who lectured at the university fascinated him, but the scepticism of Coptic Christians alarmed him. In response to this scepticism he attempted to provide rational grounds for accepting the veracity of the New Testament witness to Jesus Christ in his first book in Arabic, *Al-'Aql w'al-iman* (1939).

Though Anderson had every intention to serve as a career missionary, he abandoned his pacifism and volunteered for military service after Italy

declared war on Britain on 10 June 1940. An emergency commission in the intelligence corps followed, but because of his extensive knowledge of Arabic he was given special employment in the military intelligence (research) department of the War Office, known as MI(R), a predecessor of the Special Operations Executive (SOE), in Cairo. In this capacity he served as Britain's chief liaison with Sayed Idris al-Senussi, later King Idris of Libya, recruiting Libyan refugees to serve in a covert guerrilla unit. The partnership proved to be an amicable one and when military operations ceased Anderson remained Britain's chief contact with Idris and other notable Libyan refugees during the period of reconstruction. His first-hand experience of Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism in these years intensified his interest in contemporary political and legal developments in the Muslim world. Ultimately he rose to the rank of colonel, as second-in-command of the civil affairs branch in north Africa. Towards the end of the war he played an important part in debates concerning the future of the former Italian colonies, and he rounded off his military career by serving as an aide to Ernest Bevin at the foreign ministers' conference in Paris in 1946. He was appointed MBE in 1943 and OBE in 1945. He remained in contact with King Idris well after the war and received the Libyan order of independence (second class) in 1959 in recognition of his friendship with the king and his contributions to an independent Libya.

Anderson returned to England in 1946. From 1946 to 1949 he served as the first warden of Tyndale House, a new centre for biblical research in Cambridge, where he hoped to prepare for a possible career in biblical studies or a return to missionary work in Egypt. Almost immediately, however, he was recruited to give lectures on Islamic law at the universities of Cambridge and London. Oriental studies were burgeoning in England, but the study of Islamic law had been carried on almost exclusively by traditional orientalists concentrating on classical texts and colonial administrators focusing on 'Anglo-Muhammadan' law in the Indian subcontinent. In 1949 Anderson accepted a full-time lectureship at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. In 1953 he became head of the law department (a position he held until 1971) and in 1954 professor of oriental laws (a position he held until his retirement in 1975). In 1959 he became the director of the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (where he served until 1976), an appointment he held concurrently with his position at SOAS. He was a popular but exacting teacher and supervised numerous advanced students and doctoral candidates from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Britain, and the United States.

Anderson's research broke new ground in Britain through its focus on modern legal codes and its attention to developments in the Middle East and Africa. In his analysis of the modern codes Anderson highlighted the

hybrid mixture of Western and Islamic concepts, which he believed would characterize future legal reforms. His work reflected the wide academic popularity of modernization theory, which assumed that 'the West' would serve indefinitely as the model of development and progress for other societies. Throughout his writings he expressed concerns about the morality and practicality of certain rules and stipulations in the vast corpus of classical Islamic law, which grew from a mixture of his own cultural prejudices, theological convictions, missionary experience, and knowledge of legal reforms.

Because of his expertise in Islamic law, Anderson became a sought-after witness in legal cases, adviser to the Colonial Office and Foreign Office, and consultant to non-Western governments. His major scholarly publications were *Islamic Law in Africa* (1954), *Islamic Law in the Modern World* (1959), *Changing Law in Developing Countries* (1963), *Family Law in Asia and Africa* (1968), and *Law Reform in the Muslim World* (1976). Though his speciality was Islamic law, he made immense contributions to the study of African law with his proposals for the creation of the *Journal of African Law* and his service on Lord Denning's committee on legal education for students from Africa. He also played an important part in the archbishop's commission on the reform of divorce law, which made significant contributions to divorce law reform in England. In recognition of his contributions to law he was called to the bar at Gray's Inn in 1965, elected a fellow of the British Academy in 1970, and appointed queen's counsel in 1974.

In addition to this legal involvement, Anderson played a signal role in the transformation of conservative evangelicalism in England after the Second World War, leading his co-religionists into re-engagement with culture, society, politics, and ecumenism. He was a popular speaker in student circles and wrote and spoke frequently on the question of Christianity's relationship to other religions in general and the relationship of Christianity to Islam in particular. He warned against 'cultural imperialism', and argued for the compatibility of proclamation and dialogue. Over time he developed an evangelical theology of religions that moved beyond the traditional, exclusivist stance, but stopped short of pluralism. He expressed his views in publications such as *World Religions* (1950, 1975), *Christianity and Comparative Religion* (1970), *God's Law and God's Love: an Essay in Comparative Religion* (1980), *Christianity and World Religions: the Challenge of Pluralism* (1984), and *Islam in the Modern World: a Christian Perspective* (1990). His interest in missionary work never abated and he served as the president or chairman of a number of societies including the Bible Churchman's Missionary Society and the Middle East General Mission (later Middle East Christian Outreach). In the Church of England he served

as a lay representative on the church assembly from 1961 to 1970 then as first chairman of the house of laity in the general synod from 1970 to 1979 (for which he was knighted in 1975). In this role he used his diplomatic skills to help secure a compromise agreement with the prime minister that guaranteed the church a greater degree of independence from the state in its choice of bishops. Biblical studies also remained a constant fascination for Anderson. His most widely read book was undoubtedly *The Evidence for the Resurrection* (1950), in which he defended the historical validity of the New Testament witness to the Easter event.

In 1970 Anderson's son, Hugh, died of cancer and in 1974 his daughters, Hazel and Janet, each died tragically and unexpectedly. These personal losses caused much grief but did not shake their parents' religious faith. In 1978 Anderson retired with his wife to Cambridge where he lived out the rest of his days. He continued writing, especially on religion, and until his death remained first and foremost a missionary. He died on 2 December 1994 at the Ida Darwin Hospital, Fulbourn, Cambridgeshire, of heart failure. He was survived by his wife, Patricia.

Todd M. Thompson

## Sources

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