Spanish missiology has a bright history which began so to say with the New Testament, at the time when Spain itself was a mission field, which Paul the apostle planned to visit. In the course of time the country was lost for the Christian faith and submitted to the rule of Islam for centuries, then 'conquered' back, to become the home base of a new 'conquista' in another continent, which we know as Latin America. The tragic ambiguity of the Spanish intervention there is still a matter of self-scrutiny and shame, as it was in the days of Fr. B. de Las Casas. Authentic mission cannot be the same as a military and political conquest. The well-known reinterpretation of Latin American Church History by Enrique Dussel and the CEHILA (See Exchange, no.19, 1978, 1-22) pinpoints to the resulting ambiguity of Latin American Christianity from the beginning. The wonderful emergence of Latin American liberation theologies is partly the fruit of an endless wrestling with the past in order to give new shape to church and theology, and primarily to society, all of them finally redeemed from lingering dominations. In its struggle towards complete freedom, Latin American liberation theologians use the language of the former metropolis, i.e. Spanish or Portuguese. This means more than language only. This means a continuing dialogue, implicitly or explicitly, with the culture and especially with the theology of the country where the language has its origin. Actually the celebrated annotated bibliography for 'Ibero-American' theology (Bibliografia Teologica Comentada del area iberoamericana) launched in 1976 (BTC 1-2, covering 1973 and 1974) and published annually ever since always includes books and periodicals from Spain and Portugal. It would be a mistake, however, to approach Spanish missiology only from the Latin American point of view, as part and parcel, as it were, of Latin American Theology.

In spite of the continuing dialogue between both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, Spanish theology has its own tradition and its own course. We must also be aware of other historical relations than the certainly privileged affinity with Latin America. Spain, or at least Spanish missionaries also have strong relations with Africa and the Far East and South East Asia.

Father Diosdado's survey of mission studies in Spain takes its starting point in the missionary history of Spain in its widest range, geographically and historically. It is a Spanish survey of Spanish mission studies, originally presented to a group of European and African scholars who were foreign to the internal affairs of Spanish Christianity.

The first presentation of this survey was made in Spanish at the Eighth Colloquium of the missiological society called CREDIC (Centre de Recherches et d'Echanges sur la Diffusion et l'Inculturation du Christianisme) in August 1987
at the Pontifical University of Salamanca. The CREDIC organizes annually a scholarly meeting in one of the European universities; Salamanca was chosen in 1987 in connection with the congress of the Commission Internationale d'Histoire Eclesiastique Comparee (CIHEC) held there at the same time and partly devoted to the theme Church and Society in the American cultural processes. This setting explains something of the philosophy of the presentation. Speaking to foreigners, one has not in mind to expose conflicts and to force the foreigners to take sides with one of the parties. Of course there must be conflicts, but it is important to have a very general view of the battlefield which is also, like many battlefields, a very attractive landscape. Under the guidance of Father Diosdado we shall discover a wide range of missiological efforts which are widely unknown or at least unquoted in the English-reading world. Again, we should be aware that all the developments mentioned in the following survey are not necessarily important to or taken into account by Latin American theologians and missiologists. Some of them are important for Spain only or for other countries with which Spain has had historical relations, for instance in Africa and the Far East.

Another remark is needed. The reader will be impressed by the paramount role assigned in mission to pontifical initiative and guidance according to the author. Furthermore, this role seems to be welcome and greatly appreciated. From the Dutch perspective today this is quite unusual among Roman Catholics. After all, everybody is supposed to know that Spanish catholicism is different from Dutch catholicism.

The Spanish 'school' of missiology can rightly claim a definite originality next to the classic Roman Catholic missiological 'schools' namely the German school led by Joseph Schmidlin with the idea of salvation of infidels as its focus, the Belgian school conducted by Pierre Charles with the central thrust of Church planting, the French school inspired by the Jesuits Henri De Lubac and Jean Daniélou and later by the Dominicans P.de Menasce and A.M.Henry with an emphasis on the eschatological fullness of life in the grace of God. According to the Jesuit Fr Angel Santos Hernandez the core of Spanish missiology is the idea of the Total Christ, the mystical Body of Christ, in which all humankind is being incorporated, passing from darkness to the light of Christ. Fr Zameza, one of the founding fathers of Spanish missiology, elaborates very much on the two 'laws' of living systems: the law of progressive growth and the law of adaptable elasticity. The Church going to the Nations (ad gentes) finally comes from the Nations (ex gentibus).

Modern developments in the last thirty years have led to a more diversified picture of Spanish missiology. Fr Diosdado himself makes it obvious in the arrangement of his bibliography: the watershed is definitely the conclusion of the Council Vatican II in 1965. A political missiology took shape, in the same spirit as the emerging theology of liberation; further a certain attention was devoted to the phenomenon of atheism and secularization, although officially Spain still stands as a very Catholic country. Intense popular religiosity goes side by side with aggressive religious unbelief and indifference. Spanish missiology faces religious and social pluralism which is a common feature in Western countries; the author of the survey, however, does not insist on the divergences between new 'schools' of missiology today, but on the common ground on which every Catholic missiology is bound to stay if it is worth its name.