



TOGETHER IN THE MISSION OF GOD

Jubilee Reflections on the International Missionary Council



Editor: RISTO JUKKO

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**World Council
of Churches**
Publications

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CONTENTS

<i>Introduction</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Contributors</i>	<i>xiii</i>

Part I Looking back: 100 years of structures of mission cooperation and unity 1

1. Cooperation, Christian Fellowship, and Transnational Networking: The Birth of the International Missionary Council
Dana L. Robert 3
2. The International Missionary Council: From Lake Mohonk 1921 to New Delhi 1961
Raimundo C. Barreto Jr. 31
3. Cooperation in Mission in Word—and in Practice? The Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches
Marina Ngursangzeli Behera 59

Part II Mission in 2022: After 100 years of structures of mission cooperation and unity 83

4. Deep Resonances: Roman Catholic Perspectives on *Together towards Life, The Arusha Call to Discipleship*, and the WCC Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Arusha, Tanzania
Stephen Bevans, SVD 85
5. The Protest Movement as Mission from the Margins: COVID-19, Racism, Xenophobia, and Sustainable Livelihoods in Southern Africa
Buble Mpofu 109
6. Mission in a Wounded World
Introduced by Michael Biehl 125
 - Philippines
Thaad Kolin Angel Samson 127
 - Myanmar Christians' Experiences
Lahphai Awng Li 130

The Role of the Palestinian Church in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict <i>Rula Khoury Mansour</i>	133
South Sudan: The Triumph of the Cross <i>Hilary Garang Deng</i>	136
Wounded Healers in the Service of the Wounded: The Case of South Africa <i>Tinyiko Maluleke</i>	139
The Case of the Serbian Orthodox Church <i>Tijana Petković</i>	141
Italy: Towards the Same End <i>Melissa Baccarella</i>	144
What does collaboration among churches from different traditions look like in Latin America in the 21st Century? <i>David Nacho</i>	146
Orthodox Mission and Vulnerability in the Alaskan North <i>Alison Ruth Kolosova</i>	148
7. Misión desde las bases: cruzando fronteras para forjar la unidad <i>Bernardo Campos</i>	151
Part III Looking toward the future: Quo vadis, missio Dei?	179
8. Mission and the Age of World Christianity <i>Allen Yeh</i>	181
9. Mission in the World of Religions <i>Arun W. Jones</i>	199
10. Mission in an Urban World <i>Glenn Smith</i>	217
11. Mission in the Age of Digitalization: Metaverse, Metamodernism, and Metanarrative <i>Guichun Jun</i>	241

12. The Future of Mission: Points of Convergence? <i>Compiled and introduced by Kenneth R. Ross</i>	261
Spirituality <i>Luis Wesley De Souza</i>	263
Discipleship <i>Stephen Bevans, SVD</i>	266
Evangelism <i>Rob Hay</i>	269
Justice <i>Samuel George</i>	272
Race <i>Chammah J. Kaunda</i>	276
Social Movements <i>Silvia Regina de Lima Silva</i>	279
Indigenous Peoples <i>Tito Paredes</i>	281
Migration <i>Wanjiru M. Gitau</i>	285
Ecology <i>Cristian Sonea</i>	288
13. Toward Prophetic Missionary Discipleship <i>Risto Jukka</i>	295

INTRODUCTION

What is so important in the International Missionary Council (IMC) and its historical successor, the World Council of Churches' (WCC) Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, that they will have their own centennial volume? By reading this book, the reader will gain a better understanding of how important and crucial they have been in the development of the ecumenical movement and of what today is often called World Christianity.

This volume aims to highlight how, in the course of the past century, structured efforts to foster unity in mission cooperation have shaped not only Christianity but even the world. At the end of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, “the turning point in the history of the ecumenical movement,”¹ it was clear to the participants that the closing of the conference was not in fact an endpoint but the start of something new. It was perceived that a continuation of cooperation and efforts to achieve unity in mission were needed, and that need found concrete form in the Edinburgh Continuation Committee with a first missiological journal of its kind, the *International Review of Missions*. The Continuation Committee was followed in 1921 by the IMC—the first global ecumenical Christian council to exist. The council witnessed the unexpectedly rapid growth of Christianity in the global South in the first half of the 20th century and the establishment of National Mission Councils, many of which were later transformed into National Christian Councils when new independent states with national churches came into being in Asia and Africa.

The WCC was founded in Amsterdam in 1948, and subsequent discussions and debates over relations between the two ecumenical councils, the WCC and the IMC, were unavoidable. They were over ten years “in association,” sharing several common initiatives and cooperation, until the meeting of the IMC in Ghana in 1957–58 decided on integration with the WCC. This happened three years later, in 1961, at the WCC assembly in New Delhi, India. What happened after the 40 years of the previous existence of the IMC was inevitable: mission cannot be kept separate from the church, since it is an inherent characteristic of the church.

1 J. H. Oldham, “Reflections on Edinburgh, 1910,” *Religion in Life: A Christian Quarterly of Opinion and Discussion* 29:3 (1960), 329–38, at 333.

The texts included in this volume have been divided into three parts, starting with the history of the movement and the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910. Particular attention has been paid to Latin America, “a neglected continent,” at the Edinburgh 1910 and Lake Mohonk 1921 events. An international missionary meeting in 1921 at Lake Mohonk, in the United States, set up the IMC and started a journey that eventually ended in 1961 with its integration with the WCC. The merger united the two global ecumenical Christian councils, and the IMC became the Division and the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. From New Delhi in 1961 to the WCC assembly in Karlsruhe in 2022, the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism has continued the work of the IMC. The missiological journal *International Review of Mission* (“mission” in the singular since 1969) has become a WCC journal, published without interruption since 1912.

It has become a custom to organize a world missionary conference once per decade, and subsequently this has come to mean once between the different WCC assemblies. The organization of world missionary conference started at the time of the IMC, starting with the World Missionary Conference in Jerusalem in 1928. The WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism also elaborated the first official ecumenical mission affirmation of the WCC after some heated debate on mission in the 1960s and 1970s. The document was titled *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation*, and it was published in 1982. It took another 30 years before the second official ecumenical mission affirmation was prepared by the commission, adopted by the WCC central committee in 2012, and presented to the WCC assembly gathered in Busan, South Korea, in 2013. That document, *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*, provided the foundation for the WCC Conference on World Mission and Evangelism held in Arusha, Tanzania, in 2018. An outcome document from that conference is titled *The Arusha Call to Discipleship*, and it is undoubtedly one of the most inspiring ecumenical mission documents of the late 2010s.

The second part of the present volume brings the reader to the mission movement today. What does it look like? This section starts where the historical part ends: the WCC mission affirmation *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* and the WCC Conference on World Mission and Evangelism held in Arusha, Tanzania, in 2018, with *The Arusha Call to Discipleship*. This part also deals with stories from beyond the WCC conferences and texts: mission structures consist not only of the conferences organized and theological texts written and debated by a commission and churches but also, and especially, of mission experienced and practised in real life, in a wounded

world and haunted, as it currently is, by the COVID-19 pandemic. The stories of people confronted with, and confronting, racism, xenophobia, injustice, exclusion, hunger, violence, and conflicts and wars will constitute the bulk of the book. This is mission from the margins, including people with disabilities. The short reports from all over the world show how vulnerable humans are haunted not only by a virus-based pandemic, but by a much worse disease that cannot be escaped: the tendency to evil, which the Bible calls sin.

The second part of the book reminds the reader that an ecumenical mission also exists outside the structured ecumenical mission movement. This section will end with case studies revealing innovative expressions of mission that no longer belong to modernity but rather to postmodernity, in the sense that these new expressions occur without any connection to larger structures. They simply happen, sometimes totally outside the official structures of world mission, and sometimes within them but acting at grassroots levels and frequently unaware of the statements, recommendations, or thematic guidelines of an ecumenical world mission and evangelism.

Any reader interested in the future of mission may find the third part of the book particularly fascinating. This third section takes up some important thematic emphases on mission that will most likely be prominent in the world at least throughout the 2020s and even further in the future. The relation between mission and World Christianity is both a theological and a practical issue. Encountering world religions cannot be avoided whenever there is the question of the validity and truth claim of the Christian faith. Urbanization and digitalization are here to stay, creating quite a different milieu for world mission and evangelism than those of 1910, 1921, or 1961. A panoramic chapter enquires into the points of convergence between various mission movements in the area of a number of important cross-cutting themes, including spirituality, discipleship, evangelism, justice, racism, migration, Indigenous people, social movements, and ecology.

Does the ecumenical mission movement have a future? It certainly needs to continuously re-think its goals and methods in the same way it has done over the past century. The book closes with a chapter that tries not to summarize that which cannot be summarized, but it does manage to highlight a few of the crucial and unavoidable issues in world mission today.

This book is like a window through which the reader has a view onto a part of God's mission in the world over the past hundred years, linked with a projection forward into the near future. We hope that the view is as clear as possible. We know for a certainty that if the bi-centennial volume of the IMC and the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism is written in

2121, the view onto God's mission will look different. Perhaps those structures will no longer exist in 2121. But God and God's mission there will be.

Geneva, June 2022

Risto Jukko

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PART I

**Looking back:
100 years of structures
of mission cooperation
and unity**

CHAPTER 1

Cooperation, Christian Fellowship, and Transnational Networking: The Birth of the International Missionary Council

Dana L. Robert

On 30 September 1921, over 60 representatives of Protestant missionary societies made their way to a small mountain lake, 80 miles north of New York City. Most gathered at the “pier of the Hudson Day Line steamers” for a five-hour boat trip up the majestic river, and then from Poughkeepsie by car.¹ Some of the Europeans took the train up the Hudson from Grand Central Station. Canadians descended from the north. The group of 56 men and 5 women settled into the Mountain House, a grand “rambling” Victorian hotel, famous as the site of gatherings for peace, disarmament, and other causes dear to the hearts of its Quaker owners.

From 1–6 October, the delegates prayed and worked. They met in multiple subcommittees and rump sessions, leaving little time to enjoy the large porches, forest trails, or lakeside views for which the Mountain House was justifiably famous. Delegates included Anglicans, Baptists, Congregationalists and Lutherans, Methodists, Reformed, Disciples of Christ, and Presbyterians. Although most came from North America and Great Britain, Europeans represented the Netherlands, France, Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Switzerland. Sadly, the German mission council boycotted the meeting, and the representatives of Belgium and Denmark couldn’t get there. But to the delight of the organizers, Asian and Pacific delegates came from Australia, China, Japan, India, and Burma. Along with missionaries to Africa and a couple of white South Africans, one delegate came from Gold Coast/Ghana and one African American from Alabama. Latin America was represented only by missionaries.² Together, they wrestled with urgent issues for Protestant world mission.

1 Frank Lenwood, “The International Missionary Council at Lake Mohonk, October 1921,” *International Review of Missions* 11:1 (1922), 31.

2 For the list of delegates see *Minutes of the International Missionary Council, Lake Mohonk, New York, U.S.A., October 1–6, 1921* (1921), 4–8, WCC Internet Archives, <https://archive.org/details/wccmissionconf027/model/2up>.

The founding of the International Missionary Council (IMC) represented the self-conscious launching of a multi-ethnic, transnational network, expressed in the practical language of “cooperation”—shorthand for a theological vision of global Christian fellowship.³ In its context, the IMC was the main Protestant network, with feet planted decisively in both the global North and the global South, connecting the metropole and the colonies. On the heels of World War I, the founding of the IMC represented a major effort by Protestants to move from national and ecclesial silos to a global conversation concerning common spiritual, ecclesial, social, and political issues. On behalf of churches young and old, missionary societies grappled with the mandate system established by the Treaty of Versailles. They reckoned with the looming influence of the new League of Nations and tried to negotiate a public Christian communal vision as an alternative to the divisive nationalisms of the post-war period. Their cooperative efforts required both audacious challenges of and painful compromises with colonial power structures, as well as necessitating they negotiate serious disagreements among themselves.

As time-bound and limited as it was, the IMC, through its aspirational transnationalism, recognized publicly that Christianity was becoming a diverse yet interconnected worldwide religion. The regional mission networks that founded the IMC coalesced and functioned in relationship to each other. With mission schools, hospitals, and churches as the IMC’s material nodes, the overarching transnational network was shaped during the 1920s by its multidirectional intersections with regional and national mission councils and feedback from missions, particularly in Asia and Africa.⁴ Over the 40

3 The language of “cooperation” suffused the mission literature of the time. John R. Mott laid out the definitions and principles of cooperation in John R. Mott, “International Missionary Co-operation,” *International Review of Missions* 11:1 (1922), 43–72.

4 Traditional analysis of the IMC has proceeded along the lines of organizational history, in relation to the Protestant ecumenical movement that culminated in the founding of the World Council of Churches in 1948. This article, however, presumes that more recent tools of social history, global history, and network theory make possible a more nuanced and broader analysis of the IMC’s role as historical actor. The work of Bruno Latour on actor-network theory could be applied fruitfully to the interactive history of the IMC, its informants, conferences, global research projects, and related church councils. See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, Clarendon Lectures in Management Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Another fruitful model for analysis of the IMC is that of entanglement, the concept that each part of the network affects the other parts; when one changes, the others change in relationship and identity. See Sönke Bauck and Thomas Maier, “Entangled History,” Centre for InterAmerican Studies, Universität Bielefeld, <https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/einrichtungen/cias/publikationen/wiki/e/entangled-history.xml>. For the importance of the Paris Peace Conference and the period of the early 1920s to the meaning and method of transculturalism in global history, see Madeleine Herren, Martin Ruesch, and Christiane Sibille, *Transcultural History: Theories, Methods, Sources* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2012).

years of its existence, the IMC tackled global issues such as church-state relations, intercultural theology, the work of nongovernmental agencies, religious freedom, race and gender, theologies of religions, and ecumenism.⁵ From the vantage point of a century later, it appears that the IMC set the agenda for the unfolding ecumenical mission movement of the 20th century. In so doing, it also laid a foundation for World Christianity—the reality that Christianity in the 21st century is a multicultural, worldwide religion.⁶

In this paper, I trace the formation of the IMC from its origins at the 1910 World Missionary Conference and its Continuation Committee, through the Emergency Committee of Co-operating Missions following the World War I, to the founding years.⁷ In addition to charting the founding in 1921, I will briefly illustrate its early networking process through one particular lens still relevant today: namely, the intersection of colonialism, race, and cooperative mission practices. I argue that in its facilitation of missional fellowship and support for regional networking, the IMC took a decisive step toward global Christian community that was unmatched by other Protestant movements in the first quarter of the 20th century.

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- 5 To follow the major public discussions initiated by the IMC, see the study reports and proceedings of its centennial conferences in Jerusalem (1928), Tambaram (1938), Whitby (1947), Willingen (1952), Achimota (1958), and New Delhi (1961). The archives of the IMC are located at the World Council of Churches in Geneva, <http://archives.wcc-coe.org/Query/detail.aspx?ID=80536>. For concise treatment of some of the missiological debates in the history of the IMC, see Timothy Yates, *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
- 6 On the methods and literature of World Christianity, see Jehu Hanciles, ed., *World Christianity: History, Methodologies, Horizons* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2021); and Martha Frederiks and Dorottya Nagy, eds, *World Christianity: Methodological Considerations* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).
- 7 This article relies on a close reading of the published or typed minutes of the Continuation Committee, the Emergency Committee, and the IMC, as well as articles from the *International Review of Missions*. The Continuation Committee minutes are available through Internet Archive. Many thanks to the archivist of the World Council of Churches, Anne-Emmanuelle Tanken, for scanning and making available the minutes of the Emergency Committee. Research for the article overlaps with two larger book projects in process: Dana L. Robert, *Fractured Fellowship: Transnational Imagination and the Politics of Global Christian Community, 1919–1939*; and Judith Becker and Dana L. Robert, eds, *The Young Ecumenical Movement: Explorations in Christian Internationalism, 1895–1920s* (Brill, forthcoming).

The Globalization of Empires and the Continuation Committee, 1910–14

The age of European imperialism and technological advance made Protestant cooperation in mission both necessary and possible. Protestants had long expressed the desire to cooperate in mission.⁸ A trickle of early 19th-century Western missionaries started churches and small schools in commercial centres and remote villages. By the 1880s, amid the context of competing colonialisms and the burgeoning European diaspora, commitment to world evangelization captured the Western Christian imagination. Young people volunteered for mission postings in greater numbers than before.⁹ Railroads, steamships, and the wireless connected missionaries—and heightened a sense of simultaneity—that had previously been impossible.¹⁰ For example, the rapid increase of railroad tracks in India from 5000 miles in 1869 to 25,000 miles by the year 1900 allowed easier communication between missionary outposts.¹¹ Mission schools across Asia hosted expanding youth movements like the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) and Christian Endeavor. As the race for empire accelerated, especially after the Berlin Conference of 1884–85, competing nationalisms and modernization efforts unavoidably shaped the missionary context.¹² Missions were sucked deeper

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- 8 For older histories of the 19th- and early 20th-century proclivity toward Protestant missionary cooperation, see W. Richey Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations: A History of the International Missionary Council and Its Nineteenth Century Background*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper, 1952); Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill, ed., *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517-1948* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954).
- 9 Andrew Porter, *Religion Versus Empire?: British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700–1914* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2004); Dana L. Robert, *Occupy until I Come: A. T. Pierson and the Evangelization of the World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); Dana L. Robert, “‘Make Jesus King’ and the Evangelical Missionary Imagination, 1889–1896,” in *Global Faith and Worldly Power: Evangelical Encounters with American Empire*, ed. John Corrigan, Axel Schäfer, and Melani McAlister (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2022). William R. Hutchison called the mission movement the “moral equivalent” of empire. See William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1987).
- 10 See Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Jürgen Osterhammel, Dona Geyer, and Niels P. Petersson, *Globalization: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).
- 11 Keith Clements, *Faith on the Frontier: A Life of J. H. Oldham* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 7. The first global youth mission movement, the YMCA, initially spread around the world along the railroad lines. J. H. Oldham grew up in a railroad family in colonial India. T. Z. Koo of China was another YMCA leader from a railroad family.
- 12 The promotion of self-determining nationhood in mission schools was one of the most important political results of the entire Western mission apparatus. Nationalism was a two-edged sword in that it both validated European imperial competition and activated local resistance to it.

into an interconnected imperial world they could not avoid but desperately needed to navigate.

The World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910 responded to colonial-driven globalization by broaching the idea of an international body to connect mission societies for research and coordination of shared interests. The conference voted unanimously to form a central Continuation Committee.¹³ Regional branches would pursue goals identified in 1910. Based on the principle of a ten-year rotation among Europe, the United Kingdom, and North America, the German mission societies in 1914 offered to host the proposed 1920 conference.¹⁴ The original membership of the Continuation Committee included representatives from across Europe and North America and the major mission fields of India, China, Japan, Australasia, and Africa. The hands-on work of the Continuation Committee was done through a series of subcommittees, each of which included Germans, British, and other Europeans, and North Americans and Asians. To build regional cooperation, the Continuation Committee sent John R. Mott to Asia to organize national and regional mission councils. Simultaneously, European church leaders began organizing national mission councils of their own, modelled on the Foreign Missions Conference of North America (1893, including both US and Canadian missionary societies), Ausschuß der deutschen evangelischen Missionen (Committee of German Protestant Missions, 1894); and the Conference of British Missionary Societies (1912).

The authority of the Continuation Committee was quite limited because it was not strictly representative of all the stakeholders: it was voluntary and lacked executive functions. Individual mission societies—themselves subject to ecclesial authorities—retained full autonomy and executive power. The committee prioritized shared interests, including geographic and demographic surveys of the mission fields, standards for missionary training, and the provision of Christian literature—notably for Islamic and African contexts. It sponsored missiological reflection through its journal the *International Review of Missions*, founded in 1912. Because the international vision of missionary cooperation was based on the concept of equal and united nationhood, members of the Continuation Committee were not supposed to

13 On the World Missionary Conference of 1910, see Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids, Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2009).

14 On German participation in the World Missionary Conference and the Continuation Committee, see Jeremy Best, *Heavenly Fatherland: German Missionary Culture and Globalization in the Age of Empire* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021).

allow themselves to be drawn into their own national mission councils and local continuation committees, but to meet in the committee of the whole.¹⁵

Given the tightening colonial vise in which it operated, especially given the hulking British Empire, the Continuation Committee and its regional branches were immediately confronted with vexing issues of church-state relations beyond their ability to control. Simply put, without the permission of colonial governments, missions could not operate. Missions that had functioned in Africa and Asia prior to colonial control, for example, found themselves shut out by new overlords eager to impose their own linguistic and religio-cultural frameworks. From the beginning, freedom of religion was a major worry of the Continuation Committee, especially in Roman Catholic colonies. Geopolitics impinged on its work. So, for example, in 1912, faced with the Japanese invaders' imprisonment of Korean Christians and suppression of Christianity, the Continuation Committee drafted a letter to the Japanese Ambassador to the United States and a letter of support to missionaries in Korea. Awkwardly, the committee held special prayers "for the new Emperor of Japan, for the missionaries, and for the Korean Christians."¹⁶ The need for missions both to survive in the context of colonization and to resist oppression of local Christians remained a confounding dilemma when the Continuation Committee was confronted with the onslaught of racist laws that began South Africa's march toward an apartheid state. In 1912, the Continuation Committee indicated that "extending the Kingdom of God in the world," peace, and unity meant removing "racial misunderstanding and prejudice."¹⁷ A subcommittee in 1913 was even more explicit in addressing the Natives' Land Act of South Africa, and its causing of "widespread anxiety and sense of injustice created thereby among the native races, and to the serious effect which the Committee is informed the Act is likely to have on the native Christian Churches."¹⁸ But the best the Committee could do was

15 "Minutes of the Continuation Committee of the World Missionary Conference, III Meeting, 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th May 1911," 16. I used scanned copies of the printed minutes, 26.17.06 World Missionary Conference Continuation Committee, 1911–1921, World Council of Churches Archives, <http://archives.wcc-coe.org/Query/detail.aspx?ID=82066>.

16 "Minutes of the Continuation Committee of the World Missionary Conference, 1910, IV.—Meeting, 26th, 27th, 28th, and 30th September, and 1st October, 1912," 29, 26.17.06 World Missionary Conference Continuation Committee, 1911–1921, World Council of Churches Archives, <http://archives.wcc-coe.org/Query/detail.aspx?ID=82066>.

17 *Ibid.*, 25.

18 "Minutes of the Continuation Committee of the World Missionary Conference, 1910. The Hague, 14th–20th November 1913," 46, 26.17.06 World Missionary Conference Continuation Committee, 1911–1921, World Council of Churches Archives, Geneva, Switzerland. <http://archives.wcc-coe.org/Query/detail.aspx?ID=82066>.

to send its concerns to the “British Committee on Missions and Governments for such further enquiry and action as may be deemed necessary.”¹⁹ With no actual power of its own, nor binding actions among constituent churches, combined with naiveté about the positive aspects of British imperialism, the Continuation Committee tried to balance practicality with the defense of South African Christians. It declined to endorse the petition of the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society against the South African Natives’ Land Act, but it did encourage conversation with the Protection Society to see if anything else could be done. It walked the tightrope faced by every transnational voluntary faith-based nongovernmental organization—trying to remain above the political fray while being unavoidably sucked into public issues that affected its core constituents, namely, missionaries and Indigenous Christians.

World War I and the Emergency Committee of Co-operating Missions, 1919–21

And then in 1914 came World War I and four years of devastation across three continents. An estimated 21.5 million soldiers and civilians died, followed by an influenza epidemic that killed 25 million worldwide. Europe lay in ruins. The Continuation Committee lost its credibility across national divisions and so disbanded. After the war, many Christian leaders came to interpret the war as a damning judgement on the hypocrisy and ethical collapse of European Christianity. Some mission leaders believed the war a massive failure of the “white race,” or, in the words of London Missionary Society writer Basil Mathews, “a stupendous white civil war.”²⁰

To meet urgent post-war crises, popping up like so many heads of the hydra, the remnants of the Continuation Committee founded an Emergency Committee of Co-operating Missions. It was critically urgent that a transnational group of Christian leaders be able to represent the interests of missions and young churches at the highest level to pressure treaty negotiators to consider the rights of Christians in Asia and Africa. In addition to their own loss of credibility caused by the fact of war itself, mission leaders faced at least three daunting clusters of urgent post-war problems. First was the displacement and destruction of German missions, including the seizure

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Basil Mathews, *The Clash of Color: A Study in the Problem of Race* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1924), 20.

of mission property as the spoils of war and the permanent restriction against German missionaries from places where they had worked for many decades. Second was the bevy of church-state issues, including new colonial regulations around religious freedom, mission education, and labour policies that threatened younger churches. Post-war colonialism roared back in new forms, with the designation of mandate territories carved from the former German, Austro-Hungarian, and Turkish Empires. The new states emerging from a millennium of Muslim rule were not natural allies of either religious freedom or the presence of Protestant missionaries. Former German colonies awarded to new colonial masters, in particular the Catholic French, faced onerous restrictions on Protestant churches and schools. Exploitation of native populations accelerated under new masters and threatened to destroy young churches through forced labour, taxation, and the like.

A third set of issues concerned the meaning of nationalism itself and the need for missions to negotiate its different and confusing forms. The year 1919 saw major protest movements against oppressive colonial governments. For example, British troops fired on unarmed crowds in the Massacre of Amritsar on April 13, killing nearly 400 and wounding 1200 people. The massacre unleashed the anti-colonial movement for Indian independence led by Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress. In China, the May Fourth Movement mobilized strikes against the Treaty of Versailles over the apparent awarding of Shandong Province to the Japanese, one of the victorious allies.²¹ The March First Movement in Korea involved a nationwide protest against Japanese colonialization, resulting in the arrests of 46,000 people and the burning of dozens of churches. Issues of religious freedom, modernization, and nationalism intersected, as young mission-educated Christians in Asia and Africa protested against colonialism but were themselves pressured by anti-Christian movements. Missions were a site of struggle among Western colonialists, indigenous nationalists, and totalizing anti-Christian movements such as Soviet Communism. And, of course, Western missions were trapped in colonialism because they desired above all to continue their mission work. Without a united transnational front, everything the missionaries had worked for stood to be destroyed.

21 In more recent work on the Japanese occupation of Shandong Province, Bruce Elleman argues that secret treaties between China and Japan had already given the province back to China, but that the Chinese negotiating team at the Treaty of Versailles was ignorant of the treaties. The public airing of the issue, therefore, caused China to refuse to sign the Treaty of Versailles. See Roger E. Chapman, "Review of Bruce A. Elleman, *Wilson and China: A Revised History of the Shandong Question*," H-US-Japan, H-Net Reviews, June 2003, <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=91861059457444>.

Working with the speed born of urgency, the Committee designed a representative structure to be ratified by national and regional mission councils.²² In other words, the Emergency Committee picked up where the Continuation Committee left off, but lobbied urgently for a permanent organization that could represent missions and emerging churches around the world. The model it discussed was that of a small permanent administrative committee with periodic global conferences to discuss matters in depth. John R. Mott noted that the World's Student Christian Federation already organized itself this way.²³

Minus German representation, the Emergency Committee appealed to the victorious Allies, then negotiating the Treaty of Versailles, not to seize German mission property, and not to restrict religious freedom. J. H. Oldham, who lobbied the British foreign office, summarized the new situation well when he indicated that the centralization of power in the League of Nations, especially over the colonized mandate territories, required a transnational structure to represent mission interests. Oldham received some assurances from the British foreign office that German mission property would remain in trust, rather than being seized for reparations payments. Ideally, the global Protestant mission movement was guided by what Swedish mission leader Karl Fries and Swedish mission societies declared was the "supra-nationality" of missions.²⁴ It was agreed that each national mission or church council should pressure its own government to press for the principle that missions and younger churches be treated as beyond nationalism and ethnocentrism. So, for example, the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society lobbied the French government, the Foreign Missions Conference of North America lobbied the American delegation to the treaty negotiations, Swedish missionary societies lobbied the Swedish government. Religious freedom demanded that Christians be allowed to use vernacular languages in worship and if

22 Some regional Continuation Committees became mission councils, a number of which soon transformed themselves into councils of churches. The process of the formation of councils of churches is beyond the scope of this paper, though it is safe to say that in Asia, generally speaking, church councils grew from mission councils.

23 "Notes of Meeting of the American Members of the Emergency Committee Section minutes 5/2/20," 3. I used scanned copies of the Emergency Committee minutes. Their original location is 26.0003 folder 4, Continuation Committee and Emergency Committee of Co-operating Missions, 1910–1920, World Council of Churches Archives, <http://archives.wcc-coe.org/Query/detail.aspx?ID=64685>.

24 "Emergency Committee of Co-Operating Missions, Minutes of Meeting Held on May 2nd, 1919," 2, 26.0003, folder 4, Continuation Committee and Emergency Committee of Co-operating Missions, 1910–1920, World Council of Churches Archives, <http://archives.wcc-coe.org/Query/detail.aspx?ID=64685>.

possible schools, that Christian education be allowed in mission schools, and that missionaries from other countries and denominations be permitted in colonial territories.

One of the most interesting actions of the Emergency Committee was to coordinate replacement of the German missions. Failing in the lobbying effort to allow the immediate return of German missionaries to their posts, the Emergency Committee requested that German missionaries be put under the authority of non-German missionaries in the same organization: for example, putting German missionaries under Swiss supervision in the Basel Mission. This strategy also was refused by the governments. A third strategy was to assign temporary substitute missions to replace German missions, preferably of similar ecclesial grouping. So, for example, the Presbyterian Church of Scotland substituted for the Basel Mission in the Gold Coast. The Paris Evangelical Missionary Society and the National Missionary Society of India filled in for Germans in India. Australian missionary societies tried to cover the South Pacific.²⁵ Regional mission and church councils quickly mobilized to assign substitutes for the German missions to keep German mission property from being confiscated. The Emergency Committee tried to inform German leaders what they were doing, but of course the potential for misunderstandings was great and many Germans interpreted their actions as a takeover. The cost of this work was huge, especially among missions already stretched thin and depleted by war. To fund this operation, all missions were supposed to donate money based on a formula. North Americans gave the most money to support the orphaned missions around the world, though North American mission leaders remained frustrated that, just like at Edinburgh 1910, missions operating in Latin America or in Europe did not seem to be included in the ecumenical conversations.²⁶

The apex of the Emergency Committee work took place at its 1920 meeting in Crans, Switzerland, when delegates assembled to form the International Missionary Conference. Delegates gathered from the missionary councils and societies around the world, including, blessedly and with much thanksgiving, a few German delegates. As secretary of both the Continuation and the Emergency Committees, J. H. Oldham chaired until the conference was organized. He presented two important papers to the delegates—one on the problems of church-state relations and recommendations to deal with government restrictions of missions and the second proposing the

25 See *ibid.*, 3–12, for an inventory of German missions and discussion of which missionary society would replace them.

26 “Notes of Meeting of the American Members of the Emergency Committee, 5/2/20,” 10.

establishment of the permanent organization. Discussions ensued, punctuated by regular prayer sessions. The conference unanimously adopted nine resolutions designed to restore German missions to their mission fields. It voted for the structure of a permanent International Missionary Committee, whose purpose was to investigate and help solve problems faced by missionary societies, to help coordinate and unify mission work, to support “freedom of conscience,” to unite Christians for “international and interracial relations” and protect the weak, to publish the *International Review of Missions*, and to call worldwide missionary conferences.²⁷ Immediate tasks included freeing missions from state restrictions, studying mission education around the world in light of colonial pressures on it, providing Christian literature for mission fields, studying political questions that affected missions, and studying social problems that affected missions, especially “industrialism in Asia.”²⁸ The conference rounded off by considering specific crises. Unfinished business in the Near East included the cooperative meetings interrupted by the war and the crises of a post-Ottoman political situation. The committee sent John R. Mott to China and to the Near East to meet in conference with mission leaders. It remonstrated against “restrictions on missionary work in Madagascar and Annan.”²⁹ Finally, it referred its organizational proposals to national and regional missionary councils, and through them to the missionary societies, in hopeful anticipation that they would approve the plans for a permanent missionary council.³⁰

Post-war Fellowship and the International Missionary Council 1921

And so, on 1 October 1921, the representatives of missionary societies and councils that had approved the plan of cooperation descended on the Mohonk Mountain House. This venerable hotel had been the site of the 1912 meeting of the Continuation Committee. It was also the site of the 1913 meeting of the World’s Student Christian Federation, chaired by John R. Mott. The conference venue thus represented continuity with the hopes and dreams of the pre-war period. With John R. Mott as the opening chair, and

27 “Minutes of International Missionary Meeting, held at Crans near Geneva, June 22-28, 1920,” 14–15.

28 *Ibid.*, 17.

29 *Ibid.*, 18.

30 *Ibid.*, 19.

the singing of “All People that on Earth Do Dwell,” poignant memories of Edinburgh 1910 no doubt filled the participants.³¹

The Lake Mohonk founding meeting must be interpreted in light of the larger post-war movement toward a public theology of fellowship.³² Division, death, and disunity haunted the post-war period. To recreate and resume fellowship was a necessity for the rebuilding of Europe. Protestant church leaders claimed “fellowship” as a core ethical imperative of the post-war period. German mission leader Julius Richter, who had been active in the Continuation Committee before the war, named the chief challenge: “The World War broke so many threads. These must be joined together again by patient work.”³³

The IMC was one of several major Protestant transnational fellowship initiatives, each with its own particular purpose. Two others, with overlapping interests, must be mentioned in this context.

The first transnational fellowship movement to visibly seek unity after the war was the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches. In August 1914, the outbreak of World War I had broken up its founding meeting in Constance, Germany. Participants fled to avoid being trapped behind German lines. It was fitting, therefore, that after the war, it was the first documented international church gathering to include Germans. On 1 October 1919, 60 church leaders from Great Britain, the United States, Belgium, Italy, and France met in The Hague. In a historic move that opened the healing process, the German delegation took moral responsibility for the invasion of Belgium in 1914. Archbishop Nathan Söderblom of Sweden described it thus:

With aching hearts, losses in their families, and destitution in their nations, and with understandable distrust evoked by opposition and falsehood, they still joined together in saying ‘Our Father’ and ‘Forgive us our trespasses’ . . . It was once more the Evangelical church, weakened though it was by discord and rightly criticized

31 This was the opening hymn at Edinburgh 1910, with Mott also in the chair.

32 Post-war fellowship movements are the major subject of the work in progress by Dana L. Robert, *Fractured Fellowship*. In addition to the movements referenced in this paper, see Charlotte Methuen’s exploration of the theme of fellowship at the 1920 Lambeth Conference. See Charlotte Methuen, “Nationalism, Internationalism and Ecumenism at the 1920 Lambeth Conference,” forthcoming in Becker and Robert, *The Young Ecumenical Movement*.

33 Julius Richter, quoted in G. K. A. Bell, ed., *The Stockholm Conference: The Official Report of the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work Held in Stockholm, 19–30 August 1925* (London: Oxford, 1926), 509.

for its schisms, which was the first community or group of people in the world to bring together responsible men and women from both camps after the Great War.³⁴

To Christian leaders, the post-war gathering of churches was a means of putting a “soul” into the secular “body” of nations united in peace.³⁵ They committed themselves to Christian fellowship among nations as a foundation for permanent peace.³⁶ The Alliance called for the resumption of German missions and affirmed the League of Nations. During 1920, leaders in the Alliance organized branches throughout Europe and North America. The punitive treaty against Germany, and the failure of the US Senate to ratify the League of Nations, shocked and dismayed them. Their magazine *World Friendship* began printing their common declaration in every issue, “We believe in the Power of Friendship to establish right relationships between the nations and to secure universal peace,” and “Friendship is based upon Justice.”³⁷

A second major Protestant movement to enact fellowship as a public theology after World War I was the World’s Student Christian Federation. Given that the armies of Europe were full of students, the end of the war saw hundreds of thousands of students in crisis, homeless, and traumatized by their experiences. Founded in 1895, the World’s Student Christian Federation linked national student Christian movements, mostly in Europe, Asia, and North America.³⁸ Helping and healing students became its major post-war task. The first post-war meeting of the officers, in April 1919, took place at the bedside of international leader John R. Mott in a French hospital. Mott

34 Nathan Söderblom—Nobel Lecture: “The Role of the Church in Promoting Peace,” *Nobelprize.org*, 4 December 2012, https://www.nobelprize.org/search/?s=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nobelprize.org%2Fnobel_prizes%2Fpeace%2F+laureates%2F1930%2FS%C3%B6derblom-lecture.html. Material on Söderblom and the theology of fellowship is taken from Dana L. Robert, “Protestant State Theologians of Fellowship: From Christendom to Ecumenism in Postwar Europe,” in Becker and Robert, *The Young Ecumenical Movement*. Material on the World’s Alliance for Friendship and the World’s Student Christian Federation after World War I are taken from Dana L. Robert, “Finding Fellowship: The Search for Transnational Christian Community during the 1920s,” Public Lecture at the Conference Nationalism and Internationalism in the Young Ecumenical Movement, 1895–1920s, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 7 October 2020 (online).

35 Bengt Sundkler, *Nathan Söderblom: His Life and Work* (Lund: Gleerups, 1968), 218–19.

36 “The World Alliance at the Hague,” *World Friendship* 1:1 (April 1920), 13.

37 Frontispiece, *World Friendship* 1:3 (June 1920).

38 See Johanna M. Selles, *The World Student Christian Federation, 1895–1925: Motives, Methods, and Influential Women* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2011); Philip Potter and Thomas Wieser, *Seeking and Serving the Truth: The First Hundred Years of the World Student Christian Federation* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997). The name of the World’s Student Christian Federation was changed to the World Student Christian Federation in 1960.

lay recovering from the influenza.³⁹ German leaders did not attend the first post-war meeting, but Vice-Chairman Zhengting Wang attended, as he was attending the Paris Peace Conference on behalf of China. Thus, an international gathering met at Mott's bedside, determined to relaunch outreach among students.

Upon visiting Eastern Europe in 1920, World's Student Christian Federation leader Ruth Rouse realized that the students of Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland were literally starving. Her appeal for money to feed, clothe, and encourage self-help among them launched European Student Relief. Famine, revolution, earthquakes, and other disasters kept European Student Relief going until 1925, supported by contributions from students in North America, Australia, and other countries that had escaped the worst. Based on the foyer model of friendship and hospitality, it served 25 million meals over a four-year period.⁴⁰ In Russia during famine, the program gave a daily meal to 31,000 students. Demobilized Polish soldiers were literally stripped of their army uniforms and left shivering in rags until clothed by European Student Relief. The efforts of European Student Relief helped create student cooperatives for German Economic Self-help. Students from all over the world served as volunteers at their own expense in foreign countries. These student missions brought spiritual friendship and physical relief to former enemies. As Ruth Rouse recalled,

This proved a prime factor in breaking down racial, religious and social difficulties in each country. Poland, for example, had at one time a Danish Field Representative with British, Canadian, American and Australian helpers, many of them Rhodes Scholars from Oxford, a French woman doctor from Paris and a Swedish woman student who spoke six or seven languages . . . If E.S.R. saved 500,000 students from hunger, it saved 500,000 more from national selfishness and international ignorance and prejudice.⁴¹

Some of the strategies students used to promote peace and healing included welcoming the stranger, holding conferences that actively cultivated cross-cultural friendship, sending delegations on pilgrimages of friendship, and providing physical relief by students to needy students in some countries to others.

39 Ruth Rouse, *The World's Student Christian Federation: A History of the First Thirty Years* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1948), 213.

40 *Ibid.*, 251.

41 *Ibid.*, 260.

Amidst the Christian organizations seeking post-war fellowship, the IMC carried a unique responsibility: missions were the primary Protestant network with feet in both the metropole and colonies. In 1921, the vast majority of the world's Christians were of European extraction. Vigorous Protestant churches existed largely in Northern Europe and North America, and in diasporic pockets throughout colonial Protestant empires. But as hopeful conference participants were aware, the World Christian population was growing. The founding of the IMC thus represented both the Eurocentric background of Protestantism in 1921 and a decisive step toward a multicultural future. Protestant Allied or neutral nations provided most of the delegates, yet the plenary meeting proceeded without recrimination against former enemies and lamented the empty chairs of the German brethren as a "calamity."

Africans and Asians constituted a minority of delegates, but they strongly pressed the interests of what in the 1920s were called the "younger churches." Commenting on their important leadership—and speaking more from aspiration than reality—Georgina Gollock, associate editor of the *International Review of Missions*, wrote that Asian and African delegates signified "a new day was dawning, and that in world-wide missionary partnership the emphasis was shifting from the West."⁴² The day when cooperation was a matter of "home forces on behalf of passive converts abroad" was past.⁴³ Instead, said Gollock, cooperation meant "working with . . . the peoples of Africa and the East."⁴⁴

From a contemporary perspective, the group that constituted the IMC does not represent the full diversity of contemporary World Christianity. However, to voice hopes for multiracial and global multicultural partnership was a stance far ahead of most Westerners. Those who physically gathered at Lake Mohonk experienced the founding conference as deeply spiritual and emotional. Frank Lenwood of the London Missionary Society expressed what the gathering meant to those present. He wrote,

What was it that made the Conference worthwhile and sent us away convinced that, if we all were to die in the next two years, we must leave death-bed messages to tell our successors to meet at the Council next arranged? It was the discovery that we each need the help of the rest if we are to do our Master's will. At Mohonk we were members one of another personally, and we were members one of another corporately, each representing thousands of home supporters, hundreds of missionaries

42 G. A. Gollock, "Fifteen Years' Growth: A Study in Missionary Co-Operation," *International Review of Missions* 15:1 (1926), 69.

43 *Ibid.*, 58.

44 *Ibid.*

and thousands of the native Church. To be one in spirit, to be one in Christ, is more than all outward co-operations and resolutions. These secondary things will inevitably follow. What we cannot live without is the communion of saints.⁴⁵

Spiritual power pervaded expectation of the challenging work ahead, even for proven organizers like J. H. Oldham, who was elected secretary of the council. Speaking of the “new beginning” that inspired the preparatory meeting at Crans, Switzerland, he recalled, “Christ’s presence as the source and secret of the unforgettable fellowship . . . the seeing of fresh light on the path, the sense of great things waiting in the future, the consciousness of an open door, the call of God to be of good courage and to go forward—these things cannot be put on paper but will be an abiding influence.”⁴⁶ Lenwood wrote of the almost mystical nature of the commitment to cooperation:

The Council was nowhere more co-operative and united than in its prayer. It is an anxious thing to hold such an international meeting. Men may cross the sea, and at the end accomplish little more than a moral picnic. . . . For myself, 48 hours after we had met, I knew that our prayers were answered, when in the intercession meeting of Sunday afternoon men and women opened their hearts before God. We were one in Christ, and His Spirit was around and over us.⁴⁷

Clearly, for those who had worked and waited since the World Missionary Conference of 1910, the founding of the IMC was a profoundly hopeful moment. The spiritual grounding was deep because the challenges they faced were huge.

The visceral need to be part of each other, and to embody the reunion of Christian community, found expression in the charter of the organization: It stated that “the successful working of the International Missionary Council is entirely dependent on the gift from God of the spirit of fellowship, mutual understanding and desire to co-operate.”⁴⁸ Instead of being content with a mere “committee,” the conference formed the International Missionary *Council* to better represent its worldwide basis of collaboration. An early

45 Lenwood, “The International Missionary Council at Lake Mohonk,” 42.

46 J. H. Oldham, “A New Beginning of Missionary Co-Operation,” *International Review of Missions* 8:4 (1920), 494.

47 Lenwood, “The International Missionary Council at Lake Mohonk,” 40.

48 Constitution of the International Missionary Council, I. Preamble, in “Minutes of the International Missionary Council, Lake Mohonk New York, U.S.A., October 1–6, 1921,” 34, 26.17.06 World Missionary Conference Continuation Committee, 1911-1921, World Council of Churches Archives, <http://archives.wcc-coe.org/Query/detail.aspx?ID=82066>.

history of the IMC summarized its ultimate goals, as they were tweaked and sharpened during the late 1920s. The major duties were to “stimulate thinking and investigation on questions related to the mission and expansion of Christianity in all the world,” to help “coordinate the activities of the national missionary organizations and Christian councils of the different countries” including acting when needed, to unite “in support of freedom of conscience and religion and of missionary liberty,” to unite Christians “in seeking justice in international and interracial relations, to publish the *International Review of Missions*, and to hold world missionary conferences.”⁴⁹ Within a decade, the IMC consisted of 24 missionary and Christian councils. Some of these, such as the ones in India, China, and Japan, began after the Edinburgh 1910 conference as local continuation committees, became missionary councils, and finally developed into councils of churches.⁵⁰

Essentially, the IMC was the apex of a networked conversation engaging national and regional councils of churches throughout the world, as well as key Protestant leaders. The IMC pioneered a decentralized model of cooperation for common goals that included both older established Western denominations and emerging young churches in Asia, Africa, and the Americas.⁵¹ The IMC pursued multiple creative paths for mission research. It sponsored investigative teams in Asia and Africa, wrote reports, engaged in advocacy both through the executive and through national and regional councils, and held international conferences that engaged in major interfaith and intercultural issues globally for the first time. The IMC defended religious freedom, sponsored Christian literature and literacy movements, and negotiated with colonial governments on behalf of missions and young churches. In its first five years alone, it hosted transnational networked conversations about shared missionary training, the use of local languages, cooperative Christian

49 “The International Missionary Council: Its History, Purpose, and Activities” (London, New York: n.p., 1934), 10–11. These goals, revised after the Jerusalem Conference of 1928, continued those first outlined at the meeting in Crans, 1920. The 1934 history also describes the establishment of permanent offices in London and New York City with three executive secretaries (Oldham, Paton, Warnshuis) and a chair (Mott) who travelled widely, as well as the existence of three separate fully funded departments. *Ibid.*, 12–13.

50 For example, Oldham referenced the development from a regional Continuation Committee to mission council to council of churches in India in J. H. Oldham, “Five Conferences in India,” *International Review of Missions* 12:2 (1923), 262–76.

51 I would argue that the model of cooperation pursued by the IMC and the network of mission and church councils is more relevant to multicultural mission practices in the postmodern era than the later centralized organic unity model pursued in the 1940s. When the IMC refused to integrate into the World Council of Churches in 1948, it was partly because the decentralized networking model and broad theological basis represented in regional church networks would have been discarded.

literature in the vernacular, education, colonial power and unjust treaties, rural poverty and agricultural production, the opium trade, colonial forced labour practices, the rise of Indigenous churches, religious freedom, industrialization, racism, the education and wellbeing of girls, the roles of women in churches around the world, and Christianity's relationship with Islam.⁵²

Cooperation, Race, and Colonialism

The complexity of historically evaluating the IMC becomes apparent through analyzing one set of entanglements that formed the transnational networking process—that of cooperation, colonialism, and race. Mission thinkers observed that the post-war context sparked a crisis of race relations. Historian Basil Mathews of the London Missionary Society, for example, described how millions of Asians and Africans had helped the European war effort, only to be betrayed by the “prodigious expansion of the domination of the ‘inevitable white man’ who ‘farms the world.’”⁵³ Referring to racial upheavals around the world, Mathews noted that “the sheer force of the facts of this world clash of colour . . . drives in on us the conviction that no generation has ever been confronted by an issue so world-wide in its range and so decisive for good or ill for the future of man's life on the planet.”⁵⁴ The only solution to “race hatred,” according to Mathews, was equality, justice, and “World Community created by the Spirit of Christ.”⁵⁵

The Continuation Committee had tagged race as a problem in its 1912 meeting in reference to removing “racial misunderstanding and prejudice” so that peace could reign among the nations of Europe. Clearly the growing antagonism between the UK and Germany was on everyone's mind.⁵⁶ By the time the IMC met in 1921, the issue of race had moved to the forefront of mission problems. A barrage of new colonial laws including hut taxes, forced labour, land grabs, and restrictions on vernacular worship and education threatened Christian work around the world. In 1919, Japanese negotiators at the Paris Peace Conference asked for an amendment to the Treaty of Versailles guaranteeing racial equality among nations, but it was rejected,

52 Georgina Gollock mentions all these issues in “Fifteen Years Growth.”

53 Mathews, *Clash of Color*, 3.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid., 169.

56 “Minutes of the Continuation Committee of the World Missionary Conference, 1910. IV.—Meeting, 26th, 27th, 28th, and 30th September, and 1st October 1912,” 25.

thereby alienating Japanese Christian leaders who had committed themselves to world fellowship. In the United States, membership in the Ku Klux Klan surged after the war, and anti-immigrant sentiment would soon result in anti-Asian exclusion acts. At the Mohonk meeting in 1921, the IMC therefore tasked its executive to study “the questions involved in racial relationships as these bear on missionary work,” including asking its officers to connect with people working on the subject “in different countries.”⁵⁷

During the 1920s, the IMC problematized race relations as a core issue for Christian mission. From a contemporary perspective, the efforts of the committee had significant limitations. Mission leaders operated within a framework of European colonialism that assumed a paternalistic posture of “trusteeism,” of being senior partners speaking “for” colonized persons. Most assumed white privilege. They were classic liberal third culture elites—persons with extensive cross-cultural experience and relationships who related to each other better than to ordinary church members in their own countries. Nevertheless, at great expense and effort, the IMC sought substantial feedback from local mission contexts. It created the space for an extended conversation on Christianity, race relations, and racism that profoundly impacted ecumenical mission theory and practice. Over the course of the decade, some mission leaders’ thinking evolved from the challenges of interracial relationships to condemnations of racism in mission work. Some challenged the intersection of capitalism, race, and colonialism itself. Analyses ranged from naming specific laws or attitudes as damaging to race relations, to seeing racism as a global systemic evil and denial of Christian values.⁵⁸ Obviously missionary opinion was not uniform on these matters, and the embeddedness in colonial structures led to glaring blind spots and compromises with power.

During the 1920s, the IMC’s work at the intersection of cooperation, colonialism, and race developed along multiple lines: collaborative research projects, missiological conversation via the *International Review of Missions*, direct advocacy, and conference discussions and official reports designed to change public opinion.

57 “Minutes of the International Missionary Council 1921,” 56.

58 American mission leaders, in particular, were concerned about issues of race and mission. The women’s missionary education movement commissioned Robert E. Speer, *Of One Blood: A Short Study of the Race Problem* (New York: Council of Women for Home Missions and Missionary Education Movement, 1924). Speer’s longer work was *Race and Race Relations: A Christian View of Human Contacts* (New York: Fleming Revell, 1924). The classic of American missionary thinking on racism was Edmund Soper, *Racism, a World Issue* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1947).

Collaborative research projects

In the first of these paths, research initiatives cultivated feedback from missionaries and to a lesser extent from Christian leaders around the world. The founding of the IMC coincided with the rise of sociology and anthropology as research disciplines, and the IMC sponsored empirical and statistical research on race. IMC chair John R. Mott raised funds from John D. Rockefeller and in 1921 launched the Institute of Social and Religious Research as a department of the IMC.⁵⁹ In Africa, North American missionary councils and IMC leaders cooperated with the Phelps Stokes Commission, which in 1920–21 toured African schools and recommended educational policies for east, south, and central Africa—all of course, under the assumptions of colonial trusteeship over “subject races.”⁶⁰ Globalization through colonialism meant that problems in one corner of the world, such as illiteracy and collapse of rural life, rippled across the network. Similarly, the systemic and global dimensions of racial divisions and prejudice were soon apparent to IMC-connected researchers, even if they felt powerless or unwilling to tackle their colonial roots. Global modernization and secularization caused great handwringing and lament of missionaries, even as the missionary movement piggybacked on them.

Missiological conversation via the *International Review of Missions*

In addition to empirical research, a second way the IMC addressed issues of race was through vigorous discussion in the pages of the *International Review of Missions*. These discussions included analyses of the nature of race itself, of the relationship among race, culture, and religions, and of mission policy relating to race. In 1921, for example, the Anglican missionary Arthur Shearly Cripps published his important article “An Africa of the Africans,” in which he defended the cultural integrity of African self-development in

59 The 1934 history of the IMC called the Institute of Social and Religious Research a “department” of the IMC. For a brief discussion of the Institute, see Gina A. Zurlo, “The Social Gospel, Ecumenical Movement, and Christian Sociology: The Institute of Social and Religious Research,” *The American Sociologist* 46, 177–193 (2015). <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12108-014-9231-z>.

60 The Foreign Missions Conference of North America co-sponsored the first Phelps-Stokes Commission research on mission education in colonial Africa. J. H. Oldham of the IMC helped the commission gain the cooperation of European missions. See the commission report, Thomas Jesse Jones, *Education in Africa* (New York: Phelps-Stokes Fund, 1922). For a contemporary critical historical study of the commission and its recommendations for industrial education, see Andrew E. Barnes, *Global Christianity and The Black Atlantic: Tuskegee, Colonialism, and the Shaping of African Industrial Education*. Studies in World Christianity (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2017).

Southern Rhodesia by protesting the reduced allocation of land to the Shona and Matabele and advocating for the African right to both individual and communal economic development. Cripps described the danger in starkly racial (and anti-German) terms “of native reserves being used to subserve a sort of Anglo-Saxon imperial efficiency programme, a programme that makes for Prussianization of sorts—for the imposition of Kultur or its equivalent upon a weaker coloured race by a stronger white race.”⁶¹ In his article, Cripps condemned the schemes of European capitalists seeing African land and labour as solutions to their own lack of both. Although he did not challenge the imperialism that divided African land in the first place, he uttered this important vision in his conclusion: “I want a racially self-conscious African not to feel himself homeless in a colonized Africa.”⁶² Another interesting angle on the intersection of race and colonialism in the 1919 the *International Review of Missions* was by Indian Christian leader K. T. Paul, on “How Missions Denationalize Indians.” In this pioneer piece on inculturation, Paul defended the importance of Indian folklore, music, poetry, and drama. He advocated for Indigenous Indian hymnody and condemned the alien nature of English imports.⁶³ Paul pointed out the deep well of Indian spirituality and communal responsibility as strengths for Indian Christianity, and he condemned the imposition of foreign modes of individualistic capitalism and the missionary boarding school that took children out of their cultures at a young age. Although not explicitly about race, Paul’s article demonstrated the parameters of the dialogue the IMC encouraged—the publication by a South Asian Christian on the relationship of his own cultural identity to the missionary project, including criticism of Western economic and cultural systems that served to alienate Indian Christians from their own heritage.

The tension between the idealistic Christian transcendence of race and the practical need to take race seriously played itself out in the pages of the *International Review of Missions*. So, for example, in 1922, General Secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society John H. Ritson published “The Bible: An Unfettered Missionary.” Bible translation had always been at the heart of Protestant missions. Ritson applied the lens of race to the core act of biblical interpretation and argued that each race could interpret the Bible according to its own racial lenses. As white people faced increased racial limitations in

61 Arthur Shearly Cripps, “An Africa of the Africans,” *International Review of Missions* 10:1 (1921), 105.

62 *Ibid.*, 109.

63 K. T. Paul, “How Missions Denationalize Indians,” *International Review of Missions* 8:4 (1919), 103.

being able to share the gospel in revolutionary situations, the Bible retained its universal appeal: “Once again the Bible rises above all race differences, not by ignoring them but by being just human. White, yellow, black, have one heart, and to that one heart the Bible speaks. To the white the Bible ‘thinks white’; to the yellow it ‘thinks yellow’; to the black it ‘thinks black.’”⁶⁴ Ritson’s discussion prefigured the translatability thesis of Lamin Sanneh and Andrew Walls. He made the argument at a point in time when Indigenous churches were arising around the world and local prophets were interpreting the Bible according to their own cultural norms. He wrote,

But the Bible is not only the most translatable book but it is the book which suffers least in translation. Further, when once it is translated it speaks to every human being in his mother tongue at any moment when he is free and willing to hear. When a man has the Bible, he need not wait for the services of the House of God in order to hear the truth . . . The Bible is free from the limitations of language which beset the missionary. There is no prison for the word of God.⁶⁵

In 1923, the *International Review of Missions* published a searing article on race by Daniel Fleming, then professor of missions at Union Theological Seminary, where he mentored generations of progressive missionaries and Indigenous Christian leaders. In the article “Relative Racial Capacity,” Fleming demolished the popular 19th-century idea of racial classifications that suffused turn-of-the-century “scientific” literature. He noted, “Just as we have given up the idea of the divine right of kings, and are giving up the age-long conception of male superiority, we will very likely have to give up the flattering delusion of decided racial superiority.”⁶⁶ He further argued for the treatment of people as individuals rather than as objects of group classification, and that race itself was a social construct. Mining the insights of contemporary psychology and employing probability curves, Fleming urged missionaries to recognize that all races were capable of leadership and that whites had no special capacity for it. Taken in context, Fleming’s article heaved a broadside at colonial racist stereotypes that were shaping the kind of education, rights, and services allocated to Africans and Asians

64 John H. Ritson, “The Bible: An Unfettered Missionary,” *International Review of Missions* 11:3 (1922), 399.

65 *Ibid.*, 396.

66 Daniel J. Fleming, “Relative Racial Capacity,” *International Review of Missions* 12:1 (1923), 118. See Fleming’s important book on world fellowship and mission practices, published by the YMCA and distributed widely among missionaries. Daniel J. Fleming, *Whither Bound in Missions* (New York: Association Press, 1925).

under colonialism. Clearly, mission policy should provide training and equal opportunities for persons of all races.

Direct advocacy

In addition to vigorous discussion about the implications of race for missions, a third category of intersection among cooperation, colonialism, and race addressed by the IMC was direct advocacy. A chief purpose of the founding the council was to form a united front of missionary societies against government policies hurtful to missions and to “younger churches.” Direct resolutions and lobbying covered a wide range of issues with regard to race. Minutes from 1921 show passage of a remonstrance against forced labour on plantations in East Africa, notably in Kenya colony.⁶⁷ Forced labour decimated young Christian communities, eviscerated missions, and undercut Christian family life. Another resolution was passed urging friendship and mutual visits with East Asians to promote brotherhood and “transcend national and racial limitations.”⁶⁸ Given the rising prejudice against Asian people in the West, encouraging visitation embodied the mutuality of Christian community. By 1922, one huge racial issue that precipitated resolutions and lobbying was when francophone colonialists denied the use of vernacular languages in worship and education.⁶⁹ This issue cut to the heart of Protestant and Indigenous Christian identity. The issue of language was also linked to the supposed “problem” of independent missionaries. The Protestant missionaries of Congo wrote to the IMC appealing for help—in all likelihood referring to the political crisis caused by the independent ministry of Simon Kimbangu in Congo and the brutal Belgian crackdown against him and his followers.⁷⁰ At the same time, the 1923 IMC meeting supported the rights of African Americans and American-educated Africans to serve as missionaries. In their fear of independence movements, colonial governments were denying permission for Black missionaries. The IMC researched this topic, heard testimony from Mozambican missionary Kamba Simango,⁷¹ and passed resolutions supporting the rights of “Negro” missionaries.⁷² Another ongoing area

67 “Minutes of the International Missionary Council, 1921,” 15–16.

68 *Ibid.*, 45.

69 “Minutes of the Committee of the International Missionary Council, Canterbury, England, July 27-30, 1922” (London: Edinburgh House, 1922), 20.

70 *Ibid.*

71 “Minutes of the International Missionary Council, Oxford, England, July 9-16, 1923” (London: Edinburgh House, 1923), 14.

72 *Ibid.*, 35-36.

of concern that involved race was the decades-long effort by the IMC to provide Christian literature in both vernacular and Western languages. Without Christian literature, there could be no national churches or racial solidarity. Although the production of Indigenous literature and art do not on the surface seem like racial issues, a longitudinal study of the IMC would show how over several decades this important work even included conducting writing workshops to encourage Indigenous authors.

Conference discussions and official reports

Finally, official IMC publications tried to shape public opinion and church policies regarding issues of race and of racism. In 1924, the study of racial relationships commissioned by the IMC in 1921 was published both in the US and the UK as *Christianity and the Race Problem*. Written by IMC secretary and editor of the *International Review of Missions* J. H. Oldham, it quickly went through multiple editions. Oldham's report tracked the evolving post-war recognition of race as a central concern for Christianity as a worldwide religion. He began by juxtaposing the global reality of "white domination" with the ideals of Christian community and asked how "different races" might "live together in peace and harmony."⁷³ In considering the meaning of race, he argued that biological race did not exist, God plays no favourites, and all persons are of "inestimable worth."⁷⁴ With no fundamental differences among races, then, the contemporary "demand for racial equality is essentially a protest against the apparent inequality and injustice of the existing order of things. It is a challenge to privilege, a revolt against supremacy and domination, a claim to equal rights and opportunities."⁷⁵ Having established the "truth" of racial equality, Oldham identified concrete racial problems in various colonial contexts. Oldham bravely followed where his research led him. So, for example, contrary to the widespread anti-Asian sentiment in the US, he considered multidirectional immigration—including Asians moving to Western countries—as a matter of fairness and reciprocity, given the history of white migration through colonialism. In a chapter on the problems of interracial marriage, he concluded that "such marriages" could contribute to "mutual understanding between different races" and thus to world harmony.⁷⁶

73 J. H. Oldham, *Christianity and the Race Problem*, 8th ed. (London: Student Christian Movement, 1926), 5.

74 *Ibid.*, 19.

75 *Ibid.*, 85.

76 *Ibid.*, 158.

Relative to mission policy, Oldham deemed race vitally important and argued that the gifts of each race were needed for the founding of God's kingdom. He cited philosopher Josiah Royce's idea of the "universal community of the loyal,"⁷⁷ a concept of communal fellowship better known later as the concept of the "beloved community."⁷⁸ Oldham's study affirmed boldly that Christian fellowship could overcome racial differences, and that true friendship between people of different races witnessed to the kingdom. Christian mission, therefore, was a chief means of "bringing about understanding between different races."⁷⁹ In defiance of segregationist and apartheid movements, he wrote, "in a Church which is conscious of its mission to the world there can be no exclusion or separation on the ground of race."⁸⁰

Despite a paternalistic tone throughout much of the book, the conclusion affirmed that a worldwide Christianity was characterized by diversity in unity, made possible by God. His closing words could have been easily written a century later: "As the parts of the world are seen now to be inter-related and inter-dependent, so only a Church whose members are drawn from all peoples can truly serve the world."⁸¹ This world church did not call individuals to leave behind what made them unique. It rather "takes up these differences into its life in order that that life may become richer, more varied and more complete . . . The fundamental equality of those who all alike depend on God for everything . . . is of the essence of the fellowship."⁸²

With Oldham's official report deeming racial equality essential to worldwide Christian community, it was a short step to making "race relations" the subject of major investigation for the first IMC conference in Jerusalem, 1928. Numerous speakers identified racism as a global problem for world missions, including anti-immigration laws, segregation, and racial prejudice. In fact, outreach across racial boundaries and ministry to immigrants, combined with the naming of missionary and white colonial racism by the speakers, made it clear that the West itself was a mission field.⁸³

77 Ibid., 258.

78 See Josiah Royce, *The Problem of Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1913). Royce's term "beloved community" was later made famous by Martin Luther King, Jr, and has become a popular metaphor for the kingdom community of racial equality, peace, and justice.

79 Oldham, *Christianity and the Race Problem*, 247.

80 Ibid., 262.

81 Ibid., 264.

82 Ibid.

83 See *The Christian Mission in the Light of Race Conflict. Report of the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council, Jerusalem 1928, March 2-April 8, 1928*. Vol. 4 (London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1928).

Conclusion: The International Missionary Council, Transnational Fellowship, and Foundations for World Christianity

At a time when Christianity was largely a European religion, the founders of the IMC envisioned Christianity as a worldwide faith, made up of cooperating equal and different groups, animated by the promise of the kingdom of God. Although world evangelization was the first stated objective of the missionary movement, the IMC embraced what by the late 1920s was called the “comprehensive approach” to missions—the assumption that the church must engage the collective, including economics and social relations, as well as individual salvation.”⁸⁴

The founders of the IMC dreamed of God’s kingdom of equality and justice far in advance of ordinary church people, but they also functioned within the status quo of Western colonialism. The IMC reflected the biases of its larger context—an era of Western political power, gender biases, and racial hierarchies.⁸⁵ The non-Christian peoples of Asia and Africa did not distinguish between colonial officials and mission leaders who sent investigative commissions, held big conferences, and issued pronouncements about evangelization. So, for instance, while the Jerusalem 1928 IMC conference was being held, and even made racism a major subject of discussion, locals—both Muslims and Christians—protested the proceedings.⁸⁶ In China and India, the two biggest mission fields, independence movements were also anti-Christian movements. Any global organization that represented Christian missionaries—even though it cultivated local leadership—was considered a tool of Western colonialism.

As a transnational network of regional and national Christian networks, the IMC cultivated spaces in which mission thinkers from around the world could reflect on important issues and process feedback from local contexts; its views were always evolving. Its liberal internationalism meant that its mode of operation included research, discussion, education, and advocacy. Increasingly,

84 John Flett, “From Jerusalem to Oxford: Mission as the Foundation and Goal of Ecumenical Social Thought,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 27:1 (January 2003), 18.

85 In the same article in which British delegate Frank Lenwood described in glowing terms the impressive speeches of the African and African American delegates at the IMC founding, he wrote patronizingly, “In God’s family we cannot do without the child races. They see Him more clearly, more cleverly, more deeply than the rest of us. So there—do you see?—a great deal of the colour question goes by the board!” Lenwood, “The International Missionary Council at Lake Mohonk,” 41.

86 Deecana Ferree Womack, “Islam and Early Ecumenical Thought: Protestant Internationalism in the Arab Middle East,” Becker and Robert, *The Young Ecumenical Movement*.

it positioned itself as a site for worldwide Christian analysis and critique of competing internationalisms, including secularization, fascism, communism, and capitalism.⁸⁷ To fully comprehend the legacy of the International Missionary Council a century later requires researching its entanglement with other networks, partnerships, and contexts. Simply put, over its 40 years of existence, no other Protestant network engaged such a wide range of urgent issues that emanated from the grassroots of emerging World Christianity.

87 The IMC has scarcely been analyzed in relation to the wider scholarship on early 20th-century internationalism. The Christian internationalism it represented is kin to democratic liberal internationalism, as opposed to secular, socialist, revolutionary, or hegemonic tendencies. For helpful background on internationalism, see Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2013); Abigail Green and Vincent Viaene, eds, *Religious Internationals in the Modern World: Globalization and Faith Communities since 1750* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

CHAPTER 2

The International Missionary Council: From Lake Mohonk 1921 to New Delhi 1961

Raimundo C. Barreto Jr

The formation of the International Missionary Council (IMC) in 1921 was one of the most impactful outcomes of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh (1910), and a direct outgrowth of the conference's Continuation Committee. The IMC became a visible sign of how ingrained the 20th-century ecumenical movement was in the modern missionary movement and of the extent to which mission remained crucial in the formation of the 20-century ecumenical institutions. The IMC filled the institutional gap that would be closed with the formation of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948. Seen from that perspective, its merging into the WCC structure in 1961 was a logical development. This chapter offers a brief overview of the IMC journey, paying particular attention to the important role the "younger churches" (global South churches, in general) played in revising the understanding of Christian mission in the course of the 20th century. It also looks at how that shift in understanding impacted the relationship between those churches, which were increasingly becoming self-sustaining, and "the missionary bodies in the West," whose relations with the colonial powers could no longer be overlooked.¹

Edinburgh 1910 and the Roots of the International Missionary Council

While international missionary conferences began to be convened as early as 1854, the World Missionary Conference of 1888 in London, planned to celebrate the centenary of modern Protestant missions, was a landmark in the journey leading to Edinburgh 1910.² At the centenary conference of 1888, a

1 Lesslie Newbigin, "Mission to Six Continents," in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948*, ed. Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neil, 4th ed. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1993), 171-97, at 177.

2 See World Missionary Conference, 1910. *The History and Records of the Conference Together with Addresses Delivered at the Evening Meetings* (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant,

decision was made that a similar conference should take place ten years later. With a couple of years of delay, that second World Missionary Conference was convened in 1900 in New York. In contrast with its predecessor, though, that conference added the qualifier “Ecumenical” to its title, “not as claiming to be representative of all portions of the Christian Church, but because it represented mission work in all parts of the ‘inhabited world.’”³ Such a move reflected the growing interest in the consideration of the mission of the church in a world perspective, something that would significantly influence the preparations for Edinburgh 1910.

These two initial conferences were organized by the British, continental European, American, and Canadian foreign mission societies. While there was hope for a third conference to be held ten years after the New York conference, no practical provisions were made for that purpose. The preparations for a third world missionary conference only started in 1906, with a General Committee being named in 1907.

While standing in continuation with the two previous conferences, the World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh in 1910 was distinct from them, especially in how its masterminds intended to continue building on the conference after its closing. That impulse made it possible for them to think about the institutional embodiment the conference’s goals could take afterwards and the need to form a permanent body for international cooperation to achieve that. Thus, one of the most consequential decisions of Edinburgh 1910 was the creation of a Continuation Committee composed of 35 members “to carry forward the spirit of co-operation in the work of mission.”⁴ While that committee was still dominated by representatives from the Western missionary societies and the churches that formed them, China, India, and Japan each had one representative in it. In the decade that followed, the Edinburgh Continuation Committee inspired the formation of national continuation committees in a number of countries, including China, Japan, and Korea. Some of those national continuation committees evolved into national councils of churches.⁵ However, regardless of their title or format, these national bodies became crucial for the significant increase in the global representativeness in the ecumenical bodies that would be formed from 1921 onward.

Anderson and Ferrier/Fleming H. Hevel Company, 1910), 4.

3 Ibid., 5.

4 Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910*, Studies in the History of Christian Missions (SHCM) (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), Kindle Edition, Kindle Location 1400.

5 Ibid., Kindle Location 1402.

Organized by missionary societies, the World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh in 1910 functioned primarily as a consultation in which the missionary agencies came together as never before to plan the next steps for the joint missionary endeavour in global scale. Going beyond its predecessors, Edinburgh 1910 offered a clear path for the realization of the ecumenical ideal. Specially in the missionary fields, where various Protestant missions met each other face-to-face, Christian unity was perceived as fundamental for the fulfilment of the church's mission.

The World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh understood the church's missionary activity primarily through the ideal of planting "self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating Churches" all over the world.⁶ Such an ideal could only be realized through collaborative efforts involving both the Western missionary agencies and the growing churches in the mission fields. Furthermore, the rise of the younger churches raised new questions about the nature of Christian collaboration and the need to acknowledge the colonial wounds still impacting those relations. Among other things, some of those younger churches aimed to overcome the denominational divisions imported from the West, challenging the European churches to rethink them.

The significance of the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh for the movements toward Christian unity that spread in the course of the 20th century cannot be overstated. Kenneth Scott Latourette, one of the most important Christian historians of the 20th century, once described Edinburgh 1910 as "one of the great landmarks in the history of the Church."⁷ In this chapter, I would like to argue that the impact of the World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh in 1910 in the course of the past century owes significantly to its role in the formation of the IMC and the latter's shaping of the ecumenical movement from the 1920s onward.

The dream of forming a unified international organism to coordinate the global mission efforts and the relationship between "older" and "younger" churches took more time to be enacted than expected because of the unforeseen event of World War I (1914–18). Among the many tragedies associated with the war was the rift between Germanic missionary societies and those of Britain and America, impairing the functioning of the Continuation Committee. Thus, instead of moving ahead to create an International Committee that would be a more permanent incarnation of

6 Kenneth Scott Latourette, "Ecumenical Bearings of the Missionary Movement and the International Missionary Council," in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1517-1948*, 4th ed., ed. Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neil (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1993), 353–402, at 358. Ideally, these churches would be undivided (359).

7 *Ibid.*, 355.

the Edinburgh spirit, an Emergency Committee of Co-operating Missions, without the participation of the Germans, had to be urgently formed. Plans for the creation of an International Committee were only resumed in 1920, leading to the constitution of the International Missionary Council in October 1921.⁸ Part of the tasks the IMC would undertake had been previously carried out by both the Edinburgh Continuation Committee and the Emergency Committee, including the publication of the *International Review of Missions*, since 1912. Once constituted, the IMC quickly became “the forerunner and the first comprehensive embodiment of the Ecumenical Movement.”⁹

The Formation of the International Missionary Council: Lake Mohonk, New York, 30 September – 6 October 1921

After World War I, plans were resumed to constitute what had been contemplated as an international unified cooperation structure. An initial conference was convened in June 1920 at Crans, Switzerland, to start planning what was conceived at the time as an International Missionary Committee. That meeting, for the first time since the war, included German representatives. A business committee was formed then, and a new meeting scheduled for the following year in the mountain resort of Lake Mohonk, New York.¹⁰

On 30 September 1921, 61 representatives from 14 countries met to fulfil, 11 years later, the Edinburgh dream of creating an International Missionary Council to coordinate the cooperation among the various missionary agencies.¹¹ The IMC’s founding participants were still overwhelmingly from Western countries. Only seven represented the “younger churches,” although two African Americans profiled as Africans were also included on that list. As William Hogg noted,

8 Ibid., 366. The change of mind, which led the organizers of the IMC to move away from the initial idea of forming an International Missionary Committee to create instead an International Missionary Council, resulted from the fear of anything that resembled a centralized institution with power to make policy decisions on their behalf. By using the word “council” instead of “committee,” the IMC founders made sure that such decisions would stay in the hands of the member societies and the churches they represented.

9 International Missionary Council, *The International Missionary Council: What It Is, What It Does* (New York: International Missionary Council, 1951), 2.

10 Latourette, “Ecumenical Bearings of the Missionary Movement,” 366.

11 William Richey Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations: A History of the International Missionary Council and Its Nineteenth-Century Background* (New York: Harper, 1952), 202.

Lake Mohonk stands primarily as a meeting of the home base missions. Representatives came from Finland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, France, Holland, Great Britain, Canada, and the United States, as well as from Australia and South Africa. Yet, the lands of the East were also represented. Dr S. K. Datta, from the National Missionary Council of India, Burma and Ceylon, and his colleague, a woman, Dr Ma Saw Sa of Burma, added greatly to the meeting as did also Dr (later bishop) Y. Y. Tsu, then a professor at St John's University, Shanghai, and William Hung of the China Continuation Committee. From Japan came Hiromichi Kozaki, formerly president of Doshisha University, and Bishop Kogoro Uzaki of the Methodist Church, each representing the Japan Continuation Committee. Also present as coopted members, and because of their colour thought by some to represent the churches of Africa, were Dr James E. K. Aggrey, a native of the Gold Coast but at the time a professor at Livingstone College, North Carolina, and Dr Robert R. Moton, Principal of Tuskegee in Alabama.¹²

Despite the small number of representatives from the “younger churches” in the founding meeting of the IMC, their presence in a larger number than in Edinburgh 1910 resulted from the decade-long work of the Edinburgh Continuation Committee. Despite the delay caused by the war, the Continuation Committee (and later the Emergency Committee) continued promoting the goal of bringing the IMC into existence. According to the proposal put forward at Edinburgh, the structure of the IMC would be constituted by representatives of national missionary agencies. But in 1910 only two of them existed: “the German *Ausschuss* and the Foreign Missions Conference of North America.”¹³ In the next 11 years, though, several other similar national structures emerged thanks to the diligent work of the Continuation Committee under the leadership of John R. Mott and J. H. Oldham. The Germans did not send representation to the IMC founding meeting. They only began to participate in the council at the 1923 meeting in Oxford.¹⁴

The formation of the IMC paid particular attention to matters of representation and governance. Above all, it was important to reaffirm that the new entity would not have executive power, that is, the capacity to override the executive functions of the national missionary agencies. As an organ of cooperation, the IMC should represent the collective will of those agencies. As pointed out earlier, that concern was the main reason for the

¹² *Ibid.*, 203.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 202.

¹⁴ Latourette, “Ecumenical Bearings of the Missionary Movement,” 367.

change in the name, from committee to council. Membership in the council was limited to “missionary societies and boards, and the churches which they represent, and the churches in the mission field.”¹⁵ In order to succeed in its cooperative endeavour, the IMC agreed to abide by the same principles that safeguarded the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh. In other words, its members committed to avoid statements on doctrinal matters, leaving that field for the Faith and Order Movement. That guiding principle was not exceedingly restrictive, though, since in its meetings in Jerusalem (1928) and Tambaram, near Madras (1938) the council issued volumes focusing on “the Christian message.”¹⁶

Lake Mohonk also established the functions of the incipient IMC:

It was created “to stimulate thinking and investigation on missionary questions,” enlisting in the endeavor the best knowledge and experience and making the results available to all missions; “to help coordinate” the efforts of the different national missionary organizations and their member societies and “to bring about united action where necessary”; to “help to unite Christian public opinion” in support of freedom of conscience, religion, and missionary endeavor; to bring together the world’s Christian forces to achieve “justice in international and inter-racial relations”; to publish *The International Review of Missions* and any other publication contributing to study the missionary questions; and “to call a world missionary conference” if and when desirable.¹⁷

The creation of the IMC formation was part of a concerted ecumenical response to a time of great crisis and uncertainty, when the rise of a world perspective was suddenly shattered by a reality of increasing fragmentation, divisions, and conflicts, which World War I magnified. In light of such a reality, John R. Mott, one of the masterminds of the IMC, argued that Christians were “demanded to counteract the recent marked growth of divisive forces in the world.”¹⁸ For him, missionary agencies were world leaders urged to show an alternative moral way “[a]midst all the discord and strife in international affairs.”¹⁹ Therefore, missionary leaders were those in the Christian circles who

15 Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 204.

16 *Ibid.*, 204–205.

17 *Ibid.*, 205. Hogg’s quotes come from the *IMC Minutes*, Lake Mohonk, 1921, page 40, minute 33.

18 John R. Mott, “International Missionary Co-operation,” *International Review of Missions* 11:1 (1922): 43–72, at 44.

19 *Ibid.*

dealt “with the world as a whole” and held “world horizons.” They were the individuals who could offer proper guidance to others in such critical times.

The war had produced “a new and stronger alignment of national and racial prejudice among the peoples to whom the missionaries go.” Thus, “a more effective union on the part of the missionary forces” was necessary. The missionary movement, in Mott’s view, could make “a marked contribution . . . toward international goodwill.” More markedly, it could help promote “right international and interracial relations,” supporting “international justice and racial good will.”²⁰

Mott’s high expectations mirror the spirit of his time, expressed above all in the Social Gospel. According to that movement, the response to the crises of the world resided ultimately in the Christianization of the social order. Since his horizons had expanded to encompass the whole world, Mott saw the missionary movement as key to expanding that perspective to the ends of the earth. His concern for Christian unity, public witness, and the missionary endeavour remained influential in the development of the ecumenical movement throughout the 20th century. However, a more critical perspective emerged in the latter half of the century, particularly through the hands and voices of formerly colonized peoples. This perspective would pay greater attention to how Christians should address the problems of the contemporary world, including that which Mott described as “racial prejudice” and a sentiment of “racial superiority.”

Jerusalem: 24 March – 8 April 1928

In the wake of the Lake Mohonk meeting, the IMC’s expansion of activities was in great part due to the leadership of its chairman, John Mott, and its two secretaries, J. H. Oldham and A. L. Warnshuis, who led offices respectively in London and New York.²¹ In 1927, Oldham was joined in the London office by William Paton, a bright younger leader whose credentials included his service as the first secretary of the National Christian Council of India and as the secretary of the British Student Christian Movement.²² The success of the IMC in fostering the expansion of the worldwide Christian fellowship became evident in the two enlarged meetings that followed.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Latourette, “Ecumenical Bearings of the Missionary Movement,” 368.

²² Ibid.

The first enlarged meeting of the IMC occurred between 24 March and 8 April 1928, on the iconic Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. It was preceded by the preparation of 25 reports on topics that included the meaning of the Christian message to non-Christian systems, religious education, the relationship between “younger” and “older” churches, mission and rural problems, mission and industrialism, mission and race conflict, and international missionary cooperation.²³

One of the chief concerns at that meeting was the need for religious education to counter “the rapid spread of purely secular systems of government education.”²⁴ That concern reflected the growth of an apologetic preoccupation with the most effective ways to present the Christian message to young people in light of the influence of non-Christian systems of thought and faith on them. In addition to that, it emphasized the demand for effective recruitment of laity for the missionary work, as well as the need to understand “the impact of the so-called Christian nations upon the non-Christian world.”²⁵ A third emphasis was the Christianization of the social order in the West and beyond and the call for Christian participation in the solution of the world problems, among which was the demand for “right race relations.”²⁶ In the minds of many participants, including Mott, secular modernity and racial injustice were interconnected. Fearing that the “modern industry” was spreading over Africa and Asia, Mott wanted to prevent the negative impact of secularizing forces in Europe from affecting those continents. For him, that was one of the reasons why missionary international cooperation was so critical.

The Jerusalem meeting promoted a view of the task of international missionary cooperation aimed to advance the “interdependence of nations and races” at a time when the world was increasingly organizing itself internationally.²⁷ As Mott put it, Christianity was entering a new stage of international cooperation, which demanded the rethinking, restating, and reinterpretation of “the Christian message” in light of new challenges.²⁸ People of all

23 L. S. Albright, *The International Missionary Council: Its History, Functions and Relationships* (New York: The International Missionary Council, 1946), 11.

24 John R. Mott, “Foreword,” in *Roads to the City of God: A World Outlook from Jerusalem*, by Basil Mathews (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1928), vii–ix, at vii.

25 *Ibid.*, vii–viii.

26 *Ibid.*, viii.

27 John R. Mott, “The Future of International Missionary Cooperation,” in *International Missionary Cooperation*, Report of the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council, 24 March – 4 April 1928, Vol. 7, ed. John R. Mott (New York: International Missionary Council, 1928), 3–48, at 3.

28 *Ibid.*, 4.

“nationalities and races” were urged to cooperate, adding their intellectual resources to the task of evangelization in an increasingly international era.²⁹

Whereas the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh offered an important impulse for Christian unity, the conference in Jerusalem in 1928 was tasked with expanding that call for unity by bringing people from different lands and races into cooperation. In order to achieve its full spiritual stature, the church needed to count on “the spiritual characteristics of every race.”³⁰ For Mott, the still incipient IMC was the best equipped body to bring a multifaceted and multinational Christianity together to cooperate for the evangelization of the world. For him, evangelization included witnessing. Therefore, international cooperation was the sign of “true testimony” in a critical time in history, when “racial prejudice,” a “sense of superiority,” and “unchristian nationalism” were crippling international relations.³¹ In addition, international cooperation was “essential to emphasize the truly catholic nature of the Christian Church.”³²

Mott viewed Christian cooperation as an “interracial fellowship” through which people “of different racial groups entered into the marvelous power of genuine Christian fellowship.”³³ The gospel he wanted to advance was one of reconciliation, a necessity in Christian circles, considering that both Christianity and humanity were deeply divided. “Divisions among the Christians—denominational, national, racial—have ever been a stumbling block; but with the recent rapid shrinkage of the world these divisions have become more serious and intolerable than ever . . . This stumbling-block must be removed.”³⁴

Although the international cooperative effort among the world’s nations was still in its early stages, Jerusalem 1928 showed that progress had been made. In particular, in Jerusalem the presence of a larger representation of the “younger” churches evinced some progress in the relationship between Western churches/missionary agencies and the churches in the mission field.³⁵

29 *Ibid.*, 5.

30 *Ibid.*, 7.

31 *Ibid.*, 8.

32 *Ibid.*

33 *Ibid.*, 9.

34 *Ibid.*, 9–10.

35 While Jerusalem 1928 showed signs of rejection of the Eurocentrism characteristic of modern missions, such a turn must not be exaggerated. As Deanna Womack shows in her scrupulous examination of Palestinian Muslim and Christian responses outside the gates of the conference, there were sharply different opinions, which were apparently ignored by the conference organizers. Womack’s findings do not prevent us from seeing progress when looking at the changes in language and participation between Edinburgh

Between the conferences in Edinburgh 1910 and Jerusalem 1928, Mott and Oldham traveled extensively, participating in local conferences and contributing to the formation of national committees in various countries—an effort that led to the creation of a wide international network of national Christian organizations in Europe, North America, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.³⁶ Prior to the Jerusalem Conference, Mott visited China, the Philippines, Malaya, the Netherlands East Indies, Australia, Tasmania, New Zealand, England, Holland, France, Switzerland, Hungary, and Poland.³⁷

Furthermore, since Lake Mohonk 1921, there was a significant organizational growth in the life of the IMC. On the journey from Lake Mohonk to Jerusalem, the IMC held a meeting in Oxford, in 1923, and three additional meetings of its Committee—the inner circle in charge of conducting the Council’s business. The last one, in Atlantic City (1926), launched the preparation for the Jerusalem Conference. Mott, who by then had become “a world-figure,” was elevated to full-time General Secretary, even though he did not quit the responsibilities he held with the World’s Student Christian Federation (WSCF) and the YMCA.³⁸

That concerted preparatory effort resulted in a relatively small conference, which, nevertheless, was more diverse than any of the other previous gatherings. Fifty-one countries were represented among the meeting’s 250 delegates, among which a significant participation from the “younger” churches. In addition to Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe and North America, for the first time South America was also represented. The conference also counted with an unprecedented representation from the Orthodox Church and from the main Christian youth movements.³⁹

1910 and Jerusalem 1928, but they challenge us to see such progress only as part of the story, acknowledging at the same time that the IMC leaders in 1928 failed “to see and acknowledge the religious, cultural, or ideological ‘other’ just beyond our comfortable walls of protection.” Such a cautionary tale remains important as contemporary Christian institutions navigate increasingly diverse cultural sensibilities and concerns. Deanna Ferree Womack, “A View from the Muslim Arabic Press, 1928: The International Missionary Conference in Jerusalem,” *Exchange* 46 (2017), 180–205, at 205.

36 Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 214. The Council for Western Asia and Northern Africa was formed in the last of a series of conferences between 1924 and 1928. Mott chaired that culminating assembly in Jerusalem.

37 Albright, *The International Missionary Council*, 9ff.

38 Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 220, 223.

39 Albright, *The International Missionary Council*, 10.

Hogg called Jerusalem 1928 “the first representative, global assembly of Christians in the long history of the church,”⁴⁰ not only for the number of countries represented in that gathering but because “nearly one-fourth (52) represented younger churches.”⁴¹ The eight volumes with the addresses of the conference testify to that greater participation from representatives of the younger churches. For instance, the volume on religious education includes the findings from a conference on religious education held by the All-India Conference on Religious Education and another held by the Ceylon Christian Council, the findings of the Chinese delegates on Christian education, the findings on religious education the National Christian Council in Japan prepared for the Jerusalem conference, and the recommendations and resolutions from an international conference on Christian education in Africa.⁴²

Similarly, the volume on Mission and Industrialism not only features contributions with a focus on Asia and Africa, but also includes a perspective from Latin America on themes like land accumulation, the labour movement, the dominance of foreign capital, and immigration in the voice of American missionary Samuel Guy Inman, known for his advocacy against US military interventions in Latin America.⁴³

The theme of Christian mission in the light of race conflict was engaged by representatives from the US, South Africa, and the UK. Notably, this discussion did not focus strictly on racism targeting Black communities. Galen M. Fisher, executive secretary of the Institute of Social and Religious Research and the former secretary of the YMCA in Japan, spoke about racial relations involving white Americans and Canadians, on one hand, and Asian American immigrants, on the other hand.⁴⁴ Fisher pointed out a number of discriminatory attitudes Japanese and Chinese immigrants faced in North America at

40 Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 244.

41 *Ibid.*, 245. Among those, Erasmo Braga from Brazil; Cheng Ching-yi, T. C. Chao, Francis C. M. Wei, and David Z. T. Yui from China; Jashwant Chitambar, K. T. Paul, S. K. Datta, and P. Ooman Philip from India; Michio Kozaki and Kogoro Uzaki from Japan; Helen Kim from Korea; David Jabavu from South Africa; and Sirwano Kulubya from Uganda.

42 International Missionary Council, *Religious Education, The Relation between the Younger and the Older Churches*, Report of the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council, March 24 – April 4, 1928, Vol. 3 (New York: International Missionary Council, 1928).

43 International Missionary Council, *The Christian Mission in Relation to Industrial Problems*, Report of the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council, March 24 – April 4, 1928, Vol. 5 (New York: International Missionary Council, 1928).

44 Galen M. Fisher, “Relations Between the Occidental and Oriental Peoples on the Pacific Coast of North America,” in *The Christian Mission in the Light of Race Conflict*, Report of the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council, 24 March – 4 April 1928, Vol. 4 (New York: International Missionary Council, 1928), 118–74.

the time, including widespread suspicion of Buddhist temples, fear on the part of white North Americans of interracial marriage, and outright racism. Reading a letter from an unidentified American university professor, Fisher describes the disgusting anti-Asian sentiments in the US at the time: “The prominence and persistence of a colored skin and an Asiatic physiognomy make the Oriental among white populations everywhere a marked person. He cannot merge into the crowd. His foreign face stands out like a uniform. The theater and the movies used often to make the slant-eyed the villain in the plot. Unthinking Westerners came to associate Oriental features with trickiness and crime.”⁴⁵ The letter describes anti-Asian racism as being as widespread in North America as racist sentiments against other communities such as “dark-skinned Indians and Spaniards” and the Black population.⁴⁶ Fisher described the problem of interracial relations and anti-Asian sentiments in colourful ways, highlighting the work of Christian organizations and churches in promoting “inter-racial understanding.”⁴⁷ Above all, he highlighted the work of the Commission on International Justice and Goodwill of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, which he described as “the chief agency promoting goodwill between Americans and Orientals.”⁴⁸ Founded in 1914 in response to “anti-Japanese agitation and legislation in California,” the commission promoted studies on “the racial situation on the Pacific Coast,” published multiple volumes on the topic, and “enrolled 2,000 citizens in a National Committee on American Japanese Relations,” among other initiatives.⁴⁹

Another important address on the theme of racial conflict was delivered by Dr John Hope, President of Morehouse College, in Atlanta.⁵⁰ Hope reminded his audience of the condition of enslavement in which African Americans entered the United States, deprived of the American language, religion (he meant Christianity), political and economic participation, and even family life, since they had been “ruthlessly cut loose from their own people, their

45 *Ibid.*, 129.

46 *Ibid.*

47 *Ibid.*, 133.

48 *Ibid.*

49 *Ibid.*

50 John Hope, “The Negro in the United States of America,” in *The Christian Mission in the Light of Race Conflict*, Report of the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council, 24 March – 4 April 1928, Vol. 4 (New York: International Missionary Council, 1928), 5-20.

own customs, their own religion.”⁵¹ Hope underscored, especially, the way enslaved Africans, despite the abuses of their Christian masters, were able to embrace Christianity on their own terms.

When we think of the Negro’s interpretation of the Christian religion and realize that his first contact with this religion came in the midst of slavery and that his masters were the “Christians,” it is almost beyond conception how the Negro acquired such an adequate comprehension of Christ’s teaching. It could not be out of the life of the slave-owner; it was out of the Book, as the Negro himself, through suffering and a mysterious philosophy, came face to face with the Christ. His interpretation was so marvelous and adequate that less and less were his owners able, with any degree of moral comfort, further to bestialize him through slavery.⁵²

Such a narrative understood the embracing of the Christian faith through an unmediated encounter with a Christ they could relate as something that helped African Americans to overcome numerous barriers, despite their situation of disenfranchisement. Under horrifying living conditions, Black Americans not only found motivation to struggle for full emancipation, but also contributed to redeem the nation.⁵³ The final part of his address focuses on the efforts for the creation of a new era of interracial relations, particularly through the work of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, stating that “there will never be human happiness and world peace until inter-racial differences are composed in the spirit of brotherhood.”⁵⁴

One may ask whether Hope was excessively optimistic about the Christian contributions to interracial relations. For the purposes of this chapter, though, it suffices to note the significance of the conversations the IMC fostered in Jerusalem 1928 as one of the earliest ecumenical agencies to devote attention to the problem of Christianity and race relations. Since Lake Mohonk 1921, Oldham had been devoting part of his time to study this topic. In 1924, he published the book *Christianity and the Race Problem*, which was a direct outgrowth of his work in the council.⁵⁵ Jerusalem showed the development of a theme of increasing interest for many of the council’s members, especially those from the younger churches, and of ethnic and racial minorities in Western churches.

51 *Ibid.*, 5.

52 *Ibid.*, 6.

53 *Ibid.*, 12.

54 *Ibid.*, 19.

55 Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 233–34.

Building on the ecumenical vision of the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference, the Jerusalem meeting signalled that a new era was emerging in which Christianity was more clearly than ever becoming a worldwide movement. Emerging subjects, concerns, perspectives, and voices were challenging the Eurocentric predisposition of modern Christianity. On top of the more significant representation of the “younger churches” and the contributions from their representatives in the thematic sessions mentioned above, the plenary addresses in Jerusalem also featured speakers such as the Rev. Cheng Ching-Yi, General Secretary of the recently formed National Christian Council in China; David Z. T. Yui, General Secretary of the National Committee of the Young Men’s Christian Association of China; and Surendra Kumar Datta, National Secretary of the Young Men’s Christian Association of India, Ceylon, and Burma. In one of the plenaries, John A. Mackay presented a view of evangelism based on the lessons he learned during his missionary tenure in South America, bringing Latin America into the spotlight after its absence in the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910.⁵⁶ By the time of the Jerusalem meeting, the Congress on Christian Work in South America had met in Panama (1916) and Montevideo (1925), and was preparing its third meeting.

Tamparam: 12 December – 29 December 1938

Speaking of the significance of the World Missionary Conference in Jerusalem 1928, Mott stated that it “exerted a greater influence than that at Edinburgh in 1910.”⁵⁷ In particular, he highlighted its attention to the parity of the younger churches, and its display as never before of the “churches that had resulted from missionary labour in the preceding century in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Islands of the Seas.”⁵⁸ Its impact was directly felt in many developments that followed the turn of a new decade, with two particular movements being worthy of mentioning: (1) the Five Year Movement in China, under the leadership of Dr Cheng Ching-Yi, which led to a surge in the membership of Chinese churches in the 1930s; and (2) the Kingdom of God Movement in Japan, led by Toyohiko Kagawa, and considered “one

56 International Missionary Council, *Addresses on General Subjects*, Report of the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council, 24 March – 4 April 1928, Vol. 8 (New York: International Missionary Council, 1928).

57 John R. Mott, *Addresses and Papers of John R. Mott*, Vol. V, page 667, cited by Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 253.

58 Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 253.

of the most effective undertakings ever launched by the Christian churches of Japan.”⁵⁹ In the decade following the Jerusalem meeting, the IMC continued to grow organizationally. Requested to give more time to the council, Mott finally conceded to surrender his responsibilities with the YMCA in the United States and the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF).

The decade between Jerusalem 1928 and Tambaram 1938 posed new challenges to the still incipient ecumenical movement, which was dared to respond to some of the gravest crises of the 20th century, including the great economic depression and events that would lead to World War II, such as the Japanese occupation of Manchuria in 1931 and its offensive against China in 1937.⁶⁰

Preparations for a second enlarged meeting of the IMC began as early as 1932, when the IMC Committee formed an Ad Interim Committee to start inquiries and preparations for a new conference. Looming over the planning of a new conference was still the need for further discussions, in particular on the topic of the distinctive character of the Christian message in relation to non-Christian systems posed in Jerusalem.⁶¹ Besides the regular meetings of the committee, the road to the next enlarged meeting of the IMC was marked by an international student missionary conference at Basel in the summer of 1935, co-sponsored by the IMC and the WSCF, and chaired by William Paton. As he did in the years prior to the meeting in Jerusalem, Mott continued to tour, particularly throughout Asia, calling conferences, which resulted in the organization of more National Councils of Churches—including new councils in Siam, the Philippines, and South Africa. New councils also emerged in Latin America, a phenomenon that reflected the coming of age of national churches in the region.⁶² The IMC’s coordination with increasing number of national councils contributed not only to widening the ecumenical movement but also to increasing participation of the younger churches in the IMC—which at the time was the main organism of the ecumenical movement.

In 1935, the Ad Interim Committee decided that the younger churches should comprise the majority of the participants in the next enlarged meeting of the IMC. Kowloon, part of the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong, was chosen as the location for that meeting, among other things, because of the insensibility of the Ad Interim Committee, which thought that it would be

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 255.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 258ff.

⁶¹ Jan Van Lin, *Shaking the Fundamentals: Religious Plurality and Ecumenical Movement* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 95.

⁶² Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 267-68.

considered a neutral territory for Chinese and Japanese participants. Both the Chinese and Japanese, along with other younger churches, were deeply disappointed that the council intended to hold the 1938 meeting “on alien and colonial territory.”⁶³

In 1936, the location was changed to Hangchow, China. Not only did that move provoke some Japanese leaders to ask for the postponement of the conference, but the full-scale Japanese invasion of China in 1937 made it impossible for a conference to be held there.⁶⁴ The 1938 meeting of the IMC ended up taking place in the village of Tambaram, near Madras, in India. Four hundred and seventy-one representatives from 69 countries were in attendance. This was the first time that the majority of the representatives in an ecumenical meeting came from the younger churches, including Oceania and many parts of Africa.⁶⁵ The largest delegations were those from India and China. The latter was led by a woman, Dr Wu Yi-fang.⁶⁶ Delegates from Japan and China, the two countries at war, were present at the meeting.⁶⁷ The gathering included a good balance of clergy and laity, and 77 of the participants were women.⁶⁸

The concern with the relationship of the IMC with the younger churches remained a priority. In the negotiations with the Provisional Committee of the WCC, the IMC recommended Dr William Paton “to serve as one of the general secretaries of the World Council of Churches [still in formation], in an honorary capacity, with special concern for the relation of the Younger Churches to the World Council.”⁶⁹ Not by coincidence, the major focus of the conference was the church, with attention to “the growing development

63 According to Hogg, the Chinese would have preferred to attempt to “travel to Japan rather than to Kowloon.” *Ibid.*, 286.

64 *Ibid.*, 288.

65 Albright, *The International Missionary Council*, 16. The Tambaram conference also counted with the presence of members of existing and emerging ecumenical bodies, including the World Conferences on Life and Work and on Faith and Order and the Provisional Committee of the World Council of Churches (an outgrowth of the Oxford and Edinburgh conferences of 1937), creating the opportunity for consideration about the IMC and the future WCC (17).

66 Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 293.

67 Latourette, “Ecumenical Bearings of the Missionary Movement,” 369.

68 Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 291.

69 Albright, *The International Missionary Council*, 18.

of the Younger Churches.”⁷⁰ In reference to the IMC meeting at Tambaram, Latourette stated, “The Church was becoming world-wide.”⁷¹

In preparation for the conference at Tambaram in 1938, Dutch missionary and historian of religions Hendrik Kraemer was asked to write a book to serve as a resource, as it furthered the discussion initiated ten years earlier in Jerusalem about the Christian message in the non-Christian world.⁷² Citing the mandate from IMC Committee meeting in 1936, Kraemer named what was expected from him: the book should state “the fundamental position of the Christian Church [...] towards other faiths, dealing in detail with the evangelistic approach to the great non-Christian faiths.” In other words, “Evangelism, or the witness of the Church in relation to the non-Christian faiths, has therefore to be the main concern of this book.”⁷³ The two main theses that Kraemer advanced in his book were “that the Christian revelation is absolutely ‘sui generis’” and that “the relation between Christian revelation and other religions ‘is not one of continuity, but discontinuity.’”⁷⁴ While not relegating all the teachings of other religions as errors, Kraemer affirmed the superiority and uniqueness of the Christian revelation, concluding that “if one were to decide to follow Christ, he or she should make a clean break with their religious past.”⁷⁵ While many participants at the conference at Tambaram endorsed Kraemer’s views, a group of Indian theologians challenged especially his emphasis on discontinuity. As Joshua Kalapati notices, “This Rethinking Christianity Group broadly argued that Indian philosophy, culture, and tradition could not be ignored by those engaged in Christian mission on Indian soil, and secondly, that the ‘Kingdom of God’ rather than ‘church’ would provide a better platform for defining and doing mission in the pluralist context of India.”⁷⁶

The Tambaram meeting forced the IMC to rethink its commitment not to engage with matters of Faith and Order. In light of the widening of the

70 Ibid., 17.

71 Latourette, “Ecumenical Bearings of the Missionary Movement,” 369.

72 Hendrik Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1938).

73 Ibid., v.

74 Joshua Kalapati, “Tambaram International Missionary Council Conference, 1938,” in *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of South Asian Christianity*, ed. Roger E. Hedlund, Jesudas M. Athyal, Joshua Kalapati, and Jessica Richard (Oxford University Press, 2011), <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198073857.001.0001/acref-9780198073857-e-0961?print>, accessed 28 March 2022.

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid.

ecumenical fellowship, the increasing participation of the younger churches in the conversations about the meaning of the Christian message in the non-Christian world had created a situation in which the rise of different views on the meaning and authority of the Christian faith became inevitable. Kraemer was commissioned to create a resource that would guide that conversation, hopefully in the direction of a more unified vision. However, his Barthian approach to missions and rejection of all natural theology led him to the radical conclusion that “other religions offer no point of contact with Christian faith.”⁷⁷ Thus, he emphasized discontinuity.

The discussions around Kraemer’s book had two positive outcomes. First, it forced the conference to “rethink every theological presupposition upon which it acted.”⁷⁸ Second, the conversation showed a more egalitarian relationship between the Western missionary agencies and the increasingly self-sustaining non-Western churches, whose representatives were not afraid of expressing their own views on this important matter. For the Asian theologians challenging Kraemer’s thesis of radical discontinuity, there was more than theology at stake. As M. M. Thomas pointed out, “Tambaram 1938 took place at a time when the churches of Asia were awakening to the need of a selfhood oriented to witnessing to Jesus Christ among Asian peoples who were themselves struggling for self-identity and for the renaissance of their nations in the world of nations.”⁷⁹

The “march towards authentic Asian selfhood” was crucial for the future of the Asian churches. Thus, the challenge they posed to Kraemer’s approach to other religions was not only theological but also moral. Most Asian churches represented in the Tambaram conference were going through the formation of their Christian identities in contexts where strong nationalist sentiments were informing a transition from a colonial past to a process of nation-building that required their participation in “dialogue with religions and secular faiths within that context.”⁸⁰ While focusing on the church, Tambaram 1938 did not isolate it, providing instead an opportunity for self-critique. As Hogg rightly underscores, the Tambaram meeting “saw the church standing under God’s judgement. Madras concentrated on the church but did not absolutize it.”⁸¹

77 Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 295.

78 *Ibid.*

79 M. M. Thomas, “An Assessment of Tambaram,” *International Review of Mission* 77:307 (1988), 390–97, at 390.

80 *Ibid.*, 397.

81 Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 298.

While the conference could not arrive at a full agreement on this matter, it was able to produce a final statement, which resulted from the critical dialogue in Tambaram. Such a dialogical approach can be seen as contributing to the methodological development of ecumenical and interfaith dialogues in the following decades. The bulk of the conversation is recorded in the first volume of the Madras Series, called *The Authority of the Faith*.⁸² The volume comprises an essay by Kraemer himself on the topic of “continuity or discontinuity,” in reference to the conversations at Tambaram, and responses by T. C. Chao, from China; D. G. Moses, from India; Tao Fong, from China; A. G. Hogg, a professor in the Madras Christian College since 1903; K. Kartensein, from Switzerland; Walter Marshall, from the United States; and H. H. Farmer, from England. The essays are followed by the findings of the Tambaram conference.

While reaffirming the radical discontinuity between Christian revelation and any other religious presuppositions, Kraemer acknowledges that so little has been reached in terms of a common understanding of how Christian revelation relates to other religions that “a patient endeavor to understand and probe each other’s presuppositions and starting points” is needed.⁸³ Chao replied by affirming that there are different levels of revelation, which people from different religious traditions can experience.

The almighty God and all-loving God being the Creator of the universe, we can safely say that nature and man, in different but progressive orders, reveal God and His divine character and power. Nature reveals His power and intelligence while humanity reveals, especially in the lives of sages and prophets, His love and righteousness. All the nations, with their various religions, have seen God more or less clearly, although the forms in which their visions have been clothed are incomplete, insufficient and unsatisfactory. In them and in Jesus Christ, God has been revealing Himself, the same self, to mankind.⁸⁴

82 International Missionary Council, *The Authority of the Faith: The Madras Series—Presenting Papers Based upon the Meeting of the International Missionary Council, at Tambaram, Madras, India. December 12th to 29th, 1938* (New York/London: International Missionary Council, 1939).

83 Hendrik Kraemer, “Continuity or Discontinuity,” *ibid.*, 6. In respect to the comparative study of religions he says, “We have to adopt the attitude of an attentive and teachable hearer to the data presented to us by this branch of research. Comparative religion, however, can and must never become our authoritative guide. Its proper function is to be our intelligent and much appreciated informant” (10).

84 T. C. Chao, “Revelation, in IMC, *The Authority of the Faith*, 36–37.

While affirming the uniqueness of the Christian revelation, Chao does not see it in contrast but instead in continuity with the other forms of divine revelation in history. Similarly, Hogg interprets the uniqueness of the Christian faith in terms of the content of the revelation it bears witness to.⁸⁵ Amidst these tensions, the conference's findings reach a compromise by acknowledging the "values of deep religious experience and great moral achievements" in non-Christian religious traditions, while affirming that Christ alone "is the full salvation which man [sic] needs."⁸⁶ At the same time, the conference at Tambaram affirmed that "the Church is called to a fuller and more adequate understanding of other religious faiths as total systems of life,"⁸⁷ to "appropriate" whatever in "traditional cultures may contribute to the enrichment of its life and that of the Church universal,"⁸⁸ and to cooperate with people of other faiths "in all good social and community movements."⁸⁹

Whereas even the most advanced among the Tambaram's views on the relationship between Christianity and other religious traditions may seem so limited today, some things are important to keep in mind. First, the conference at Tambaram provided the most open ecumenical conversation about how Christians should deal with other religions of its time, particularly in the Protestant world. The advances made at Tambaram resulted from the widening of the church's ecumenicity through the inclusion of more voices from non-Western churches in those conversations. In particular, Tambaram conference created the conditions for the rise of an understanding of the ecumenical that, while centred on the church, moved beyond ecclesiocentric concerns. The social, economic, political, and cultural demands that many of the so-called younger churches were facing forced them to reconsider questions of identity and belonging in religiously plural contexts, and their increasing participation in the IMC brought those concerns to the centre stage of the IMC conversations. In that sense, the Tambaram conference contributed to a reevaluation of the Protestant missionary mindset. The significance of Tambaram 1938 is also noticed in the fact that in search of greater inclusion, the most representative ecumenical event ever held pointed to emerging forms of difference that could lead to more division and separation at a critical time in international relations. Some have considered the simple fact that it was

85 A. G. Hogg, "The Christian Attitude to Non-Christian Faith," in IMC, *The Authority of the Faith*, 116.

86 IMC, *The Authority of Faith*, 194.

87 *Ibid.*, 195.

88 *Ibid.*, 196.

89 *Ibid.*, 197.

able to hold the widening Christian fellowship together in the midst of that widening diversity a miracle.⁹⁰

Whitby, Ontario, Canada Meeting: 5–18 July 1947

The conference at Tambaram was the last meeting of the IMC before World War II. During the interregnum of the war, the Ad Interim Committee continued to advise the council. The war in Europe and the Pacific created a number of orphaned missions, leaving many younger churches on their own. It also created new fronts of needs to be met. The preparation for the post-war focused on the creation of the Orphaned Missions Fund, a program created with the goal to serve “the ultimate well-being of younger churches of an important part of the world Christian community.”⁹¹

This was also a time of leadership transition. The first chair of the IMC, John R. Mott, retired in 1942. Vice-chairs J. H. Oldham and A. L. Warnshuis also left the council, and William Paton died in 1943. A new leadership shaped under the guidance of Bishop James Chamberlain Baker, who succeeded Mott. He presided over the first post-war meeting of the council in Whitby, Ontario, Canada, in 1947.

The Ad Interim Committee met in Geneva in 1946. Together, the participants celebrated the success of the work of the Orphaned Missions Fund and reaffirmed that “the spirit of Tambaram still lived,” despite the years of war and devastation.⁹² More than anything else, they listened to stories of suffering and heroism coming from different parts of the world, reaffirming the meaningful phrase once uttered by Bishop William Temple, that the worldwide Christian fellowship, the universal church, was “the great new fact of our time.”⁹³ Among other things, the committee wanted to draw attention once again to explore how the IMC and the WCC would act jointly. Another topic of interest was “the opening of the way for a wider participation of women in the cooperative work of the Christian enterprise.”⁹⁴ There was a sense that an important chapter in the journey of the IMC had come to an end and a new chapter was about to begin. As a result of the dislocations caused by the war, the Ad Interim Committee was not sure about the wisdom of calling another worldwide

⁹⁰ Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 302.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 316.

⁹² Albright, *The International Missionary Council*, 23.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

conference. So, instead of planning a meeting for the full council in the mode of Jerusalem and Tambaram, the Ad Interim Committee planned a smaller meeting, involving an enlarged version of the committee, for 1947.

The main goal of the meeting at Whitby was to plan for the future, even though it could not ignore the experiences of the churches during the war.⁹⁵ A total of 112 delegates from 40 countries met for that first larger meeting of the IMC after the war. The first part of the enlarged meeting focused on “the Word” and the second on the theme of “Partnership in Obedience.”⁹⁶ Whitby 1947, however, did not build on or surpass the findings of the conference at Tambaram. It was a gathering to regroup and rebuild. Part of its task was to reinterpret its mission in order “to meet the needs of the present situation.”⁹⁷ The Christian challenge to meet the needs of a world in continuous revolution began emerge as a key concern, along with the idea of “expectant evangelism,” which related to “sensing a time of opportunity after years of warfare.”⁹⁸ Acknowledging that the “colonial churches” had come of age, it renewed the call for all churches—young and old alike—to come together to fulfill the task of “World evangelism—the evangelisation of every area of life by men and women ablaze with the fire of God, torches flaming with the gospel of Christ.”⁹⁹

Willingen, Germany: 5–17 July 1952

The next enlarged meeting of the IMC took place in Willingen in 1952. This time, 190 delegates from over 50 countries were in attendance, including representatives from newly independent countries such as Pakistan and Indonesia. The notable absence this time was China. The Willingen 1952 conference reiterated the missionary call of the churches and the relation between mission and Christian union. The call to serve in mission stems from the fact that the church exists in the world and, following the example of Jesus, must serve the world. That call is fulfilled as a witness in fellowship, affirming that “Christ is not divided.”¹⁰⁰

95 Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 335.

96 International Missionary Council, *Minutes of the Enlarged Meeting of the International Missionary Council and of the Committee of the Council, Whitby, Ontario, Canada, July 5-24, 1947* (New York: International Missionary Council, 1947).

97 *Ibid.*, 30.

98 Kenneth R. Ross, Jooseop Keum, Kyriaki Avtzi, and Roderick R. Hewitt, eds, *Ecumenical Missiology: Changing Landscape and New Conceptions of Mission* (Oxford: Regnum and Geneva: WCC Publications, 2016), 58.

99 *Ibid.*, 60.

100 International Missionary Council, *The Missionary Obligation of the Church: Willingen*,

One of the most significant themes of this meeting was a discussion of what was for the first time identified as “the Indigenous Church,” with an emphasis on the relationship between the universal and the local church.¹⁰¹ While acknowledging the rise of local churches rooted in a variety of cultures, and forming particular Christian identities, the meeting reaffirmed the oneness of the church, and the fact that these local churches were, in fact, the local expression of the universal church in a given area. Some of the questions raised related to the characteristic marks of a local church, its relation to the ecclesiastical tradition, and its degree of independence.¹⁰²

This emphasis on the local reality of the church (churches grounded locally) demanded the rethinking of the role of missionary societies, challenged to become partners in areas such as leadership and theological training, financial support, literature, and technical assistance of emerging and younger churches. More than that, the partnership proposed implied a shared responsibility in the fulfillment of the missionary call. Mission was no longer a one-way enterprise. Now, younger and older churches had the joint responsibility of evangelizing the world. While local churches should exhibit some marks without which they would “not be a church,” their distinctiveness in relation to the “soil” in which it is planted was acknowledged. However, local churches were expected to be rooted in Christ and to exhibit a critical attitude toward national cultures.¹⁰³ This is part of the recognition not only of the prophetic nature of Christianity but, in particular, of the supranational and “supra-racial character of Christ’s Church.”¹⁰⁴ Like in previous meetings, there was an emphasis on the witness Christian unity provided to a divided world, and a connection between Christian unity and the reconciliation of the world. The missionary agencies in such a context represent that supranational fellowship, which reminds the local churches of “their obligation to make their voice heard on political and social issues.”¹⁰⁵ The autonomy of the younger churches is reinforced, and the role of the missionary agencies redesigned in terms of cooperation and consultation. The IMC is portrayed as that international agency uniquely located to form international, interracial, and interdenominational teams to effect such collaboration between the younger churches and the missionary agencies.¹⁰⁶

Germany, July 5–17, 1952 (London: IMC, 1952), 6.

101 *Ibid.*, 8.

102 *Ibid.*

103 *Ibid.*, 9.

104 *Ibid.*, 12.

105 *Ibid.*, 15.

106 *Ibid.*, 17.

Such a perspective represented a radical change in the traditional relationships between the missionary agencies and the younger churches. Thus, in response to the conversations in Willingen 1952, the younger churches' delegates put together a statement, in which they asked all the members of the council to embrace such changes as fellow co-workers. For them, not only should the missionary responsibility lay on the shoulders of local churches, but there should be a more radical conceptual change: "We should cease to speak of 'missions and churches' and avoid the dichotomy not only in our thinking but also in our actions. We should now speak of the mission of the Church."¹⁰⁷ One can say that this blurring of the distinction between "missions and churches" is a birthmark of the contemporary World Christianity movement. Such concern emerged not only out of theoretical reflections, but also out of practical pastoral concerns. The various situations of war in previous decades had reinforced the need for nationals to be ready and trained to lead their own churches.

The formation of the WCC in 1948 contributed to the idea that the distinction between older and younger churches was no longer viable, and that mission was now a task of a worldwide church. As part of that thinking, the existence of two distinct councils (the IMC and now the WCC) began to seem redundant, and the two continued to progressively draw together. While remaining independent for almost another full decade, the two bodies created a Joint Committee, which affirmed the essential common ends of the two organizations and allowed for increasing association between them.¹⁰⁸ In the course of the 1950s, the debate about the integration of the two councils and the conditions for that to happen intensified.

Accra, Ghana: 28 December 1957 – 8 January 1958

A final IMC assembly gathered in Ghana in 1958. The opening address, delivered by John Mackay, was titled "The Christian Mission at This Hour." The participants divided into five groups that took on specific themes: (1) The Christian Witness in Society and Nation, (2) The Christian Church Facing Its Calling to Mission, (3) The Christian Church and Non-Christian Religions, (4) The Place and Function of the Missionary, and (5) What Does "Partnership in Obedience" Means.¹⁰⁹ The group focusing on Christian

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁰⁸ Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, 353.

¹⁰⁹ International Missionary Council, *Minutes of the Assembly of the International Missionary Council*, Ghana, 28 December 1957 to 8 January 1958 (London, IMC, 1958), 5.

Witness in Society and Nation recommended that considering that this meeting was taking place in an African country, “a declaration should be made on the problem of Race Relations in different parts of the world,” suggesting the reiteration of a statement the WCC passed in its assembly in Evanston in 1954.¹¹⁰ Likewise, this group urged the IMC and the churches about the need for Christian witness to be rooted in Indigenous cultural and social patterns, especially in theological training: “If the Gospel is to become fully incarnate in the training of the ministry, it must take on indigenous flesh and expression.”¹¹¹ Another significant development at the Accra meeting was the funding and setting up of the Theological Education Fund “for the advancement of theological education in Asia, Africa and Latin America.”¹¹²

Despite the vision advanced at the Willingen conference of a new understanding of the mission as the work of an “emerging world Christian community,” few initiatives in that direction had taken place in practice. One of them was the merging of the Asia Council on Ecumenical Mission “into the East Asia Christian Conference of the IMC and WCC”.¹¹³ In Accra, the IMC focused, among other things, on the missionary role of laypersons, urging its members to support initiatives involving business people and student exchange.

The integration of the two councils remained a major topic of deliberation at that meeting. A draft resolution of the integration plan was presented, with several concrete steps, including increasing contact between the staff of the two organizations. The integration was understood not only from an institutional perspective, but also as a natural consequence of an organic development. The resolution of the IMC meeting at Accra on the integration reads, “The missionary movement has resulted in a new world Christian community; this has within itself the possibility of becoming a world-wide missionary community.”¹¹⁴ In such a reality, the two organizations were seen as belonging together. The Accra meeting believed that the specific missionary purpose of the IMC would be safeguarded in the proposed WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME). There were voices, however, that feared that such an integration would lead “to the loss of missionary vision and thrust.”¹¹⁵ Recommendations were made to assure proper representation of

110 *Ibid.*, 22. This is one of the places where one can see the duplication already happening between the WCC and the IMC at that time.

111 *Ibid.*, 23.

112 *Ibid.*, 53.

113 *Ibid.*, 58.

114 *Ibid.*, 85.

115 *Ibid.*, 86.

the CWME in the composition of the WCC central committee. The integration plans were reviewed, and further steps approved for it to happen at the 3rd Assembly of the WCC, in 1961.

The final statement of the Accra meeting, “The Christian Mission at This Hour,” was a call to the joint responsibility of all churches. At that point, the distinction between older and younger churches was finally left behind. “Churches differ in resources and in opportunity for mission; but those differences are not in principle differences between ‘older’ and ‘younger’ churches. Within their fellowship in Christ, churches give and receive from one another in their missionary task; but such giving and receiving no longer takes place solely between ‘older’ and ‘younger’ churches. If they are churches, they are all alike called to mission.”¹¹⁶

The IMC had fulfilled its purpose. Its trajectory models a way of institutional life that resists the temptation of idolatrous self-perpetuation. Institutions are created to meet specific needs. When healthy, they are transformed by the new challenges they encounter in the course of their existence. Once their work has contributed to the birth of a new reality and demands that require new structures, they must be able to die, giving birth to new forms of institutional life. This is what happened when the IMC and the WCC merged.

The IMC continued to exist until 1961, and until its last breath it continued to facilitate and strengthen the formation of national and regional ecumenical organisms, one of its most significant contributions to the ecumenical movement.

New Delhi, India: 19 November – 5 December 1961

At the 3rd Assembly of the WCC in New Delhi, India, the IMC and the WCC were fully integrated through the CWME of the WCC. The 1961 report of the Committee on the Division of World Mission and Evangelism stated, “The integration of the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches brings into being a new instrument of common consultation and action to serve the churches in their missionary task under the new conditions of the second half of the twentieth century.”¹¹⁷ In New

116 Ibid., 90.

117 International Missionary Council, *Minutes of the Assembly of the International Missionary Council, November 17–18, 1961 and the First Meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, December 7–8, 1961, at New Delhi* (Delhi: IMC, 1961), 29.

Delhi, the integrated council carried on with the work initiated by the IMC in at least four areas:

1. a fresh look into the theological basis of mission, with attention to ordinary missionary practice around the world;
2. the work of the recently formed regional centres for the study of non-Christian religions, continuing the focus on “the study of Christian encounter with other faiths” and producing the first interfaith dialogues coordinated by the WCC;
3. the study of life and growth of “young churches,” later renamed “World Studies Churches and Missions;” and
4. a series of research pamphlets on other topics the IMC had initiated.¹¹⁸

The details of the merging still needed further clarification. There was a common understanding, however, that the church worldwide was experiencing a new situation, which demanded new missionary responses. While there was no wish to cut off from the spiritual heritage of the missionary movement, there was a predominant conviction that the modern missionary era with its virtues and sins was now part of a complicated heritage we would need to deal with in new ways. Christian mission now has a worldwide base, and the responsibility of bearing witness to Christ in the world was shared by every Christian congregation around the world.¹¹⁹ In the face of a new situation, new mission structures were needed. The missionary task was not complete. But mission was now to be considered in new terms. While the WCC assembly at Delhi represented the encounter between the old and the new, and the place where the IMC and the WCC merged, it also represented a rupture, which as it was made clear in the report of the Committee on the Division of World Mission and Evangelism,

The programme of the new Division is not here fully described. It will provide a new frontier . . . Our temptation will be to think of the Division simply as the continuation of the interests of the International Missionary Council with emphasis on Asia, Africa and South America. We must resist this temptation. This is the Division of World Mission and Evangelism in the World Council of Churches. We

118 Newbigin, “Mission to Six Continents,” 189–90.

119 International Missionary Council, *Minutes of the Assembly of the International Missionary Council*, November 17–18.

are concerned not with three continents but with six. In co-operation with every department of the World Council and with the full resources of the Christian community in every land we must help the churches to confront men and women with the claims of Jesus Christ wherever they live.¹²⁰

In Lieu of a Conclusion

While inheriting the ecumenical journey of the IMC, the formation of the CWME opened a new era of ecumenical mission in the second half of the 20th century. The whole world became the home mission base and the mission field. New questions began to be asked, and the concept of mission itself was expanded to mean the fulness of life, in love and unity.¹²¹

The final quarter of the 20th century saw trends already in formation in previous decades intensified. Since then, Christianity has become more than ever before a worldwide movement. The face of World Christianity has changed dramatically in the past 60 years, as has the world in which it exists. The 1960s and 1970s saw the rise of liberationist and postcolonial movements, which continue to inform the struggle of many in the world today. Globalization, mass migration, and the environmental and the nuclear crises brought to us a new sense of urgency and a new understanding of the interconnectedness of life, which has impacted our thoughts and reflections on both mission and ecumenics. While Pentecostal and independent churches have experienced a drastic growth in this period, an increasing awareness of the religiously plural reality in which most of us live has become key to understanding the new demands for interfaith relations in the contemporary reality. Whereas the CWME continues to be instrumental in the way ecumenical Christians respond to these and other demands, there is much to learn in remembering the journey of the IMC from 1921 to 1961. For those who identify with what was then labelled “the younger churches,” it is worth remembering that despite its epistemic limitations, the International Missionary Council played the role of a midwife in the birth of the World Christian movement that has since then significantly shifted the epistemic and cultural loci from where most Christians today reinterpret the notion of Christian mission.

120 *Ibid.*, 30.

121 See “Commission on World Mission and Evangelism,” World Council of Churches, <https://www.oikoumene.org/what-we-do/commission-on-world-mission-and-evangelism>.

CHAPTER 3

Cooperation in Mission in Word— and in Practice? The Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches

Marina Ngursangzeli Behera

The International Missionary Council (IMC)—as the instrument of mission societies, councils, and later also churches that emerged from missionary work—was an institutional expression of “cooperation in mission.” The institutional perspective and the one on cooperation outside the IMC, taken together, inscribe the history of the IMC in the much broader history of mission in the context of World Christianity. Even at the time that the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh 1910 analyzed the resources available for mission work and strategized to carry the gospel to non-Christian territories, Christianity was a world religion. With this background in mind, this paper will place the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) as the successor of the IMC, its history, and its aims in the broad and changing landscapes of mission in the last decades.

The IMC had been operating on the assumption that world mission is the task of mission societies and special boards. When it merged with the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1961, the IMC highlighted in its report to the WCC assembly in New Delhi that it had been a council of councils. It was noted with pride that in 1961, 24 of the 38 member councils were then located in countries that had formally been considered mission fields.¹ Just three years earlier in 1959 at the Achimota IMC conference, U Kyaw Than, one of the first secretaries of the East Asia Christian Conference, critically remarked, “Sometimes there seems to be an emphasis even in the sending country on the mission of the mission board, rather than of the church to which the board is related. In the receiving country, the mission seems to be the mission of anybody except that

1 International Missionary Council, *Report to the Final Assembly of the International Missionary Council and the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches New Delhi 1961* (Lausanne: 1961), 10.

of the church in the country concerned.”² Both observations are revealing in the context of the planned merger of churches and mission bodies. Kirsteen Kim succinctly emphasized Than’s argument by stating, “The colonised world was not expected to take responsibility for the evangelisation of the whole world but only of its own nation.”³ Many resources and expertise continued to be located in the northern hemisphere, which is one reason that led to the demand for a missionary moratorium around the time of the Bangkok assembly in 1972/1973.⁴

Kim cautions that a similar colonial logic can be identified in the movement toward the foundation of the WCC. One of its focuses was to overcome the fragmentation into confessional churches of a war-ridden world, which predominantly characterized the situation of churches in the northern hemisphere.⁵ The expectation about what the churches in the non-Western world could contribute was less prominent.⁶ By 1958, only 24 out of all the 150 member churches were so-called younger churches.⁷ However, M. M. Thomas, looking back at the New Delhi assembly, said that the transformation of the WCC from a fellowship of basically Western European protestant churches into an ecumenical “truly world movement” began there.⁸ The integration of the IMC with its wide constituency certainly contributed to this.

2 U Kyaw Than, “The Christian mission in Asia today,” in *The Ghana Assembly of the International Missionary Council. 28th December, 1957 to 8th January, 1958. Selected Papers, with an Essay on the Role of the IMC*, ed. Ronald K. Orchard (Edinburgh, London: Edinburgh House Press, 1958), 125–37, at 137.

3 Kirsteen Kim, “Mission: Integrated or Autonomous? Implications for the Study of World Christianity,” in *Ecumenism and Independence in World Christianity: Historical Studies in Honour of Brian Stanley*, Theology and Mission in World Christianity 15 (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2020), 62–80, at 63. Kim quotes the second half of this passage by U Kyaw Than.

4 Birgitta Larsson and Emilio Castro, “From Missions to Mission” in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement. 1968-2000*, Vol. 3, ed. John Briggs, Mercy Amba Oduyoye, and Georges Tsetsis (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2004), 125–48, at 127–28.

5 See the documents of the WCC assembly 1948 in Amsterdam: *Man’s Disorder and God’s Design: The Amsterdam Assembly Series*, 5 vols (London: SCM Press, 1948). For one study on how World War I affected the image and perception of the Western nations and of Christianity of Christian intellectuals in India, see Klaus Koschorke, “Absolute Independence for Indian Christians’—The World Missionary Conference Edinburgh 1910 in the Debates of the Protestant Christian Elites in Southern India,” *Annales Missiologici Posnanienses* 21 (2016), 37–52.

6 Yap Kim Hao notes the reluctance and even opposition within the IMC and WCC against the founding of this regional conference. See his *From Prapat to Colombo: History of the Christian conference of Asia (1957–1995)* (Hong Kong: Christian Conference of Asia, 1995), 5, 10.

7 Kim, “Mission: Integrated or Autonomous?,” 64.

8 Madathilparampil Mammen Thomas, *My Ecumenical Journey* (Trivandrum: Ecumenical Publishing Centre, 1990), 252.

This paper will focus on the question of cooperation and unity and how it found its expression in mission documents that have been developed by the CWME. These are conciliar documents expressing a confluence of topics and issues, attitudes and habits of doing and reflecting on evangelism and mission. The changing relationship of and distinction between evangelism and mission is one trajectory that can be pursued up to the latest WCC mission statement, *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (TTL, 2012).⁹

The chapter will first of all focus on the place of the CWME within the WCC and trace some of its changing locations within the structures, starting from the integration of the IMC in 1961. Secondly, it will describe the role of the CWME as a platform for reflection on mission and evangelism and explain this aspect by highlighting the development of some of the main documents produced by the CWME. These documents will be read as an expression of the conciliar confluence of issues or topics in mission over the last decades, which will explain their influence and importance even though both the main mission documents of 1982 and 2012 have been criticized by some as not being consistent in their theological concepts.¹⁰ Thirdly, the chapter will attempt to highlight that mission was and is much broader than indicated in the WCC, expressed in the widening circle of participants from beyond the constituency of the WCC membership in the discussion on mission led by the CWME. This will be contextualized within the changing landscapes, as TTL calls it, and will be set in parallel with some major concerns in mission within World Christianity.

Locating Mission in the Structures of the World Council of Churches

The main argument for integrating the IMC and WCC was that both had the same origin and both shared a concern for unity in witness. Joint activities of the two bodies, such as the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (founded in 1947) and the East Asia Christian Conference (founded

9 Jooseop Keum, ed., *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013).

10 See Gerrit Noort, “So What?”—Dutch Responses to the New Mission Statement,” in *International Review of Mission* 102:2 (2013), 191–98; Byung Joon Chung, “An Assessment of Together towards Life: Korean Responses,” in *International Review of Mission* 102:2 (2013), 199–204. Jan A. B. Jongeneel, “‘Mission and Evangelism’ (1982) and ‘Together towards Life’ (2013),” *Exchange* 43:2 (2014), 273–90.

in 1958) pointed to that. Member churches of councils in Asia and Africa that were members of the IMC had become members of the WCC.¹¹

The report that the IMC submitted to its last assembly and to the WCC assembly problematized the responsibility for world mission in the categories of evangelistic activities versus theological discussions. “When the Willingen meeting of the Council took as its main theme ‘The Missionary Obligation of the Church,’ there were some who feared that this betokened either a shift of interest from evangelical obedience to theological discussion, or a too inward looking at the meaning of mission in contrast to awareness of an unfinished task.”¹²

The IMC emphasized the task at hand as fulfilling the unfinished task of the World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh in 1910 to bring the gospel to the whole world. It can safely be assumed that for some Asian and African leaders, the integration promised that their countries and churches would, as members of the WCC, leave the tag “mission field” behind.

The New Delhi assembly declared that “the Christian mission is one throughout the world” and that the WCC was concerned with mission in six continents and not with three as the IMC had been, foreshadowing the well-known slogan of the Mexico conference 1963.¹³ It is interesting to note that this was even reflected in the revised WCC’s constitution. The main function of the WCC was defined at New Delhi as “to carry on the work of the world movements for faith and order and life and work and of the International Missionary Council” and “to support the churches in their worldwide missionary and evangelistic task.”¹⁴ One expectation expressed within IMC circles was that after integration, the churches could not meet in the WCC without addressing their responsibility for worldwide mission.¹⁵

11 For an account with a focus on Newbigin’s role, see Mark Laing, “The Church Is the Mission: Integrating the IMC with the WCC,” *International Review of Mission* 100:2 (2011), 216–31.

12 IMC, *Report to the Final Assembly*, 4. The Willingen minutes saw the source of the “missionary movement” in the triune God himself. God sends to the “immediate neighbourhood” but “each group of Christians is also responsible for the proclamation of His Kingship to the uttermost parts of the earth.” International Missionary Council, *The Missionary Obligation of the Church. Willingen, Germany, July 5–7, 1952* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1953), 2–3.

13 *The New Delhi Report: The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches 1961* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 249–250.

14 “The Constitution and Rules of the World Council of Churches,” *ibid.*, 426–43, at 427.

15 “Proposed Integration of the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council. A. Summary of the Discussion in Plenary Sessions on the Proposed Integration of the I.M.C. and the W.C.C.,” in Orchard, *The Ghana Assembly*, 156–64, at 157–59.

From the perspective of a merger of two organizations, one can observe that the CWME became a part of the WCC without being fully integrated. The sections on witness, service, and unity and several others of the New Delhi report bring to light the wide array of missionary questions that were debated in different departments of the WCC from different perspectives.¹⁶ There was a study division and department for evangelism before the integration of the IMC. The IMC was integrated as a conference on World Mission and Evangelism, with the former members of the IMC as constituency, and as a commission in a newly created division within the WCC. Both, the conference and the commission, had the tasks to “further the proclamation to the whole world of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to the end that all men may believe in him and be saved,” as well as to remind the churches of the unfinished evangelistic task and to foster united action for world evangelization. Studies on the meaning of the churches’ missionary task and “questions directly related to the spread of the Gospel in the World” were also listed as functions of the commission.¹⁷ Studies that had been done over a long period of time, as they had been done by the research department of the IMC,¹⁸ were assigned to the renamed Department for Studies in Evangelism of the WCC. A further hint of the limitations of this integration was that the conference and the Division for World Mission and Evangelism continued to be responsible for their own finances, and the bigger part of their budgets was supposed to come from the member councils of the conference. The funds for the personnel in the study department were provided by the commission, which also proposed people to be appointed.¹⁹

It almost seems as if this incomplete integration replicated within the setup of the WCC the distinction between, on the one hand, mission as reaching out to the ends of the world (the evangelistic task as it had been defined by Edinburgh in 1910 and in the last report of the IMC) and, on the other, evangelism as a concern of local congregations in a worldwide fellowship (mission everywhere). The well-known study on the “Missionary Structure of the

16 Reports of the sections, *The New Delhi Report*, 77–137. See the report on the Committee on the Department on Studies in Evangelism and the report on the Department on Missionary Studies, 188–95. The Commission and Division of World Mission and Evangelism had its own report, 249–61.

17 “Constitution of the Commission on and Division of World Mission and evangelism,” in *The New Delhi Report*, 421–26, at 421. For the role and importance of the *International Review of Mission*, see Andrew F. Walls, “Missions or Mission? The International Review of Mission after 75 Years,” *International Review of Mission* 100:2 (2011), 181–88.

18 IMC, *Report to the Final Assembly*, 20–28.

19 *The New Delhi Report*, 297, 351–53. The budget is on page 368.

Congregation” was located in the WCC study department and not in the Division for World Mission and Evangelism. The minutes of the second meeting of the CWME 1963 in Mexico City convey, in contrast, the impression of an independent commission continuing the work the IMC had been doing.²⁰

A similar observation can be made about the next WCC assembly, in 1968 in Uppsala, which is often seen as having understood mission as humanizing the world. Metropolitan Lakdasa de Mel (Church of India, Pakistan, Burma, and Sri Lanka) noted in his introduction to section 2, “Renewal in Mission,” that this draft report was the result of work at different levels in the life of the member churches and in the ecumenical council. He quoted studies such as those on missionary structures of the congregation, on dialogue with people of other faith, on theological education, on the missionary role of the lay Christian, on the growth of churches, on the Bible, and on the healing task of the churches, as well as new experiments in mission in urban and industrial areas and on common witness.²¹ Looking at this array of topics and issues demonstrates how wide and diverse the understanding of mission was. This was linked to a reflection on whose responsibility it was to pursue the different aspects of mission and through which structures: member churches, mission councils, or specialized ministries as members of the commission or joint departments within the WCC.

The various assemblies of the WCC and the missionary conferences of the commission respectively continued to discuss which structures would correspond best to this wide array of themes and transversal issues. The place of the commission within the WCC had been reconfigured at various times, and this had repercussions on the WCC departments, and vice versa. The Constitution of 1961 defined the aim of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism as “to further the proclamation to the whole world of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to the end that all men may believe in him and be saved.” All member councils of the IMC were considered to be affiliated members of the commission, which would meet every five years as a conference. A division within the WCC was introduced to carry out the aim and functions of the commission, and an accompanying committee was established.²² The recent commission by-laws of 2016 states that the two organizations merged “on

20 Ronald K. Orchard, ed., *Witness in Six Continents: Records of the Meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches held in Mexico City December 8th to 19th, 1963* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1963).

21 *The Uppsala Report 1968: Official Report of the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches Uppsala July 4–20, 1968* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1968), 21–24.

22 “Constitution of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism and Division for World Mission and Evangelism,” in *New Delhi Report*, 421–426, at 421, 424.

the understanding that the concerns for mission and evangelism would have a structured place at the heart of the WCC.” The original commission was renamed as the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism. The main task of the conference was “to meet together for reflection and consultation leading to common witness” and thus to “to assist the Christian community in the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, by word and deed, to the whole world to the end that all may believe in him and be saved.”²³ The new commission, in turn, seems to be the continuation of the former committee accompanying the work of the earlier division, since all the members of the commission are appointed by the central committee. In the wake of this major rearrangement, the sequence of conference and commission was changed in the by-laws and now the (new) commission was placed first.

The change occurred between the WCC assemblies in Canberra in 1991 and in Harare in 1998.²⁴ The report of the Missionary Conference in Salvador de Bahia in 1996 hints at a heated discussion on the constitution of the CWME. The conference participants demanded that the central committee reconsider its plan of restructuring. They demanded “to continue to give visible structural expression of the mission agenda within the WCC and to give adequate representation of the affiliated bodies in such a structure. It was also felt that any such structure should include sufficient representation of those who are actively engaged in mission even outside the organized structures of the WCC member churches.”²⁵ These demands give the impression of what was at stake for the conference participants.

The demands and the structural changes mirror the ongoing debates on evangelism and mission and on the agent of mission, be it the church or

23 *By-laws of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism as Adopted by the WCC Central Committee in 2016*. The addition “by word and deed” appears for the first time in the Constitution of the Conference in the WCC assembly in Nairobi. See “Constitution of the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism and the Subunit and Commission on World Mission and Evangelism,” in *Breaking Barriers Nairobi 1975: The Official Report of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Nairobi, 23 November – 10 December, 1975*, ed. David M. Paton (London, Grand Rapids: SPCK, William B. Eerdmans, 1976), 390–94, at 357.

24 Compare the “Commission on World Mission and Evangelism and Conference on World Mission and Evangelism: By-Laws,” in Jacques Matthey, ed., “*Come Holy Spirit, Heal and Reconcile!*” *Report of the WCC Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, Athens, Greece, May 2005* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2008), 356–60, at 356, 358.

25 “‘Thuma Mina’—‘Send Us, Lord’: The Conference Closes,” in *Called to One Hope: The Gospel in Diverse Cultures*, ed. Christopher Duraisingh (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998), 186–89, at 187. Jacques Matthey mentions that the “name and function [of CWME] was changed after the Canberra assembly in 1991, when it was integrated into the Unit II Commission. In Harare 1998, it was re-established as CWME,” see Jacques Matthey, ed., *You Are the Light of the World: Statements on Mission by the World Council of Churches, 1980–2005* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005), 61, note 1.

agencies. They were led within the WCC and were one dimension of the later discussion between the so-called ecumenicals and evangelicals.²⁶ It is illuminating to compare the respective paragraphs of the recent WCC and CWME constitutions with those of the New Delhi versions. The aim of the original CWME conference to “further the proclamation to the whole world of the Gospel of Jesus Christ” was changed to “assist the Christian community in the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, by word and deed.” In parallel, the WCC constitution was changed from “to support the churches in their worldwide missionary and evangelistic task”²⁷ to “the primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the WCC is to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one Eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ through witness and service to the world, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe.” The WCC will “facilitate common witness in each place and in all places, and support each other in their work for mission and evangelism.”²⁸

One interesting detail to note in this context is that two general secretaries of the WCC had been directors of the CWME. Philip Potter had been the director of the CWME from 1967 to 1973 before he was elected as general secretary. Emilio Castro followed Potter as director of the commission and later as general secretary of the WCC in 1985.²⁹ At the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the WCC, Potter said at the WCC assembly at Harare, “The WCC has continued and intensified its central task of furthering the mission of the church in six continents, and the proclamation of the gospel in diverse cultures, as well as the ministry of health and healing. There has also been a steady development of dialogue, in mutual respect and openness, with people of the major non-Christian faiths. In several cases cooperation on concerns of human rights and welfare and of disarmament and peace is fruitfully taking place. All this must go on.”³⁰

The brief overview elucidates the widening perspective on mission over the decades. One effect of the widening is what can be called the confluence of

26 Kim, “Mission: Integrated or Autonomous?” 62–80.

27 *The New Delhi Report*, 427.

28 *Constitution and Rules of the World Council of Churches*, as amended by the WCC central committee in 2016.

29 “Editors of the International Review of Mission,” in *International Review of Mission* 100:2 (2011), 367–73, at 370. This overview is one of the few places where a list of the directors of the CWME is given.

30 “Visions for the Future: Address by Philip Potter to the WCC on the Occasion of its 50th Anniversary,” in *Together on the Way: Official Report of the Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, ed. Diane Kessler (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1999), 273–77, at 275.

themes and topics. Proclaiming the good news to the poor or marginalized, engaging for justice, peace and reconciliation, and including care for creation are issues with which mission as well as other units or actors within and outside of the WCC are engaging. Telling examples for this convergence in the recent past could be the declaration on “Just Peace” of the conference 2011 in Kingston, Jamaica, summing up the “Decade of Overcoming violence.” Many issues raised there, such as “peace in community” or “peace with creation,” can be understood as peace being a lens for revisioning mission and vice versa.³¹ Another example could be the document “Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World” (2011), which defined an ethics of mission by relating it to evangelism and interfaith dialogue.³² Both are examples not only of a confluence of issues but also of a growing interaction of actors within and beyond the WCC. The document “Christian Witness” is a joint statement by the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, the World Evangelical Alliance and the WCC, represented by its desk for interreligious dialogue and the CWME evangelism desk.³³ Among the WCC members, meanwhile local churches, and not organizations, have been considered to be the main actors in world mission.³⁴

The Changing Landscapes for Mission

The developments described so far are expressions of an ongoing discussion about mission and evangelism and the undergirding question of who is responsible for doing mission and evangelism. One of the functions of the IMC had been to be a council of organizations doing mission. The succeeding CWME is a platform for deliberation and reflection, and in turn the world missionary conferences changed their character, too. It is well-known that the integration of the IMC and the WCC was one reason for the occurring split

31 *Glory to God and Peace on Earth: The Message of the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation, WCC, Kingston, Jamaica, 17–25 May 2011*, quoted in Keum, *Together towards Life*, §77.

32 “Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious world,” quoted in Keum, *Together towards Life*, §90.

33 Jooseop Keum, “CWME: From Athens to Arusha: Directors Report,” in *Moving in the Spirit: Report of the World Council of Churches Conference on World Mission and Evangelism*, ed. Risto Jukko and Jooseop Keum (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2019), 76. See the issue “Christian Witness in a Multi-religious World,” *Transformation* 36:1 (2019).

34 See, for instance, the paragraphs on the local congregations in “Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes” in *Ecumenical Missiology: Changing Landscapes and New Conceptions of Mission*, ed. Kenneth R. Ross, Jooseop Keum, Kyriaki Avtzi, and Roderick R. Hewitt (Oxford: Regnum and Geneva: WCC, 2016), 355–80.

in the global mission movement, and this story does not need to be told here again. The focus on reflecting on holistic mission in conjunction with assigning the responsibility for mission and evangelism to the local churches fuelled the suspicion that this would lead the churches to neglect their responsibility to proclaim the gospel to the ends of the world, not only at their place in the world. Organizations and churches that had not been willing to take the path of integration organized different structural expressions for unity in mission and witness. Some seem to have assumed that a new IMC would be installed by those who did not join the integration. Eventually, the Lausanne Movement was constituted as a network on the basis of the Lausanne covenant.³⁵ The opposition between the so-called ecumenicals and evangelicals was born and continued to mark the debate on mission and evangelism and proved its potential to lead to conflict and opposition instead of unity in witness.³⁶

These developments occurred in a rapidly changing world. The changes have often been analyzed, and every paper on mission contextualized mission according to the authors' perception of these changes. The clause "Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes" in the title of the TTL mission document hints at this. I concentrate here on these issues as a background to the proposed focus on a few selected mission documents of the CWME:³⁷

- The integration happened in the beginning phase of decolonisation and independence movements in various countries, in which the mission-initiated churches had to define their position. Some mission societies responded to these changes by developing into international communities in mission on several continents. The United Evangelical Mission, Wuppertal, Germany; the Communauté Évangélique d'Action Apostolique (CEVAA) with churches mainly associated with the former Paris Mission; and in 1977, the Council for World Mission (CWM) in succession to the former London and Congregationalist mission societies organized the sharing of resources (personnel, ideas, finances) through structures of participation

35 Margunn Serigstad Dahle, Lars Dahle, and Knud Jørgensen, eds, *The Lausanne Movement: A Range of Perspectives*, Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series, 22 (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2014).

36 Kim, "Mission: Integrated or Autonomous?"

37 I refer here to Marina Ngursangzeli Behera, "'Global North and Global South': The Significance and Meaning of These Terms for Our Understanding and Practice of Mission," *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai. Theologia Orthodoxa* 64:2 (2019), 29–38.

in decision-making and of mutual accountability.³⁸ These new communities joined the CWME as affiliated members.³⁹

- It has been observed that the spread of the Christian faith and the growth in numbers globally occurred in the mentioned decades.⁴⁰ This led to the so-called shift of Christianity to the global South and to claims like that Christianity was reborn as a Non-Western religion.⁴¹ Charismatics and Pentecostals are supposed to form the fastest growing sector in World Christianity.⁴²
- This led to a certain blurring of denominational differences and to new actors in mission and evangelism. “(T)he development of world Christianity . . . is largely the result of personal contact, the formation of communities and migration. Christians today move around the world as the first Christians moved around the Roman Empire—for employment, as slaves or domestic servants or due to persecution. As they do so, they share their faith. One of the unforeseen consequences of contemporary globalization may be the further spread of Christianity from below.”⁴³
- The resurgence of religion led to the importance of religious communities, which in some cases had the effect of a renewed fusion of religion and nationalism as it can be observed in India, for example. TTL speaks about the “excessive assertion of religious identities and persuasions that seem to break and

38 Kai Funkschmidt, “New Models of Mission Relationship and Partnership,” in *International Review of Mission* 91:363 (2002), 558–76. For CWM see Desmond van der Water, ed., *Postcolonial Mission: Power and Partnership in World Christianity* (Upland: Sopher Press, 2011).

39 The three organizations are mentioned at the conference in Salvador 1998 as examples for mutuality in mission. Duraisingh, *Called to One Hope*, 72.

40 See as two examples Dana Robert, “Shifting Southward: Global Christianity since 1945,” in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 24:2 (2000), 50–58; and Todd Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross, eds, *Atlas of Global Christianity 1910–2010* (Edinburgh: University Press, 2009).

41 See Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2003).

42 Wonsuk Ma, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, and J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, eds, *Pentecostal Mission and Global Christianity*, Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series 20 (Oxford: Regnum, 2014).

43 Kirsteen Kim and Sebastian Kim, *Christianity as a World Religion* (London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2008), 212.

brutalize in the name of God rather than heal and nurture communities.”⁴⁴

- The end of dictatorships in Latin America and the collapse of the apartheid system in South Africa led to truth and reconciliation commissions. A number of conflicts—such as those in Ireland, the former Yugoslavia, and the MENA region, or the genocide in Burundi/Rwanda—brought to light the involvement of churches and religious groups in violent conflicts. This brought the question of conflict transformation, forgiving, reconciliation, and “just peace” to the mission agenda.
- Migration of Christians led to migration-induced churches in the former heartlands of missionaries to the mission fields.

These and other changes in the global situation challenged the churches and mission organizations and influenced their understanding and practice of mission and evangelism. They also brought new players to the field outside the fold of the ecumenical fellowship organized in the WCC. Prominent issues include the split into an ecumenical and evangelical world of mission and evangelism, the growth of the charismatic and Pentecostal movement, globalization, the need for reconciliation, and the expanding of theological concerns to include “peace with creation” beyond the emphasis on justice. These issues have had an impact on theology—for instance, in bringing reconciliation and healing and creation care to the mission agenda—and have enhanced the pneumatological basis for mission theology.

The Commission on World Mission and Evangelism as a Reflector on Mission and Evangelism

The CWME organizes a world mission conference between two WCC assemblies. In the 21st century, it met in Athens (2005) and more recently in 2018 in Arusha, Tanzania.⁴⁵ Since 1974, the Lausanne Movement has organized congresses on world evangelization, including the important forum 1980 in Pattaya, Thailand, while the CWME mission conference was meeting in Melbourne. The second Lausanne congress met in 1989 in Manila,

⁴⁴ Keum, *Together towards Life*, §82.

⁴⁵ See the report on all mission conferences in Kenneth R. Ross, Jooseop Keum, Kyriaki Avtzi, and Roderick R. Hewitt, eds, *Ecumenical Missiology: Changing Landscapes and New Conceptions of Mission* (Oxford: Regnum; and Geneva: WCC Publications, 2016), 6–146.

Philippines, close to the CWME conference in Melbourne and Lausanne III in 2010 in Cape Town, shortly after the Edinburgh Jubilee Conference.

This background shows in retrospect how much theologians and church leaders struggled to understand the upheavals in the world and their significance for mission and evangelism. The global trends and the diversifying of mission movements were reflected in the missiological reflection of the CWME and the WCC, both at the missionary conferences and at the WCC assemblies. The world mission conferences were platforms for theological reflection, and the circle of those to involve in the discussion was continually widened as Roman Catholic representatives, evangelicals, and Pentecostals became full participating members of the CWME, not guests or consultants.⁴⁶ Participants from all over the globe attempted to read the signs of the times and to contextualize mission as a response to the challenges of the time. The extent to which the transcending of the geographical understanding of mission has shaped ecumenical discussions can be seen in the fact that it is still addressed in TTL in a hermeneutics of power: that is, of centres and margins.

Despite lingering differences and controversies, exchanges have taken place between the various movements. In more recent times, contacts have deepened in some cases and cooperation—such as the one for the Edinburgh Jubilee Conference in 2010—indicate a rapprochement of the old camps of ecumenists and evangelicals in mission-theological questions, also at the last two world mission conferences of the WCC. There is a strong consensus that mission is holistic, that it must be done in word and deed. This can be found in some of the main documents of the CWME and the WCC on mission, which will be briefly presented in this perspective.⁴⁷

Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation (1982)

In 1982, the central committee of the WCC adopted “Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation” (EA).⁴⁸ It had asked for a statement based on the debates on mission and evangelism at the WCC assembly at Nairobi (1975). Matthey, who later served as the director of the CWME, writes of an “unsuccessful attempt” to produce such a statement for the Melbourne conference and reports that the then director of the CWME, Emilio Castro, wrote a first draft, which after many discussions and revisions was approved by the

46 *From Harare to Porto Alegre: An Illustrated Account of the Life of the World Council of Churches*. December 1998 to February 2006 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005).

47 It is more adequate to speak of a confluence and convergence than to say “that positions that the CWME had defended for decades have now become somewhat common ground.” Keum, “CWME: From Athens to Arusha,” 75.

48 Matthey, *You Are the Light of the World*, 1–38.

commission and eventually by the central committee. Matthey opines that the “EA is rightly considered a successful result of ecumenical conversations, involving missiologists and mission practitioners from various church and spiritual affiliations, including Roman Catholic, Orthodox and evangelical.”⁴⁹

The EA speaks of mission, proclamation, and evangelism without defining or differentiating the two terms. One of its often-quoted aspects is that evangelism is linked with social action: “There is no evangelism without solidarity; there is no Christian solidarity that does not involve sharing the knowledge of the kingdom which is God’s promise to the poor of the earth.”⁵⁰

Nature and Mission of the Church (1998)

Another hint to the confluence of mission related issues and to the cooperation of different actors is the document “The Nature and Mission of the Church” of the WCC Commission on Faith and Order. There is no mention of any involvement of the CWME staff or commission in its introduction and no quote from a mission document, but mission is very prominent in this document.⁵¹ Throughout the document, mission is defined as characteristic of the essence of the church. “Mission thus belongs to the very being of the Church. This is a central implication of affirming the apostolicity of the Church, which is inseparable from the other three attributes of the Church—unity, holiness and catholicity” (no. 35).⁵² Mission is rooted in God whose design is “to gather all creation under the Lordship of Christ (cf. Eph 1:10), and to bring humanity and all creation into communion.” This leads to proclamation because among the tangible signs of this “new life of communion” is “proclaiming and witnessing to the good news in mission and working together for justice and peace” (no. 32).

Mission rooted in the Triune God as a dimension of the essence of the church which is a sign for the world and intentional evangelism in Christ’s way are interconnected.

The Church, embodying in its own life the mystery of salvation and the transfiguration of humanity, participates in the mission of Christ to reconcile all things to God and to one another through Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Rom 8:18-25). Through its

49 *Ibid.*, 1.

50 *Ibid.*, 23.

51 *From Harare to Porto Alegre*, 56.

52 *Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement*, Faith and Order Paper No. 198 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005), <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/the-nature-and-mission-of-the-church-a-stage-on-the-way-to-a-common-statement>.

worship (*leiturgia*); service, which includes the stewardship of creation (*diakonia*); and proclamation (*kerygma*) the Church participates in and points to the reality of the Kingdom of God. In the power of the Holy Spirit the Church testifies to the divine mission in which the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. (no. 36)

This Faith and Order paper was one input for a joint conference with the Mission and Evangelism Team in 2000 which was already planning for the next missionary conference. One of the major intentions of this common conference was “to take stock of existing approaches to ecclesiology and mission within various church traditions.”⁵³ It thus highlights the focus which was increasingly put on the church as the agent in mission and on evangelism at the locality of the churches.

Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today (2000)

“Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today” was the result of attempts to take into account the changing landscapes since 1982 after abandoning the idea to prepare a new mission statement.⁵⁴ It was discussed at the above-mentioned conference with the Faith and Order Commission, which points to the tendency to identify the church as the main actor in doing mission. In the document, globalization is briefly described by its economic, political, and cultural consequences. It suggests that the disintegration of nations that emerged during the decolonization phase led to ethnic revitalization movements and conflicts in which cultures, and especially religions, became more formative frames of reference than the previously dominant ideologies and in which the churches had not always played a positive role.

The discussion of a first draft at the World Mission Conference in Salvador da Bahía, Brazil, in 1996, made clear that the paper needed fundamental revision. A revised version was presented to one of the Padare workshops held during the WCC assembly in Harare in 1998, which had no plenary on mission.⁵⁵

One and a half years later, the document was presented together with a summary of the reactions collected during the assembly to the newly elected Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME Commission) at its first meeting in Morges, Switzerland, in the year 2000. The CWME Commission adopted the

53 “Editorial,” *International Review of Mission* 90:358 (2001), 228.

54 Jacques Matthey, “Missiology in the World Council of churches: Update,” *International Review of Mission* 90:359 (2001), 427–33, at 428.

55 In addition to the WCC assembly in Harare in 1998, the assembly in Porto Alegre in 2006 had no plenary on mission.

statement as a study document to be used for reflection and dialogue on mission in preparation for the next world mission conference in 2005.⁵⁶

This document gives definitions of “mission” and “evangelism” which earlier documents only implied.⁵⁷

(a) “Mission” carries a holistic understanding: the proclamation and sharing of the good news of the gospel by word (*kerygma*), deed (*diakonia*), prayer and worship (*leiturgia*), and the everyday witness of the Christian life (*martyria*); teaching as building up and strengthening people in their relationship with God and each other; and healing as wholeness and reconciliation into *koinonia*—communion with God, communion with people, and communion with creation as a whole.

(b) “Evangelism,” while not excluding the different dimensions of mission, focuses on explicit and intentional voicing of the gospel, including the invitation to personal conversion to a new life in Christ and to discipleship.⁵⁸

The holistic understanding of mission is rooted in the marks of the church: *kerygma*, *diakonia*, *leiturgia*, and *martyria*. This is in parallel to the understanding of mission as it is expressed in the quoted Faith and Order document. The expression in the title “Mission in Unity” refers to the search for ways of witnessing together in unity and cooperation—despite differing ecclesiologies—“so that the world may believe” (John 17:21) within the context of the challenges that churches are today facing everywhere.

Edinburgh 2010

The missionary conference in Athens 2005 brought healing and reconciliation on the mission agenda and reconciled the *missio Dei* perspective with the centrality of the church in mission.⁵⁹ It was marked by including Roman Catholic, evangelical and Pentecostal participants.⁶⁰ This cooperation of the various actors helped the preparation of the 100th jubilee of the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference. The IMC and the WCC can both claim to be inheritors of movements that started in 1910, but other movements also trace their history and objectives back to this conference. The CWME had planned

56 Matthey, *You Are the Light of the World*, 59.

57 Ibid., 59.

58 “Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today,” in Matthey, *You Are the Light of the World*, 63–64. Compare with Keum, *Together towards Life*, §85.

59 Ross et al., *Ecumenical Missiology*, 139.

60 Matthey, ed., “Come Holy Spirit, Heal and Reconcile”.

to organize a world missionary conference in 2011 but decided to join for a jubilee event toward Edinburgh 2010, encouraged by the strong participation of Pentecostals and evangelicals in its activities.⁶¹ For a common conference to mark the jubilee of the 1910 conference, questions were raised, such as who could legitimately organize such an event and where should it take place. Could a location in the global South not be misunderstood as triumphantly celebrating that the task begun in Edinburgh had been successfully completed? And what should be the focus of this conference: looking back or looking forward?

In the discussions between the representatives of the different movements, it became apparent that they had different answers to these and other questions.⁶² A council formed by 19 different organizations and networks, among them the CWME, eventually launched a study process. Study groups around the world worked on nine mission themes and seven so-called transversal themes (such as the role of the Bible or that of women or youth). These groups were asked to present, on behalf of a multipolar Christianity, studies on how to respond to some of the issues identified as urgent for mission in the 21st century. The study group texts were then reviewed and discussed at Edinburgh in June 2010 at a conference hosted by the above-mentioned council with some 250 participants from across World Christianity. The study documents presented there as well as materials prepared in advance, such as the retrospective of 1910 and the *Atlas of World Christianity* were consciously reminiscent of the form of the study conference that had been held in Edinburgh in 1910.⁶³ One of the aims of the 1910 conference had been to develop an empirical-based science of mission.⁶⁴ The studies for the 2010 conference were continued after the event in Edinburgh with a series of books on various issues in worldwide mission and evangelism. The main outcomes of this study process have been published in 37 volumes by Regnum Books of the Oxford

61 Compare the message after the meeting of the newly elected CWME in April 2007, <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/world-mission-and-evangelism-conference-recommended-for-2011>, with this message, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/towards-2010-mission-for-the-21st-century>.

62 See the following two volumes: David A. Kerr and Kenneth R. Ross, eds, *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now*, Regnum Studies in Mission (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2009); and Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim, eds, *Witnessing to Christ Today: Edinburgh 2010 Vol. II*, Regnum Edinburgh 2010 Series 2 (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2010).

63 See Kerr and Ross, *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now*; Johnson and Ross, *Atlas of Global Christianity 1910–2010*.

64 Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910*, Studies in the History of Christian Missions (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 3.

Centre for Mission Studies (OCMS), UK, and demonstrate the existence of networks in mission studies beyond the constituency of the WCC.⁶⁵

“Edinburgh 2010 brought together probably the widest spectrum of world Christianity ever to engage in a shared global project of mission study. It took place at a remarkable moment when representatives of so many different sectors of the world church were able to affirm an incisive statement of the meaning of Christian mission for our time.”⁶⁶ Each of the three major tracks within the worldwide mission movement, however, held their own respective conferences claiming the heritage of Edinburgh 2010. The Tokyo conference in 2010 was organized in honour of Ralph Winter and attempted to form a network of parachurch mission agencies.⁶⁷ The Lausanne Movement, which was involved in the Edinburgh 2010 conference, organized its 3rd International Congress for World Evangelisation in Cape Town. Both conferences prove that efforts to evangelize people groups identified as the last unreached is high on the agenda for large parts of the evangelical mission movement.⁶⁸ These conferences and the Edinburgh 2010 event are in that perspective a sign that the mission movement has become global and more plural and multicentred and that organizational expression for mission and evangelism has become more fragmented than during the period of the IMC.

The participants in the Edinburgh 2010 conference could agree on a short “Common Call” in which they renewed their commitment to mission and evangelism in unity.⁶⁹ The “Cape Town Commitment: A Statement of Faith and a Call to Action” is a much longer document. The commitment is composed in a language of love: the mission of God flows from God’s love for the world, and Christians evangelize out of love for their neighbours and the world. The focus of the congress and the declaration is therefore the ongoing commitment to evangelize the world and to bear witness to the truth of Jesus Christ in a pluralistic and globalized world, to build peace in a broken world, and to bear witness in living together with people of other faiths in an attitude of humility and respect that excludes proselytism or persuasion or violence.

65 See <https://www.regnumbooks.net/collections/edinburgh-centenary>.

66 Ross et al., *Ecumenical Missiology*, 143.

67 Kim, “Mission: Integrated or Autonomous,” 74.

68 “Cape Town 2010: The Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization,” Lausanne Movement, <https://lausanne.org/cape-town-2010-the-third-lausanne-congress-on-world-evangelization>.

69 Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson, eds, *Mission Today and Tomorrow: Edinburgh 2010*. Regnum Edinburgh 2010 Series (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2011), 1–2.

After the Lausanne Declaration (1974), the Cape Town Commitment became an important document for the evangelical world mission movement.

A comparison between this document and those of the Edinburgh 2010 conference highlights that a confluence in themes and theologoumena does not mean unity in the answer to the question of who is responsible for doing mission and evangelism. The Cape Town Conference is characterized as a conference of mission and church leaders, but its document speaks rather vaguely of the worldwide or Global Church. It refers to local communities as well as mission movements and has no ecclesiological dimension comparable to those in the WCC documents to which a variety of church families and tradition would need to agree.

One effect of the joint conference in Edinburgh was that for the first time since the integration there was no world mission conference between two WCC assemblies. As diverse as the council was, made up of representatives from the WCC, the Roman Catholic Church, Orthodox churches, the Pentecostal movement, African independent churches and evangelical movements (Lausanne, World Evangelical Alliance), so was the participation in the fora on the study topics.⁷⁰ Some of those involved represented churches, movements, or organizations that had not existed in 1910, had not been invited, or did not wish to—the Edinburgh 2010 conference marked a step forward in the mission and ecumenism movement since 1910.

Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes (2012)

TTL is only the second major mission document that was endorsed by the central committee for the WCC fellowship and was presented to the member churches in an impressive plenary at the 13th WCC Assembly in Busan, South Korea.⁷¹ After having abandoned the plan for a mission document in the 1990s, the CWME started to work on such a document after the missionary conference in Athens. One issue of *International Review of Mission* published eight documents of four CWME working groups and from three ecumenical networks which were contributing to TTL.⁷² Inputs from Protestant mainline, Orthodox, Pentecostal, and evangelical voices were included and mirror the width of the mission movement. The draft was discussed in Manila in 2012 before the redrafted document was submitted to the central

70 For the membership in the council, see <http://www.edinburgh2010.org/en/about-edinburgh-2010/governance/general-council.html>.

71 “Mission in the Busan Assembly,” *International Review of Mission* 103:1 (2014).

72 See *International Review of Mission* 101 (2012).

committee of the WCC.⁷³ The Manila event was labelled “pre-Assembly,” happening before the Busan assembly, and replaced the world mission conference that could not take place between the WCC assembly in Porto Alegre 2006 and the then planned assembly in Busan.

TTL was not meant to replace the EA from 1982 but to supplement it, and it has been discussed intensively.⁷⁴ In the perspective of the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Arusha, it can be noted that the document has a strong pneumatological emphasis and attempts to describe a transformative missionary spirituality. On that basis, there is almost no issue discussed in mission and evangelism that is not picked up in the statement, which is a strong witness to the confluence of themes and issues. It could be noted in the line of the argument of this paper that TTL uses as similar definition of mission and evangelism and their relation, similar to the “Mission in Unity Today” document.

”Evangelism,” while not excluding the different dimensions of mission, focuses on explicit and intentional articulation of the gospel, including “the invitation to personal conversion to a new life in Christ and to discipleship.” In different churches, there are differing understandings of how the Spirit calls us to evangelize in our contexts. For some, evangelism is primarily about leading people to personal conversion through Jesus Christ; for others, evangelism is about being in solidarity and offering Christian witness through presence with oppressed peoples; others again look on evangelism as one component of God’s mission. Different Christian traditions denote aspects of mission and evangelism in different ways; however, we can still affirm that the Spirit calls us all towards an understanding of evangelism which is grounded in the life of the local church where worship (*leiturgia*) is inextricably linked to witness (*martyria*), service (*diakonia*), and fellowship (*koinonia*).⁷⁵

Arusha 2018

In 2018, the CWME of the WCC accepted an invitation from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania to hold a world mission conference in Arusha. This was the second world mission conference on the African continent, 60 years after the IMC meeting in Achimota, Ghana, and it was the largest after Edinburgh 1910, with more than one thousand participants.

73 See the issues “New Ecumenical Affirmation on Mission and Evangelism” of *International Review of Mission* 101:1 (2012), and especially the “Report of Listeners Group” in “New Milestone in Mission,” *International Review of Mission* 101:2 (2021), 422–36.

74 See for instance Ross et al., *Ecumenical Missiology*, 354–563.

75 Keum, *Together towards Life*, §85.

The theme was “Moving in the Spirit: Called to transforming discipleship”⁷⁶ and the conference work was based on the latest mission document *Together towards Life*, with the focus on discipleship. The outcome of the conference is a wealth of material and the “Arusha Call to Discipleship.” Its 12-fold call echoes the 12 apostles whom Jesus sent out.⁷⁷ The 12 calls bring out the confluence of themes and issues in mission of the last decades. The emphasis on discipleship, on being called and empowered by the Spirit, offers a focus for the much broader *missio Spiritus* of TTL, but does not address the church as agent of mission and evangelism.

Conclusion

At the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism in Melbourne in 1980, Emilio Castro referred to his own famous statement in Bangkok 1972/73 that the era of world missions is over and the era of world mission has started.⁷⁸ The dropping of the “s” indicates a fundamental paradigm shift in mission, paralleled by the claim of mission in six continents.⁷⁹ This change has been anticipated when the IMC was transformed into a Conference and a Commission on World Mission(!) and Evangelism. The integration also provided an answer to the question of who is responsible for mission and evangelism. The integration of a council of mission-related bodies and a council of churches struggled in the beginning, as was shown, and the ongoing discussion on its location in the fellowship of churches somehow peaked in the period between the WCC assemblies in Canberra and Harare. The awareness of a need to broaden the participation in the conversation about mission grew after the missionary conference in Salvador de Bahia and after the WCC assembly in Harare.

The bold step was taken to transcend the membership of the council of churches inviting the Roman Catholic mission orders, evangelicals, and Pentecostals to send not only observers but delegates to participate fully in the

76 *Moving in the Spirit. Report of the World Council of Churches Conference on World Mission and Evangelism*, ed. by Risto Jukko and Jooseop Keum (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2019).

77 Kenneth R. Ross, *Mission Rediscovered. Transforming Disciples. A Commentary on the Arusha Call to Discipleship* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2020), 13. For a discussion of the call see the issue of the *International Review of Mission* 107(2), 2018.

78 *Your Kingdom Come. Mission Perspectives. Report on the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism, Melbourne, Australia, 12-25 May 1980* (Geneva: WCC Publication, 198), 26.

79 See the editorial by William H. Crane, “Dropping the S,” *International Review of Mission* 58 (1969), 141–44, at the occasion of the renaming of the journal to *International Review of Mission*.

CWME. This decision integrated more mission-related bodies (see the list of affiliated mission bodies and specialised ministries in the documents of the missionary conferences) into the conversation. The discussions of the CWME and the documents the commission produced highlight the deep integration of mission and church in a theology of mission. Its emphasis is on the local church as the agent in mission and evangelism within the Spirit's mission, who is present and active in the whole *oikoumene*. This is a highly significant insight for a worldwide fellowship of churches and emphasizes the responsibility of the churches for mission. The unity of churches in mission is in itself understood as a sign of God's mission.

Dana Robert writes on the IMC,

As a transnational network of regional and national Christian networks, the IMC cultivated spaces in which mission thinkers from around the world could reflect on important issues and process feedback from local contexts; its views were always evolving. . . . no other Protestant network engaged such a wide range of urgent issues that emanated from the grassroots of emerging World Christianity.⁸⁰

The CWME should be seen as an element of an emerging World Christianity, a platform for reflecting on mission and evangelism. The discussions in and outside of the CWME led to focal points for the ecumenical conversation on mission, leading to more unity at least in the understanding and conception of mission and evangelism. One result was the TTL document, which is lauded as a conciliar document with a breathtaking breadth on mission in the Spirit. In relation to the various constituencies the commission brings together, it should be noted that TTL has been adopted by the central committee for the WCC fellowship. From this perspective, it is noteworthy that the Lausanne Movement as a network in the evangelical world choose to draft its own mission statement, the Cape Town Commitment. Although there are analogies, especially in the notion of discipleship, between the two documents⁸¹ it is noticeable that the authors of TTL place the document in the ecumenical discussion about mission, unity, and witness by quoting a wide range of documents, including Roman Catholic documents and "Christian Witness," published jointly with the World Evangelical Alliance. This is an attempt to document the confluence of topics and the convergence in an ongoing ecumenical conversation on mission and evangelism. The footnotes

80 Dana L. Robert, "Co-Operation, Christian Fellowship, and Transnational Networking: The Birth of the International Missionary Council," pp. 28, 29 in this volume.

81 Timothy T. N. Lim, "The Holy Spirit in EG, TTL, and CTC: The Pneumatological Impulse for Christian Mission," in *International Review of Mission* 104:2 (2015), 203–16.

of the Cape Town Commitment consist almost entirely of biblical quotations, thus claiming clearly that the understanding of mission described in the commitment is based first of all on the Bible and less on a conciliar discussion among various ecclesiological traditions.

In the beginning of this chapter, the concern the IMC raised before the integration was quoted: “When the Willingen meeting of the Council took as its main theme ‘The Missionary Obligation of the Church’ there were some who feared that this betokened either a shift of interest from evangelical obedience to theological discussion, or a too inward looking at the meaning of mission in contrast to awareness of an unfinished task.”⁸² It would be illuminating to know what those who had these doubts would say on the work of the CWME in today’s context. The question as to whose task and responsibility is evangelism and mission to the whole world beyond the witness of a local church to its immediate neighbourhood in an intentional and responsible manner remains only vaguely answered in the studied CWME documents. What has changed since 1961 is that the answer is given today in the context of a World Christianity that is highly active in evangelism, and in which more missionaries than ever before are moving from everywhere to everywhere. A study reveals that never before have there been so many cross-cultural missionaries sent out by congregations and by churches and mission organizations than today. Among the ten countries from which most of these missionaries are being sent out, three are in the global South, which is a proof of the shift of gravity in World Christianity.⁸³ Noort of the Dutch Mission Council questioning the TTL asks,

Why is a reference to missionaries absent in a total of 112 articles, with possible exception of article 76, which refers to mission trips? . . . The development [the high number of cross-cultural missionaries] as such deserves to be assessed theologically as well as practically, including some thoughts about sending countries, types of employment, finances involved, and developments in the partnerships of sending and receiving churches (or agencies).⁸⁴

82 IMC *Report the final Assembly*, 4.

83 *Christianity in its Global Context, 1970–2020: Society, Religion, and Mission* (June 2013), Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, <https://www.gordonconwell.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2019/04/2ChristianityinitsGlobalContext.pdf>.

84 Noort, “So What?” 195.

The CWME documents and the WCC agree that the church is the agent of mission joining in the Spirit's mission. The unity of the churches in God's *oikoumene* is understood by the CWME and the WCC as a sign for God's mission. This answer is given in the context of a World Christianity in which large sectors seem to disagree and have different answers. The debate on mission, evangelism, and cooperation in mission continues and needs a global forum that is more flexible and not limited by strict structures and policies.

PART II

**Mission in 2022:
After 100 years of
structures of mission
cooperation and unity**

CHAPTER 4

Deep Resonances: Roman Catholic Perspectives on Together towards Life, The Arusha Call to Discipleship, and the WCC Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Arusha, Tanzania

Stephen Bevans, SVD

In the last decade, the World Council of Churches' (WCC) Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) has offered the Christian world several new and fresh ways of thinking about the mission that the triune God shares with the Christian church. In 2012, the WCC's central committee approved *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (TTL), only the second such document published by the CWME since the integration of the International Missionary Council (IMC) with the WCC in 1961.¹ In 2018, the CWME sponsored a major Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Arusha, Tanzania (hereafter, Arusha conference), a successor to the long line of mission conferences begun by the IMC from its founding in 1921—the centennial of which this book commemorates. At the Arusha conference, the assembly unanimously approved “The Arusha Call to Discipleship” (ACD), a brief but powerful document that aligned the ideas of TTL with its theme of “Moving in the Spirit: Called to transforming discipleship.”²

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- 1 Jooseop Keum, ed., *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), also available online at <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes>. References will be cited in the text as TTL with the corresponding paragraph number. The first mission document issued by the CWME after 1961 was entitled *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation*, in 1982, published in *International Review of Mission* Vol. 71, No. 284 (October 1982): 427-451 and *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 7:2 (1983): 65–71, also available online at <https://www.religion-online.org/book-chapter/appendix-mission-and-evangelism-an-ecumenical-affirmation/>.
 - 2 “The Arusha Call to Discipleship” (ACD), in *Call to Discipleship: Mission in the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace*, ed. Risto Jukko (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2021), 12–14. The document will be cited as ACD with the appropriate page number since it has no paragraph numbers. The document is also available online at <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/the-arusha-call-to-discipleship>.

The purpose of this present chapter is to explore the deep resonances evident in these two documents, together with the extraordinary event at Arusha, and contemporary Roman Catholic understandings of mission. Such resonances are many, and can be seen in the fact that several Roman Catholic documents are quoted directly in TTL.³ Even more significant are several allusions to Roman Catholic sources—paragraph 55 referring to the Trinity’s “overflowing love” is an allusion to paragraph 2 of *Ad gentes*, Vatican II’s Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity, and paragraph 96 uses language that hints at the beautiful beginning of the Second Vatican Council’s Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et spes* 1) and its acknowledgement that the Spirit works in ways known only to God (GS 22).⁴ Whether these allusions are deliberate or not, they certainly reveal that the members of the CWME and Roman Catholics are “pilgrims journeying alongside one another” (EG 244).⁵ In fact, because the Roman Catholic Church is a full member of the CWME (though not of the WCC), Catholic members played an active and integral part in the writing of both documents and were a vital presence at the Arusha conference.⁶

Perhaps the best way, however, to explore the deep resonances between the CWME’s most recent teaching and that of Roman Catholicism, and so offer

3 The documents quoted are: Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelization* (Vatican Press, 2007), https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20071203_notaevangellizzazione_en.html; Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, World Council of Churches, World Evangelical Alliance, *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct* (WCC, 28 June 2011), <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/christian-witness-in-a-multi-religious-world>; and Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue and Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dialogue and Proclamation*, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_19051991_dialogue-and-proclamatio_en.html.

4 Vatican Council II, Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity, *Ad gentes* (Vatican Press, 1965) (AG), https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html; Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes* (Vatican Press, 1965) (GS), https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

5 Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* (Vatican Press, 2013) (EG), 244, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

6 To give just one example of my own participation, I was consulted in the early stages of TTL’s writing, although I was not able to attend any of the early meetings. I was a member of the major consultation on the document that was held in March 2012 in Manila, Philippines, and was on the listening committee. Subsequent to the WCC assembly at Busan, I was appointed by the Pontifical Council of Inter-religious Dialogue and selected by the WCC central committee as a commissioner of the CWME and played a key role in the preparation of the Arusha conference.

a Roman Catholic perspective on TTL, ACD, and the Arusha conference as the title of this chapter suggests, is to reflect on the many missiological themes that the CWME and Roman Catholicism have in common. The chapter will not be able to reflect on all of them in detail, but a reflection on the major themes that constitute TTL and ACD will cover most of them, and certainly show convincingly the rich connection between CWME and Roman Catholic missiological thinking. Consequently, I have chosen seven key missiological themes, the first five of which appear in TTL, and all of which appeared at the Arusha conference and in ACD. These seven themes are the following:

- The mission of God and the missionary church
- Mission and creation
- Mission from the margins
- Mission and migration
- Evangelism
- Transforming discipleship
- Leadership

To offer an adequate Roman Catholic perspective on TTL, ACD, and the Arusha conference, my sense is that these documents and event need to be read against the broad, rich, and rather complex background of Roman Catholic teaching on mission in the last 60 years, since the beginning of the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), and the pontificates of John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis.⁷ Roman Catholic theology and missiology is rooted in this papal teaching, even though it might here and there emphasize or focus it in a different way. Although I will refer to Catholic theologians in what follows, my main task will be to see how TTL, ACD, and the Arusha conference are basically in accord with this official Catholic teaching.

The Mission of God and the Missionary Church

TTL begins with a confession of belief in the triune God and locates the origin of mission in God's heart, whose love "overflows to all humanity and creation" (TTL 1, 2). The triune God is a "missionary God who sent the

⁷ The successor of Paul VI was John Paul I, but since his pontificate lasted a bit more than a month, he had no real impact on Roman Catholic mission teaching.

Son to the world” (TTL 2), empowered by the same Spirit who “moved over the waters at the beginning” (TTL 12, 13) and commissioned Jesus at his baptism for his mission. That mission of healing and preaching ended with Jesus’s death on a cross, but “by the power of the Spirit he was raised to life” and with same Spirit sent his disciples to continue his mission to the ends of the earth (TTL 13, 14). “Through Christ,” therefore, “and in the Holy Spirit, God indwells the church, revealing God’s purposes for the world and empowering and enabling its members to participate in the realization of those purposes” (TTL 56). The church, then, gets its mission by its participation in the trinitarian life of God. “It is not possible to separate church and mission in terms of their origin and purpose” (TTL 57). ACD speaks of mission in terms of discipleship—“a gift and calling to be active collaborators with God in the transforming of the world (1 Thessalonians 3:2)” (ACD 12). It goes on to speak of Christians as those who share God’s mission “in what the church’s early theologians called ‘theosis’ or deification” (ACD 12), a powerful notion in the theology of the Orthodox Churches especially of participation in God’s life of love and mission.

In an effort to reach out to Orthodox and Pentecostal Christians, and in response to a renewed understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit in mission, TTL’s understanding of mission was crafted with a “pneumatological focus” that “recognizes that mission is essentially Christologically based and relates the work of the Holy Spirit to the salvation through Jesus Christ” (TTL 16). The Spirit is active throughout the Hebrew Bible from its first lines, leading “the people of God—inspiring wisdom (Prov. 8), empowering prophecy (Is. 61:1), stirring life from dry bones (Ezek. 37), prompting dreams (Joel 2), and bringing renewal as the glory of the Lord in the temple (2 Chron. 7:1)” (TTL 12). That same life-giving Spirit guided the entire ministry of Jesus and raised him to life after his Spirit-filled life led to his execution on the cross. Jesus sends the Spirit that filled him to move his disciples be the church, and the Spirit continues to move the church forward, often in subversive ways, “leading us beyond boundaries and surprising us” (TTL 25). “The pneumatological turn taken by TTL in regard to the mission of God was reflected in the first part of the [Arusha] conference title: ‘Moving in the Spirit.’”⁸ ACD recognizes that “the Holy Spirit continues to move at this time, and urgently calls us as Christian communities to respond with personal and communal conversion, and a transforming discipleship.”⁹

8 “The Arusha Conference Report,” in Jukko, *Call to Discipleship*, 17.

9 ACD, in *Call to Discipleship*, 12.

Some have critiqued TTL particularly of having a weak Christological focus, but a close reading of the document reveals that this is not the case. What the document does do, however, is to connect Christ and the Spirit in a much closer manner than has been traditionally done. In this way, TTL offers what contemporary theology calls a “Spirit Christology” on the one hand and a much more trinitarian focus to the history of salvation on the other. If there is any neglect of Christology in TTL, the emphasis on discipleship at Arusha certainly balances things out. ACD emphasizes that we are called “both individually and collectively” to be “disciples of Christ.”¹⁰

From a Roman Catholic perspective, I would say that the CWME’s understanding and articulation of the triune God and the missionary church is in perfect accord. Influenced no doubt by the IMC’s 1952 Willingen Conference,¹¹ Vatican II’s Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity says clearly and forcefully that “the church on earth is by its very nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the holy Spirit. This plan flows from ‘fountain-like love,’ the love of God the Father” (AG 2). This trinitarian nature of the church and mission is referred to in John Paul II’s mission encyclical *Redemptoris missio*.¹² As he put it, “The Council emphasized the Church’s ‘missionary nature,’ basing it in a dynamic way in the trinitarian mission itself.” Mission, therefore, “belongs to the very nature of the Christian life” (RM 1). Pope Francis’s amazing apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, published soon after his election and just a few weeks after TTL’s official presentation at the WCC’s assembly at Busan in November 2013 leaves no doubt that TTL’s and Arusha’s understanding of mission jibes closely with that of Roman Catholics. He too alludes to AG 2 (EG 179), but he uses slightly different language to talk about the missionary God and the missionary church. The church, he says, is “rooted in the Trinity,” but “exists concretely as a people of pilgrims and evangelizers, transcending any institutional expression, however necessary” (EG 111). Caught up in the joy of the gospel, the church “goes forth” as “a community of missionary disciples.” It is “an evangelizing community” that “gets involved by word and deed in people’s daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others” (EG 24). Francis’s dream is that the church make “a ‘missionary

10 Ibid., 13.

11 See Stephen B. Bevans, SVD, “Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity: *Ad Gentes*,” in Stephen B. Bevans, SVD and Jeffrey Gros, FSC, *Evangelization and Religious Freedom: Ad gentes, Dignitatis humanae* (New York / Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2009), 33–34.

12 John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio* (RM), https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio.html.

option” that is “capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be channeled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation” (EG 27).

Paul VI’s and John Paul II’s missionary approach was quite Christocentric, but they also would agree with the CWME’s emphasis on the Holy Spirit. In Paul VI’s apostolic exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*,¹³ the word “Trinity” never appears, and the document takes as a point of departure Jesus’ preaching of the kingdom of God (EN 8). A trinitarian sense, however, is never distant. In paragraph 75, Paul VI speaks forcefully of the importance of the Holy Spirit in the missionary activity of the church. “Evangelization will never be possible without the action of the Holy Spirit,” he writes, and briefly rehearses how the Holy Spirit is active and directive in Jesus’ ministry. Indeed, “the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of evangelization,” impelling “each individual to proclaim the gospel.” The pope goes on to emphasize that theologians and pastors, as well as all the faithful, “should study more thoroughly the nature and manner of the Holy Spirit’s action in evangelization today” (EN 75). This is precisely what the CWME has done in TTL, at the Arusha conference, and in ACD.

Mission and Creation

A very innovative aspect of TTL’s approach to mission is its emphasis on the care of creation as an integral, vital part of God’s mission that the church shares. “God’s mission begins with the act of creation. Creation’s life and God’s life are entwined.” TTL calls the church, therefore, “to move beyond a narrowly human-centred approach and to embrace forms of mission which express our reconciled relationship with all created life” (TTL 19). A commitment to ecology and eco-justice is central to mission, TTL insists. In a powerful line, it states that “we do not believe that the earth is to be discarded and only souls saved; both the earth and our bodies have to be transformed through the Spirit’s grace” (TTL 20). What is needed is a genuine conversion “which invites a new humility in regard to God’s Spirit.” Rather than thinking that mission is only humanity’s task, “humans can participate in communion with all of creation in celebrating the work of the Creator.” In a bold statement, TTL goes on to observe that “in many ways creation is in mission

13 Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* (Vatican Press, 1975) (EN), https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html.

to humanity; for instance, the natural world has a power that can heal the human heart and body” (TTL 22).

The Arusha conference was well aware of TTL’s inclusion of eco-justice as an essential part of mission. The “Arusha Conference Report” notes that the participants of the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute, a good portion of the number of youth that were present at the conference, planted 12 Mringaringa trees on the campus of Tumaini University near Arusha. At the Arusha conference as well, reusable water bottles were given to every participant in lieu of plastic bottles so harmful to the environment.¹⁴ In ACD, one of the calls read, “We are called to care for God’s creation, and to be in solidarity with nations severely affected by climate change in the face of a ruthless human-centred exploitation of the environment for consumerism and greed.”¹⁵

In an important chapter in a book on Roman Catholic mission in the last century, Australian Catholic theologian Denis Edwards traces the history of concern for the care of creation in Roman Catholic church teaching since the early 1970s. What Edwards reveals is a robust and growing ecological commitment of the official Roman Catholic Church that dovetails strongly with WCC concerns with the integrity of creation, and is very much in tune with the approach of TTL and ACD. For Roman Catholics as for the CWME, ecology is indeed at the heart of mission.¹⁶ Concern for creation in Catholic teaching goes back to 1971 and Paul VI’s apostolic letter *Octagesima Adveniens*,¹⁷ but it is during the pontificates of John Paul II and Benedict XVI that ecological concern begins to move to the centre of Catholic thinking. Pope Francis has moved commitment to the care of creation squarely into Catholic thinking about mission. What Edwards calls the “fundamental document”¹⁸ in Catholic teaching on creation is John Paul’s message for the World Day of Peace, 1 January 1990. As John Paul writes, “a new *ecological awareness* is beginning to emerge which, rather than being downplayed, ought to be encouraged to develop into concrete programmes and initiatives.”¹⁹

14 “The Arusha Conference Report,” in *Call to Discipleship*, 22.

15 ACD, in *Call to Discipleship*, 13.

16 Denis Edwards, “Ecology at the Heart of Mission: Reflections on Recent Catholic Teaching,” in *A Century of Catholic Mission*, ed. Stephen B. Bevans (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2013), 206–15.

17 See Paul VI, Apostolic Letter *Octagesima Adveniens* (Vatican Press, 1971) (OA), 21, https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_p-vi_apl_19710514_octogesima-adveniens.html.

18 Edwards, “Ecology at the Heart of Mission,” 207.

19 John Paul II, “Message for the World Day of Peace, 1 January 1990: ‘Peace with God the

Edwards cites three of John Paul II's social encyclicals, all of which lay down strong theological and moral foundations for ecological concern and commitment.²⁰ In a general audience address in 2001, John Paul used the language of "ecological conversion," a phrase that may well be alluded to in TTL 22. His text is powerful:

Unfortunately, if we scan the regions of our planet, we immediately see that humanity has disappointed God's expectations. [Humanity], especially in our time, has without hesitation devastated wooded plains and valleys, polluted waters, disfigured the earth's habitat, made the air unbreathable, disturbed the hydrogeological and atmospheric systems, turned luxuriant areas into deserts . . . We must therefore encourage and support the 'ecological conversion' which in recent decades has made humanity more sensitive to the catastrophe to which it has been heading.²¹

John Paul's successor, Benedict XVI, has actually been called the "green pope," since he had solar panels installed on the roof of the Vatican audience hall, and involved the Vatican in a reforestation project in Hungary.²² He has also spoken and written a number of times about ecological responsibility, notably in his 2009 encyclical *Caritas in veritate* and in his 2010 World Day of Peace Message.²³ In this latter message, Benedict is direct and blunt: "*The Church has a responsibility towards creation, and she considers it her duty to exercise that responsibility in public life, in order to protect earth, water and air as gifts of God the Creator meant for everyone*" (12).

Creator: Peace with All Creation," 3 (Vatican Press, 1989), https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19891208_xxiii-world-day-for-peace.html.

20 John Paul II, Encyclical Letters *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (Vatican Press, 1987) (SRS), https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.html; *Centesimus annus* (Vatican Press, 1991) (CA), https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html; *Evangelium vitae* (Vatican Press, 1995) (EV), https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae.html. See Edwards, "Ecology at the Heart of Mission," 208–10.

21 John Paul II, General Audience, Wednesday, 17 January 2001 (Vatican Press, 2001) https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/audiences/2001/documents/hf_jp-ii_aud_20010117.html.

22 Edwards, "Ecology at the Heart of Mission," 211.

23 Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in veritate* (Vatican Press, 2009) (CV), https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html; "Message for World Day of Peace, 1 January 2010: If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation," (Vatican Press, 2009), https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20091208_xliii-world-day-peace.html. See Edwards, "Ecology at the Heart of Mission," 211–13.

Since the beginning of his pontificate, Pope Francis has emphasized the centrality of the protection of creation. In the homily at his installation as pope on the feast of St Joseph, 2013, Francis spoke of how Joseph was the protector of Jesus, and so we are called to do the same: “Let us protect Christ in our lives, so that we can protect others, so we can protect creation!”²⁴ Several months later, Francis connected this call to protection explicitly with mission in his great mission apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*. In Chapter 4 of the document, entitled “The Social Dimension of Evangelization,” Francis includes creation among

other weak and defenseless beings who are frequently at the mercy of economic interests or indiscriminate exploitation. . . . We human beings are not only beneficiaries but also the stewards of other creatures. Thanks to our bodies, God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment, and the extinction of a species as a painful disfigurement (EG 215).

In 2015, Francis issued his magnificent encyclical “On the Care of Our Common Home,” *Laudato si’*.²⁵ It is a long and powerful document, rooted in the best of science and rich in theological reflection. It concludes with two chapters that outline practical suggestions regarding how Christians—and all people of good will—might work to protect creation and live more fully and humanly in the process. Like John Paul II, Francis calls Christians to “ecological conversion”: in this way “the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience” (LS 217).

In 2019 Francis presided over a synod of peoples from the Amazon region of Latin America, and often in these days he remarked on the great wisdom of the Indigenous people there in their closeness to and care for the earth. For these people, living well—*buen vivir*—was living simply, and in harmony with the forests and rivers around them, and he called other peoples of the earth to learn from such simplicity and harmony.²⁶ His Apostolic Exhortation

24 Pope Francis, Inaugural Homily (Vatican Press, 2013), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130319_omelia-inizio-pontificato.html.

25 Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato si’* (Vatican Press, 2015) (LS), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html.

26 “Final Document of the Pan-Amazonian Synod,” *The Amazon: New Paths for the Church and for an Integral Ecology* (Vatican Press, 2020), 9, <http://secretariat.synod.va/content/sinodoamazonico/en/documents/final-document-of-the-amazon-synod.html>.

*Querida Amazonia*²⁷ was a true love letter to these people and to their region, and a testimony to Francis's commitment both to the poor and marginalized and to ecological integrity. At one point in the document, he quotes a poem by Peruvian poet Javier Yglesias—lines that capture Francis's spirit, and I would venture to say that of TTL as well:

*Make the river of your blood . . .
Then plant yourself,
blossom and grow,
let your roots sink into the ground
forever and ever
and then at last
become a canoe
a skiff, a raft
soil, a jug,
a farmhouse, and a man*²⁸

Mission from the Margins

The “defining perspective” of TTL, according to CWME Moderator Geervarghese Coorilos, one of the document's principal authors, is its articulation of “Mission from the Margins.”²⁹ TTL insists on a reversal of thinking about mission. Classically, mission was conceived as a rich, powerful centre going to poor, powerless people on the world's margins. Such a perspective, however, only contributes to the continuation of oppression and marginalization. People on the margins, however, can offer important lessons to those at the centre. “People on the margins have agency, and can often see what, from the centre, is out of view. People on the margins, living in vulnerable positions, often know what exclusionary forces are threatening their survival and can best discern the urgency of their struggles” (TTL 38), and marginalized

27 Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Querida Amazonia* (Vatican Press, 2020) (QA), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20200202_querida-amazonia.html.

28 QA 33, Javier Yglesias, “Llamado,” *Revista peruana de literatura* 6 (June 2007), 31.

29 Metropolitan Geervarghese Coorilos, “God of Life, Lead Us to Justice and Peace: Some Missiological Perspectives,” *International Review of Mission* 102:1 (2013), 5–16, at 9.

people have gifts that only they can bring to the missionary effort (TTL 39). As such, people on the margins are “reservoirs of the active hope, collective resistance, and perseverance” that the entire church needs to witness to and proclaim the reign of God (TTL 39). Mission should no longer be directed *at* people, but done *with* people, acknowledging the agency that people on the margins have. “The marginalized in society are the main partners in God’s mission.” (TTL 107). Such a commitment to the dignity and power of people on the margins gives new emphasis and energy to working for justice and inclusivity for the poor, since it calls for the poor themselves to claim the agency that is truly theirs.

“Mission from the Margins,” states the *Arusha Conference Report*, “was a key affirmation that was constantly heard and asserted throughout the conference.” The report describes the notion as “a paradigm shift in missiological discourse.”³⁰ During the various pre-conferences and in the conference itself, the voices of women constantly called for continuing efforts toward gender justice. In the same way, the voices of Indigenous peoples, especially Indigenous youth, called for the recognition of their continued suffering “discrimination and exploitation at the hands of the powerful.” Nevertheless, they insisted that “their wisdom may hold the key to the future.”³¹ Many of the 12 “calls” in ACD are infused with the spirit of “Mission from the Margins,” but one is explicit: “We are called to joyfully engage in the ways of the Holy Spirit, who empowers people from the margins with agency, in the search for justice and dignity (Acts 1:8; 4:31).”³²

Roman Catholic teaching does not use the phrase “Mission from the Margins,” but Pope Francis in *Evangelii gaudium* has the same understanding of the importance of the poor as the church’s primary evangelizers. No doubt his ideas come from the existence, since the early 1970s, of the theology of liberation, which always insisted on the fact that people who are oppressed, ignored, and marginalized need to recognize (through conscientization) that they are not the victims but the subjects and protagonists of history. For liberation to be “authentic and complete,” writes Gustavo Gutiérrez, “it has to be undertaken by the oppressed themselves, and so must stem from the values proper to them.”³³

30 “The Arusha Conference Report,” in *Call to Discipleship*, 22.

31 *Ibid.*, 22. See also 23.

32 ACD, in *Call to Discipleship*, 13.

33 See Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1973), 57; see the seminal book of Paulo Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000); see also Peter McClaren and Petar Jandrić, “Paulo Freire and Liberation Theology: The Christian Consciousness of Critical Pedagogy,” *Vierteljahrschrift*

Pope Francis makes this point in a subsection of Chapter 4 of *Evangelii gaudium*, which is entitled “The Inclusion of the Poor in Society” (187–216). On the one hand, the pope is clear that “each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society” (EG 187). This involves, in the first place, real solidarity with all peoples and a recognition of their right to equal dignity and participation in society’s processes (EG 188-190). But, in a way that echoes TTL, the pope speaks of the need to learn from the poor, for “they have much to teach us.” “The new evangelization is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in their lives and to put them at the centre of the church’s pilgrim way.” Christians are called to find Christ in the poor, to lend their voice to their causes, but—more importantly in the light of TTL’s insights — “to listen to them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them” (EG 198).

The “Final Document of the Pan-Amazonian Synod” of 2019 emphasizes the need for the church to heed “the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor and of the peoples of the Amazon with whom we walk.”³⁴ In this way, the document connects TTL’s concern with the integrity of creation to mission from the margins. Another echo of Roman Catholic understandings of what TTL and ACD speak of as mission from the margins is expressed a bit further on in the document. Here it speaks about how, “At the present time, the Church has the historic opportunity to distance itself from the new colonizing powers by listening to the Amazonian peoples and acting in a transparent and prophetic manner. In addition, the socio-environmental crisis opens up new opportunities to present Christ with all his power to liberate and humanise.”³⁵ In his Apostolic Exhortation *Querida Amazonia*, written in response to the Pan-Amazonian Synod, Francis speaks about the need for grassroots ministry and grassroots authority. He writes,

A Church of Amazonian features requires the stable presence of mature and lay leaders endowed with authority and familiar with the languages, cultures, spiritual experience and communal way of life in the different places, but also open to the

für Wissenschaftliche Pädagogik 94 (2018), 246–64, esp. 250–51, https://petarjandric.com/images/pdf/VFP_McLaren_Jandric.pdf; from the perspective of people with disabilities, see Lorraine Cuddeback-Gedeon, “‘Nothing about Us without Us’: Ethnography, Liberation, and the Epistemic Challenges of Intellectual Disability,” *Practical Matters: A Journal of Religious Practices and Practical Theology* (3 August 2018), <http://practicalmattersjournal.org/2018/08/03/nothing-about-us-without-us-ethnography-conscientization-and-the-epistemic-challenges-of-intellectual-disability/>.

34 *The Amazon*, 17; see 10–14.

35 *Ibid.*, 15.

multiplicity of gifts that the Holy Spirit bestows on every one. For wherever there is a particular need, he has already poured out the charisms that can meet it. This requires the Church to be open to the Spirit's boldness, to trust in, and concretely to permit, the growth of a specific ecclesial culture that is *distinctively lay* (QA 94).

This, I believe, is mission from the margins.

We might also find a resonance with the WCC's commitment to mission from the margins in the current synodal process in which the Roman Catholic Church is participating. Key to this process is a call to listen to every sector of the church, so that the church can better carry out the mission entrusted to it by the triune God. Everyone is to be listened to, and everyone is invited to speak from their wisdom. The preparatory document mentions specifically "the voice of minorities, the discarded, and the excluded."³⁶

Mission and Migration

TTL speaks briefly about the phenomenon of migration today in several places. In paragraph 5 it notes that "migration has become a worldwide, multi-directional phenomenon which is reshaping the Christian landscape." It calls for meeting the challenge of migration with practical actions, like "advocating justice in regard to migration policies and resistance to xenophobia and racism" (TTL 70). In the context of the mission of local communities, TTL emphasizes that, rather than being seen as a problem, migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers can offer "new possibilities for churches to re-discover themselves afresh" (TTL 75). Kenneth Ross, in his extensive commentary on ACD, recalls that "as delegates from every part of the world gathered" at Arusha, "one common concern that soon emerged as the movement of people."³⁷ ACD, therefore, calls disciples "to break down walls and seek justice with people who are dispossessed and displaced from their lands . . . and to resist new frontiers and borders that separate and kill"—referring to Isaiah 58:6-8.³⁸

This concern regarding migration is echoed strongly in the rich teaching of the Roman Catholic Church on migration, going back at least to Pope

36 Preparatory Document: *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission* (Vatican Press, 2021), 30, II, <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2021/09/07/210907a.html>.

37 Kenneth R. Ross, *Mission Rediscovered: Transforming Disciples* (Geneva: WCC Publications / Globalethics.net, 2020), 95.

38 ACD, in *Call to Discipleship*, 13.

Pius XII in 1952.³⁹ In our day, however, Pope Francis has been particularly concerned with the issue, and has written and spoken on migration hundreds of times. As Francis said in the early days of his pontificate, “The Bishop of Rome will not rest while there are still men and women of any religion, whose dignity is wounded and are deprived of their basic needs for survival, robbed of their future, or forced to live as fugitives and refugees.”⁴⁰ Francis’s first trip outside the Vatican after his election was to the Mediterranean island of Lampedusa, the first landfall of many African migrants fleeing for their lives or in search of a better life. His homily on that occasion condemned the “globalization of indifference” that migrants are often faced with, and calls people to compassion—to weep for the many victims drowned in their efforts to escape a life of poverty and violence.⁴¹ On various occasions in the last years, Francis has spoken about four practical actions that Christian women and men can take: welcome, protection, promotion, and integration.⁴²

Migration is a burning issue in the Amazon, as both the “Final Document of the Pan-Amazonian Synod” and Francis’s Apostolic exhortation *Querida Amazonia* point out. The final document states:

The displacement of indigenous groups expelled from their territories or attracted by the false allure of urban culture represents a specific feature of migratory movements in the Amazon. Where these groups move within territories of traditional indigenous mobility that are now crossed by national and international borders, cross-border pastoral care is needed that is capable of understanding these people’s right to free movement. Human mobility in the Amazon reveals the face of Jesus Christ poor and hungry (cf. *Mt* 25:35), expelled and homeless (cf. *Mt* 2:13-14). Also of paramount concern is the feminization of migration; it makes thousands of women vulnerable to human trafficking, one of the worst forms of violence against

39 Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Exul Familia Nazarethana* (1952) Papal Encyclicals Online (EF), <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius12/p12exsul.htm>. For an overview of Roman Catholic teaching on migration, see Michael A. Blume, SVD, “Migration and the Social Doctrine of the Church,” Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, Vatican website, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/migrants/pom2002_88_90/rc_pc_migrants_pom88-89_blume.htm.

40 Pope Francis, *Address to Participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches*, 21 November 2013, Migrants Refugees website, https://migrants-refugees.va/mr_article/address-pope-francis-participants-plenary-assembly-congregation-oriental-churches/.

41 Pope Francis, *Homily on Lampedusa* (Vatican Press, 2013), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130708_omelia-lampedusa.html.

42 For a longer reflection on Pope Francis’ teaching on migration and on these four actions, see Stephen Bevans, “Pope Francis: Mission, Migration, and Christian Spirituality,” *Studi Emigrazione* 57:218 (2020), 267–93.

women and one of the most perverse violations of human rights. Human trafficking linked to migration requires a permanent network of pastoral work.⁴³

Francis in *Querida Amazonia* laments how forced migration to cities becomes a major problem for the people of the Amazon: “The cry of the Amazon region does not rise from the depths of the forest alone, but from the streets of its cities as well” (QA 10).

Francis also writes rather extensively on migration in his encyclical letter *Fratelli tutti* (FT 129-141).⁴⁴ Repeating once again the four actions just mentioned, he notes,

Our response to the arrival of migrating persons can be summarized by our words: welcome, protect promote and integrate. For “it is not a case of implementing welfare programmes from the top down, but rather of undertaking a journey together, through these four actions, in order to build cities and countries that, while preserving their respective cultural and religious identity, are open to differences and know how to promote them in the spirit of human fraternity.” (FT 129).⁴⁵

Surely there are deep resonances between WCC and Roman Catholic concerns here.

Evangelism

TTL devotes an entire chapter to evangelism, which it defines as “mission activity which makes explicit and unambiguous the centrality of the incarnation, suffering, and resurrection of Jesus Christ without setting limits to the saving grace of God” (TTL 80). Quoting a document from Roman Catholicism, it states that “while not excluding the different dimensions of mission,” evangelism “focuses on explicit and intentional articulation of the gospel, including ‘the invitation to personal conversion to a new life in Christ and to discipleship’” (TTL 81).⁴⁶ Nevertheless, TTL insists that evangelism must be

⁴³ *The Amazon*, 13.

⁴⁴ Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli tutti* (Vatican Press, 2020), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html.

⁴⁵ Francis is quoting his remarks at a general audience on April 3, 2019, *L'Osservatore Romano* (4 April 2018): 8.

⁴⁶ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelization*, 12.

open to interreligious dialogue and simple presence among non-Christians, as well as deep respect for non-Christian cultures (TTL 93-100).

The conference in Arusha also highlighted evangelism but emphasized in a particular way the importance of presence and wordless witness. “If we wish evangelism to be convincing today,” the “Arusha Conference Report” stated, “the first thing we must do is to be disciples. Humility and sacrifice are urgently needed to liberate the gospel from captivity to projects of self-aggrandizement. The more we are true disciples of Christ, the more effective our evangelism will be.”⁴⁷ ACD also holds evangelism in prominence, calling disciples “to proclaim the good news of Christ—the fullness of life, the repentance and forgiveness of sin, the promise of eternal life—in word and deed, in a violent world where many are sacrificed to the idols of death (Jeremiah 32:35) and where many have not yet heard the gospel.”⁴⁸

Roman Catholic teaching and theology does not distinguish evangelism and mission in the same way as does the WCC and the CWME. Catholics, rather, see mission and “evangelization” (the Catholic version of the word evangelism) as basically the same thing. Vatican II issued a decree on the *missionary* activity of the church. Ten years later, Pope Paul VI, in the aftermath of a synod of Bishops on the theme of “*Evangelization* in the modern world,” published *Evangelii nuntiandi* (EN) in which he did not use the word “mission.” In 1991, Pope John Paul II wrote his expansive mission encyclical *Redemptoris missio* in which the word “mission” appeared over 500 times, and the word “evangelization” appeared 59 times.

What Pope Paul insisted was that the essential nature of evangelization is the proclamation of the Lordship of Jesus the Christ: “There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed” (EN 22). Indeed, wrote John Paul II, “proclamation is the permanent priority of mission” (RM 44). In *Evangelii gaudium*, Pope Francis confirms both of these statements when he refers to Pope John Paul’s exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, writing that “there can be no true evangelization without the explicit proclamation of Jesus as Lord, and without ‘the primacy of the proclamation of Jesus Christ in all evangelizing work’” (EG 110).⁴⁹

47 “The Arusha Conference Report,” in *Call to Discipleship*, 23.

48 ACD, in *Call to Discipleship*, 13.

49 Quotation is from John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* (Vatican Press, 1999) (EA), 19, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_06111999_ecclesia-in-asia.html.

In *Evangelii nuntiandi*, however, Paul VI cautioned against any reduction of evangelization to simply the proclamation of the gospel. “Any partial and fragmentary definition,” Paul VI wrote, “which attempts to render the reality of evangelization in all its richness, complexity and dynamism does so only at the risk of impoverishing it and even of distorting it. It is impossible to grasp the concept of evangelization unless one tries to keep in view all its essential elements” (EN 17). Those “essential elements” include what had begun, in the Catholic Church, to be called inculturation, and about justice and liberation (EN 29). In 1984, a document from the (then) Secretariat for Non-Christians added the elements of liturgy, prayer, and contemplation as well as that of interreligious dialogue.⁵⁰ The document spoke of mission as “a single but complex articulated reality” (DM 13—a phrase virtually repeated by John Paul II in RM 41), and concluded the list by saying that “the totality of Christian mission embraces all these elements” (DM 13). Gathering several other lists of essential elements of mission/evangelization together, Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder included six basic elements: witness and proclamation; liturgy, prayer, and contemplation; justice, peace, and the integrity of creation; interreligious, ecumenical, and secular dialogue, inculturation, and reconciliation.⁵¹ The complexity of mission/evangelization is also evident in the writings and speeches of Pope Francis.

While there are certainly deep resonances between WCC/CWME teaching on evangelism and Roman Catholic teaching on evangelism/mission, Catholics would insist on a unity in mission that gives witness and proclamation a certain priority but can never be the whole of what mission does. Probably for historical reasons, the WCC/CWME keeps evangelism separate, although in many ways it also recognizes the unity of mission and refuses to reduce evangelism simply to witness and proclamation. If there is to be any disagreement between the perspective of TTL, the Arusha conference, and ACD, and the perspective of Roman Catholicism, it would be here.

50 Secretariat for Non-Christians, “The Attitude of the Church towards the Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission” (DM), 13, <https://www.cam1.org.au/Portals/66/documents/Dialogue-Mission-1984.pdf>.

51 Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004), 348–95.

Transforming Discipleship

The idea of discipleship has emerged as a major way that the WCC/CWME has begun to think about Christian mission in today's world. The term disciple/discipleship appears several times in TTL—for example, “The church, as the communion of Christ's disciples, must become an inclusive community and exists to bring healing and reconciliation to the world” (TTL 10). It is, however, “little developed”⁵² there. The major themes of the document, as we have seen, focus on the work of the Holy Spirit, the centrality of the care of creation in mission, and the idea that mission must originate from and be carried out by women and men who have been marginalized by those at society's centre.

When the CWME began planning the Arusha conference, however, it chose the theme of discipleship—“Moving in the Spirit: Called to transforming discipleship”—to deepen its understanding of the content of TTL. Discipleship, the members of the CWME discovered as they reflected on the theme, is a dynamic, missionary task given to every Christian by virtue of her or his baptism. They discovered further that discipleship is an ongoing, spiritual task that calls for constant openness to growth in God's grace through commitment to what the Arusha conference would call “Christ-connected way of life” (ACD). Discipleship, they realized, called as well for a commitment to discerning the distortions of God's creation rooted in human an institutional sin, and commitment to the world's redemption and transformation. Discipleship became therefore a fresh way to imagine the church's mission in the “changing landscapes” of today's world, and a wonderful way to speak of the common Christian task in that world. In the words of Kenneth Ross in his commentary on ACD, the term discipleship has become a game-changer. “Somewhere in common memory is the knowledge that Jesus called people to follow him and that those who did were called ‘disciples.’ The Arusha Conference brought this calling once again to centre-stage, proposing that this might be the driver of the transformation that our world so desperately needs.”⁵³

ACD is a very short document, consisting of a preamble, 12 points or aspects of the call, and a concluding prayer. Each of the 12 points, however, calls individuals and the church to live out discipleship by caring for creation, holistic evangelizing, resisting dehumanizing powers, acknowledging the wisdom and agency of marginalized women and men, respecting people of other

52 “The Arusha Conference Report,” in *Call to Discipleship*, 18.

53 Ross, *Mission Rediscovered*, 10.

religions, taking up the cross, and practising servant leadership. What we see in this document—and the ongoing reflection of the WCC on discipleship⁵⁴—is an understanding of discipleship that is dynamic, missionary, spiritual, and participatory.

Until the papacy of Pope Francis, the term discipleship did not take centre stage in Roman Catholic theology and missiology. In 2007, however, the notion of discipleship took on a new prominence and a new dimension at the fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, the theme of which was “Disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ so that our peoples may have life in him.”⁵⁵ The term ‘discipleship’ appeared almost three hundred times in this rather long document, most often as “disciples and missionaries” or “missionary disciples.” In this way, the notion of discipleship, besides pointing to a deep personal following of Christ, takes on a more dynamic, missionary character. In his inaugural address at the conference, Pope Benedict XVI emphasized the connection between baptism and discipleship. Christians, he said, “by virtue of their Baptism . . . are called to be disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ. This implies following him, living in intimacy with him, imitating his example and bearing witness.”⁵⁶

One of the major figures at Aparecida and a principal author of its final document was Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the cardinal archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina, and, in March 2013, elected to succeed Benedict XVI as Pope Francis. In Francis’s *Evangelii gaudium*, written in November of 2013, the language of discipleship takes centre stage in describing the missionary nature of the church. “The Church which ‘goes forth’ is a community of missionary disciples,” Francis writes, “who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice” (EG 24). Later on in the document, Francis clearly refers to Benedict’s opening address when he writes: “In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. *Mt* 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are

54 See *Call to Discipleship*, especially “Study Paper: ‘Missiological Exploration on the 2022 WCC Assembly Theme *Christ’s Love Moves the World to Reconciliation and Unity* and Ongoing Work of CWME,” 31–46; and “Study Paper: ‘Converting Discipleship: Dissidence and Metanoia,’” 47–56. See also the entire issue of *International Review of Mission* 107:2 (December 2018), entitled *Mission quo vadis?*

55 *Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, Concluding Document* (AD), <https://www.ltrr.arizona.edu/~katie/kt/misc/Apercida/Aparecida-document-for-printing.pdf>.

56 Pope Benedict XVI, *Inaugural Address at the Aparecida Conference* (Vatican Press, 2007), 3, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2007/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20070513_conference-aparecida.html.

agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients.” As Francis goes on to say, “we no longer say that we are ‘disciples’ and ‘missionaries’, but rather that we are always ‘missionary disciples’” (EG 120).

Although the phrase “transforming discipleship” was conceived independently of Francis’s understanding of “missionary discipleship,” those planning the Arusha conference were quick to recognize the connection and saw it as a wonderful ecumenical opportunity. “The Arusha Conference Report” recognizes that connection specifically,⁵⁷ and the Study Document published by the CWME’s Theology for Mission working group actually puts both terms together in an exploration of the 2022 WCC Assembly theme: “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity”:

*As transforming, missionary disciples
we move in the Spirit,
and are moved by Christ’s love:
Pilgrims on the road to justice and peace,
Pilgrims on the road to reconciliation and unity,
In solidarity with all creation
Led and inspired by children, women and men on the margins.*⁵⁸

It would seem that the notion of “transforming, missionary discipleship” holds real promise for missiological reflection for both the WCC and Roman Catholics.

Leadership

The term “leader” or “leadership” does not appear at all in TTL, but the Arusha conference did address the question of leadership and its importance over against a global culture that privileges raw power and greed. ACD proclaims, “We are called to be formed as servant leaders who demonstrate the way of Christ in a world that privileges power, wealth, and the culture of

⁵⁷ “The Arusha Report,” in *Call to Discipleship*, 20.

⁵⁸ “Study Paper: Missiological Exploration,” in *Call to Discipleship*, 35.

money (Luke 22:25-27).⁵⁹ Sadly, the conference also saw this distortion of power within the church as well, and as a result called for a discipleship that truly was at the service of God's mission, God's church, and all God's people. In his commentary on ACD, Kenneth Ross quotes the Norwegian missiologist Knud Jørgensen: "The person, who has not learned to be a disciple, cannot be a leader."⁶⁰ Leadership, like mission in general, must be done "in Christ's way."⁶¹

Although the theme of leadership was not a central theme at the Arusha conference or in ACD, I have highlighted it here because there is a strong resonance between it and the teaching on leadership and synodality in Pope Francis's papacy. There are many places in Francis's writings and speeches that speak of leadership, especially leadership in the church.⁶² Francis talks about pastors need to have "the smell of the sheep" (EG 24). He speaks about engaging in pastoral ministry "in a missionary key" (EG 33). He warns young priests against being "little monsters."⁶³ One passage in *Evangelii gaudium* is particularly striking. Francis writes of the bishop's ministry of fostering "missionary communion": "To do so, he will sometimes go before his people, pointing the way and keeping their hope vibrant. At other times, he will simply be in their midst with his unassuming and merciful presence. At yet other times he will have to walk after them, helping those who lag behind and—above all—allowing the flock to strike out on new paths" (EG 31).

Francis's understanding of servant leadership is rooted in his understanding of the church as "the faithful people of God," that possesses an instinct known in Catholic theology as the "sense of the faith" or the "sense of the faithful."⁶⁴ What this theological doctrine implies is that every person in the church—by virtue of their baptism—has a voice that needs to be heard in the church, and that leadership in the church has as its major task the discernment of this wisdom and truth.

59 ACD, in *Call to Discipleship*, 13.

60 Ross, *Mission Rediscovered*, 87.

61 This is an often-quoted phrase in WCC/CWME documents. See Frederick R. Wilson, ed., *The San Antonio Report, Your Will be Done: Mission in Christ's Way* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990).

62 See, for example, the collection of Francis's writings and talks on the priesthood: *Disciples Together on the Road: Words of Pope Francis for Priests* (Rome/Washington, DC: Vatican Press/United States Catholic Bishops' Conference, 2016).

63 "Pope Francis's 10 Principles for Making Good Priests," *Aleteia*, 23 March 2015, <https://aleteia.org/2015/03/23/pope-franciss-10-principles-for-making-good-priests-no-little-monsters/>.

64 Antonio Spadaro, *A Big Heart Open to God: An Interview with Pope Francis* (New York: HarperOne/America Press, 2013), 25–26.

This “sensus fidelium” of the people of God is in turn the theological basis for what theologian Richard R. Gaillardetz calls “the leitmotif” of Francis pontificate: synodality.⁶⁵ Synodality, says Francis, is rooted in the sense of the faithful emphasized in LG 12. It is “all the people walking together. This is what I understand today as the ‘thinking with the church’ of which St Ignatius speaks. When this dialogue among the people and the bishops and the pope goes down this road and is genuine, then it is assisted by the Holy Spirit.”⁶⁶ Francis has emphasized that synodality is precisely what “God expects of the Church of the third millennium.”⁶⁷

In his address at the opening of the process of the “Synod on Synodality” in 2021, Francis highlighted the three key words that characterized the two-year event: communion, participation, and mission. The church is rooted in trinitarian communion, and also in trinitarian mission, and full participation by every member of the church is necessary for communion to be realized and mission to be effectively carried out.

Without real participation by the People of God, talk about communion risks remaining a devout wish. In this regard, we have taken some steps forward, but a certain difficulty remains and we must acknowledge the frustration and impatience felt by many pastoral workers, members of diocesan and parish consultative bodies and women, who frequently remain on the fringes. Enabling everyone to participate is an essential ecclesial duty! All the baptized, for baptism is our identity card.⁶⁸

The church, says Francis, must become a “listening Church,” a “synodal church,” not only occasionally, but in the church’s very structure.⁶⁹ Francis does not use the term, but it is clear that he is talking about a church of baptismal missionary discipleship. We see this connection in the preparatory

65 Richard R. Gaillardetz, “Implementing Synodality: Reflections on Two Recent Contributions,” *Worship* 95 (2021): 100–107, at 100. The literature around synodality is voluminous. One fascinating attempt to speak of synodality in a more contextual way is Stan Cho Ilo, “Exploring the Possible Contributions of African Palaver towards a Participative Synodal Church,” *Exchange: A Journal of Contemporary Christianity in Context* 50: ¾ (2021), 209–37.

66 Spadaro, *A Big Heart Open to God*, 25–26.

67 Pope Francis, *Talk at the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Synod of Bishops* (Vatican Press, 2015), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/october/documents/papa-francesco_20151017_50-anniversario-sinodo.html.

68 Pope Francis, *Talk at the Opening of the 2021–23 Synod on Synodality* (Vatican Press, 2021), <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2021/october/documents/20211009-apertura-camminosinodale.html>.

69 *Ibid.*

document for the Synod, published in September 2021. “*Synodality*,” it says, “*is at the service of the Church’s mission, in which all her members are called to participate.*”⁷⁰

The Arusha conference and ACD only have a few lines on leadership, but one can sense a deep resonance between this inchoate theology of leadership and the more expansive ideas of leadership contained in what is Francis’s favourite image of the church, the doctrine of the “sense of the faith/faithful,” and synodality.

Conclusion

A century ago, the International Missionary Council (IMC) was founded with no cooperation at all from the Roman Catholic Church. Seven years after the IMC’s founding, in fact, Pope Pius XI issued the encyclical *Mortalium animos* in which he said that the Roman Catholic Church “cannot on any terms to take part” in the assemblies of the budding ecumenical movement, and that it is not “lawful for Catholics either to support or to work for such enterprises.”⁷¹ Forty years later, at Vatican II, the Roman Church reversed its opinion and exhorted “all the Catholic faithful to recognize the signs of the times and to take an active and intelligent part in the work of ecumenism.”⁷² The council’s decree on mission *Ad gentes* insists that, although ecumenism is distinct from mission in the strict sense, it is “most closely connected with the missionary zeal because the division among Christians damages the most holy cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature and blocks the way to the faith for many” (AG 6). Although the Roman Catholic Church has maintained only observer status in the WCC, it is a full member of the CWME and has three delegates appointed by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity in the Vatican. An amazingly beautiful event took place in January 2016 when the executive group of the CWME presented Pope

70 Preparatory Document, *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission* (Synod of Bishops, 2021), https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/common/preparatory-document/pdf-21x21/en_prepa_book.pdf.

71 Pope Pius XI, Encyclical Letter *Mortalium animos* (Vatican Press, 1928) (MA), 8, https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19280106_mortalium-animos.html.

72 Vatican Council II, Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio* (Vatican Press, 1964) (UR), 4 https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html.

Francis with a special issue of the *International Review of Mission* on *Evangelii gaudium* at a public audience in St Peter's Square.⁷³

Even in the days when WCC members and Catholics could not even talk to one another, the theologies of mission of the two groups were still relatively close. There is something about mission that transcends ecclesial and denominational boundaries. In the last six decades, however, that closeness has grown to the point that, in terms of mission theology—as I hope this chapter has shown—the mission theologies of the two bodies are virtually identical. This is seen particularly in the deep resonances between the teaching of *Together towards Life*, the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Arusha, and “The Arusha Call to Discipleship” and the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. We have come a long way since 1921—to the glory of God!

73 See *International Review of Mission* 104:2 (2015).

CHAPTER 5

The Protest Movement as Mission from the Margins: COVID-19, Racism, Xenophobia, and Sustainable Livelihoods in Southern Africa

Buhle Mpofu

Given the wars, displacement, poverty, crime, violence, racism, climate change disasters, drought, gender-based violence and all the catastrophes of our time, there seems to be no easy solutions for the challenges the world is experiencing. The COVID-19 pandemic decimated economies as the global public health infrastructure dealt with a crisis that brought the world to a standstill. As the world emerges from the pandemic, thanks to a slow but promising global vaccination rollout programme, one would hope that the living conditions for the poor would improve at the same pace as the global economic recovery, as the world opens up with the lifting of lockdown restrictions. But the world has witnessed a new conflict as Russia invaded Ukraine in another catastrophic development that has been met by global protests.¹

South Africa, like the rest of the world, was shocked at the news that Russia invaded Ukraine in what appeared to be the end and catastrophic failure of Western diplomacy following weeks of speculation over the escalating tensions in eastern Europe. It was not only political figures who raised concerns about the unfolding situation, but the Anglican Archbishop called for a “peaceful protest”² to show solidarity with the people of Ukraine. The wars in Syria, Afghanistan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo and threats from the Islamic State in North Africa and some parts of Mozambique, to name a few, all threatened hopes for a peaceful world. What has been disturbing about the new war in Ukraine is that it happened when nations are emerging out of the devastating impact of COVID-19 pandemic. A new war means there will be more funds directed toward military spending than improving the living conditions of the poor. This is concerning.

1 For more details see: *Protests Erupt in Russia, Worldwide Against Moscow's Invasion of Ukraine*, RadioFreeEurope, 27 February 2022, <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-ukraine-protest-georgia-invasion/31725406.html>.

2 ENCA News Channel, *Live Broadcast*, 2 March 2022.

In painting a picture of this global reality, the *Mail and Guardian* editorial had this to say:

We are living through interesting times, to borrow from that Chinese adage; and what we see unfold in East Europe should come as no real surprise. In the final years of the 20th century and the first few of the current one, we may have had some awe-inspiring changes, but we've borne witness to genocidal wars in Rwanda, persistent Middle Eastern conflict, global recessions, a growing climate crisis, a rise of nationalism in the form of people such as Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin at the expense of multilateralism. The last straw was a health pandemic that despite our advancements in medical care brought the world to a standstill. What is happening in Ukraine and what may happen in Taiwan on some future date and conflicts in Ethiopia speaks to the point that there's some evolution to come.³

Among these challenges, wars have forced people to flee for safety, and the world has experienced more economic migrants and refugees. This has caused divisions in many communities, as locals and foreigners compete for limited resources in a world divided across racial, ethnical, national, and regional boundaries. Intolerance and xenophobic violence are increasing as communities struggle to manage migration flows from economic migrants and refugees fleeing violence and hunger in war-torn countries. Added to this, some countries have experienced severe drought, rising temperatures, and floods, which are a result of climate change, forcing people to seek safety in neighbouring countries. How can the mission of the church enhance a transformative response to these challenges? This chapter analyzes the South African situation through available literature and categorizes the challenges of poverty, inequality, and corruption as "illegal manifestations of resource contestation" that have culminated in scapegoating of foreign migrants who are now blame for South Africa's economic woes. This article proposes a racially united "protest movement" as a model for a missional and sustainable development intervention. It presents protest movements as a missional paradigm focused on people on the margins toward a transformative missional hermeneutical optic within the context of poverty, racism, and xenophobia.

3 For more details see "From the Newsroom," *Mail and Guardian*, 24 February 2022, <https://mailchi.mp/f0fadf1e51e4/editorial-putins-actions-show-the-end-of-history-is-a-myth?e=ead527e0eb>.

COVID-19, Poverty, and Racial Inequality in South Africa

According to a report by the World Bank⁴ highlighting root causes of South Africa's economic challenges, researchers concluded that one of the most pressing issues behind poverty is racial inequality. The country still experiences severe disparities that resulted from apartheid times, when government-enforced laws segregated “non-whites” and discriminated against them. These policies ended in 1994 when the country moved to democracy under the leadership of the first Black president, Nelson Mandela, the introduction of a racially mixed parliament yielded good policies that stopped racial discrimination. But these have not translated into economic transformation because the majority of Black people still live in extreme poverty, with a few Black elites, most of them connected to political figures, amassing wealth through corruption at a time when nations should be united to deal with the growing threats of COVID-19 in the face of persistent waves and new variants. Since March 2020, governments had healthcare systems have been stretched to the limit, and some companies have not been able to get back to business after the COVID-19 lockdown. Consequently, jobs have been lost and poor families are struggling to survive.

Analyzing the impact of COVID-19 on South African society, Jamieson and Van Blerk observed that “[l]ockdown measures confined people to their homes in the hope of curbing the spread of the virus and saving lives, and this has led to joblessness, poverty and isolation from protective social networks.”⁵ There has been unprecedented loss of employment not only in South Africa, but globally.⁶ In highlighting the economic impact of COVID-19 in South Africa, Khambule also noted that “[t]he closure of other economic sectors such as tourism and hospitality industry meant that over 800,000 jobs were in jeopardy, potentially increasing the country's already high unemployment

4 World Bank, *Republic of South Africa—Systematic Country Diagnostic: An Incomplete Transition Overcoming the Legacy of Exclusion in South Africa*, 30 April 2018, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/29793/WBG-South-Africa-Systematic-Country-Diagnostic-FINAL-for-board-SECPO-Edit-05032018.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

5 L. Jamieson and L. Van Blerk, “Responding to COVID-19 in South Africa: Social Solidarity and Social Assistance,” *Children's Geographies* (May 2021), 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2021.1924359>.

6 I. Khambule, “COVID-19 and the Counter-Cyclical Role of the State in South Africa,” *Progress in Development Studies* 21:4 (2021), 380–96, at 380.

rate.⁷ These figures demonstrate that South Africa has not been spared the impact of COVID-19 and will indeed also be affected by the developments in Eastern Europe, like the rest of the world, as we experience rising fuel and food prices in the face of ongoing all other challenges that came with transforming the nation after the fall of apartheid in 1994.

Employment disparities still pose a threat to South Africans, who now view migrants as people taking their employment opportunities. The World Bank report⁸ acknowledges the historical impact, noting that Black South Africans statistically have fewer skills because they had been excluded from the attaining quality education and taking up good jobs in the workforce for a long time. Although there has been progress, the impact of this historical exclusion means they are still more likely to be unemployed than white people. In fact this report indicates that Black South Africans saw a 31.4 percent unemployment rate in 2017,⁹ while among white South Africans the rate was only 6.6 percent. Corruption has been on the increase and the report cites it as a manifestation of “resource contestation”: “Corruption and crime are illegal manifestations of resource contestation. Inequality within the white community under apartheid was lower than it was across the country when democracy brought formerly excluded South Africans into the political community. This has allowed a new political elite to contest old resources, providing one possible explanation for the perceived increase in corruption.”¹⁰

In some of the conversations around the challenge of racial inequality and corruption in South Africa, one of the outspoken politicians, Helen Zille¹¹ sparked a debate after she tweeted new words on “black privilege” where she removed “white” and replaced it with “black” in the popular political discourse aimed at addressing the challenge of historically privileged whites in the context of empowering Black people who were historically segregated. Black privilege, in Zille’s view, means that since South Africa is now ruled by Black people, this means the Black people are now more privileged than whites. In a twist of language, Zille used this language to attack corrupt political leaders, as she argued that Black people will vote for Black leaders no matter how corrupt they may be. There, they will still be re-elected and they

7 Ibid., 386.

8 World Bank, *Republic of South Africa*.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., 25.

11 E.V. Diemen, “Helen Zille Sparks Twitter Ire Again with ‘Black Privilege’ Comments,” *News24*, 17 May 2019, <https://www.news24.com/News24/helen-zille-sparks-twitter-ire-again-with-black-privilege-comments-20190517>.

will continue to exploit the country's economy at the expense of the poor masses, the majority of whom are Black. While it is important to expose the political exploitation of Black people by corrupt leaders, Zille's dismissal of the term "white" and replacing it with "black" is a form of racism that carries with it denialism and betrayal of socio-economic transformation. This is the reason most Black people considered it an assault on Blackness. For the suffering Black people, the term "black privilege" was therefore considered a racist remark.

South African society is dealing with systemic racism, which is still prevalent and deeply embedded in all the structures and fabric of society and social, political, economic, educational, judicial, and religious institutions. The country has a high rate of unemployment, and high levels of poverty, crime, violence (including gender-based), and protests. These challenges were evident in the July 2021 protests, where shops were looted and vandalized by frustrated Black people.¹² This was one of the "illegal manifestations of resource contestation" that had been identified earlier by the World Bank Report.

Sustainable Development as a Response to Poverty

One of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals is "ending poverty in all its forms everywhere."¹³ The United Nations defines poverty in 1998 as follows:

Fundamentally, poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and cloth[e] a family, not having a school or clinic to go to, not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living on marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation.¹⁴

12 For more details, see S. D. Waal, "Eight Days in July: Inside the Arrest And Looting That Shook South Africa," *News24*, 5 November 2021, <https://www.news24.com/news24/books/eight-days-in-july-inside-the-unrest-and-looting-that-shook-south-africa-20211105>.

13 "Goals—1. End Poverty in All Its Forms Everywhere," United Nations, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal1#:~:text=Goal%201%20calls%20for%20an,and%20environmental%20shocks%20and%20disasters>.

14 "United Nations Definition of Poverty," Learning for Justice website, Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, https://www.learningforjustice.org/sites/default/files/tt_poverty_h1.pdf.

This definition of poverty as “a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity” is central to the arguments in this article as it resonates with the consequences of COVID-19 lockdown measures. People and communities were denied choices and opportunities and their human dignity was violated, especially those who were locked down without access to basic needs such as food, shelter, and proper sanitation. Being denied movement meant they had no capacity to participate effectively in society and therefore did not have enough food or clothing and, in some cases, lacked access to health services. It was not only politicians and economists who were concerned about these developments, but also theologians and faith-based organizations. The World Council of Churches (WCC), World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Council for World Mission (CWM) convened an e-conference under the theme “Economy of life in a time of pandemic” on 17 April 2020.¹⁵ This was a joint initiative under the New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA).¹⁶

The global church has been concerned about the impact of the pandemic. As Van der Merwe lamented, “The COVID-19 pandemic brought South Africa to the brink of the proverbial poverty abyss.”¹⁷ Writing in the context of the South African government’s restrictions during alert level 5, Thinane shared a similar observation, noting that the country’s economy was brought “to a near-freeze, and this resulted in multiple job losses and business closures.”¹⁸ As a theological contribution to the challenges experienced by the poor communities during the pandemic in South Africa, this study explored the intersections between the mission from the margins of COVID-19 lockdown, racism, and xenophobia with a view to exploring sustainable livelihoods in South Africa.

Buhle Mpofu’s article “Migration, Xenophobia and Resistance to Xenophobia and Socio-economic Exclusion in the Aftermath of South African

15 “Calling for an Economy of Life in a Time of Pandemic—a Joint Message from the WCC, WCRC, LWF, and CWM,” World Council of Churches, 15 May 2020, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/calling-for-an-economy-of-life-in-a-time-of-pandemic-a-joint-message-from-the-wcc-wcrc-lwf-and-cwm>

16 *Ibid.*, 1.

17 J. M. Van der Merwe, “Poverty and the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Challenge to the Church,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/HTS Theological Studies* 76:1 (2020), 1 <https://hts.org.za/index.php/HTS/article/view/6221>.

18 J. S. Thinane, “*Missio hominum* as the Compassionate Response to Socio-economic and Vaccine Challenges during COVID-19 in South Africa,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 77:3 (2021), 4, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i3.6544>.

Rainbowism”¹⁹ analyzes statements by South African political leaders to show how they emphasize differences between citizens and foreign migrants. On the intersecting trajectories between poverty, unemployment, and homelessness, it sought to demonstrate how such politics of exclusion is a far cry from the ANC’s Freedom Charter, which envisioned a “rainbow” nation for a South Africa that “belongs to all who live in it.” By reflecting on the current situation of migration and experiences of foreign migrants in the last 25 years, the intention was to highlight the different articulations of South African *rainbowism* through interrogating the position of migrants in some of the economic development policies during this period. The article articulated how the different governments from Nelson Mandela’s reconstruction economic development (RDP), Thabo Mbeki’s growth, employment, and redistribution (GEAR) to Jacob Zuma’s radical economic transformation (RET) reflect how the opportunities and recognition of migrants has remained elusive. The presence of migrants in South Africa have been in the spotlight recently as the country is reeling under the challenges of growing intolerance in the face of increased levels of poverty, unemployment, and economic meltdown exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another study on poverty and homelessness explored narratives and discourses from marginalized migrants in their quest for survival.²⁰ It approaches the South African context through the lens of United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1 “Ending poverty in all its forms,”²¹ employing John Hick’s²² notion of “soul-making” to analyze themes that emerged from a conversation with a stranger. These themes of faith in God, forgiveness, and vulnerability reflect on the spirituality of migrants and highlighted religious expressions of the homeless, their vulnerability and their perceptions of God. The study contends that some of the homeless (and migrants or refugees) prayerfully deploy religiosity and seek God’s guidance in their survival strategies, practising Christian faith and values in their daily struggle to survive on the margins.

These findings challenge dominant narratives on poverty and highlight that current developmental discourses need to be decolonized to promote new models for “development from below” that will take seriously the role of

19 Buhle Mpofu, “Migration, Xenophobia and Resistance to Xenophobia and Socio-Economic Exclusion in the Aftermath of South African Rainbowism.” *Alternation* 26:1 (2019), 153–73.

20 Buhle Mpofu, “A Conversation with a Stranger: Debunking Religiosity and Poverty in South Africa,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 77:4 (2021), a7053. <https://hts.org.za/index.php/hts/article/view/7053>.

21 “Goals—1. End Poverty in All Its Forms Everywhere.”

22 J. Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).

religion and involve the poor toward promoting sustainable livelihoods. The negative impact COVID-19 lockdown measures have had on global economies has meant that South Africa's unemployment levels have worsened, resulting in a surge in violence against foreign migrants. The transport sector is one example where trucks have been burnt and roads blockaded as local unions argue that truck drivers are not on the list of "scarce skills" jobs and demand that foreigners leave those jobs so that unemployed locals can take over.²³

Scholars such as Kritzinger have explored the racial tensions with a view to understanding the struggles of Black Christians in the context of being Black and Christian in a racist society.²⁴ Kritzinger's work has been concerned with what he terms "a typology of white responses to Black Theology," identifying three types of white response to Black theology (namely rejection, sympathy, and solidarity) that he constructed in his doctoral thesis to articulate his solidarity position, which he labelled a "liberating white Christianity."²⁵ His work inspired a number of African theologians to use this framework to assess South Africa's progress in addressing racism. For example, this has been evident in the work of Vellem,²⁶ Van Wyngaard,²⁷ and others. These scholars approach racism from the perspective of white theological engagement with Black theology. Ongoing scholarly engagement has recently inspired Kritzinger²⁸ to highlight weaknesses of his typology and "develop a more adequate framework for transformative encounters between white and black theologians in South Africa."²⁹ Paying tribute to Vellem, Kritzinger also acknowledges that his theology has evolved and he has had to pay more attention to his own struggles of being white and Christian in that racist society to

23 For more details see H. Isilow, "South Africans Target Foreign Truck Drivers over Jobs," Anadolu Agency, 26 November 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/south-africans-target-foreign-truck-drivers-over-jobs/2056232>

24 J. N. J. Kritzinger, "Becoming Aware of Racism in the Church: The Story of a Personal Journey," in *Towards an Agenda for Contextual Theology: Essays in Honour of Albert Nolan*, ed. M. T. Speckman and L. T. Kaufmann (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2001), 231–75.

25 J. N. J. Kritzinger, *Black Theology – Challenge to Mission* (DTh thesis, University of South Africa, 1988), 268–34.

26 V. S. Vellem, "Un-Thinking the West: The Spirit of Doing Black Theology of Liberation in Decolonial Times," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 73:3 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i3.4737>.

27 G. J. Van Wyngaard, *In Search of Repair: Critical White Responses to Whiteness as a Theological Problem – A South African Contribution*, (PhD thesis, Vrije Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2019).

28 J. N. J. Kritzinger, "White Responses to Black Theology: Revisiting a Typology," *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 78:3 (2022), <https://hts.org.za/index.php/hts/article/view/6945>.

29 *Ibid.*, 1.

propose a framework of transformative encounters. This framework is useful beyond white engagement with Black theological scholarship.

In a sense, if all sections of South African society were to continuously reflect on their experiences and struggles with race and identity—moving beyond categorizations of “us” and “them” and moving beyond rejection, sympathy, and solidarity toward embracing their own struggles—then they will experience enriching and transformative encounters. It is through these encounters beyond racial categorizations that the mission of God can be developed—for authentic engagement informed by embracing diversity as a gift from God.

Sustainable Development for Transformation

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO),

Sustainable development is the overarching paradigm of the United Nations. The concept of sustainable development was described by the 1987 Brundtland Commission Report as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” There are four dimensions to sustainable development—society, environment, culture and economy—which are intertwined, not separate. Sustainability is a paradigm for thinking about the future in which environmental, societal and economic considerations are balanced in the pursuit of an improved quality of life.³⁰

What is unique about the concept of sustainable development is that it is holistic and encompasses the four dimensions of “society, environment, culture and economy,” which should never be viewed individually but as a whole. It is for this reason that

the notions of “cultural landscapes” and “ecotheology” to highlight an exploitative relationship, which is characterised by disharmony in the relationship between humanity and nature. This illustration demonstrates how the concept of unity between “self and the entire Kosmos” in African worldview presents a potentially constructive African theology of ecology. Amongst other recommendations . . . in

30 “Sustainable Development,” UNESCO, <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development/what-is-esd/sd#:~:text=Sustainable%20development%20is%20the%20overarching,to%20meet%20their%20own%20needs.%E2%80%9D>, accessed 28 February 2022.

order for humanity to restore harmony and attain fullness of life—*oikodome*—with nature the notions of healing, reconciliation, liberation and restoration should be extended to human relations or interactions with nature and all of God’s creation.³¹

The African worldview, particularly its emphasis on “the essential unity between self and others, as well as the self and the entire *Kosmos*, is a vitally important aspect in relating the African world view to an integrated approach to consciousness.”³² Therefore, sustainable development is not a single-minded pursuit for economic growth, where individual communities seek wealth at the expense of others or the generations to come. Rather, it should be a collective endeavour. As we seek economic development, we should also ensure social inclusion and eliminate environmental damage through responsible industrial activities. It is in this regard that we should commend such protests movements as the one that took place at the Waterfront in Cape Town. These communities mobilized across race and ethnicity to demand that the South African government stop international oil giant Shell from conducting seismic surveys for oil, citing the damage to local fishing projects that sustain the livelihoods of the poor.

The protest movements as mission from the margins

It is a common trend for governments to use terror and crack down on dissent as a means to silence the voices of protesters. The poor and the weak are often trampled upon by those who hold powerful positions. Whether it is about the people arrested in Russia as they protested against the recent war in Ukraine, or poor communities and individuals standing up against any form of injustice and life-denying practices, these acts of boldness reflect courageous responses from the margins. Individuals and communities have dared to stand up and challenge racial intolerance, xenophobic violence, and exploitation of natural resources by multinational corporations that often engage in destructive industrial and mining activities. These protests take various forms, and they reflect a unified demand for sustainable livelihoods in poor communities.

31 Buhle Mpofu, “Pursuing Fullness of Life through Harmony with Nature: Towards an African Response to Environmental Destruction and Climate Change in Southern Africa,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 77:4 (2021), 1, <https://hts.org.za/index.php/HTS/article/view/6574>.

32 D. A. Forster, “A Generous Ontology: Identity as a Process of Intersubjective Discovery, An African Theological Contribution,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 66:1 (2010), <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v66i1.731>, 82. Italics mine.

One example is when protesting migrants stood up against police brutality as the police forcibly removed them from the Central Methodist Church in Cape Town, South Africa.³³ This eviction was intended to force migrants to relocate as part of COVID-19 tactics employed by governments to enforce COVID-19 regulations. The migrants had been sheltering in the church for months before being forcibly removed.

During a protest march against racism in Hamburg,³⁴ thousands of anti-racism protesters took to the streets and demanded safe migration routes for migrants fleeing wars in Syria, Yemen, and other parts of North Africa. They were also demanding an end to right-wing extremism after the eastern German town of Chemnitz experienced several anti-immigrant protests.

Another unifying protest event took place at the Waterfront in Cape Town, South Africa, where protesters were waiting for the arrival of the ship *Amazon Warrior*. A protest march was organized on the 21 November 2021 against plans for Shell's seismic survey for oil and gas as part of their sea exploration. This took place after it was reported that Shell would carry out its survey from Morgan Bay to Port St Johns, off the Wild Coast. According to Emsie Ferreira,

The Makhanda high court . . . granted an urgent interdict halting further seismic exploration by Shell on the Wild Coast because oil giant had flouted the constitutional rights of affected indigenous communities . . . [and] ordered Mineral Resources Minister Gwede Mantashe and BG International, a part of Shell and fifth respondent, to pay costs of the applicants, a coalition of Wild Coast communities that argued that blasting would cause significant, lasting damage to marine life and impact their livelihoods and customary and constitutional rights.³⁵

This is one judgement which took seriously the holistic approach to sustainable development. By considering the long-term impacts of Shell's seismic blasting on the future generations and Indigenous communities, the high court acted within the definition of sustainable development which ensures that multinational corporations implement "development [initiatives]

33 See a photo in which police remove foreign migrants from the Central Methodist Church in Cape Town, South Africa, Thursday, 2 April 2020. Available in the article, "South African Cops Storm Cape Town Church to Expel Migrants," *Wane.com*, 2 April 2020, <https://www.wane.com/news/south-african-cops-storm-cape-town-church-to-expel-migrants/>.

34 For more details see "Thousands in Hamburg March against Racism," *DW*, 29 September 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/thousands-in-hamburg-march-against-racism/a-45692164>, accessed 2 March 2022.

35 A highlighting photo available in the article by E. Ferreira, "High Court Halts Shell's Seismic Exploration along Wild Coast," *Mail and Guardian*, 28 December 2021, <https://mg.co.za/environment/2021-12-28-high-court-halts-shells-seismic-exploration-along-wild-coast/>.

that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”³⁶ What was significant with these protests is their profoundly articulated protest messages, which reflected a united confrontation with the global economic system, which tends to exploit the environment at the expense of the environment. Whereas in the past, protests against apartheid and service delivery were dominated by the poor Black majority, recent protests demanding sustainable livelihoods have been characterized by racial diversity as white communities on the coast stand in solidarity. The protest messages are an indictment to these practices: “We can’t eat oil”; “Go to Hell Shell”; “Voetsak Shell”; and “No to seismic surveys.”

Mission as protest from the margins

Understanding the role of peaceful protests movement as mission from the margin resonates with what Pillay identifies as “the church as a transformation and change agent.”³⁷ In the context of the foregoing, there is a need for the church to serve as a change agent to mitigate some of the devastating challenges and aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Given that sound theological reflections present a critical and unique approach to global challenges, it follows that the church can contribute to the development of new models for sustainable development. Issuing statements against violence, corruption and taking part in peaceful protests that demand sustainable development are viable options for accompaniment and expression of solidarity within the context of poverty, racism, and xenophobia. Communities dealing with these challenges need the assurance that the church understands their plight. For example, the compelling teachings of the church, such as the preferential option for the poor, and Pope John Paul II’s message, “Development and Solidarity: Two Keys to Peace,”³⁸ remain relevant messages for addressing crime, poverty, and violence in the South African context.

The concept of sustainable development provides a holistic approach to society’s challenges in which the church has a critical role in ensuring that pursuits of economic growth are not at the expense of the majority poor. By expressing solidarity with the poor, church’s holistic approach combines

36 “Sustainable Development,” UNESCO, 1.

37 J. Pillay, “The Church as a Transformation and Change Agent,” *HTS Theological Studies* 73:3 (2017), 1–12.

38 For more details see: Pope John Paul II, “Development and Solidarity: Two Keys to Peace,” 1987, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19861208_xx-world-day-for-peace.html.

economic development and ensures social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and good governance. Development should be focused on addressing poverty—which is a denial of choices and opportunities and a violation of human dignity. The world’s governments adopted sustainable development as the organizing principle for global development at Rio+20 Summit in June 2012.³⁹ At this conference, the governments adopted the Sustainable Development Goals to help harness the world’s energies toward global challenges. At the conclusion of the summit, they adopted “The Future We Want,” which describes the world’s sustainable development priorities and how a set of development goals can help to meet them. Some of the challenges to South Africa’s sustainable development are technical, such as having to deal with global financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF). But most of the challenges are fundamentally human-induced and revolve around leadership’s ethical choices, such as corruption and racial inequality. Therefore, there is a need for a shared commitment for equitable distribution of wealth as a means to take care of the poor. Grants are not enough. The church should continue to demand justice for the poor as part of the social doctrine that provides direction toward responsible and universal ethical care for God’s creation.

A study exploring alternative ways of being a missional church in the context of COVID-19 proposed a critical paradigm to identify “missional blinds spots” as areas that have received scant attention from the church before COVID-19 lockdown exposed them.⁴⁰ These include socioeconomic challenges that have traditionally been neglected by the church, such as poverty, homelessness, gender-based violence, and abuse of power or financial resources by some of the self-proclaimed bishops and pastor. The study calls for a need for the church to build on the ideas of the ecumenical affirmation of mission and evangelism (WCC/CWME)⁴¹ of a “reversal of roles” and demand a shift of the mission concept from “mission to the margins” to “mission from the margins” as COVID-19 has redefined the church boundaries and mission strategies. These “disruptions allow for emergence of alternative ways of being church and new modes of socioeconomic organisation with

39 For more details see: United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/rio20>.

40 Buhle Mpfu, “Mission on the Margins: A Proposal for an Alternative Missional Paradigm in the Wake of COVID-19,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 76:3 (2021), <https://hts.org.za/index.php/hts/article/view/6149>.

41 Jooseop Keum, ed. *Together towards life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013).

new possibilities presented through alternative theoretical hermeneutics of missiology that locates experiences of the poor at the centre.”⁴²

According to David Bosch, “mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God”,⁴³ and J. Moltmann states, “It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfil in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church.”⁴⁴ Mission derives from the very nature of God. It has often been understood and practised as a current flowing only in a single direction: from north to south, from rich to poor, from powerful to the powerless, from male to female, from white to Black, from “Christian” civilization to godless culture. This reduces mission to something that some people do to others, rather than a common sharing in God’s mission of love to the whole world.

Mission of the church in poor communities is not in the first instance the service (*diakonia*), but the building of relationships (*koinonia*). COVID-19 disruptions presented an opportunity for people at the margins to reclaim their key role as agents of mission and affirming mission as transformation. This reversal of roles in terms of envisioning mission has strong biblical foundations because God chose the poor, the foolish, and the powerless (1 Cor. 1:18-31) to further God’s mission of justice and peace so that life may flourish. If there is a shift of the mission concept from “mission to the margins” to “mission from the margins,” what then is the distinctive contribution of the people from the margins? Why are their experiences and visions crucial for re-imagining mission and evangelism today? C. J. H. Wright argues that it is not so much the case that God has a mission for his church in the world, as that God has a church for his mission in the world.⁴⁵ Mission was not made for the church; the church was made for mission – and that is the reason to understand the mission of the church as the mission of God’s people.

Mission from the margins appropriates the role of ordinary people in God’s work toward reconciling himself with the whole of the created order in love, justice and integrity (Eph. 1:10) to God in which human beings are called and invited to participate by being sent through the love of Christ (Matt. 5:43-45) that all might attain life in all its fullness (John 10:10). Mission is worldwide oriented and involves a partnership between the triune

42 Mbofu “Mission on the Margins,” 1.

43 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), 389–90.

44 J. Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (London: SCM Press, 1997), 64.

45 C. J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 62.

God and human beings who constitute the church. Therefore, authentic mission re-affirms the purpose of God as fullness of life (John 10:10) and this becomes the criterion for discernment in mission. We are called to discern the Spirit of God wherever there is life in its fullness, particularly in terms of the liberation of the oppressed people, the healing and reconciliation of broken communities, and the restoration of the whole creation. We are challenged to appreciate the life-affirming activities present in different cultures and to be in solidarity with all those who are involved in the mission of affirming and preserving life, including protest movements that demand justice for the poor. We also discern and confront evil spirits wherever forces of death and negation of life are experienced as envisioned by the WCC.⁴⁶

Many churches and ecumenical groups have indeed defined mission in various ways. For example, J. Zink asserts the “five marks of mission” of the Anglican Communion: “To proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers. To respond to human need by loving service. To seek to transform the unjust structures of society. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.”⁴⁷ M. McCoy argues that the five marks should be rewritten to reflect a better theology of mission.⁴⁸ He suggests that in mission, we serve the good news of the reign of God as we (1) witness to Christ’s forgiving, saving, reconciling love for all; (2) build welcoming, transforming communities of faith; (3) stand in solidarity with the poor and needy; (4) challenge injustice and oppression; and (5) protect, care for and renew life on our planet.

Therefore, the church’s commitment to transformation is not limited to individuals but extends to the geographic communities in which the church is located and non-geographical networks in which it is engaged. Missional churches recognize that they are signs and servants of the reign of God; but because they themselves are in the process of becoming, they are ambiguous signs and unworthy servants. When drawing people to it, the missional church must always point beyond itself. The church must give high priority to the Great Commission. It is apparent that there is no single way of describing mission. We should be guided by questions that have been raised by scholars such as Richard Osmer in his four tasks of practical theology as we respond

46 World Council of Churches “Mission from the Margins. Toward a Just World,” *International Review of Mission* 101:1 (2012), 153–69, at 122, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6631.2012.00092.x>.

47 J. Zink, “Five Marks of Mission: History, Theology, Critique,” *Journal of Anglican Studies* 15:2 (2017), 144–66, doi:10.1017/S17403553117000067.

48 M. McCoy, “Going in Peace, or Breaking in Pieces? Anglican Unity and the Mission of God,” *InterMission: An Australian Journal of mission* 4:1 (1998), 22–33.

to the questions: What is going on? Why is it going on? And what ought to be going on?⁴⁹ These questions will equip the church's mission through the following tasks:

- The descriptive-empirical task: gathering information that helps us discern patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations, or contexts.
- The interpretive task: drawing on theories of the arts and sciences to better understand and explain why these patterns and dynamics are occurring.
- The normative task: using theological concepts to interpret particular episodes, situations, or contexts, constructing ethical norms to guide our responses, and learning from “good practice.”
- The pragmatic task: determining strategies of action that will influence situations in ways that are desirable and entering into a reflective conversation with the “talk back” emerging when they are enacted.

Conclusion

This chapter asked the question: How can the mission of the church enhance a transformative response to the challenges of COVID-19, racism, xenophobia, and sustainable livelihoods in the South African context? The chapter analyzed the South African situation and identified poverty, inequality, and corruption as “illegal manifestations of resource contestation” that have culminated in the scapegoating of foreign migrants who are now blamed for South Africa's economic woes. I proposed that a racially united “protest movement” is an alternative model for a missionally oriented church that responds to the challenges of COVID-19, racism, and xenophobia and that promotes sustainable development interventions in South Africa. The article also presented protest movements as a missional paradigm that is focused on people on the margins, toward a transformative missional hermeneutical optic—which should highlight marks of the mission of the church.

⁴⁹ Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 92–93.

CHAPTER 6

Mission in a Wounded World

Introduced by Michael Biehl

“The Arusha Call to Discipleship” (hereafter, Arusha Call) of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) conference in 2018, Tanzania, stated, “Despite some glimmers of hope, we had to reckon with death-dealing forces that are shaking the world order and inflicting suffering on many.”¹ The Arusha Call names such death-bringing forces that have been identified during this last CWME conference to cause the wounds in this world, be it the suffering of people, be it the groaning of the whole creation. Faith identifies sin and human hubris as one of the main root causes for these wounds. Mission and evangelism proclaim the life-giving movement of the Spirit. They name those forces that endanger the life of people and of creation and proclaim the Spirit of God empowers humans to heal the wounds. Christians all over the globe live and witness in contexts that are marked by conflicts in different ways. Even though churches, networks, social movements, and individuals fight injustices and for rights, an honest look into these issues reveals that often some of them or parts of them have a share in the causes of the conflict and that they have not and are not everywhere and always on the side of those suffering. Mission itself has been complicit with colonialism, power, and destruction of the cultures of Indigenous communities, as some of the contributions to this chapter do not fail to remind.

The long-planned foundation of the International Missionary Council (IMC) happened only in the year 1921. To organize cooperation in mission through it was possible only after overcoming the wreckage brought by World War I. The founding of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948, again, occurred in the midst of the aftermath of the World War II. At the occasion of the 100th jubilee of the IMC’s founding, mapping today’s global hotspots where injustices, poverty and violence are more glaring than in other locations. These hotspots are locations in which one can identify the involvement and witness of Christians and churches for reconciliation,

1 “The Arusha Call to Discipleship,” in Kenneth R. Ross, *Mission Rediscovered: Transforming Discipleship: A Commentary on the Arusha Call to Discipleship* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2020), 13-15, at 13.

healing, and unity. This is line with the proclamation of the theme of the upcoming WCC's 11th Assembly, which is "Christ's love moves the world to unity and reconciliation." Insights and challenges for mission identified in a study process will be submitted to the delegates to this assembly. Taking into account all of these aspects, a book on a hundred years of organized mission movements and mission studies needs to contain a chapter on mission in a wounded world that elucidates how and where Christ's love moves Christians to work for peace and reconciliation.

In line with the international study process marking the jubilee of the founding of the IMC, in which centres around the world have been invited to engage, for this chapter, authors from different regions have been asked to characterize the main wounds of their contexts and to describe the involvement of Christians and their churches and mission networks to cope with these and their attempts to heal. Even a whole library of books would not be able to cover all possible hotspots, and the number changes daily. When the planning for this book started, we were in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and the suffering it inflicted on the lives of people. In Ethiopia and in Myanmar, civil wars had begun, and the situations in the Middle East and Afghanistan continued to be devastating. In the days as this chapter has been concluded, all this has not ended but has been overshadowed by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. We heard the cry of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine and as well as of the Protestant churches and their call for peace. We realize how the various calls for being true disciples in this dramatic situation led to different analyses of the causes for this violent attack and for different answers. Olga Oleinik,² an Orthodox theologian from Belarus, wrote when asked to comment on the situation,

Speaking about mission, our church has never fully adopted this ministry. I see several reasons to it—centuries of living under the state's control, and learning to do what is allowed and thus losing capacity of a free action dictated solely by God's authority. Surely, we have the examples of the people burning with missionary spirit, however, in many cases they were acting in spite of the restrictions. Another factor is historically formed lack of a dignified attitude to the human person and lack of church community life.

H. H. Patriarch Kirill of Moscow answered the letter of the Acting General Secretary of the WCC, Fr Ioan Sauca, by justifying the invasion as the answer

² Olga Oleinik is an Orthodox theologian from Belarus. She served as the general secretary of Syndesmos, the World Fellowship of Orthodox Youth (2004-2007) and as consultant on Eastern Europe of Church Mission Society, UK (2007--16).

to an aggression from the Western world. We realize here how churches are involved in the conflict and how different the call for peace can sound.³

Facing similar intricacies and the plethora of people's suffering in this wounded world, any selection of authors and activists writing about their mission is prone to the criticism that the pain and cry of others have not been heard and "glimpses of hope" have been overlooked. The sad truth is that any discrimination between different voices becomes part of the conflict whose suffering is mentioned and whose suffering is not paid attention to. This selection is meant to offer examples of some of the pestering wounds in our world, such as racism, political oppression, war, persecution, violence, and interfaith enmity. The focus that led to this the selection is the emphasis on missionary and evangelistic activities in cooperation because the issues and topics are so large and endemic that one church, one denomination, one congregation will never be able to cope with it alone. Most of these topics are, in a way, also affecting the churches themselves. We also wished to include narratives like the one from Italy, where in the midst of a quite well-to-do region, people are still suffering from insecurities and anxieties. Inner conflicts in churches are addressed in two of the contributions. The last point to mention is that the compilation of the different pieces is a result of positive answers of authors who have been willing in the midst of their involvement in mission in a wounded world to write these pieces as testimonies to discipleship.

Philippines by Thaad Kolin Angel Samson

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken its toll on everyone. In the Philippines, 2.83 million people have been infected, and 48,712 have died to date. The pandemic had a heavy impact on the lives and livelihood of many, especially the poor and the marginalized. Grave corruption in government and killings continue with impunity. Principalities who have been given the task and the power to respond and to act focused more on building their wealth out of the pandemic. Those who dare question and cry out are silenced by those who are sworn "to serve and protect." Every day, the divide between the rich and those barely survive the day is getting more defined.

I come from Bulacan, one of the provinces adjacent to the beautiful Manila Bay. Bulacan as an agricultural province is one of the biggest producers of rice, corn, root crops, and seafoods. In coastal areas, there are 22 species of

3 "Response by H.H. Patriarch Kirill of Moscow to Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca (English translation)," World Council of Churches, 10 March 2022, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/response-by-hh-patriarch-kirill-of-moscow-to-rev-prof-dr-ioan-sauca-english-translation>.

mangroves that serve as habitat for fish, crabs, shellfish, among others. In Bulacan alone lies the 24 hectares of fishing reservation area that produces at least 41 million tons of fish every year. That is why Manila Bay is a pillar of food security for Bulacan and the country. Moreover, some of the best by-products of Manila Bay are shared with the international community through export, providing the livelihood of more than 62,000 families.

In 2016, the Duterte Administration launched the “Build, Build, Build” flagship program that aims to elevate the economy of the Philippines through nationwide infrastructure projects. It was what enticed voters in the 2016 elections to vote for Rodrigo Duterte.

Infrastructure can really make a difference in the economic life of a country, but only if it is aimed to lift the poor. The Philippine government conspired with big corporations to implement the program but with intentions that are anti-poor and anti-environment. One of the projects is the Manila Bay Reclamation Project, a priority of the Duterte Administration. At least 2,700 hectares of sea area will be converted to land to hold business districts, airports, seaports, casino, and shopping malls along Manila Bay. Mountains will be levelled down to support the conversion and mangroves that are habitat to marine life will be cut. The livelihood of many fisherfolks, fish dealers, and market vendors will be lost. The food security of the common people in the province and nationwide is under threat.

To date, all residents in the village of Taliptip, Bulakan township in the province of Bulacan, were already forced out of their homes and given around 200,000 Philippine pesos per family to start their lives and build a livelihood elsewhere. Many do not have any other source of income but the daily hand-picking of shrimps and crabs. Taliptip is only one among the many villages resting directly at the site of the construction of the reclamation area.

The dredging of the Manila Bay has caused severe contamination of the waters in surrounding towns. Fish has become scarce. The price of fish and other by-products have increased significantly, affecting the lives of many poor families, such as that of Virgie. Before the project, Virgie’s husband’s take-home income was at least 2,000 pesos for a day of fishing. These days he earns only 200 to 400 pesos a day.

Virgie and her group of concerned mothers sent petition letters from the community to the mayor and the governor. Unfortunately, the local government unit cannot act or comment on matters of the national development plan of the government. They resorted to call-outs and protests, but the national government sent the military to set up a detachment camp to harass and silence those who resist the project.

One good thing that happened is the Bulacan Ecumenical Forum, of which I am a member. This is an organization of church workers, clergy, and laypersons with a mission to help the poor, to address the root causes of conflicts, and to protect the environment from abusive projects and practices. The forum united many people from different churches to stop the reclamation and save Manila Bay.

The United Methodist Church, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, Iglesia Filipina Independiente, and the Roman Catholic Church through the Bulacan Ecumenical Forum asked the Mayor of Bulacan, Bulacan, for a dialogue. The forum was hoping to claim back the land from which the community was evicted. However, it was only able to secure a 250,000-peso grant from the local government for each affected family to aid in their relocation.

The forum also coordinated with Oceana (an international ocean advocacy group) and the University of the Philippines in gathering facts and evidence of the negative effects of the project. Continuing activities include gathering young people from affected villages for awareness raising about global warming, climate change, and ways to prevent the degradation of our natural resources; and organizing webinars to educate affected residents about the reclamation project and how to respond as individuals and as church people.

The infrastructure program of the Duterte Administration kills the hope of the poor and destroys the environment. The benefits are not worth the suffering of the already suffering people. The government should be the one protecting the rights of the residents of Taliptip, not the one harassing and threatening them.

Our mission, as we claim to be followers of Christ, is to take concrete steps in building the kingdom of God here and now, to alleviate suffering and to ensure justice is achieved. For now, we will continue fighting along with the fisherfolks in Bulacan. We will continue to set up platforms to voice their concerns. Because that is what Christians and neighbours do—amplify the voices from the underside.

Our world is hurting from many wounds. One effective way to heal these wounds is to unite. Churches should continue to build stronger ecumenical networks to effect public influence and meaningful change. Intentional programs include relief work, quick rescue and response systems, regular awareness raising sessions for far-flung villages and communities, and many more. These works are never in vain. They are seeds from which a larger movement could grow and bring about real and positive change in the lives of local communities like Taliptip and in the world.

Myanmar Christians' Experiences by *Lahphai Awng Li*

A brief analysis of the context

On 1 February 2021, Myanmar military (*Tatmandaw*) led by Min Aung Hlaing, took control of the country and ruled again through a junta. Consequently, the majority people of Myanmar face an uncertain future for democratization. The vision of the ethnic minorities to build a democratic federal union based on the Panglong agreement of 1947 seems to have become impossible. Without abolishing national chauvinism, the military dictatorship, and the current constitution, the ethnically and religiously diverse people will not be able to co-exist peacefully and harmoniously. Moreover, the religious freedom conditions for Christians in Myanmar have worsened since the coup. It seems that the ideology of *Burmanization* (to create a homogeneous people [Burman] and religion [Buddhism]) in the country continues to influence the mindset of the current military regime.

The majority of the Chin and the Kachin ethnic groups of the western and northern regions of Myanmar are Christians. The majority of the Karen and Karenni (Kayah) ethnic groups are Buddhists but have a sizeable number of Christians. Among the ethnic Burman, Shan, Naga, Lahu, Ah Kha, Wa, Chinese, and Indians, very few are Christians. Christians in Kachin, Karen, Kaya, and Chin states have suffered oppression for almost seven decades and are currently facing even more persecution. The Chin Baptist Convention states that “the military’s attack on church buildings, occupying churches and destroying church property, and bombing civilians’ homes is an insult to religions and believers.”⁴ As a result of the recent military’s attacks, thousands of people have fled their homes and taken refuge in churches and the jungle. The number of displaced persons is increasing every day in Christian areas. In some townships, unarmed civilians, including Christian priests and pastors, have been detained or killed.

How Myanmar Christians are coping with the post-coup 2021 crisis

In the past, Christians advocated for human rights and peace but were “more engaged in social development rather than explicitly political activities at least at an institutional level.”⁵ Most Christians in Myanmar adhere to traditional conservative theology, which divides the sacred and secular, and

4 “Baptist Pastor Shot Dead in Myanmar,” UCA News, 20 September 2021.

5 Benedict Rogers, “The Contribution of Christianity to Myanmar’s Social and Political Development,” *The Review of Faith and International Affairs* 13:4 (2015), 60.

yearn for the otherworld where there is no pain, sorrow, suffering, or death. Ecumenical seminaries taught political theology, liberation theology, Asian theology, third-world theology, and public theology for several decades, training students to be the leaders of prophetic churches promoting peace and justice in the community and the country. Most Christian leaders were not yet able to train their church members to practise faith and action together, opposing a government that violates basic human rights or the right to religious freedom. Only a small number of Christians and churches were convinced that the church is called to be the servant of the entire Myanmar society and raised their voices against the abuse of rights and the state of the country's social and political system as their mission task. A small number of Christians participated actively in demonstrations against the evil socio-political system privately, but not as representatives of any churches or Christian organizations.

However, this line of theological and missiological understanding changed after the coup. Christian bodies issued statements that expressed their rejection of military authoritarian rule and called for federal democracy. These included the Catholic Bishop's Conference of Myanmar (CBCM) and the Myanmar Council of Churches, the Myanmar Evangelical Christian Fellowship, the Myanmar Baptist Convention, the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar, the Methodist Church, the Chin Baptist Convention, the Kachin Baptist Convention, and the Myanmar Institute of Theology (MIT). In a statement on 5 February 2021, the Myanmar Baptist Convention stated its mission: "the Myanmar Baptist Convention is a Christian organization that always stands firmly on the promotion of love, peace and freedom in accordance with the teaching of the Bible."⁶ The MIT declared, "we firmly stand with the peoples of Myanmar who have freely expressed their will and sincere desires for the prevalence of justice and peace, which is the way of Jesus Christ, and condemned the unjust, forceful, oppressive, authoritarian activities."⁷

Most Myanmar Christian priests, pastors, nuns, seminarians, seminary staff, and youths joined the street protest movement, together with leaders and laypersons of other religions, showing solidarity with all the civilians of Myanmar in opposing the military coup in the early stages of the Spring Revolution. They took part in a procession on the street with their religious symbols, but also in acts of civil disobedience, labour strikes, a military boycott campaign, a pot-bang movement, a red ribbon campaign, and public

6 Statement of the Myanmar Baptist Convention on 5 February 2021.

7 "Church Groups Back Calls for Civil Disobedience in Myanmar," *LiCAS.news: Light for the Voiceless*, 9 February 2021, <https://www.licas.news/2021/02/09/church-groups-back-calls-for-civil-disobedience-in-myanmar/>.

protests. Some of them held banners with passages such as, “Let justice run down like water (Amos 5:24a)” and “God loves peace and justice.” After recent military crackdown on protesters, the Christian organizations restricted the use of their names, flags, and symbols of their denominations or churches. For instance, on 9 February 2021 the CBCM issued a directive that “priests, religious people and seminarians are not allowed to hold demonstrations on the streets by holding Catholic Church flags or with Catholic symbols or with the names of Catholic organizations.”⁸ They also restrict laypersons from using Catholic symbols and church flags in their support of anti-coup movement as citizens.⁹ Most Christian organizations, conventions, and churches encouraged their clergy and members to demonstrate only in their respective Christian/church compounds. Later, they changed their political engagement to pray for the country in the church compound, supporting the Civil Disobedient Movement and supplying food and non-food items to those most affected by the military coup. Therefore, Myanmar Christians and church participation have turned slightly back again following the brutal military crackdown on the protesters.

In contrast, some Christian youths have joined the street movement (the People’s Defense Force) and ethnic armed organizations to end the military dictatorship. Some laypersons have become key players in the anti-coup political movement. There are some lay Christians in the National Unity Government of Myanmar,¹⁰ such as Duwa Lashi La (Vice President), Dr Lain Hmung Sakhong (Minister of Federal Union Affairs), Dr Sasa (Minister of International Cooperation), Dr Hkalen Tu Hkawng (Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation), Hkaung Naw (Deputy Minister of International Cooperation), and Ja Htoi Pan (Deputy Minister of Education). We can see progress in Christians’ participation in public affairs to some extent after the military coup.

Conclusion

Myanmar churches must not only nurture their members to be spiritually mature, actively proclaiming the word of God in words and deeds in the midst of rapid social and political changes. We, Myanmar public theologians, still need to encourage every Myanmar Christian to engage directly with the

8 Myanmar Christians Appeal for Release of Detained Leaders,” *UCA News*, 10 February 2021, <https://www.ucanews.com/news/myanmar-christians-appeal-for-release-of-detained-leaders/91356>.

9 Ibid.

10 NUG is a Burmese government in exile formed by the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH), a group of elected lawmakers and members of parliament ousted in the 2021 Myanmar coup d’état.

political process in Myanmar in a peaceful way. Christians, individually or collectively, must identify with the people of the whole community and cooperate with all religious communities for liberation from demonic power by engaging in the peaceful struggle for the common welfare of society and for religious freedom, Christians in Myanmar will be known as true patriots and Christianity will be rooted in the life of the country.

The Role of the Palestinian Church in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict by Rula Khoury Mansour

Background and challenges

The creation of Israel in 1948 caused the displacement of more than 700,000 Palestinian Arabs and the destruction of more than 400 Palestinian villages and towns (henceforth, the *nakba*). Many rounds of war and violence emerged as a result of the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Seven decades later, two million Palestinians live under siege in Gaza, three million live under occupation in the West Bank, and two million Palestinians are second-class citizens within Israel. Six million Palestinians live in the diaspora or in refugee camps in neighbouring countries.

Palestinian Christians include some of the oldest Christian communities in the world, whose presence in the Holy Land dates back to early Christianity (Acts 2:11). As ethnic minorities among Jews in Israel (20%), and as religious minorities among Arab Muslims (8% in Israel and 1% in the West Bank), Palestinian Christians form a unique minority. Palestinian Christians tend to perceive themselves positively as a distinct social group, and this collective self-esteem is partly due to the educational and economic level Christians have achieved, despite their difficulties. As a resourceful minority, they have played an important role in shaping a Palestinian national identity, with a political and cultural influence within Palestinian society that far exceeds their numbers.

The ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the failed peace process, the general political instability of the region, the rise of Islamist groups, and the exodus of Christian populations have shaped the political identity of Palestinian Christians, causing a split in their loyalties. Some embrace traditional secular nationalism, others work for a Christian religio-communal revitalization, or focus on apolitical escapism. Some Palestinian Christian citizens of Israel favour alignment with Jews in Israel, while others take a role through involvement with parachurch organizations. Throughout the different stages

of the conflict, as I will elaborate, the Palestinian Church has been active in taking a stance against the occupation and injustices.

Opportunities and initiatives through the different stages of the conflict

Shock and resignation (1948–67).

During the *nakba*, Palestinians were stunned when they became a minority and refugees in their own land. In this stage, the main attitude of Palestinians, mainly those who live in Israel, was one of acceptance. During this period, the church hosted refugee families from evacuated towns and villages and provided shelter as well as a health and educational centre for both Muslims and Christians.

Awakening (1967–89).

In 1967, Israel occupied the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In this stage, Palestinians in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza began to increasingly resist injustices against them in different ways.

Before and during the first uprising (*Intifada*) in 1987, there were Christian nonviolent initiatives such as those initiated by Mubarak Awad (the “Gandhi of Palestine”) through the Palestinian Centre for the Study of Nonviolence, including civil disobedience, planting olive trees on Israeli settlements, tax-strikes, and boycotting Israeli products.

Additionally, the Patriarchs of the Churches of Jerusalem issued many statements against injustices. They called on the Palestinian Christian communities for a nonviolent resistance, and international involvement for solving the conflict through dialogue.

Palestinian Christians struggled in this situation, having to fight against Israeli occupation, Palestinian violent resistance, and Christian Zionism. Several Palestinian theologians therefore started to develop contextual theology, liberation theology, and nonviolent theology, and later, theology of the land and reconciliation theology.

Demanding justice (1989–today).

After the failure of the Oslo Accords peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians in the 1990s, Palestinian voices started to demand justice through less traditional political methods. Palestinian Christians played an important role during this period, which was characterized by a new generation seeking to fight for their rights using new means.

Nonviolent direct action:

Besides protests and demonstrations, there was civil disobedience regarding unjust laws in the West Bank. Several Palestinian Christian villages, such as Beit Sahour, organized city-wide tax resistance, refusing to pay tax to Israel and boycotting Israeli products. In 2002, based on an appeal from local church leaders, the WCC created the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel to create an international presence in the country, accompanying the local people and communities, offering protective presence, and witnessing their daily struggles. Around 1800 ecumenical accompaniers have served in this program, and many have stayed involved in working toward a just peace in Palestine and Israel.

In 2005, the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, modelled after South Africa's anti-apartheid movement, was established, aiming to pressure Israel into meeting the obligations of international law. Since the BDS call, there has been an increase in nonviolent strategies internationally, including from international Christian denominations, Israeli human rights organizations, American Jewish organizations, student groups, and Palestinian civil society groups.

Declarations articulating a vision for human rights:

In 2006, a group of Patriarchs and heads of Palestinian churches issued the Jerusalem Declaration on Christian Zionism, a statement rejecting Christian Zionism as a false doctrine that corrupts the biblical truths of love, justice, and reconciliation. The declaration does not specifically oppose political Zionism in terms of challenging the reality of Israel's presence, but it condemns Christian Zionism for identifying with the one-sided Zionist political ideology and expresses a belief that Israelis and Palestinians can live together in peace.

In 2009, an unprecedented collaboration of 13 Palestinian Christian communities led to the creation of Kairos Palestine, which declared the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories to be a "sin against God and humanity" and urging Christians everywhere to nonviolently intervene to end its injustices. It insists that the church's mission is "to proclaim the Kingdom of God, a kingdom of justice, peace and dignity," seeing resistance, with love as its logic, as a Christian duty.

Peacebuilding grassroots groups:

Palestinian grassroots parachurch organizations have taken various approaches to peacebuilding, of which I will name some examples. Sabeel is a liberation theology movement that contributes to the rebuilding of Palestinian society through developing a nonviolent Christian theo-political

approach. Diyar Consortium is another peacebuilding movement, working with Palestinian youth across all religions with a praxis-oriented, socio-political, educational, and culturally programmed approach. Al-Liqa, a Palestinian contextual theology movement, has focused on developing dialogue between Muslims and Christians. Other movements include the Holy Land Trust, which promotes the teaching of nonviolence; the *Musalaha* ministry of reconciliation, which fostered interfaith dialogue between Palestinian Christians and Messianic Jews; Nazareth Center for Peace Studies; Come and See, a leading online forum; Nazareth Evangelical College and Bethlehem Bible College (including Christ at the Checkpoint conferences), which engage in contextual theology focusing on peace and justice.

Despite the challenges of being a historically oppressed church and a marginalized minority, the Palestinian Church has effectively shaped contextual theology related to its struggle, and has been successful in drawing widespread attention to the injustices through its emerging creative practices of nonviolence.

The fact that God has ultimate control of all injustices does not release us from our responsibility and mission as peacemakers. Our call to act as salt and light is an active, not passive, peace-making role; salt prevents immorality and light casts out darkness. In this way our ministry should link the gospel to important issues, serving as society's conscience.

South Sudan: The Triumph of the Cross ***by Hilary Garang Deng***

Sudan is one of the largest countries in Africa and was the first to become independent among those which had been colonized. Because of the longest civil war in Africa, Sudan's people could not live this freedom until today. According to Acts (8:26-40), the eunuch brought Christianity to the region, known as *Cush* in Hebrew (OT), *Ethiopia* in Greek (NT), and *Sudan* in Arabic—"the Land of the Blacks." Christianity spread in Sudan, Ethiopia, and northern Africa. Three great Christian kingdoms were established in Nubia along the Nile cataracts between Khartoum and Swan. Today, we still see the ruins of the Faras Cathedral of the Nubia church, lying in northern Sudan.

With the birth of Islam, Christianity began to face the challenge of its destruction. The Sudanese have particularly confrontational with Islam, leading to the destruction of Nubian Christianity and an Islamic period from the 9th to the 19th century. In the same way that Islam dealt with the first church of Sudan, it strategizing to destroy the Sudanese church. It started

with the expulsion of the Western missionaries in 1965, especially from the Anglican churches, mostly with an English background. They were seen as the continuation of the British colonial domination. Many churches were burned down. Christians were forced to leave their homeland and run for their lives to neighbouring countries. Some went to Uganda, some went to Congo, some went to Kenya, and many went to live among the Muslim majority in the northern parts of the country. There, they founded churches, and many people from South Sudan went and met Jesus Christ there, of which I am one.

A peace agreement that was signed between the southern rebels and the Muslim government gave the South Sudan autonomy. As a result, we experienced about ten years of peace, and churches were rebuilt and Christian faith spread in many parts of Sudan. Now the same government dishonoured the agreement and the war started again. The aim of the Arab ruling parties and all their elites was to assimilate the rest of African ethnic groups to become Muslims and learn the Arabic language, so that there would be harmony and unity among the Sudanese. This agenda was good, but the way they attempted to implement it was wrong because they were using force and intimidation to make all people Muslims.

Islam is today one of the fastest growing religions in South Sudan, especially in Northern Bahr el Gazal, Upper Nile, and Equatoria, particularly in Juba. This happens with support from the government, through the position of the presidential advisory on religious affairs. This always reminds us of how we Christians were treated by the Islamic Government of Khartoum when they used to isolate Christians by not letting them assume higher positions. This was a rejection of Christianity. What is happening now in the South through this favouring of an Islamic cleric to serve as an adviser while Christians are the majority in South Sudan? In the past, the authorities did not provide approval for land for churches to be built. No Christian was given a higher political positions, none were promoted to high ranks in the army or police unless they became a Muslim. The government defends this on the basis of Sharia (Islamic) Law to lessen the impact of Christians in the country.

The wonder we as Christians observe is that, amid the persecution and intimidation, revivals take place and many South Sudanese came to Christ. Christianity began to grow in the midst of the troubles, and unity and the ecumenical movement began to strengthen the faith and the Christian community to witness for Christ's salvation in the country. The Sudanese ecumenical movement is one of the recent Christian fellowships of our time. It was a response from the Christian body to the Islamic Jihadist. It was an outcome of the severe suffering, felt by all believers across the country from

all corners of the Christian body in and outside the country. Everyone was to meet, hand-in-hand, the challenge and to pay the price. It was a time of God and the reign of the gospel, a time of the movement of the Holy Spirit of God.

To the surprise of many, evangelical youth—graduates from universities and secondary schools—began to work together. Within a short time, the flames of a revival began to rise within their fellowship. Most of their activities were Bible study, worship, and prayers for new converts. Many evil spirits began to show up, and prayers for deliverance and healing were conducted. Many new converts were seen everywhere pouring into churches. Many of the leaders began to grow into power and ministry, and many young people, especially from the Anglican Church, decided to remain as a source of renewal and were ordained. They began to network with other youths from other churches, and a powerful movement and outpouring of the Spirit began to invade the church.

It began slowly in the southern parts of the country and moved into the northern parts, following the movement of the population displaced by the effects of the civil war of the Christian South against the Muslim North. It has to be noted that religion is at the heart of this dispute, though its actors have sworn to hide it. The civil war caused the country unnecessary and extreme poverty and weakness that kept them fighting for years. But because of God's grace, a great explosion of joy happened in the midst of this Islamic nation! God was doing something new! Something that was not expected, nor was it the plan of any person or system. As Christians, we were still accommodating those who wanted us to suffer, who persecuted us, wishing to end our relationship with Jesus, his saving power and the mighty works of his hands and the acts of his actors. Despite all that Muslims have been doing to Christians in a united Sudan, they do not reconsider their position in these two countries of Sudan. The mistakes of the past that they have committed against us as a church have not been addressed or forgiven.

Today, as we share our experience of the wounds of war, conflict, and persecution, we are grateful to God for helping us to persevere through these wounds of war, oppression, rejection and hostility. A price was to be paid and a race to be run, but the master did it on our behalf. The war is over, but temptation from the enemy, the devil, and its allies still must be addressed through the power of God and the command of Jesus.

Wounded Healers in the Service of the Wounded: The Case of South Africa by ***Tinyiko Maluleke***

From a wounded country

I write from South Africa, a country that was born 27 years ago, when I was already an adult. Twenty-seven years ago, a great and beautiful country comprising 60 million beautiful people was born. But it is also a tragic country that might have never seen the light of day if it had not recognized the woundedness out of which it emerged—a woundedness out of the midst of which it has forged a new identity and carved out a future for all its citizens.

One way of speaking of our national woundedness is contained in the preamble to the constitution of South Africa, when it speaks of the need to “recognise the injustices of our past” and to “heal the divisions of the past.”¹¹ Another way of acknowledging the woundedness may be observed in the opening lines of the celebrated presidential inaugural speech of Nelson Mandela, who in May 1994 said, “Out of the experience of an extraordinary human disaster that lasted too long, must be born a society of which all humanity will be proud.”¹² The “extraordinary human disaster” of which Mandela speaks includes what he later describes as “the depth of the pain we all carried in our hearts as we saw our country tear itself apart in a terrible conflict, and as we saw it spurned, outlawed and isolated by the peoples of the world, precisely because it has become the universal base of the pernicious ideology and practice of racism and racial oppression.”¹³

Apartheid—which Mandela is referring to when he speaks of “the pernicious ideology and practice of racism”—was a legalized system built around a series of laws governing every aspect of human life. It was meticulously designed to protect and enhance white privilege without care for the dignity, humanity, and livelihood of the Black majority. Necessarily, apartheid was a racial system of structural as well as actual violence.

11 “Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996—Preamble,” South African Government, <https://www.gov.za/documents/constitution-republic-south-africa-1996-preamble>, accessed 10 February 2022.

12 Nelson Mandela, “Speech on Occasion of His inauguration as President of South Africa,” in *Nelson Mandela: From Freedom to the Future*, ed. Kader Asmal, David Chidester, and Wilmot James (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball 2003), 68.

13 *Ibid.*, 68.

The spiritual woundedness

At first glance, the woundedness of South Africa appears to be mainly political and merely economic, at least in its basis and its effects. But there is more to the apartheid system than law, economics, and politics. As well as these, apartheid was also a perverted theological and spiritual system. Indeed, as an ecclesiastical practice, it was born in the bosom of the Dutch Reformed family of churches when the decision was taken to separate Black and white table when giving communion. In time, the Dutch Reformed Church would play a pivotal role in providing theological and biblical justification to the apartheid system. Indeed, the first prime minister of the first apartheid state administration, D. F. Malan, was a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church. If law was the sword of apartheid, theology was its shield and its fountain.

Nor were the other churches left unscathed. All South African churches, particularly the white churches, were, in one way or the other “trapped in Apartheid.”¹⁴ If the white churches were largely complicit with the apartheid system, the shadow of apartheid also loomed large upon the Black churches. The very segregation of the churches into “Black,” “white,” “Indian,” and “coloured” ethnic groups was problematic.¹⁵ Both the Christian faith and the churches were deeply implicated in both the founding and the maintenance of the apartheid system. For this reason, the struggle against apartheid was waged both inside and outside the walls of the churches. In this sense the body of Christ was riddled with the wounds of apartheid. For this reason, a section of the South African churches called for apartheid to be declared not just a crime against humanity, but a Christian heresy. And the World Alliance of Reformed Churches did declare apartheid a heresy.

Wounded healers

While the South African churches were deeply implicated in and affected by apartheid, they also played a crucial role both in struggling against Apartheid and providing an alternative vision for society, away from the state of woundedness. In this regard, various formations within the South African ecumenical movement, including the South African Council of Churches, the Christian Institute, the Black Theology Project, the Institute for Contextual Theology, amongst many others. At a time when such political leaders as Nelson Mandela, Robert Sobukwe, and many others were languishing in jail, the South African churches, their organizations, and their leaders stepped

14 Charles Villa Vicencio, *Trapped in Apartheid: A Socio-Theological History of the English-speaking Churches* (New York: Orbis Books, 1988).

15 Tinyiko Maluleke, “Mission, Ethnicity and Homeland: The Case of the EPCSA,” *Missionalia* 21:3 (1993), 236–52.

into the gap. One is thinking here of the likes of the leadership provided by such church leaders as Desmond Tutu, Allan Boesak, Itumeleng Mosala, Engenas Lekganyane, Nicholas Bhengu, Frank Chikane, and many others.

Through Desmond Tutu's leadership as chairperson of the Truth and Reconciliation in the democratic era, the role of the churches as wounded healers in the service of the wounded was underscored. But the vocation of healing is a complicated and difficult one, especially when carried out by the wounded in the service of the wounded. No one has captured the scope of functions, objectives, and attitudes entailed in the act of healing better than the late Canadian poet-singer, Leonard Cohen, in his song "Come healing."¹⁶ In this song, Cohen calls for the gathering up of brokenness and laments the splinters carried and the crosses left behind as well as the need for the healing of the body and the healing of the mind. How then can wounded healers carry out such a mammoth task in the interest of the wounded? In the prophetic witness of the South African churches, in the contributions of some church leaders and theologians, we have seen glimpses of what the healing of minds and bodies might entail. We certainly saw this in the life and work of the late Desmond Tutu—the epitome of a wounded healer.

The Case of the Serbian Orthodox Church by Tijana Petković

In addition to all the problems that Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) has been facing and struggling with for a long time, new problems have been created since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The SOC was the most affected of all Orthodox churches by the loss of great theologians and church leaders. In addition to several bishops, priests, monks, and nuns, Patriarch Irinej passed away, as did Metropolitan of Montenegro Amfilohije and Bishop Atanasije Jevtić. The election of the new SOC Patriarch has been monitored closely throughout the Balkans, especially in Skopje and Podgorica, as both capitals have invested time in recent years and prepared tactics to improve their demands for autocephaly.¹⁷

The two great territorial problems that have agonized our church for decades are still unfortunately current. The wounds that still hurt us are

16 Leonard Cohen, "Come Healing," Album: *Old Ideas* (Sony Music, 2012).

17 Andrija Bogdanovski, "The New Serbian Patriarch and the Burden of Old Territorial Problems," *Public Orthodoxy*, Orthodox Christian Studies Center of Fordham University, 18 February 2021, <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2021/02/18/new-serbian-patriarch-old-territorial-problems/>, accessed 6 February 2022.

the relations with the unrecognized Macedonian Orthodox Church, which seceded from the SOC in 1967 and has been in conflict ever since. The search for autocephaly and its realization was especially encouraged because in 2018, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew considered the appeal of North Macedonia for autocephaly and offered his role of mediation between the two sides.¹⁸

Another fundamental problem is the political situation in Montenegro, which has influenced the actualization of the issue of autocephaly of the Montenegrin Church and the position of the SOC there, with the controversial law on religious freedoms in 2019. The SOC saw the law as an attack on its activities in Montenegro, as the law states that all religious property built before 1918 should become state property if the religious organization occupying it cannot provide proof of ownership. The adoption of this law enraged the SOC and provoked months of processions that eventually resulted in the overthrow of the ruling party in August. One of the new government's most urgent demands was to resolve this controversial law, which they achieved temporarily in December 2020.

The SOC has not only problems concerning the territory, but also internal problems that are increasingly coming to light.

These include the problems of the Faculty of Theology, freedom of speech, as well as the relationship between different levels of the hierarchy in our church. The Faculty of Orthodox Theology (FOT) in Belgrade is one of the four founders of the University of Belgrade, thus our faculty is a state faculty. However, students and lecturers of FOT are in a different position compared to other faculties at the university. To enrol in the FOT, every student needs the blessing of the diocesan bishop. This means that students are also members of the SOC. It is also necessary for the lecturers at the faculty to have a blessing and, of course, to preach the correct faith.

The management of the faculty is in close contact with the synod of the SOC, therefore the influence of the church is great. Certainly, for one theological faculty, that should not be a problem, because it is in the interest of the church that the well-being of the lecturer and the student are set as a priority; but what if it is not always so? Freedom of speech, which we have been learning for years, is in trouble. The church that offers love and gives us shelter at the same time challenges the birth of free theological thought and criticism. The church should realize that it is only out of love that it is possible to criticize sincerely, because that criticism at its core needs to be improved.

18 "Initiative of Ecumenical Patriarch to Resolve the Issue of the Church of Skopje," *Orthodox Times*, 13 January 2020, <https://orthodoxtimes.com/initiative-of-ecumenical-patriarch-to-resolve-the-issue-of-the-church-of-skopje/>, accessed 6 February 2022.

All these rules and current relations create a closed circle of people and opinions—a comfort zone—in which everyone agrees. The problem occurs from the first day after faculty, when students meet dissenters and have neither an argument to defend what they really live for nor a culture of dialogue, but necessarily reject those who do not live life the way they think they should. Our pluralistic, modern, or post-modern world does not tolerate unanimity and provokes such cases to the extreme in every aspect of life. Being tucked away during studies was certainly pleasant, but it was also immensely harmful, because young theologians must invest a lot of effort to learn to articulate their views correctly, without verbal conflict.

The bishops of our church are necessarily monks. Many have been in those positions for years and rarely have contact with people outside the church. Sometimes this isolation creates problems because it results in a lack of understanding of different ways of living. The younger generations grow up differently than the generations of the older bishops. Older generations of bishops have lived long under communism, and it is difficult to accept so many new ways of thinking. Young theologians have a much more open view, which also includes cooperation with other disciplines, open discussions, and mission. The expectation of unconditional respect from the younger generations just because of the rank is unjustified, and a gap of misunderstanding is created that rejects the young from the church. We have been taught that bishops' decisions should not be doubted because they know what is best for their dioceses. But is it really possible in the 21st century that someone's decisions are not questioned or discussed—especially when it comes to a symphony,¹⁹ which in reality is just authoritarianism. Politics and the church have always relied on each other for the good of the state; but even in the most difficult moments, that well-being referred mainly to the ruling politics and its representatives, and least to the common people, who, with such authoritarianism, only lose trust and respect.

It is important to determine whether the mission of the church, which comes from the religious leaders, is identical to the mission pursued by its young members. Each generation has the task of preserving the reputation of the church in its time. What I consider good is that our church does not deviate from all its views in order to satisfy the spirit of the times and adapt. But our mission is to understand that the church is a living organism, which

19 Symphonia (Greek: συμφωνία “accord”) is a normative theory or concept in Eastern Orthodox Christian theological and political thought, especially within the Eastern Roman and Russian empires, which posits that church and state are to complement each other, exhibiting mutual respect, with neither institution presuming to dominate the other. Stanley S. Harakas, *Living the Faith: The Praxis of Eastern Orthodox Ethics* (Minneapolis: Light and Life, 1993), 259–93.

cannot prosper if it continues to live isolated in a pluralistic world. The church ought to begin by healing communication within the church itself, and then open dialogues with other confessions, religions, and nations. This is one way to live today in our wounded world.

Italy: Towards the Same End by Melissa Baccarella

Woundedness comes in many forms, some more readily hidden than others. They are under the skin and in the soul, but not for this reason less severe. A type of woundedness afflicts many Italians in Northern Italy: Anxiety is a persistent unease about uncertain outcomes that can manifest physical symptoms like increased heart rate, muscle tension, and sleeplessness. Anxiety gnaws at the soul, compromising the human capacity to trust God and others.

Having ministered in towns of Northern Italy for nearly 20 years, I perceive that anxiety is widespread. Still, I often connect with people who struggle or suffer somehow. I consulted an Italian acquaintance who is a psychologist and psychotherapist. Paola²⁰ serves as a district head in Piedmont for the national association tasked to manage mental health emergencies in Italy. She deduces that six million Italians (10 percent of the population) consumed prescribed anxiolytics before the pandemic, which does not account for over the counter, non-pharmaceutical alternatives. After the rigid lockdowns in Italy during the COVID-19 pandemic, the consumption of anxiety medications has doubled.

I shared this information with an Italian friend of a certain age. Giuseppina wondered if the current generation might not have a dangerously low threshold when it comes to processing and reacting to life's adversities, which provokes in them an elevated anxious response. A 30-something Italian woman, Sofia described the pandemic as the first true test of her generation's resolve. "However," she continues, "my church family helps me focus, giving me a firmness of purpose. Through sharing our daily worries, despite what life throws at us, I find continual strength and living examples of how to walk the path of faith, staying rooted in Jesus." Sofia's comment about resolve refers to the contemporary history of Italy. The world wars destroyed the nation's economy; however, Italians call 1950–69 the "economic miracle," which raised the standard of living for ordinary Italians. Grandparents and parents who suffered deprivation during the wars saved and sacrificed to provide a stable and carefree future for their children. In many ways, they succeeded, rearing successive generations that were less affected by some of life's harsher realities. The Italians who experienced the hardships of the world wars passed

20 I have changed the names of my Italian friends.

away before the pandemic. COVID-19 claimed many more lives, leaving the cherished and “protected” younger generations to adequately manage their response to a global health crisis with fewer psychological, emotional, mental, and spiritual resources.

The scriptures constantly address fears and anxieties. Consider Moses teaching Joshua: “It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed” (Deut. 31:8). The prophets added to the refrain. Isaiah addresses “those who have an anxious heart” (35:4), and Jeremiah reminds the exiles that the person who trusts the Lord “does not fear when heat comes . . . [and] is not anxious in the year of drought” (17:8). The psalmist is pragmatic, writing, “It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for [the Lord] gives to his beloved sleep” (Ps. 127:2). Jesus tells those who have ears to hear not to be anxious about their lives or lifestyle (Matt. 6:25) and attributes Martha’s troubles to her anxiety (Luke 10:41). Paul summarizes a solution for it: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Phil. 4:6). The biblical writers gently rebuke our anxiety, trace its source to fear and distrust, and anticipate its result, a compromised capacity to confront life’s tribulations healthily. Their admonitions suggest that anxiety is part and parcel of the human condition and that we need constant reminders and resources to overcome it in Christ’s power (John 16:33; 1 John 5:4).

At this centennial anniversary of the IMC, I reflect on its ambition to encourage missionary cooperation among the Protestant churches, striving for unity. Cooperation comes in many forms and is not always formalized. Its plainest acceptance is to work toward the same end—*solī Deo gloria*—a form of Protestant catholicity, which is simultaneously diversified and unified.²¹ Consider Daniella, who spoke to me about her and her companion Gerardo’s beautiful transformation after their baptism, following years of anxiety and depression: “I have noticed changes in myself, but I see them in Gerardo, but maybe this is because we are quicker to observe changes in others than we do in ourselves. We need each other to recognize how we are growing.” Persons suffering anxiety tend to navel-gaze, contemplating themselves or uncontrollable circumstances; but we need each other to overcome these propensities and recognize the new quality of freedom gained thereby.

21 Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority after Babel* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016), 190–204; Leonardo De Chirico, *Evangelical Theological Perspectives on Post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism* (New York: Lang, 2004), 192–202.

At the gatherings of evangelical churches in the alpine valleys of Italy, “the believer is vividly reminded of the end to which he has always aspired,”²² to commune with God and the saints and live for the praise of his glory (Eph. 1:11-12). These aspirations combat our anxieties. Apprenticed to the scriptures, Italian Christians hear again and again the refrain to be anxious for nothing. On this point, we are all hard of hearing, and the repetition reorients and resources us. For example, Carina suffered from debilitating anxiety and associated eating disorders in secret. She praised the Lord for a church she discovered two weeks before the pandemic started at her baptism. “The pandemic has been so ugly: Some took ill physically, others mentally, many died. My experience has been counter-intuitive to law and nature. Instead of taking ill, I healed. My church helped me. The Lord healed me.” Believers, scattered throughout the valleys of Piedmont but gathered in their churches, pursue the same end by teaching one another, bearing one another’s burdens, and praying for and with each other. The churches do not cure anxiety, but they offer companionship in Christ and practical help to those who suffer its effects.

What does collaboration among churches from different traditions look like in Latin America in the 21st Century? by David Nacho

The answer is complex because many of the lines that had been drawn in the 20th century have either been moved or are in the process of being moved. Today, many churches and church traditions exist and are involved in mission in Latin America, and the majority of them are not members of the WCC. A significant movement among them is that the separation between the state and the church, a key tenet of the identity of Latin American Protestantism and evangelicalism in the 20th century, has been eroded or simply ignored in the 21st century by the explicit and vocal support from Protestant, evangelical, and neo-Pentecostal leaders and churches to political candidates.²³

With the fading of that line, a convergence between groups of Catholics and of Protestants around the pursuit of power in order to (re)establish a

22 Cyril Eastwood, *The Priesthood of All Believers: An Examination of the Doctrine from the Reformation to the Present Day* (London: Epworth 1960), 256.

23 Consider, on one side, the close support to Evo Morales and his administration that the Methodist Church in Bolivia manifested and, on the other side, the vast support that neo-Pentecostals showed to Luis Fernando Camacho’s movement to depose Evo Morales and “bring the Bible back” to the centre of power, during the social commotion that followed the national elections of 2019 in Bolivia.

Christian society has gained strength. The most emblematic case of this new phenomenon is seen in the high levels of appeal and the support Jair Bolsonaro, a Catholic, received from evangelical leaders in Brazil.

Given these new circumstances, it is important to ask ourselves, is it possible for churches to collaborate in mission but not around the pursuit of power? Two kinds of experiences come to mind.

In El Salvador, where I worked with Emmanuel Baptist Church for two years between 2006 and 2008, I was honoured to participate in a couple of meetings of a nascent network called Religions for Peace. Besides my church, there were other Protestant leaders, as well as representatives from other religions such as the Muslim community or a movement to reinvigorate ancestral, Indigenous beliefs. This group was made up of committed leaders who had a lot to teach younger generations about the pursuit of kingdom justice. The mere act of coming around a table seemed prophetic in my opinion. However, the way of thinking and the proposed course of action in the group seemed to me somewhat detached from the day-to-day life of the communities represented. Pronouncements and documents were elaborated; there was a lot of truth, but I believe an approach that would have connected with the lives of ordinary people would have made this movement even stronger.

When I moved back to my own country, Bolivia, as I was giving a workshop on Integral Mission to Baptist pastors in Santa Cruz, I read a report on domestic violence within Christian households in 2013. As I read more sources, I realized the magnitude of the sinful reality of violence many Latin American families live under.

In my position of Academic Dean at Community of Interdisciplinary Theological Studies, I learned that participatory pedagogical approaches could lead the students to truly engage with the realities they are facing because they are invested in diagnosing and in creating solutions. So, when it was time to update our module on family, we decided to partner with Eirene Argentina, an organization with long experience in supporting families in crisis. In the updated module, we helped churches all over the continent to identify how violence is promoted in our societies, repent of our complicity as Christians in this system, as well as imagine and commit to new ways of leading family lives safe from violence.

Jesus asked, “What is the kingdom of God like? And to what should I compare it? It is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches” (Luke 13:18-19).

The church or the churches are not the kingdom, but they are its agents. Collaboration among us is a crucial way to participate in the life of this tree that is

the kingdom. The purpose of this tree is to foster life, and participatory processes of formation should be at the core of collaborative efforts in Latin America.

May we be inspired not just by the example of great denominational or church leaders, but also by youth and children who are teaching us about the importance of peace-building.

Orthodox Mission and Vulnerability in the Alaskan North by Alison Ruth Kolosova

From the mid-17th century, Russian hunters and traders crossed the Bering Straits to Alaska in search of furs, which were prized commodities in the markets of Eurasia. Their travels took them to the Aleutian Islands, rugged rocky outcrops inhabited by the Unangan Aleuts who depended on seals, whales, and fish for food. The frontiersmen forced the Unangan to hunt sea otters on their behalf, leading to drastic depletion of the otter population. The newcomers' presence frequently led to armed conflict, such as battles between the Russians and the Indigenous Tlingit of Sitka Island.

The newcomers also brought their diseases, such as smallpox, which swept through Alaskan settlements in 1836, causing the death of more than half of the Sitka Tlingit population. It was this suffering, however, that prompted some of the first steps toward reconciliation. After the Russian priest Ioann Veniaminov arrived on the Aleutian Islands in 1824, he and his family shared the rigorous Aleutian lifestyle, growing their own vegetables, building a wooden house and church, and handcrafting the furniture. He travelled for days across treacherous seas to minister on far-flung islands and suggested to the fur company more sustainable ways of harvesting fur seals, thus saving them from extermination. After learning the local language, he devised an alphabet for Unangan Aleut and co-translated the gospel of Matthew with the local chieftain, Ivan Pankov.

Fr Ioann was transferred in 1834 to Sitka Island, where the smallpox epidemic began to rage in 1836. Soon, the Tlingit realized that the disease was devastating their settlements much more than the Russian colony, where most people were vaccinated. The colony's doctor agreed to administer the vaccine assisted by Fr Ioann, who spent his evenings talking with the Tlingit in their dwellings, asking about their beliefs and customs. He was going on his own at night, as every head of family wanted him to show him hospitality, when only a few years before Russians had not dared go outside the fort without armed guard.

Fr Ioann let the Tlingit take the initiative to ask about the Christian faith. If any requested baptism, it was his policy to ask permission of their mothers and chieftains, so he baptized very few. When he celebrated the eucharist outside Stakhino fort in 1837, he informed the Tlingit in advance and 1500 of them gathered to observe the novel event. During the 1840s, the Tlingit language was used regularly in scripture reading, prayers, and teaching; and by 1851, there were 300 Tlingit in the Sitka parish.²⁴

As Easter approached during Lent 1838, Fr Ioann preached a sermon about Christ's cross, reminding his hearers that it is amid the greatest evil and suffering that each person is called by Christ to be a source of healing, as he himself had become for the Tlingit. "He came to earth to teach human beings how to turn the earth's unavoidable evil into a source of healing, wisdom and spiritual endeavor, how to transform the cross hanging over humankind into the most effective means of salvation. How to fashion out of the bitter tree which crushes human beings and draws them down even to hell, a ladder leading upwards to the Kingdom of Heaven."²⁵

After Alaska was sold to the United States in 1867, wounds continued to be inflicted, as Indigenous Alaskan children were taken by force to monolingual boarding schools as part of assimilationist educational and social policies. In response, the Alaskans fought to preserve their native languages, alphabets, written texts, bilingual schools, and churches introduced by Ioann Veniaminov. They consciously took ownership of the multilingual Orthodox Christian worship that had fused with their traditional cultures, thus promoting their survival. Owing to this Indigenous activism, there were 2,147 Tlingit, 1,406 Aleuts, 4,839 "Eskimos," and 2,257 of mixed ethnic background among the 11,758 members of the Orthodox Diocese of Sitka in 1902, and today when Alaskans celebrate Christ's resurrection at Easter, the shout of "*Gristos Kuxwudigu!*"²⁶ can still be heard.

24 The account of Fr Ioann Veniaminov's ministry among the Tlingit is from I. Barsukov, *Innokentii, Mitropolit Moskovskii i Kolomenskii po ego sochineniiam, pis'mam i raskazam sovremennikov* (Moskva, 1883), 81–87. Other historical material is from Michael J. Oleksa, *Orthodox Alaska: A Theology of Mission* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992). From 1840, Fr Ioann became Bishop Innokentii Veniaminov and is known widely today as St Innocent of Alaska.

25 "Slovo v Nedelii tret'iu sviatogo posta" in *Izbrannye Trudy Sviatitelia Innokentia, mitropolita Moskovskogo i Kolomenskogo*, ed. B. Pivovarov (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskoi Patriarkhii, 1997), 116. Translation: A. R. Kolosova.

26 'Christ is risen!' in the Tlingit language. I am grateful to Fr Michael Oleksa for sharing this phrase with me.

CHAPTER 7

Misión desde las bases: cruzando fronteras para forjar la unidad

Bernardo Campos

Abstract

This article discusses mission from the margins proposes crossing borders to forge unity. Starting from the ecumenical experience of the Pentecostals in Latin America and the Caribbean, it proposes a path of unity as a dialectical process that goes from the minimum intraconfessional unit to the average interconfessional unit to project the action of the churches in the search for maximum unity with the human race. It proposes Pentecostality as a universal experience for the Christian faith in dialogue with the Abrahamic religions. It suggests the decisive role of the Holy Spirit as promoter of an ecumenism of the Spirit, without going back to human correspondence in favour of unity. It finally includes a discussion about the possibility of legitimate proselytism against another, non-legitimate one that violates human rights to freedom of conscience.

Keywords: mission, ecumenism, unity, Pentecostality, proselytism

Resumen

El presente artículo versa sobre la misión desde las bases y propone cruzar fronteras para forjar la unidad. Partiendo de la experiencia ecuménica de los pentecostales en América Latina y El Caribe, propone un camino de unidad como un proceso dialectico que vaya de la unidad mínima intraconfesional, a la unidad media interconfesional para proyectar la acción de las iglesias en la búsqueda de la unidad máxima con el género humano. Propone la pentecostalidad como experiencia universal para la fe cristiana en diálogo con las religiones abrahámicas. Sugiere el rol decisivo del Espíritu Santo como promotor de un ecumenismo del Espíritu, sin retrotraerse a la correspondencia humana en favor de la unidad. Incluye finalmente una discusión sobre la posibilidad de un proselitismo legítimo en contra de otro no legítimo que vulnera los derechos humanos a libertad de conciencia.

Palabras clave: misión, ecumenismo, unidad, pentecostalidad, proselitismo

Introducción

En varias presentaciones anteriores sobre la unidad pentecostal y de la Iglesia en general, hemos explorado tanto las posibilidades como las limitaciones de nuestra práctica pentecostal como aporte a la unidad de la Iglesia, así como las potencialidades del CMI, el CLAI y el Foro Pentecostal Latinoamericano y Caribeño, contraparte del Foro Cristiano Mundial. Entre otras cosas, hemos recordado:

- Que la unidad es una “*nota ecclesiae*” distintiva de la verdadera iglesia y, por ello mismo, constituyente ineludible de la iglesia.
- Que, para aquellas personas que sean seguidoras de Cristo y miembros de su cuerpo, es un mandato divino, y no una opción.
- Que esa unidad es tanto invisible (obra del espíritu) como visible (obra de la iglesia).
- Que, al igual que el “principio protestante”, el “principio pentecostal” nos libra de todo relativismo confesional y de todo exclusivismo.
- Que el Foro Pentecostal es un medio y no un fin en sí mismo en la búsqueda de la unidad no solo de la iglesia, sino también del género humano.
- Que la *Pentecostalidad* de la Iglesia como obra del Espíritu está por encima de los pentecostalismos y que es una experiencia universal de toda la iglesia y sus diversas confesiones.
- Que no hay un modelo perfecto de unidad, sino que, en el camino, vamos construyendo alternativas. Se trata de una *unidad en el camino*, como experiencia de un peregrinaje siempre creativo y nunca repetitivo.

Dialéctica de la unidad

Si bien lo que buscamos es la unidad desde las bases, y por eso estamos aquí, creo que esta es solo una mediación para un proyecto mayor: la unidad de la creación entera, la reunión de todas las cosas en Cristo. Pero, para llegar a ella,—porque hacia ella avanzamos inexorablemente, ya que ese es el propósito del Padre—debemos dar algunos pasos previos. Si fuéramos hegelianos, propondríamos que, de cara a la unidad, los cristianos desarrollemos un programa de vida en tres momentos. Cortos o largos, no lo sé. Dependerá de cuán dispuestos estemos para compartir el proyecto de Jesús: “*que todos sean*

uno, así como tú y yo, Padre, lo somos” (Juan 17:11). O, en términos paulinos: “*Hasta que todos alcancemos la unidad en la fe*” (Efesios 4:13) proponemos que la búsqueda de la unidad pase necesariamente por un proceso que bien podría resumirse en *tres momentos*: primero, alcanzar una unidad mínima, para pasar después a una unidad media y terminar en una unidad máxima.

Sugerí buscar una unidad mínima, es decir, la unidad de cada confesión primero, por ejemplo, entre los propios pentecostales o los propios presbiterianos. Por ahí deberíamos empezar y avanzar gradual y procesualmente hacia una unidad media para alcanzar la unidad total y global. Es una especie de utopía motivadora.

El paso siguiente de la unidad mínima es la unidad media, esto es la unidad entre los pentecostales y los demás protestantes y entre estos y otras familias de la fe cristiana: ortodoxos y católicos, pero siempre en la fe de Cristo como centro. Aquí todavía estaríamos buscando la unidad en el marco del cristianismo. Probablemente todavía nos quedaremos en el dialogo interreligioso a este nivel.

Finalmente, como una utopía y, al mismo tiempo, como proyecto a largo plazo, procurar la unidad máxima. Unidad de, y con, todo el género humano, para ponernos de pie ante el Padre celestial donde toda lengua, tribu o nación adora al que vive para siempre, según la visión y teología apocalíptica de Juan. Una unidad sin distinción de ningún tipo sea esta de género, clase o etnia o posición social, económica, política o religiosa. La unidad de Cristo con el Padre y del Padre con toda su creación.

La experiencia pentecostal de unidad en América Latina

La (des)unión de los pentecostalismos y la impronta de la pentecostalidad

Ante todo, partamos de la realidad de las divisiones entre nosotros, los pentecostales. Cualquier pentecostal que lleve algunos años en la fe o lea algo de la historia de los pentecostalismos puede dar cuenta de esta realidad.

Las divisiones pentecostales, aunque tienen origen propio (mayormente por razones administrativas, conflictos por el poder religioso, y pocas veces por razones doctrinales), son también un reflejo de las divisiones sociales y de los problemas que enfrentan las masas (los pueblos) en su conjunto.

Quisiera proponer que estas divisiones han sido superadas por la gracia de Dios y han dado lugar a la diversidad de los pentecostalismos. Tanto así que los pentecostales hemos mitificado y justificado la división y el cisma

hablando de multiplicación por división. No obstante, son motivo de preocupación porque la diversidad sin unidad frecuentemente impide una mayor eficacia en la evangelización, tiende al proselitismo y resta poder a la misión transformadora en y de la sociedad.

La atomización de los pentecostalismos reduce las posibilidades de participación organizada para la búsqueda del cambio social y nos ha hecho vulnerables ante los que detentan el poder, ya sea político o religioso.

A pesar de su fuerza numérica, la desunión pentecostal, sumada a la falta de experiencia política y claridad ideológica, nos ha hecho presa fácil de la manipulación o el clientelismo político.

La búsqueda de unidad del protestantismo latinoamericano

La presencia o participación pentecostal en las experiencias ecuménicas promovidas por los protestantes históricos ha sido muy escasa. No obstante, aunque con temor y temblor, sectores minoritarios de pentecostales han participado casi desde sus inicios en América Latina en esfuerzos continentales de unidad tales como UNELAM¹, CLAI², CONELA³ y, más recientemente, en el diálogo católico-pentecostal.⁴

Pero la verdad es que, a veces, por desconocimiento, discriminación, reservas o sospechas ideológicas (de que éramos la “avanzada del imperialismo americano”), los pentecostales nunca hemos tenido un rol ni protagónico ni de mediana importancia en los movimientos de unidad y cooperación en América Latina. Hemos sido ignorados y, en ocasiones, utilizados para la consecución de fondos y luego marginados.

Cuando hemos participado de movimientos de unidad continentales, hemos reproducido modelos autoritarios de gobierno o le hemos dado la espalda al contingente pentecostal que supuestamente deberíamos representar o salvaguardar. Casi siempre hemos sido vistos como “sectas perniciosas” que, de tomar el poder (dado nuestro potencial numérico), tenderíamos a destruir las propuestas, modelos y estilos de unidad erigidos por organizaciones protestantes o católicas.

1 Unidad Evangélica en Latinoamérica

2 Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias

3 Confraternidad Evangélica Latinoamericana

4 El autor de este artículo ha sido invitado varias veces como ponente pentecostal por conferencias episcopales del catolicismo romano, tanto de América Latina como de Alemania. Cf. Campos, Bernardo. *Unidad y diversidad pentecostal: la potencialidad de los pentecostalismos para la misión global*. Panamá: Reunión con dirigentes del Foro Cristiano Mundial, 2016; Campos, Bernardo. *Ecumenismo del espíritu. El diálogo católico-pentecostal como suceso del espíritu santo*. Reunión con dirigentes del Foro Cristiano Mundial, Panamá, 2016.

La búsqueda de unidad entre los pentecostales

Tampoco han faltado experiencias propias de organización para la unidad y la cooperación pentecostales. Cuando dirigentes reformados del Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias (CLAI) nos dieron la espalda, se creó el Encuentro Pentecostal Latinoamericano (EPLA), pero pronto se diluyó en un Comité animador (Comité para el Encuentro Pentecostal Latinoamericano, CEPLA) que terminó asfixiándose por al menos cinco razones:

- Se creó como una estructura paralela al CLAI y copió el modelo institucional y los estilos de gobierno caudillistas, no aportando al desarrollo y crecimiento interconfesional.
- No pudo escapar a los vicios o juego de poder del viejo ecumenismo, reposando en la cooperación extranjera en lugar de en la autogestión y la autosuficiencia.
- Desconocía la idiosincrasia pentecostal: sus temas, sus mitos, sus lenguajes, sus saberes, sus métodos e intereses teológicos recurrentes. En otras palabras, desconocía la visión misionera y la hermenéutica pentecostal sobre el Pueblo de Dios.
- No supo sobrellevar el rechazo de los pentecostales al proyecto ecuménico, dada la persecución y el maltrato recibido por protestantes y católicos desde su llegada a América Latina en el siglo XIX.
- Quemó etapas y procesos, y desatendió los ritmos en la caminata pentecostal en favor de la unidad.

El influjo del Espíritu Santo en favor de la unidad

Muy a pesar de la opinión, interpretación o intervención pentecostal en favor del ecumenismo, el Espíritu Santo—como “*ruaj*” libre—ha soplado por donde ha querido y ha avivado una diversidad de tradiciones confesionales. El resultado ha sido:

- Una pentecostalización de diferentes tradiciones protestantes y una despentecostalización de tradiciones pentecostales como acto reflejo.
- Un movimiento carismático activo en el marco del catolicismo romano y la consiguiente renovación bíblica, emergencia de un laicado activo, desarrollo de ministerios y espiritualidades efusivas, reafirmación de “predicadores católicos renovados”,

sanadores, así como una revitalización de la liturgia católica incorporando la nueva canción evangélica (sintonía litúrgica).

- El arraigo de la religión cristiana en América Latina (contraria a la secularización europea) y el crecimiento de la increencia o deserción religiosa por la decepción de “los que se fueron”, la ineficacia de la fe cristiana y el avance de la maldad.

Misión a ras de suelo

Vivir a ras de suelo es vivir la misión dentro de la cultura a la que pertenecemos. Significa ser uno mismo en medio del mundo y, en particular, en la sociedad en la que vivimos, para permearlo con la presencia de Dios. Que los demás perciban ese “algo” sobrenatural que se desprende de vivir de forma auténtica lo que amamos y en lo que creemos. Vivir a Jesús en medio de nuestra sociedad creará un impacto, porque Jesús fue una persona que tuvo un impacto en su sociedad y continúa teniendo impacto en las vidas de las personas. Si vivimos en Él, irradiaremos su presencia.

La Evangelización de Latinoamérica desde 1916

Uno de los objetivos de la unidad está asociado a la evangelización del mundo. Todos sabemos que Jesús oró para que sus discípulos fueran uno, así como él lo era con su Padre, pero el propósito era para que el mundo crea. A partir de ahí, se ha propuesto la unidad como instrumento para la evangelización. Lamentablemente, esta ha sido entendida y tergiversada como proselitismo. Por eso nos preguntamos si es posible algún tipo de proselitismo en la misión. Nos referiremos en este apartado al celo evangelizador del pentecostalismo y su impronta santificacionista, gestora del proselitismo y las razones del crecimiento pentecostal en América Latina.

Sostenemos la hipótesis de que, aun cuando el pentecostalismo no ha estado presente en las decisiones evangelizadoras del Congreso Misionero de Panamá 1916 desde hace más de cien años, fue el movimiento que más creció debido a tres razones: su celo evangelizador, su dinámica santificacionista y su legítimo afán proselitista. Sostenemos, además, que existe un proselitismo genuino (legítimo), contrario a otro dañino (o ilegítimo) que no respeta la libertad del individuo ni la unidad de la iglesia como finalidad última.

La ausencia de los pentecostales en el Congreso Misionero de Panamá

En 1916, el incipiente pentecostalismo organizado, a juzgar por las recién formadas Asambleas de Dios en los Estados Unidos (1914), no formó parte del Congreso de Panamá. Como se sabe, el Congreso de Panamá de 1916

fue convocado por las iglesias misioneras que trabajaban en América Latina, quienes formaron el Comité de Cooperación para América Latina (CCLA) en Nueva York en el año 1913. Este comité, que fue presidido por el presbiteriano Robert E. Speer, representaba el ideal misionero de las facciones protestantes no pentecostales cuya estrategia misionera era subsidiaria de la modernidad. La estrategia misionera, imbuida por las ideas del evangelio social⁵ y el panamericanismo⁶, contemplaba, entre otras cosas, llegar a las élites latinoamericanas y superar los problemas sociales de marginalidad y pobreza que oprimían al continente desde la época de la Colonia hispano-lusitana. Comenzó en la edad media y se acentuó después con la “modernidad periférica”. Expresión esta última que hace referencia a las características socioculturales de los países no desarrollados en su experiencia de modernidad.

Muy diferente era la perspectiva pentecostal que, para 1916, ya estaba presente en América Latina. Desconociendo la división territorial de las misiones protestantes⁷, se avocó a una intensiva evangelización de las clases populares, coincidiendo en esa misión a ras de suelo, pero con propósitos distintos. Coincidió también con movimientos sociales como el incipiente movimiento obrero (1890 a 1930)⁸, el anarquismo y el movimiento social restauracionista de Rumi Maqui⁹ en el caso Peruano.

De acuerdo con Denis Sulmont, docente de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP), esta etapa de formación del movimiento obrero en el Perú va de 1890 a 1930 y tiene como antecedentes: el auge de la economía de exportación (guano y salitre), la penetración del capital británico y estadounidense, la incipiente manufactura de bienes de consumo inmediato (harina, jabones, velas, fósforos, cigarros, tejidos de algodón y lana, etc.), y las organizaciones de ayuda mutua (gremios y mutuales). Este período es conocido en el Perú como la “República aristocrática.”¹⁰

5 Tomás Gutiérrez Sánchez, *Pensamiento social Evangélico: Congresos evangélicos en América Latina 1916-2000*. Lima (Perú): Ediciones AHP, 2006.

6 Piedra, Arturo. *Evangelización protestante en América Latina: Análisis de las razones que justificaron y promovieron la expansión protestante*. Tomo II. Quito, Ecuador: CLAI-SBL, 2002.

7 Gutiérrez, Tomás. Op.cit.

8 Denis Sulmont, *Historia del movimiento obrero en el Perú*. Lima: PUCP, 1973-1975, 1982:19. En esta etapa nace también el anarquismo en el Perú. Cf. Hobbsbawm, Eric. *The Age of Revolution: 1789-1848*. London: Peter Smith Pub Inc., 1999.

9 Oshige, Fernando. “Rumi Maqui, líder de rebeliones indígenas en Puno, fue metodista” en: <https://metodistaperu.blogspot.com/2012/10/rumi-maqui-lider-de-rebeliones.html> (consultado el 15 de diciembre, 2020).

10 Se conoce como República Aristocrática (1895-1919) a la época de la historia del Perú caracterizada por el dominio político de una oligarquía dedicada a la agroexportación, minería y las finanzas, por medio del Partido Civil.

Las élites sociales de entonces, y personas ilustradas como Luis Alberto Sánchez y otros destacados intelectuales, desde la plataforma de la revista *Nueva Democracia*, afilaban una visión democrática bajo el influjo del gobierno de los Estados Unidos¹¹. No obstante, otras fuerzas vivas de la sociedad y otros intelectuales como Haya de La Torre¹² se oponían a estos proyectos porque sospechaban de las políticas imperialistas que el CCLA promovía o legitimaba¹³.

En el Perú de esa época, sucedió un raro episodio violento que el Estado oligárquico tuvo que afrontar, en la sierra gamonal. Fue el levantamiento campesino de *Rumi-Maqui* (“mano de piedra” en quechua) liderado por el militar Teodomiro Gutiérrez Cuevas¹⁴, 1915, en Puno. Su objetivo era “restaurar el Tahuantinsuyo” (antiguo Imperio Incaico), pero terminó tan rápido como empezó¹⁵. Fue muy similar al movimiento campesino liderado por Tomas Münzer durante la Reforma luterana del siglo XVI, que también fue violentamente arrasado por el naciente protestantismo.

Dos movimientos y fuerzas sociales (oligarquías vs. movimientos populares), dos visiones políticas (el panamericanismo vs. independentistas), dos concepciones de misión (evangelio social vs. evangelización conversionista), dos estrategias evangelizadoras (obras sociales vs. predicación callejera), se encontraron en la época en que se daba el Congreso de Panamá. Se trataba de una lucha simbólica y, al mismo tiempo, de dos proyectos misioneros en pugna, el “civilista”¹⁶ y el proselitista¹⁷-conversionista¹⁸, para decirlo en mis propios términos: formas tradicionales de misión vs. misiones a ras de suelo.

11 Arturo Piedra, *Evangelización protestante en América Latina: Análisis de las razones que justificaron y promovieron la expansión protestante*. Tomo II. Quito, Ecuador: CLAI-SBL, 2002.

12 Líder fundador del partido aprista peruano, Acción Popular Revolucionaria Americana, APRA.

13 Arturo Piedra, Loc. Cit.

14 La rebelión campesina en el departamento de Puno (sur del Perú), fue reprimida severamente por las tropas gubernamentales, con el apoyo de los terratenientes locales. Teodomiro Gutiérrez fue capturado en 1916 y sometido a juicio por sedición y traición a la patria, siendo condenado a 20 años de prisión. A partir de entonces se pierde su rastro, desconociéndose la fecha y las circunstancias de su muerte.

15 Flores Galindo, Alberto: *Buscando un Inca. Identidad y utopía en los Andes*, Biblioteca Imprescindibles peruanos. Empresa Editora El Comercio. Lima, 2010:209-21.

16 *Civilista* por la idea de lograr, mediante la acción social, una nueva civilidad para una nueva civilización.

17 *Proselitista* es un adjetivo o nombre común que describe el afán de convencer y ganar seguidores o partidarios para una causa o una doctrina.

18 Es *conversionista* porque pretende cambiar el mundo mediante la transformación interior (conversión) de cada integrante.

El celo evangelizador de los pentecostalismos de entonces, heredero de los avivamientos y del movimiento wesleyano de santificación, era diametralmente opuesto a la perspectiva misionera del protestantismo evangélico y reformado. Su proyecto, que ya venía en su identidad religiosa y su teología cuadrangular¹⁹, era más bien de tipo conversionista-santificacionista²⁰ y, al mismo tiempo, popular. Es así como, con justa razón, sociólogos de la religión como Bryan Wilson tipifican a los pentecostalismos como movimientos santificacionistas.

La impronta santificacionista del pentecostalismo

Con relación al pentecostalismo, me parece sumamente útil distinguir entre la *doctrina* de la santificación y la ideología de santificación. Los pentecostales, por lo general, enseñamos como doctrina de santificación que la santificación definitiva ocurre en el momento de la conversión (Dios nos declara santos en Cristo), y la santificación progresiva viene después tras la conversión. En tal sentido, se espera que los creyentes convertidos hagan todo lo posible para vivir una vida santa. A pesar de que los cristianos no puedan alcanzar la perfección absoluta en esta vida, como sí creen los wesleyanos, la entera santificación se producirá cuando Cristo regrese por segunda vez y nos transforme en cuerpos glorificados.

Por el contrario, entendemos como ideología de santificación el sistema simbólico motor cuyo eje básico es la santificación permanente de todo lo profano y que es capaz de legitimar y dar sentido a las prácticas proselitistas. Es la impronta santificacionista del pentecostalismo.

La ideología de santificación se caracteriza por ser des institucionalizadora, instauradora y restauradora de un poder carismático que es, al mismo tiempo, el motor y la razón de ser de su crecimiento y desarrollo.

Adviértase que no uso la palabra ideología en el sentido de “falsa conciencia de la realidad”, legitimadora de la clase dominante, como entendía el marxismo. Prefiero su acepción de “sistema simbólico” que permite preservar la identidad del grupo y de los individuos. En ese sentido sigo a Paul Ricoeur cuando señala que la ideología, como sistema simbólico, sirve de modelo para las acciones típicas, organiza los procesos sociales y psíquicos y forma sistemas y subsistemas tales que uno de ellos engloba al otro sin que se pueda aplicar

19 Cristo salva, sana, santifica (bautiza), viene otra vez.

20 Es *santificacionista* porque la dinámica que impulsa sus acciones está mediada por el deseo permanente de santificar el mundo profano. La idea pentecostal de “ganarle terreno al diablo” está en sintonía con este concepto.

un esquema causal a dichas relaciones de integración²¹. En el caso particular del pentecostalismo, la ideología de santificación constituye a la vez el universo estructurado y estructurante, cuyo contenido básico es la doctrina de la santificación, en su mejor expresión protestante.

La ideología pentecostal de santificación comporta elementos y matices que son propios de los grupos disidentes, cuyos rasgos comunes, a mi modo de ver, son cuatro:

Un sentido mesiánico de elección divina. Esto incluye la formación de un cuerpo o grupo especializado consagrado a la actividad místico-religiosa. Como es natural en la configuración cultural del grupo elegido intervienen teologías, teogonías, antropogonías y una serie de mitos ancestrales, ritos purificatorios y catequesis de doctrinas místicas tendientes a consolidar un poder misterioso revelado especialmente a los líderes y a la comunidad elegida.

Emergencia de un Líder Carismático. Su autoridad presume estar en directa armonía con la “voluntad divina” para el cumplimiento de la cual ha sido levantado (sesgo mesiánico).

Una ética de separación del mundo que aísla necesariamente al grupo elegido de la vida común o de la laicidad de la vida cotidiana, para consagrarse a los servicios de Dios. En el peor de los casos, esta ética de separación lleva al aislamiento de las prácticas sociales (*fuga mundi*) y, en el mejor, a la protesta profética frente al malestar de la civilización. Cuando la separación de las corrientes de este *saeculo* (=mundo) adquiere formas vocacionales o ministeriales, se crean las órdenes hierocráticas²².

Una tendencia proselitista. Es como la necesidad imperiosa que moviliza al grupo, casi con desesperación, a evangelizar a los “paganos” con la finalidad de salvarlo (arrancarlo) de las garras de Satanás, para convertirlo en un discípulo (prosélito) de Jesucristo. La consecuencia natural es el crecimiento numérico de los adeptos a la nueva fe, inspirada y fundada en Pentecostés y el Sinaí.

21 Paul Ricoeur, *Finitud y Culpabilidad*. Madrid: Taurus, 1969.

22 Bernardo Campos, *De la Reforma Protestante a la Pentecostalidad de la Iglesia: Debate sobre el Pentecostalismo en América Latina*. Quito, Ecuador: CLAI, 1997:39.

¿Es posible un proselitismo legítimo?

La pregunta es perfectamente válida ¿Habrá—por así decirlo—algún tipo de proselitismo sano, legítimo, que se diferencie de otro nocivo, no legítimo? Todo cristiano tiene el mandato de evangelizar y, de manera natural, lleva en la sangre el deseo de compartir el evangelio. Evangelizar sería así la imperiosa necesidad de presentar la verdad de Cristo sin caer en un proselitismo mal-sano, ilegítimo. Como en el caso del sincretismo, el proselitismo puede tener dos polos, uno negativo y otro positivo.

Es algo natural que el Espíritu Santo produzca en el creyente fiel la motivación de proclamar a Cristo en todo momento y en todo lugar. El mandato de Jesús a su iglesia es claro: “Vayan por todo el mundo y prediquen el evangelio a toda criatura” (Marcos 16:15).

No obstante, como bien observa Cecil M. Robeck Jr., citando a G. R. Evans, en esa tarea, el proselitismo puede tener *un* efecto negativo, porque

El proselitismo, según G. R. Evans, “*es una señal de que el sentido de compartir una mente común se ha roto*”. Este desglose (o quiebre) se puede observar en dos niveles. En primer lugar, se puede observar en la multitud de comunidades cristianas que no respetan ni reconocen la plena autenticidad de reclamaciones eclesiales realizadas por otras comunidades también cristianas. En segundo lugar, se puede observar en nuestra incapacidad o falta de voluntad para trabajar juntos en una definición común de los términos. Hasta la fecha, la evangelización de un grupo es todavía proselitismo de otro grupo²³.

El proselitismo es, en realidad, el empeño exagerado con que una persona o una institución tratan de convencer y ganar seguidores o partidarios para una causa o doctrina, violentando la libertad de las personas. En este esquema, prosélito es toda persona que se incorpora a una religión por la fuerza de la seducción. Por extensión, se aplica también a todo individuo que se consigue para una doctrina, facción o ideología.

El vocablo, originariamente, no estaba ligado a lo religioso, pero, con el tiempo, fue adquiriendo este matiz. Ahora que tiene mayormente un sentido religioso, muchas religiones cristianas distinguen entre lo que es proselitismo ilegítimo y la evangelización. Desde el punto de vista jurídico, podemos distinguir de un proselitismo legítimo.

Este último concepto es el adecuado, ya que no se trata de convencer a nadie para que profese una religión o para que crea en Dios, sino que la

23 Robeck, Cecil M. Jr., *Mission and the Issue of Proselytism, en: International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, January 1996:1, p. 2. (Traducido por Norberto Saracco) Instituto Teológico FIET para la Cátedra Petrecca del 2008.

decisión de profesar un determinado culto debe surgir del convencimiento del creyente, del nacimiento de la fe²⁴.

En la actualidad se utiliza más bien el término *conversión* para el acto de los fieles de una religión que adoptan otra, mientras que proselitismo se refiere a conseguir adeptos para un partido político, seguidores para alguna acción, o votos para una elección. Durante las campañas electorales, se utiliza el término proselitismo para describir los intentos por parte de los candidatos de los partidos de que las personas cambien su voto. Tratan de lograr que no voten a quien originalmente pensaban, sino que lo hagan a su favor.

¿Qué tipo de proselitismo se instauró en el protestantismo latinoamericano a partir de 1916 en relación con el catolicismo romano y los pentecostalismos? ¿Implica la evangelización actos de legítimo proselitismo? Esta es una pregunta muy comprometida para el pentecostalismo, pues, para el movimiento pentecostal, la evangelización implica naturalmente conversiones y, por ello mismo, la incorporación de nuevos creyentes (prosélitos) a la fe pentecostal.

La respuesta jurídica de la Dra. María José Ciaurriz, profesora Titular de Derecho Eclesiástico de la Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia de Madrid, arroja una nueva luz a la discusión y resalta su aspecto positivo.

Ciaurriz es autora del libro: *El derecho de proselitismo en el marco de la libertad religiosa*.²⁵ En el libro, la autora dilucida qué es la libertad religiosa como marco del derecho de proselitismo de las confesiones y los Estados. Para la autora, “el proselitismo forma efectivamente parte del derecho de libertad religiosa”. “Evangelizar es un acto legítimo de proselitismo” reconociendo que hay formas no legítimas de hacer proselitismo que se dan cuando se coacta la libertad de las personas y se les fuerza a tomar decisiones contra su voluntad.

Según Ciaurriz, el derecho de libertad religiosa aparece mencionado, de una u otra manera, en todas las Declaraciones Internacionales que recogen el reconocimiento de los derechos humanos fundamentales. Igualmente sucede con las Constituciones de la mayor parte de los países democráticos y, en general, con toda la doctrina moderna en torno a la materia: la libertad religiosa no se presenta como un derecho que el Estado o el Poder público concede a los ciudadanos, sino como un derecho previo al ordenamiento jurídico y que este tiene el deber de tutelar y proteger.

Se trata de un derecho que se desarrolla a través de distintas formas de ejercerlo, entre las que resultan capitales el derecho a elegir y profesar la religión

24 Quees.la ¿Qué es proselitismo? En: <http://quees.la/proselitismo/23.11.2015>, (site no longer active).

25 Ciaurriz, María José, (2001) *El derecho de proselitismo en el marco de la libertad religiosa*, del Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, Madrid. Cf. También: Ciaurriz, María José. *La libertad religiosa en el derecho español. La Ley orgánica de Libertad Religiosa*. Madrid, 1984.

deseada, el derecho a cambiar de religión y el derecho a manifestar la propia religión, que, a su vez, engloba el derecho de publicar, enseñar, predicar y hacer proselitismo, además del derecho a actuar en la vida pública y privada de acuerdo con las propias convicciones religiosas.

De todo ello, se deduce que el derecho de proselitismo forma efectivamente parte del derecho de libertad religiosa²⁶. Al preguntársele sobre el proselitismo ilegítimo, la Dra. respondió:

Debe tenerse en cuenta que, cuando algún Estado, como es el caso de Grecia, ha condenado a personas pertenecientes a una religión distinta de la nacional por llevar a cabo un *proselitismo ilegítimo*, el Tribunal Europeo de Estrasburgo ha dado la razón a quien ejercía el proselitismo, y no al Estado, la mayor parte de las veces, por considerar que la propagación, por todos los medios legítimos, de la propia fe, es un derecho integrado en la libertad religiosa (...)

Desde ese punto de vista, la conversión de nuevos creyentes, que lleva a los nuevos conversos a elegir dónde y con quien congregarse, es un derecho legítimo, forma parte de los beneficios de un Estado de derecho y no atentaría para nada contra otras formas confesionales o religiosas.

Sería deseable, sin embargo, que, al compartir la fe, el nuevo convertido tenga libertad de asistir a la iglesia que quiera, sobre todo si ya es practicante de alguna de las familias confesionales del cristianismo.

En mi opinión, para que el proselitismo sea legítimo, debe buscarse también que la evangelización no quiebre la unidad invisible de la iglesia ni atente contra la autonomía de cada confesión religiosa.

Caminos de unidad y cooperacion para la misión comun

Muchos pueden ser los caminos de unidad para la misión común, pero quiero proponer solamente unidad en la adoración de la alabanza y la danza pentecostal a la Adoración en el Espíritu, más allá de los pentecostalismos dirigidos hacia la pentecostalidad universal.

Una de las posibilidades que veo en la obra del Espíritu Santo en América Latina, en favor de la unidad, es la caída de los particularismos confesionales. Cristianos de diversas tradiciones confesionales compartimos una vida

26 ¿Proselitismo o evangelización? Entrevista a la jurista María José Ciaurriz. Madrid, 10 junio 2003 (ZENIT.org) en: http://mercaba.org/FICHAS/Evangelizacion/proselitismo_evangelizacion.htm (Consultado el 23.11.2015).

litúrgica común. Se están rompiendo las barreras culturales de separatismo entre católicos y protestantes, y entre protestantes y pentecostales (falta todavía romper el particularismo entre los propios pentecostales). Es como si asistiéramos a una Fiesta del Espíritu donde danzamos y cantamos las mismas canciones a nuestro único Dios. Lo que no hemos podido lograr en Teología (unidad en la doctrina, unificar criterios sobre Bautismo, Eucaristía y Ministerio como logró el CMI con el documento BEM) lo ha producido el Espíritu de Dios en la devoción y la espiritualidad (que llamamos aquí *Pentecostalidad*).

La adoración a Dios es el nuevo camino que nos acerca y nos hermana. Hay como un retorno al Padre y, de hecho, “Él está buscando adoradores que le adoren en Espíritu y en verdad”. Se trata de un reencantamiento religioso y un avivamiento espiritual.

La asimilación de la música evangélica y de las prácticas típicamente “evangélicas” por el catolicismo puede ser solo un espejismo de unidad, un remedo para neutralizar su acelerado crecimiento, o, a lo sumo, una coincidencia musical y cultural (o una moda) Tenemos que pasar de la sintonía a la sinfonía. No se trata solo de coincidir sino, por el contrario, de armonizar respetando las diferencias en una polifonía de voces y obediencias que sean olor fragante en la presencia de Dios.

Jesús dijo: “El que no es contra nosotros, por nosotros es” (Marcos 9:40), y “El que conmigo no recoge, desparrama” (Mateo 12:30). Por esa razón, no debemos oponernos a la Obra del Espíritu—vaya donde vaya—y debemos dejarnos guiar por Él, aunque sus formas nos sorprendan o no nos gusten.

La adoración es el mejor y más alto nivel de espiritualidad y comunión. No hay demonio que se resista a la adoración de los hijos de Dios. Principados, gobernadores, potestades y huestes espirituales de maldad, encarnados en las estructuras políticas (Barth) tienen que estar sujetas al Dios Vivo, en el poderoso nombre de Jesús.

Tomamos autoridad en el nombre de Jesús para “atar y desatar” en el cielo todo aquello que en la tierra se opone a su voluntad, ya sean nuestras fortalezas mentales o las fuerzas de la sociedad organizada en contra de Dios (el mundo) o para impedir las divisiones eclesíásticas.

Unidad en el servicio y el testimonio común

Ahora más que nunca, los pentecostales tenemos la posibilidad de dar un testimonio común de unidad y cooperación junto con otros hermanos en la fe

y con nuestros vecinos en la sociedad civil. No somos los únicos; somos uno de los tantos agentes de cambio.

Sufrimos todos la misma realidad de la pobreza, violencia, migraciones y vejámenes que afectan a millones de personas en nuestro continente y en el mundo entero. Necesitamos unirnos con un propósito. La lucha contra la pobreza es un noble propósito y debe ser incluida como parte de nuestra misión redentora y transformadora.

De hecho, el crecimiento y madurez de la diversidad de pentecostalismos se expresa hoy en nuevas generaciones de profesionales, mayores y mejores indicadores de desarrollo humano, calidad educativa, mayor participación social, y mayor poder adquisitivo, así como una novedosa y sorprendente ubicación de pentecostales en los diversos estamentos o poderes del Estado. Otro mundo es posible y perfectamente viable si trabajamos unidos. Empecemos por poner en orden nuestra propia casa y unamos esfuerzos en causas comunes por el desarrollo de nuestros países. Sobre todo en este contexto de pandemia, la sinergia es indispensable.

Lo que podamos lograr a nivel de la sociedad civil redundará en el testimonio público de que nuestro Dios es un Dios vivo y que él quiere formar hombres y mujeres nuevos para una sociedad transformada, signo y anticipo del Reino de Dios.

Unidad y cooperación en la busca de un nuevo orden social

No son pocos los pentecostales que incursionan en la vida pública y se organizan para el gobierno local, regional o nacional en sus países. Se trata de nuevas formas de poder y participación ciudadana. Somos “ciudadanos de dos mundos”.

Aunque debemos pagar “el precio del noviciado” en materia de participación política, los pentecostales vamos pasando de la presencia individual (caudillos en “servicio” social) a la participación colectiva (a la “acción social” a través de partidos políticos confesionales, frentes amplios, o inclusión en programas globales o partidos políticos ya establecidos) (Habermas, Audi, Rawls).

Inspirado en los ideales y valores del Reino de Dios, pero sin caer en una mezcla semántica (como confundir Reino de Dios con poder político) (Clodovis Boff), la búsqueda de un Nuevo Orden Mundial puede traducirse en una utopía que guíe la realización de proyectos tendientes a la creación de un nuevo orden social, o una cultura de paz, en el que la iglesia como colectividad—sin perder su especificidad—se vuelva promotora de cambios profundos en la sociedad.

La lucha contra la corrupción, las desigualdades sociales, como la discriminación de todo tipo, y las enfermedades endémicas merecen no solo una

denuncia profética en nombre del Dios justo (discurso), sino también, sobre todo, la construcción de sociedades de esperanza forjadas en el poder de Dios y en la fuerza del Espíritu que renueva la creación. Se requieren tanto una voz profética como acciones solidarias para superar las taras humanas.

Unidos en la esperanza: hacia una teología pública para la transformación del mundo

Finalmente, el futuro del pentecostalismo pasa por adecuarse sabiamente a los cambios y nuevos desafíos de la sociedad latinoamericana. Pasa también por ser capaces de articular teológicamente una propuesta de unidad basada en los “Principios sociales de Jesús” (Walter Rauschenbusch), la teología de la unidad que se sustenta en la “reunión de todas las cosas en Cristo”, al final de la historia (*anaquefalaiosis*), así como en la visión escatológica del Reino de Dios ya aquí y desde ahora, hasta la eternidad.

La dialéctica de la unidad, de la que hablábamos en los foros pentecostales, y el despliegue del Padre que se ha negado en Jesús por amor a su humanidad y que la lleva consigo de regreso a Él por su Espíritu²⁷, se convierte para nosotros en la esperanza que guía nuestra acción en el mundo como una Teología de la Esperanza siempre renovada.

A la luz de esto, los pentecostales estamos llamados a construir una Teología Pública y una Ética liberadoras que den lugar a una Teoría de la Transformación social en la perspectiva del Reino sempiterno de Dios Padre. Aquel Reino donde los ciudadanos otrora despreciados son redimidos y recuperan la dignidad de Hijos de Dios que tuvieron en el paraíso para ser en esta historia ciudadanos respetables.

Ecumenismo del Espíritu para la misión sin fronteras

En América Latina, donde el catolicismo romano es mayoritario, debemos preguntarnos por las posibilidades y limitaciones del llamado diálogo católico-pentecostal. Creemos que las condiciones para emprender creativamente un camino hacia la unidad y catolicidad (universalidad) de la iglesia se dan desde la unidad invisible de la iglesia como cuerpo de Cristo. Esto es posible desde la pentecostalidad de la iglesia como una *quinta marca (nota)* de la iglesia, guiada por el Espíritu de Cristo hacia el reencuentro con Dios Padre quien es la meta última de los seres humanos (hominización y unidad del género humano). De la unidad intraconfesional debemos avanzar a la unidad postconfesional de la humanidad entera, en un proceso gradual y guiado por

27 Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Fenomenología del Espíritu*; traducción de Wenceslao Roces, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1994.

el Espíritu del Padre. Se trata de la desaparición de fronteras confesionales que se oponen a la unidad del cuerpo de Cristo.

Ante todo, debo reconocer que es un honor poder hablar como pentecostal de nuestra catolicidad. Conociendo bien a los organizadores del diálogo católico-pentecostal, sé que su idea principal es la construcción de puentes para la relación entre católicos y pentecostales, pero hablar de diálogo con el catolicismo ya de entrada me parece una autolimitación conceptual si buscamos la unidad como iglesia. De hecho, esta es la expresión propia del movimiento ecuménico intraconfesional, como lo describe Patricio Merino Beas, miembro de la Comisión Nacional para el Diálogo Ecuménico e Interreligioso de la Conferencia Episcopal de Chile.²⁸

Es cierto que, históricamente, desde la Reforma Protestante y desde la constitución del Campo Religioso en América, entre católicos y protestantes (incluido los pentecostales en su momento), se han dado confrontaciones y negaciones mutuas, más bien por prejuicios o por desconocimiento de la fe del otro. No obstante, a la luz de la fe y del seguimiento a Jesús el Cristo, estoy convencido que entre católicos y pentecostales debe primar la unidad, porque nos asumimos por igual miembros del cuerpo de Cristo en fe y obras.

El diálogo, o mejor, la misión sin fronteras, es una categoría que en la búsqueda ecuménica ha sido usada mayormente para referirse las relaciones interreligiosas, entre la religión cristiana y religiones no cristianas. Pero como ambos, católicos y pentecostales, compartimos las mismas raíces judeocristianas y occidentales, así como el hecho de seguir a Cristo, tenemos muchas posibilidades de unidad. Por eso, ambas confesiones deberíamos pensar en construir caminos de unidad en función de la misión común comenzando por las bases y no al revés, “llevando hacia abajo las decisiones tomadas por el liderazgo desde arriba”.

Catolicidad y pentecostalidad en el Cuerpo de Cristo

Catolicidad y pentecostalidad son, a mi juicio, dos maneras de referirse a la una, santa, apostólica y católica iglesia cristiana mundial. Partimos del planteamiento del teólogo católico español Alfredo Fierro Bardaji²⁹, quien señala acertadamente que no hay uno, sino varios cristianismos. Sin restarle unidad a nuestra variopinta fe cristiana, Bardaji propone que las maneras de

28 Así lo plantea el profesor, Dr. Patricio Merino Beas, en su artículo *Contenidos teológicos para un diálogo católico-pentecostal. Hacia un testimonio común del Evangelio*. Teología y Vida, Vol. LIII (2012), 575-602, Y en: “Centenario del avivamiento pentecostal en Chile,” *Diálogo Ecuménico*, 135 (2008), 7-27.

29 Alfredo Fierro Bardaji, *Teoría de los Cristianismos*. Estela, Navarra: Verbo Divino, 1982.

seguir a Cristo son muy diversas y que, a su modo, cada grupo de seguidores busca ser cristiano.

Me he referido en otro lugar a la pentecostalidad de la iglesia como la *quinta marca* de nuestra iglesia y la he distinguido de los pentecostalismos que son concreciones históricas de esa pentecostalidad. Entiendo por pentecostalidad la experiencia de la totalidad de cristianos con el Espíritu Santo, sin distinción confesional. En la medida que es universal no tiene fronteras, el principio de la pentecostalidad es interconfesional, global e intercultural, porque procede de Dios Padre y retorna hacia él.

La Pentecostalidad como quinta “nota” de la iglesia

Si el Credo niceno tuviera que ser reformulado hoy, probablemente la iglesia universal reunida en un concilio agregaría la pentecostalidad como una *nota*³⁰ más de la iglesia, o bien como una de sus características. Recordemos que el símbolo niceno-constantinopolitano del año 381 calificó a la Iglesia como “una, santa, católica y apostólica”. Ahora que percibimos la acción del Espíritu Santo haciendo posible esas cuatro marcas, necesitamos pensar en la pentecostalidad como una marca que une a esas cuatro anteriores. En efecto, el principio pentecostal mueve al mundo de regreso al Padre. Nos da elementos para caminar en equidad hacia la unidad del género humano, que es el ideal del Reino de Dios. Es un retorno al Paraíso, en comunión plena y familiar de los hijos e hijas de Dios con el único Dios y Padre.

La pentecostalidad ha movido a comunidades cristianas de todas las épocas y de todo lugar a identificarse bajo el nombre de pentecostales o carismáticos en el sentido no denominacional. Los sistemas de creencias y sistemas rituales, así como las formas de organización y normas éticas de estas comunidades han configurado, a lo largo de la historia del cristianismo, movimientos de espiritualidad e instituciones eclesiales (y también heréticas) de muy diverso tipo. Unas, como comunidades emergentes del seno del cristianismo católico, como el caso del medieval protestantismo radical, paralelo a la Reforma luterana, y otras, como formas que emergieron después del interior de los protestantismos, producto de avivamientos. Unas, heredando la tradición trinitaria de la iglesia; otras, bajo la tradición unitaria o unicitaria de la iglesia. La gran mayoría, producto de escisiones internas motivadas por la renovación de la experiencia de Pentecostés o la práctica de los carismas del Espíritu.

30 En latín “*nota*” designa la idea de marca, característica o cualidad que describe la naturaleza de la iglesia. Entre las *notae* de la iglesia están: la santidad, la apostolicidad, la unidad, la catolicidad y—yo añadiría, ahora—la pentecostalidad. Cf. Sayés, José Antonio (2003). *La Iglesia de Cristo. Curso de Eclesiología*. Madrid: Ediciones Palabra. pp. 270-304. Consultado el 21 de junio del 2018.

Me apresuro a decir que lo que hay que buscar no es la legitimidad; ni siquiera la autenticidad, y, menos aún, la unicidad de la iglesia visible. Todos, a su manera, creen que son la verdadera iglesia o parte de ella. Es la pretensión de universalidad que tienen todas las religiones.

Hacia un cristianismo global

El Dr. José Míguez Bonino señalaba que hoy es común hablar de la existencia de “varios” cristianismos dentro del cristianismo primitivo, no en el sentido de que fueran realidades totalmente diferentes y aisladas, sino como movimientos paralelos, con sus particularidades, conflictos e influencias mutuas.

Hubo un *judeocristianismo de Siria occidental* (Antioquía) reflejado en el evangelio de Mateo y uno con *inclinaciones gnósticas en Siria Oriental* (Edessa) que se advierte en el apócrifo Evangelio de Tomás (ca. 150 DC) (...) Un *cristianismo samaritano* que estaría en las bases del evangelio de Juan y un *cristianismo galileo* con sus propias tradiciones, que después fue articulado en lo que se podría llamar un cristianismo paulino³¹.

Lo mismo sucede hoy con el cristianismo. Dentro de él hay muchas corrientes, incluida la eclesial u oficial, las carismáticas y las profético-mesiánicas. La diversidad es un don de Dios y la convivencia armónica depende que el Espíritu de Dios nos una en proyectos comunes.

¿Tiene futuro el cristianismo, así como está, dividido y fragmentado? ¿Podemos decir que—ahora sí—ha llegado el fin del denominacionalismo o del confesionalismo? ¿Qué cambios radicales habrá que introducir en el mundo, después de más de dos mil años de historia cristiana? Pero, al mismo tiempo, ¿cómo se libra una propuesta global de una visión imperialista y globalizadora? El teólogo Jorge Costadoat, SJ., en un artículo titulado *Un futuro para el cristianismo*, se pregunta lo mismo. Y responde de manera contundente:

Supuesta una noción de Cristo suficientemente ortodoxa y adecuada a los tiempos precisos, el cristianismo se juega en una identificación personal con Jesús y en la asimilación práctica de su causa. Más que una *noción* de Dios, la fe cristiana es una *versión* de Dios. Qué es Beethoven sin un pianista que lo interprete... No es aventurado pensar que, si el cristianismo agota su creatividad, si opta por la falsa seguridad de la copia tradicionalista, por la condena a priori de cualquier novedad, si renuncia al Espíritu, no servirá más que como texto de estudio de arqueólogos o, en el mejor

31 Míguez Bonino, José. *Conflicto y unidad en la Iglesia*. San José, Costa Rica: SEBILA. 1992:31. Según Alfredo Fierro Bardaji, *Op.cit.*: “No hay solamente uno; ha habido y hay proyectos varios de cristianismo, relacionados desde luego, pero también irreductibles entre sí: el proyecto eclesiástico, el carismático, el profético-mesiánico”.

de los casos, ofrecerá sus templos de museo. La creatividad, como el Espíritu, es inherente al cristianismo. Sin el Espíritu, Jesús no habría inventado el camino de regreso a su Padre entre la Encarnación y la Pascua, pero tampoco habría sido posible la libertad que proviene de él para que el cristiano, *alter Christus*, haga su propia historia. La pertinencia de la fe cristiana depende de la teoría, pero en última instancia proviene del Espíritu que inspira en el cristiano, con originalidad, la praxis de Jesús. La fe en la Encarnación, en los tiempos nuevos, pide a los cristianos protagonismo.³²

Por su parte Martín Velasco, interpretando la situación mundial, ve que estamos pasando por una “metamorfosis de lo sagrado”³³. Siguiendo a Karl Rahner, señala que el “El cristiano del mañana, o será místico o no será cristiano”. Con el término *místico* no designaba Rahner al sujeto de experiencias extraordinarias, sino al creyente que, en medio de la vida, hace la experiencia personal de su fe. ¿Será esa mística la pentecostalidad, donde lo extraordinario se expresa en lo ordinario, lo divino se epifaniza en lo humano?

Para Velasco, el problema fundamental de las religiones en las sociedades modernas no es la crisis de determinadas mediaciones—creencias, prácticas rituales, constelaciones simbólicas, organizaciones institucionales, comportamientos morales. El problema decisivo, aquél en función del cual se juega el ser o no ser de las religiones, reside en si es posible el reconocimiento de la absoluta trascendencia de Dios sin menoscabo de la condición de persona del ser humano, de su legítima autonomía, de su inviolable dignidad. Con la modernidad y postmodernidad, el hombre se ha vuelto en el centro de sí mismo y, desde dentro de sí mismo, busca autónomamente ser Dios. Precisamente esta es la crítica a la modernidad que hace Alain Touraine. Esa pérdida de la trascendencia expresada en la afirmación del Yo humano que reemplaza la unidad de un mundo creado por voluntad divina por la razón o la historia, la racionalización y la subjetivación³⁴.

El modelo de fraternidad de los hijos

La institucionalización que han impuesto al cristianismo siglos de convivencia y contaminación con la organización de la sociedad secular exige, dice Martín Velasco, una reconversión. Se trata de pasar del modelo de Iglesia-sociedad perfecto, con un predominio absoluto de la jerarquía convertida en su centro, al modelo de fraternidad, propuesto por el NT, de una comunidad

32 Costadoat, Jorge. *Un futuro para el cristianismo*. Biblioteca Católica Digital en: http://www.mercaba.org/FICHAS/Teologia_latina/futuro_para_el_cristianismo.htm.

33 Velasco, Juan Martín. *Metamorfosis de lo sagrado y futuro del cristianismo*, “Selecciones de Teología” 150 (1999) 127-146.

34 Touraine, Alain. *Crítica de la Modernidad*. México: FCE, 32012: 227.

de hijos del Padre común, iguales en dignidad y en derechos; todos activos y corresponsables, dotados de diferentes carismas y destinados a diferentes ministerios, pero puestos todos al servicio del Reino a través del servicio a los hermanos y al mundo³⁵.

Avanzamos hacia una globalización de la pentecostalidad, hacia una espiritualidad no confesional. La pentecostalidad no es solo una *nota* de la iglesia, sino una realidad sobrenatural del Espíritu de Dios que empuja a la creación entera hacia la reunión con él. Y eso supone además de una confesión de fe, una praxis de transformación social de cara al Reino de Dios, atendiendo al pobre como referente para establecer la justicia de Dios.

Si esa pentecostalidad traiciona el sentido de la praxis apostólica de sus orígenes, que fue una praxis solidaria, atenta a los cambios sociales, entonces esa pentecostalidad será espuria, alejada de los principios sociales de Jesús. El futuro de los pentecostalismos dependerá de la forma en que respondan a los desafíos sociales y políticos de un mundo en transformación acelerada³⁶.

Daniel H. Levine, hablando sobre el futuro del cristianismo en Latinoamérica, resalta precisamente el papel de los pentecostales en un contexto de competencia política y pluralismo:

La cara pública de la religión en América Latina ha sido transformada en la última mitad de siglo, con importantes implicancias para el futuro. La cristiandad del futuro estará marcada por una competición vigorosa y un creciente pluralismo en una sociedad civil y un orden político cada vez más abiertos y competitivos. Los orígenes de esta diversidad se encuentran en los cambios dentro del catolicismo largamente dominante de la región, combinado con el surgimiento de *nuevas iglesias protestantes*, en particular, *pentecostales*. Ambas tendencias adquieren sentido en el contexto de transformaciones sociales y políticas que han desplazado a países importantes de la región de la guerra civil y el autoritarismo hacia la política competitiva, lo que atrae a las iglesias hacia el espacio público en nuevas formas. El impacto de la violencia sobre las iglesias se ve en la nueva apertura hacia cuestiones de derechos y libertad de organización, pero también en un retiro del compromiso político directo y una diversificación de las posiciones políticas de todas las iglesias³⁷.

35 Velasco, Martín. *op.cit.*:15, 16.

36 Cf. Orellana, Luis. *The Future of Pentecostalism in Latin America*, in: Synan, Vinson *Spirit-empowered Christianity in the twenty-first century* (1st ed). Charisma House, Lake Mary, Fla, 2011:107-126.

37 Levine, Daniel H. *The Future of Christianity in Latin America*³⁷. Working Paper #340. Kellogg Institute: August 2007:1-43 (itálica mía).

José Míguez Bonino, por su parte, se pregunta si no están los pentecostales condenados a los mecanismos de rutinización y burocratización descritos por Weber, que los conducen a imitar a las “iglesias tradicionales”³⁸. Una posibilidad teológica de salida es—según Míguez—que al menos los pentecostales, ya que es tarea de todos, amplíen su teología del Espíritu en términos más globales que incluyan la creación entera y la realidad social en el marco de una comunidad trinitaria (*perijóresis*), como han sugerido Leonardo Boff³⁹ y Amos Yong⁴⁰ al hablar de la interrelación entre el Padre, el Hijo y el Espíritu. La comunión trinitaria es para Yong la base para una liberación social e integral, y para una praxis cristiana comprometida desde una pneumatología del amor⁴¹.

Hoy por hoy, la humanidad tiene conciencia de la necesidad de proclamar la universalidad de valores éticos que, respetando la multiculturalidad, trasciendan los propios valores epocales y converjan en unos principios comunes inherentes a todo ser humano, más allá de su raza, cultura o credo. Esta es la propuesta de una ética universal⁴² difundida por Hans Küng. Esta opción ética no es una opción más, sino la única capaz de dar a la sociedad una sostenibilidad en la paz y la dignidad humana. Sin ella, ni sistemas sociales, ni económicos, ni avances científicos ni tecnológicos garantizan la paz o un auténtico desarrollo de los pueblos de la Tierra.

Igualmente, desde la teología y desde el diálogo entre las religiones, Hans Küng viene haciendo un llamado a construir una ética y una teología universales que permitan el encuentro entre los seres humanos, empezando al menos por las religiones abrahámicas: judaísmo, islam y cristianismo.

De acuerdo con la declaración de principios de la Red Internacional para una ética Universal, se hace necesario entender el vínculo y la unidad esencial existente entre todos los seres humanos más allá de sus razas, creencias y condiciones sociales; entender la humanidad como una gran familia donde debe reinar la paz, el entendimiento y la solidaridad. El espíritu de fraternidad se apoya en el reconocimiento de la dignidad de todo ser humano, de su libertad para elegir su vida y sus creencias en el marco natural de respeto a los valores universales y los derechos humanos.

38 Míguez Bonino, José. *Rostros del protestantismo latinoamericano*, Nueva Creación, Buenos Aires, 1995:105-106.

39 Boff, Leonardo. *La Trinidad, la Sociedad y la Liberación*. Buenos Aires: Eds. Paulinas, 1987: 167-190 [capítulo dedicado a la *perijóresis*].

40 Yong, Amos. *Spirit of Love. A Trinitarian Theology of Grace*. Texas, USA: Baylor University Press, 2012: 59-112.

41 *Ibid*: 153-166ss.

42 <http://www.eticauniversal.net/>

El peligro de los imperialismos y de los afanes hegemónicos

Semejante utopía podría convertirse en un proyecto histórico viable, pero contamos con la maldad instalada en el mundo. Creemos que ninguno sería capaz de establecer un gobierno mundial de paz para una justa distribución de las riquezas. Habría que empezar por distribuir a cambio de trabajo las que ya tenemos para lograr la justicia social, sin la cual es imposible el desarrollo o la paz mundial.

No obstante, como cristianos, creemos que ni una ética y ni una moral universal serán posibles únicamente en base a la razón pura (Spinoza)⁴³, o al margen del cristianismo, sino sobre la base de una nueva racionalidad teológica que dialogue con una *teología pública global*. Puede servir como precedente la Teología de la unidad: la “reunión de todas las cosas en Cristo” como ya habían anticipado José Míguez Bonino⁴⁴ y Jorge León⁴⁵ en los años setenta. Igualmente útil será el urgente llamado de Hans Küng⁴⁶ a una *Teología universal*.

Teología de la Unidad de Dios en Cristo

Por tal razón, una teología de la unidad de Dios en Cristo debe tomar en cuenta que, al final de la historia (telos), todos seremos uno en Dios, como el apóstol San Pablo lo señaló a los corintios (1 Corintios 15.22-28).

La unidad *en* el Espíritu y *por* el Espíritu—en cuanto es el Espíritu de Cristo—es la que hará posible la paz entre las naciones, como preparación para el definitivo reinado universal de Dios, concepto que ha llevado a Eldin Villafañe a articular una ética social latinoamericana⁴⁷ y a nosotros a hablar de un ecumenismo del Espíritu⁴⁸. En tal sentido, la Pentecostalidad apunta en esa dirección, en la ruta de regreso al Padre (Gustavo Gutiérrez), por el espíritu de Cristo (conciencia mesiánica) que mora en nosotros.

43 Cruz, Ricardo. “¿Es posible una Ética Universal?”. *Universidad el Minuto de Dios*, en: <https://docplayer.es/11286351-Es-posible-una-etica-universal.html>.

44 Míguez Bonino, José, *Integración Humana y Unidad Cristiana*, Seminario Evangélico de Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico, 1969

45 León, Jorge. *Teología de la Unidad*. Buenos Aires, Argentina: Ediciones La Aurora, 1971

46 Küng, Hans. *Hacia una Teología Universal*, Video en <https://www.youtube.com/embed/DB9OXZSC3yk?showinfo=0&rel=0&autoplay=1> (Parte I - Emisión del día 17-06-2011 - 26:14 min. y Parte II - Emisión del día 01-07-2011 - 21:05 min.); Küng, Hans. *El cristianismo y las grandes religiones. Hacia el diálogo con el islam, el hinduismo y el budismo*. Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad, 1993.

47 Villafañe, Eldin. *El Espíritu Liberador: Hacia una Ética Social Pentecostal Latinoamericana*. Bs. As.-Grand Rapids: Nueva Creación y William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996: *In toto*.

48 Campos, Bernardo y Orellana, Luis. *Ecumenismo del Espíritu. Pentecostalismo, Unidad y Misión*. Lima, Perú: Foro Pentecostal Latinoamericano, 2012.

Una teología de la pentecostalidad, de camino a una práctica de la pentecostalidad universal, debe poder fundarse en la larga tradición de la teología y de la religión natural. Solo así, la teología revelada podrá ser capaz de comunicarse con la secularidad para no quedarse en un monólogo sobre cuestiones que interesan sólo a los cristianos practicantes.

Para el efecto, la pentecostalidad y la catolicidad como teologías universales deberán tomar en cuenta las recomendaciones de Habermas sobre la participación de la iglesia en la vida pública. Mediante el uso de una glosolalia simbólica, la pentecostalidad universal debe ser capaz de establecer mecanismos de comunicación con la comunidad universal para traducir el mensaje del Mesías y de su Reino definitivo, universal, en el mundo.

La Religión en la esfera pública

Habermas, en su *Religion in the Public Sphere*⁴⁹ (2006), empieza por destacar el papel de las Iglesias y de las organizaciones religiosas en el desarrollo de la democracia y de los derechos civiles y hace especial mención del papel de estas organizaciones en Estados Unidos, aunque también menciona el papel de las Iglesias en los totalitarismos y contra los derechos civiles.

Habermas subraya de manera muy positiva el papel de las Iglesias en las democracias constitucionales actuales, al prestar una valiosa contribución a la estabilidad y al avance de la cultura política liberal. Llama la atención además sobre las exigencias que suponen para los ciudadanos las condiciones que imponen los defensores de la idea de la razón pública, ya sea en la versión de Robert Audi⁵⁰ o la de John Rawls⁵¹. Porque, si además de que el Estado haya de permanecer neutral para garantizar la libertad religiosa, se exige a los ciudadanos que suplementen sus declaraciones públicas acerca de sus convicciones religiosas con declaraciones equivalentes en un lenguaje no religioso accesible para todos, entonces lo que estamos haciendo es plantear que cuando los ciudadanos religiosos actúen como votantes, lo hagan guiados en última instancia por consideraciones laicas. Esto, según Habermas, equivale a ignorar cuáles son “las realidades de una vida devota, de una existencia basada en las creencias”. Y, añade, “el Estado liberal no debe transformar el requisito

49 Habermas, Jürgen. “Religion in the Public Sphere”, *European Journal of Philosophy*, 2006^a 14:1, 1-25; Cf. También: Jürgen Habermas, *Entre naturalismo y religión*, Barcelona, Paidós Ibérica. 2006b.

50 Audi, Robert. “The Separation of Church and State and the Obligations of Citizenship”, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 18, no. 3, (1989): 259-296; Audi, Robert. *Religious Commitment and Secular Reason*, Cambridge University Press. 2000.

51 Rawls, John. *El liberalismo político*, trad. cast. de A. Doménech, Barcelona, Critica. 1996; Rawls, John. “Una revisión de la idea de razón pública”, en *El derecho de gentes y una revisión de la idea de razón pública*, Barcelona, Paidós. 2001.

de la separación institucional entre religión y política en una carga psicológica y mental indebida para aquellos ciudadanos que sigan una fe⁵².

Se exige a los creyentes la capacidad de considerar reflexivamente su propia fe y relacionarla con puntos de vista no religiosos, algo así como “una condición institucional de traducción”. La traducción ha de ser concebida como una tarea cooperativa en la que han de participar los ciudadanos no religiosos, porque, de otro modo, se estaría creando una situación asimétrica al imponer una carga adicional a los religiosos. Sin esa traducción, los argumentos procedentes de los religiosos no serían tomados en cuenta en la agenda política.

Habermas afirma que el Estado liberal tiene interés en la participación pública y política de las voces religiosas, sin constricciones, porque esos ciudadanos, pese a su lenguaje religioso. Se entienden a sí mismos como parte de una *civitas* terrena, lo cual les legitima para ser autores de las leyes que han de obedecer, aunque el lenguaje religioso implique siempre la necesidad de respetar la “condición de traducción” con fines de diálogo⁵³.

Conclusión

La unidad de la iglesia ahora es posible debido a la obra de Cristo en la Cruz del Calvario para unir a todos en su persona⁵⁴ sin buscar la uniformidad, sino respetando la diversidad⁵⁵. La cruz de Cristo es el lugar donde hemos sido reunidos y unificados y en el que estamos unidos de una manera más profunda de lo que podríamos pensar.

La trinidad y unidad de Dios es el fundamento de la unidad de la iglesia y del género humano.⁵⁶ Es bajo la paternidad de Dios que los hijos de Abraham podemos encontrarnos.

El verdadero ecumenismo debe estar al servicio del mundo. Ese servicio tiene un eje y es el pobre como objeto de la justicia de Dios. La experiencia del compromiso liberador por las clases explotadas se da más allá de las fronteras de las iglesias institucionales. Desde aquí y desde una nueva concepción de la eclesiología como pentecostalidad queda planteada una nueva apertura de la teología hacia los terrenos fronterizos como expresión de su

52 Habermas, 2006b: 9-10.

53 Ibid.

54 Cullmann, Oscar y Karrer, Otto. *Unidad en Cristo*. Sígueme. Salamanca 1967.

55 Cullmann, Oscar. *Verdadero y falso ecumenismo*. Studium. Madrid, 1972: 6.

56 CMI. *Llamados a ser la Iglesia Una*, en: <https://www.oikoumene.org/es/resources/documents/called-to-be-the-one-church-as-adopted>.

misma eclesialidad. Las cuestiones insospechadas y los desafíos son cada vez más complejos; con todo, este es uno de los retos más lucidamente asumidos por la teología latinoamericana desde los años setenta⁵⁷: esa anhelada unidad en el espíritu.

La tesis, la antítesis, la síntesis

El primer momento es propositivo: la tesis. La idea aquí es que busquemos la unidad entre nosotros, los pentecostales, para que, aprendiendo y errando, podamos luego aportar creativamente a la unidad mayor del pueblo de Dios. Necesitamos aprender a vivir en unidad y a desaprender actitudes divisionistas.

Necesitamos hacer nuestro propio camino y desandar otros ya transitados pero que no condujeron a buen puerto. Es más fácil así que si pensáramos en unirnos ya interconfesionalmente. De ese modo, podremos caminar al mismo ritmo con nuestros hermanos (protestantes, católicos, ortodoxos) quienes nos aventajan en cuanto a experiencia en este largo caminar. Los pentecostales no tenemos una historia de unidad; todo lo contrario. Somos el centro de las críticas sobre divisiones o escisiones, y nos jactamos de ellas porque hemos aprendido a revertir la división en multiplicación para el crecimiento cuantitativo. En realidad, sabemos que es mal testimonio, pero Dios que ha sido misericordioso, ha revertido lo malo en algo bueno. Sin embargo, creo que esa no es la voluntad de Dios.

Este segundo momento es la antítesis, la negación del primero. Una vez que hayamos caminado un poco y hayamos aprendido lo que implica la unidad, tendremos que negarnos a nosotros mismos. Debemos morir y deponer nuestros particulares intereses intraconfesionales para ponernos al servicio de la causa mayor: la unidad mínima, al menos, de las grandes confesiones de la fe cristiana. Esto todavía es incompleto, en la medida que solo buscamos la unidad en el marco de nuestra religión, *ad intra*.

Siendo la unidad mínima, se quedan fuera las otras dos religiones abrahámicas (la judía y la musulmana), sin contar a las demás religiones del mundo. Pero me apresuro a poner la cura para no morir desangrados. Me dirán que, con las religiones no abrahámicas, solo será posible el diálogo interreligioso, y no la unidad. Lo entiendo. No obstante, dejémoslo ahí por ahora y conversémoslo después en un foro abierto.

El tercer momento es de síntesis. Se extenderá en el tiempo y tal vez ya no podamos tener control sobre él. Esto exigirá una dosis mayor de fe y esperanza. Para entonces, habremos caminado y saboreado las dulzuras y los

57 Gutiérrez, Gustavo. *Teología de la liberación, perspectivas*. Sígueme. Salamanca, 1975: 361.

sinsabores de la unidad media entre las confesiones cristianas y entre las religiones abrahámicas.

A esas alturas, tendremos que mirar con amor a los otros dos tercios de la población mundial cuyas religiones no son cristianas. Esos dos tercios suman unos 4000 millones de personas. Con sus religiones, buscan religarse al padre a partir del nivel de revelación recibida. Es que todas las criaturas del mundo estamos hechas por el Padre y buscamos retornar al Padre, y eso solo será posible en la medida que no desparramemos, sino que recojamos junto con él. Jesús lo dijo claramente: “el que conmigo no recoge, desparrama. El que no es contra mí, por nosotros es.” También dijo “Tengo otras ovejas que no son de este redil a quienes también debo traer.”

No estoy pensando en una síntesis universal como una mezcla indiscriminada de todas las religiones, por el solo hecho de unirlas. Eso no es ecumenismo para mí. Tal vez sea alguna forma de universalismo, o de cosmización, pero no es ecumenismo. Lo que propongo es que avancemos en el camino de traer a Cristo a todos nuestros hermanos del mundo. Pero traer o llevar a Cristo no es convertirse en el centro de la unidad. Ninguna confesión puede arrogarse ese derecho. Cristo es el centro y el Padre es la finalidad.

El Espíritu Santo es quien da la cohesión entre los miembros del Cuerpo. Esto es lo que llamaríamos la unidad máxima. Si, para lograr esa unidad máxima, tenemos que ofrecernos en sacrificio, como lo hizo Jesús, a fin de que los más de 7000 millones de habitantes del mundo puedan llegar al Padre junto con nosotros al final de la historia, bien valdrá la pena.

Naturalmente, visto así en conjunto, la búsqueda de la unidad es una empresa de varias generaciones y quizá no la veamos nunca en el transcurso de nuestras vidas. Pero, al menos, será una guía, una luz que alumbré nuestro caminar y que solidifique nuestro propósito en lo que nos queda de vida. Es como una utopía que nos alumbrá y que trataremos de convertir en proyecto para que tenga lugar. Eso creo que puede ser aceptado teológicamente. El asunto no es tanto nuestra teología de la unidad, cuanto nuestra consecuencia con el evangelio y nuestra fidelidad a Jesucristo.

Sé que, si esperamos conseguir la unidad perfecta como condición para evangelizar el mundo entero, podríamos “perder soga y cabra”. Podría, por el contrario, ser un impedimento para la misión desde las bases o “a ras de suelo”. Para evitar eso, debemos iniciar una peregrinación o caminata de fe como lo hizo Abraham saliendo de su tierra, aun sin saber si lograremos conseguir la tan anhelada unidad.

Debemos empezar por la negación y la ruptura. Eso significa metafóricamente dejar nuestra casa y nuestra parentela (Génesis 12) para salir al lugar (*topos*) que Dios nos mostrará. En ese camino no hay seguridades, o asertividades,

lo único seguro es que Dios Padre tiene en sus manos nuestro destino y él sabrá conducirnos hasta la tierra prometida. A nosotros nos toca la obediencia; simplemente eso: obediencia y docilidad a la voz del Espíritu de Dios.

Nuestro futuro está en las manos de Dios. Él nos conducirá a la tierra prometida. El camino es largo e incierto. Tal vez tengamos que descender a Egipto y volver a Jerusalén algunas veces, pero habrá que empezar a caminar “como en tierra extraña”. Habrá momentos en que sentiremos que estamos solos o que corremos el peligro de perder el rumbo. Pero, recordemos: La promesa es nuestro acicate. Dios siempre estará allí. A la vera del camino. Ha prometido bendecirnos y, a través de nuestra simiente, bendecir a las familias de la tierra.

PART III

**Looking toward
the future: Quo
vadis, *missio Dei*?**

CHAPTER 8

Mission and the Age of World Christianity

Allen Yeh

The great Yale church historian, Kenneth Scott Latourette (1884–1968), wrote his seven-volume magnum opus entitled *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*. In it, he devotes fully three of the seven volumes to what he dubbed the “Great Century of Missions,”¹ namely the 19th century. He could be forgiven for his enthusiasm: he was not wrong that—up until that point—this kind of explosion of Christianity around the world had not been seen before. But he obviously did not know what was to come in the next two centuries, in which case he might have been a little more measured in his assessment. In contrast, Scott Sunquist, former dean of Fuller Seminary’s School of Intercultural Studies and later president of Gordon-Conwell Seminary, called the 20th century the “Unexpected Christian Century.”² That may sound a bit optimistic, as Christianity was essentially decimated in most of the West (with the notable exception of the United States). However, while it was a heartbreaking century considering the Christian decline in the previous centres of power, the reason for Sunquist’s title was the encouraging growth of Christianity in places hitherto “unexpected,” that is, Africa, Asia, Latin America, and even Eastern Europe. While it is certainly not a zero-sum game, what turned out to be loss for one group of Christians was tremendous gain for another group of Christians. As the African proverb goes, “Until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.” Therefore, it is easy to lament the loss of Christianity in the West in the 20th century onward if judged only by the standard of whom is telling the story, but globally there was a net gain. And thankfully, the story of the “lions” is now being told.

1 Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, 7 vols (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1937–45). Volumes 4 to 6 are called, respectively: *The Great Century: Europe and the United States*; *The Great Century: The Americas, Australasia and Africa*; and *The Great Century: North Africa and Asia*.

2 Scott W. Sunquist, *The Unexpected Christian Century: The Reversal and Transformation of Global Christianity, 1900–2000* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015).

While Christianity in 1900 saw 75 percent of its constituency in the West, by 2000 the Majority World had fully 65 percent of the Christians. Despite this huge pendulum shift, the percentage of Christians worldwide stayed the same, namely one-third of the world's population. Yet, it was not as static as it might seem at first glance, because the population of the world *tripled* from two billion in 1900 to six billion in 2000. And today, in 2022, the global population is approaching *eight* billion. So, it was not simply a proportional shift; it was percentage combined with a multiplicative effect. Therefore, the Majority World's Christians went from 25 percent of one-third of two billion (167 million), to 67 percent of one-third of 7.75 billion (1.73 billion).³ That was tenfold growth (10.36 to be more exact) of Christianity in 122 years!⁴

Therefore, while the 20th century saw the growth, the full flourishing of World Christianity was not truly felt until the advent of the 21st century. With its arrival, a Copernican shift has occurred: the Age of World Christianity. This is arguably the greatest revolution in Christianity since the Protestant Reformation. But unlike the Reformation which began with a bang (or rather, a hammering of the Ninety-Five Theses on the church door at Wittenberg) or with a declaration of, "Here I stand, I shall do no other!" World Christianity arrived on the scene stealthily, without much fanfare. Although it is a fairly

3 See Gina A. Zurlo, "Who Owns Christianity?" [blog] Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, 11 December 2019, <https://www.gordonconwell.edu/blog/who-owns-global-christianity/>, which states that (in 2020) North America has 268 million Christians, Latin America has 612 million, Europe has 565 million, Africa has 667 million, Asia has 379 million, and Oceania has 28 million. Total Christians: 2.52 billion out of a world population of 7.75 billion, making for a Christian percentage of the world of 32.5 percent.

4 There is always a need for caveats when it comes to demographic statistics. The only way to know how many Christians per country or continent is by self-identification. Some of the problems with this include (in no particular order): (1) Are top-down ("Christendom") countries that have no separation of church and state, or have Christianity, which is so tied to culture, really as Christian as they may seem? For many people, their Christianity is the same as their nationality. For example, all Greeks would say they are Orthodox, most Italians would say they are Catholic, and many US Americans (especially in the "Bible Belt" in the south would call themselves Baptist Christians. And Christian-adjacent religious traditions (some might call "cults") like Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses also call themselves Christians (they do not qualify as Christians because they do not have a doctrine of the divinity of Jesus). (2) What if some countries have Christians who are reluctant to self-identify, due to persecution, such as in Communist or Muslim countries? There may be many "underground" Christians. For example, it is extremely difficult to know accurately the number of Christians in China, and even estimates vary wildly. Or C-6 (Insider Movement) Christians in Islamic countries may look so similar to Muslims that it is difficult to distinguish them. (3) How does one capture quality, not just quantity? Even if someone self-identifies as a Christian and truly believes that they are a Christian, the mark of a true believer is discipleship. If someone does not attend church, does not pray, does not read their Bible, but professes belief in Jesus, is that enough? In Matthew 7:21 Jesus himself says, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."

well-known phenomenon in Christian academic circles, Western laypeople and non-Christians may still be operating under the assumption that the West = Christianity. In his book *Europe and the Faith*, Hilaire Belloc wrote in 1920, “The Faith is Europe. And Europe is the Faith.” While that may have been true in his time, it is unfortunately a narrative that has proved hard to shake. Part of this is due to the fact that the US—the largest Western country—is still mostly Christian. However, the reality that World Christianity has still not sunk in for so many people proves the African proverb stated above.

What Is Mission versus World Christianity?

The first task at hand is to distinguish the definitions of mission versus World Christianity. They are certainly not the same thing, though there is tremendous overlap. One might think of them as flip sides of the same coin. World Christianity (or some might say Global Christianity) is defined broadly as the shift of the centre of gravity of Christianity to the Majority World, also known as the Two-Thirds World (Africa, Asia, Latin America, Oceania), in the last half century. This phenomenon has been well documented by scholars such as Andrew Walls, Lamin Sanneh, Dana Robert, Jehu Hanciles, Todd Johnson, Amos Yong, Timothy Tennent, Brian Stanley, Wonsuk Ma, Philip Jenkins, and many others. Walls is generally considered the “founder” or “father” of this field of study, and along with his disciple Sanneh (the two of them essentially became peers later), co-founded the Yale-Edinburgh Group on World Christianity and the History of Mission, based on the institutions where they taught. Both have recently passed away (Walls in 2021 and Sanneh in 2019), which may signal the passing of the baton to a new generation of scholars. Sanneh held the same endowed chair that Kenneth Scott Latourette previously held, namely the D. Willis James Professor of Missions and World Christianity at Yale Divinity School. Walls was the founder of the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World (CSCNWW) at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, after moving there from the University of Aberdeen. The name has since been changed to the Centre for the Study of World Christianity (CSWC), reflecting the updated nomenclature that it is better not to define the Majority World by a negation of the Western world. Philip Jenkins, formerly professor at Penn State University and now at Baylor University, has the distinction of being the one who most popularized this field of study for the masses via his book *The Next Christendom*⁵

5 Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

(first published 2002; in contrast, Walls' *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*⁶ was published in 1996). This is why Christianity Today called Andrew Walls "the most important person you don't know" in an article in 2007⁷—he may not have gotten as much attention as Jenkins, but to those who are familiar with his work, he laid the foundation. Soong-Chan Rah expanded on the World Christianity definition via his book *The Next Evangelicalism*⁸ (taking his cue from Jenkins's book title). He observed that the shift of the centre of gravity of Christianity in the United States has gone to (or is due to) ethnic minorities and immigrants, which is why the US is the only Western nation that remains majority Christian.

How is World Christianity different from mission? The former is studying where Christianity is thriving; the latter is necessary where Christianity is lacking. Therefore, mission is often the *predecessor* to World Christianity. However, one might think of it actually as cyclical, or a chicken-and-the-egg issue: one gives birth to the other, and the other gives birth to the one. This explains the overlapping nature of the two: while it is logical to think that Western missionaries gave rise to Christianity in many Majority World nations on earth, two factors need to nuance that: (1) Many Majority World nations started off as Christian before Western missionaries ever arrived, such as India and Ethiopia, which were Christian before Europe ever received the gospel. (2) Majority World nations—even when they do receive Western missionaries—oftentimes eventually become so Christian that they start to outnumber Christians in the Western world and in fact even start sending missionaries to the Western world. Lamin Sanneh unpacks this in his *Whose Religion Is Christianity?*⁹ where he outlines the indigeneity of Christianity to many perceived "non-Christian" nations around the world. One major example is Africa. Africa is on the one hand a birthplace of the faith, from Solomon's wife who was the Queen of Sheba and thus Judaized Ethiopians, to the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 bringing the gospel to his queen, Kandake, to the early church fathers such as Tertullian, Origen, Augustine, and Athanasius, who were all North African. On the other hand, Africa is also a receiver of missions, from Frumentius and Aedesius arriving as Tyrian missionaries to

6 Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996).

7 Tim Stafford, "Historian Ahead of His Time," *Christianity Today* (February 2007), www.christianitytoday.com/ch/news/2007/ct-mar8.html.

8 Soong-Chan Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009).

9 Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity?: The Gospel beyond the West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

Ethiopia in the fourth century; to the so-called “Scramble for Africa” (1880–1914) which accompanied European colonization to the African shores, carving up the continent between the British, French, Portuguese, Belgian, and Dutch powers. It certainly cannot be said that all of Africa has always been Christian; nor can it be said that Africa has always been the receiver of missions. The truth is that it is a complex back-and-forth relationship. Today, the largest church in London is Nigerian (Kingsway International), exhibiting one of the tangible effects of “reverse mission.”

Mission Characteristics of the Age of World Christianity

Now that World Christianity has had some time to “settle in” (especially as we consider its “arrival” in 2000 to its flourishing today in 2022), what are some implications of the past 22 years? Traditional “from the West to the rest” type of mission now needs to accommodate the realities of World Christianity. While some characteristics of mission can certainly remain the same—and in fact sometimes *must* remain the same—contemporary mission also has to adapt to the current global circumstances of “from everyone to everywhere.” Doing “business as usual” does not suffice in the current climate. The following is a non-exhaustive list (in no particular order) of ways that mission has changed from the 20th to the 21st century:

- creation care (adapting to the crisis of climate change)
- integral mission (not just evangelism, but also including social justice)
- acceptance of science / integration (“all truth is God’s truth”)¹⁰
- discipleship (seminaries and theological production)
- kingdom of God (versus a soterion gospel)
- urbanization
- *missio Dei* (mission over missions)
- reconciliation (race, gender, class, or otherwise)
- collectivism (instead of merely individualism)

¹⁰ Another way of saying this is St Augustine’s dictum, based on Exodus: “Plunder the Egyptians for their gold” based on Ex. 12:35-36. In other words, even secular/pagan people have valuable things to offer the people of God.

- generational characteristics (awareness of how to minister to Millennials and Generation Z)
- love/orthopraxis (not just orthodoxy)
- 3-D gospel (not just innocence/guilt, but also power/fear and honour/shame)
- Pentecostalism / signs and wonders
- polycentric leadership
- shift from parachurch back to church
- post-denominationalism; independent or non-denominational churches
- race (Black Lives Matter, critical race theory)
- ecumenism and the LGBTQ community
- mission from the margins
- internet (its uses and abuses)
- mental health crises
- immigration / refugees
- mission during the COVID-19 pandemic (fewer short-term missions and more in-country cross-cultural missions)
- business as mission (BAM)
- religious pluralism
- fourfold global superpowers (US, Russia, China, Islam)
- decline of evangelicalism in the West but its rise in the Majority World
- beyond the Three-Self Church

In many ways, this is similar to the *aggiornamento* (updating or modernization in the Roman Catholic Church due to the Second Vatican Council),¹¹ except the above are descriptive and not prescriptive. Also, similar to Vatican II, not everyone is happy with the changes, and sometimes the

11 Vatican II was convened between 1962 and 1965, opened by Pope John XXIII, and closed by Pope Paul VI. Some of its updates included the following: scripture and worship in the vernacular; the church as a community composed of individuals with gifts to contribute; acceptance of non-Catholics as “separated brethren”; positive recognition of “secular historical progress”; more freedom and creativity given to priests in their individual contexts; view of the church as more of a servant than an authority.

current situation garners pushback from various constituents. However, as Andrew Walls is “the most important person you don’t know,” perhaps World Christianity is “the most important subject you don’t know.” As such, sometimes it is not even just a matter of resistance to change, but simply an ignorance of the need to change. The following will focus on some of the major mission characteristics in this age of World Christianity.

Creation care

Creation care is the first mission that was given by God to humans, in Genesis 1:27-29. This means that mission existed before the fall, so mission was not just a response to sin. This “Cultural Mandate”¹² was a twofold command: be fruitful and multiply, and have “dominion” over the earth. The word “dominion” is derived from the Latin word *dominus* or “lord.” We as humans reflect the *imago Dei* (verse 27) by being lords over the natural world, just as God is Lord over all. God is Creator; therefore, we are creative. Yes, we may use everything on earth for food, clothing, shelter, etc., but it must be done so with care, responsibility, stewardship, and sustainability. Although this kind of mission seems “new” to some in the church,¹³ it is actually the oldest form of mission. Nonetheless, it seems to have freshly caught the attention of modern-day missionaries, or at least missions in the Majority World.

Latin Americans are at the forefront of this mission, especially in the Catholic Church. Pope Francis—the first ever Latin American pope—named himself after St Francis of Assisi, a lover of nature. St Francis penned the nature hymn, “All Creatures of Our God and King,” and Pope Francis became the first pope to write a papal encyclical dedicated solely to creation care (in 2015): *Laudato si* (“Praise be to him”), taken from St Francis’s hymn. The pope was not the first Latin American to write about creation care. His predecessors include Leonardo Boff, a Brazilian liberation theologian who was ironically silenced by Francis’s predecessor, Cardinal Josef Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI). Boff wrote an important book linking creation care with human poverty called *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor*.¹⁴ Another theologian of note was Ivone Gebara, a Brazilian Catholic nun who linked creation care

12 Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981).

13 Andrew Walls and Cathy Ross outline five marks of *Mission in the 21st Century* (based on their eponymous book): (1) to proclaim the good news of the kingdom; (2) to teach, baptize, and nurture new believers; (3) to respond to human need by loving service; (4) to seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation; and (5) to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

14 Leonardo Boff, *Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997).

with gender oppression, a subject known as ecofeminism.¹⁵ And of course, theologians from various continents have also written on the subject. As this topic intersects with world governments and economies, such as the Paris Climate Accords of 2015 (Pope Francis's encyclical was a direct response to that), this surely has taken on a missional dimension as it addresses the secular world with a Christian message.¹⁶ Native North American missiologists are not to be left out of this either. People such as Randy Woodley, Terry LeBlanc, and Mark Charles have also written about the link between the oppression of peoples and the oppression of the land.¹⁷

Polycentric leadership

Similar to creation care, the concept of polycentric leadership is a recovery, not a new discovery. In the early church (at least in the Mediterranean), the five patriarchates ruled polycentrically: Rome (Europe), Constantinople (Eurasia), Antioch (Asia), Jerusalem (Asia), and Alexandria (Africa). If one reflects missionally, it is not surprising that Israel is located where it is: it is at the crossroads of three continents, and the faith went all three directions within the first century. Paul's initial missionary team comprised people like Luke (a Greek), Simeon called Niger (an African), and Barnabas (an Asian Jew). When the first multi-ethnic church in history was founded at Antioch, Acts 11:20-21 reports: "But among them were some men of Cyprus (Asians) and Cyrene (Africans) who, on coming to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists also (Europeans), proclaiming the Lord Jesus. The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number became believers and turned to the Lord." The fact that the early church did not have a single leader but rather was led by a small band of apostles and deacons illustrates this kind of ecclesial model of leadership.

Western churches tend to have three styles of polity: Episcopal (similar to a monarchy), Presbyterian (similar to an oligarchy), and Congregational (similar to a democracy). It seems that in the Majority World, there is a shift away from the first and third toward the second model. European Catholics tend to be more Episcopal, North American Protestants tend to be more Congregational, but Majority World Christians often find that the Presbyterian model suits their cultural milieu best. This has been a burgeoning theme which

15 Ivone Gebara, *Longing for Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation*, trans. David Molineaux (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999).

16 United Nations, "The Paris Agreement," <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>.

17 Randy S. Woodley, *Shalom and the Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012).

has gained a lot of traction in recent years. My book *Polycentric Missiology*¹⁸ came out in 2016 highlighting five global missiology conferences of 2010–12 held on five different continents, each purporting to be the successor to the famous Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference. Concurrent with that (literally in the same month my book was published, namely October), completely independent of each other, the World Evangelical Alliance held its Panama 2016 conference with the theme of “Polycentric mission: from all nations to all nations.”¹⁹ The Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (OCMS) had as the theme of their Montagu Barker Lecture Series in September 2020 “Polycentric missions.” The fourth Lausanne Congress that is due to be held in Korea in 2024 (celebrating the 50th anniversary of the original Lausanne Congress in Switzerland in 1974) will have as its theme “Polycentric global mission.” Its strategy is to move from a polycentric process to a polycentric agenda to polycentric events.

Missio Dei and Pentecostalism

Going back much further than the early church, the original polycentric leadership is found in the Trinity itself. Twentieth-century South African missiologist David Bosch²⁰ was one of the major proponents of the concept of *missio Dei* (the mission of God) which contrasts with *missiones ecclesiae* (the missionary endeavours of the church). The *missio Dei* has become *de rigueur* for proper missiology in the 21st century. Many organizations have dropped the “s” from the word “missions” in order to signify this understanding. The origin of this phrase can be traced as far back as 1934 with the Germany missiologist Karl Hartenstein. However, the International Missionary Council of Willingen, 1952, really launched this term to more common usage. Paul Lehmann and H. Richard Niebuhr issued an “American Report” at Willingen that outlined this, and people like Bosch and Lesslie Newbigin ran with this concept. The idea that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit operated together for mission (*perichoresis*) in a dynamic way illustrated a polycentric *missio Dei*: the Father sends the Son; the Son prays to the Father and carries out the work of the Father; and the Holy Spirit is breathed out by the Father (and the Son?). This is the controversy over *filioque*, or procession, which is an ancient

18 Allen Yeh, *Polycentric Missiology: 21st-Century Mission from Everyone to Everywhere* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016).

19 “WEA Mission Commission Highlights Polycentric Mission During Panama Global Consultation,” 9 November 2016, <https://worldea.org/news/wea-mission-commission-highlights-polycentric-mission-during-panama-global-consultation/>.

20 David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991).

debate stemming back to the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE. Regardless, it is acknowledged that God the Father is the source, initiator, and goal of the *missio Dei*; God the Son is the embodiment of the *missio Dei*; and God the Holy Spirit is the empowering presence of the *missio Dei*.

Today, in the post-denominational Majority World, where independent and house churches are common, an exponential type of mission such as how Jesus empowered and sent his disciples (“as the Father has sent me, so I am sending you” from the Johannine version of the Great Commission in 20:21) proves to be a vibrant model for the church to follow. However, this involves discipleship. Jesus’s investment was in a small group of individuals: if each of those 12 disciple 12 more, then suddenly there are 144 disciples, and from there it will reach almost 2,000 believers if those also disciple 12 each. This coheres not just with Jesus sending out his disciples, but more particularly the Holy Spirit, which saw in Acts 2:41 that “three thousand” were added to their number! This is quite an expansion before the second chapter of Acts is even finished. Today, cell churches and independent churches abound in the Majority World, and the resemblance to the 1st-century church is not a coincidence. As Pentecost “rebooted” with the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles in 1906 (or some might argue, with a polycentric mission, as multiple mini Pentecosts sprung up in the early 20th century²¹ and has led to a full bloom today), so the early church sprouted from a multiplicity of house churches. And this is a refocus on the third person of the Trinity, not just the second. Jesus was very clear in John 16:7 that “it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.” It is no surprise that Pentecostalism has become the fastest-growing form of Christianity around the world today. Church growth is no longer contingent upon the Fuller Seminary-inspired Homogeneous Unit Principle of Donald McGavran,²² which postulates that churches grow fastest when people are with others just like them. Multi-ethnicity is becoming the “new normal.”

The gospel and integral mission

With a shift of emphasis from the second to the third person of the Trinity comes a concomitant reorientation in theology. The understanding of the gospel itself is expanding. In the 20th century, a typical Western evangelical understanding of the gospel is justification by faith, imputed righteousness, and focused on the cross (the necessity of Jesus’s death and resurrection).

21 Examples include Wales (1903–04), India (1904–05), Chile (1906–07) and Korea (1907).

22 Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).

While those ideas are not discounted by any means, several new dimensions have now been added—or rather, rediscovered. They include the following:

(1) A collectivistic (rather than individualistic) hermeneutic. The *euangelion* started as a pagan pre-Christian word that meant “the announcement of the birth of a king.” It was not individualistic good news; it was national good news. Along with this redefinition comes a change in understanding of the recipients of mission. Conversions to Christ are collectivistic as well, via family units or villages. The word “nation” (as in Matt. 24:14, “And this *gospel* of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all *nations*”) itself is redefined not as political nations but as ethno-linguistic groups, spurred on by Ralph Winter’s groundbreaking speech at the first Lausanne Congress in 1974 in Switzerland,²³ changing the very way we catalog the unreached of the world.

(2) A focus more on the kingdom of God rather than just a soterion gospel. The latter is more of an anthropocentric focus (who is saved and how to be saved), whereas the former focuses more on God and is more expansive. It rests its gaze not just on one moment in history but rather on the Alpha and Omega, from creation to redemption to the eschaton—the new heavens and new earth. The kingdom of God was the main topic Jesus preached on (more than love, or faith, or the cross) and is predicated upon the Lordship of God in everything, not just his work upon the cross. This means that humans, as the targets of mission, are not just objects to be saved, but are image bearers of the divine who would be elevated to divine image-bearers primarily in need of restoration to their primal dignity and vocation of God’s royal representatives in the world and creation’s wise overseers. This is yet another major contribution of David Bosch.

(3) The Greek word *dikaiosune* is seen in its fullest dimension, meaning it can be translated as “righteousness” but can just as easily be translated as “justice.” This means that it can be for the forgiveness of sins, but it can also be for the healing of diseases, the freeing of people from oppression and bondage, the freeing of slaves, and the cancellation of debts (the last two are seen in the Year of Jubilee). Jesus’s Nazareth Manifesto in Luke 4:18-19 talks about these multiple dimensions. Yet, it is not only evangelism plus social justice (as seen in the Lausanne Covenant, which was inspired by the Latin American *evangélicos* for holistic mission,²⁴ or *misión integral*), but even more

23 Ralph D. Winter, “The Highest Priority: Cross-Cultural Evangelism” in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: International Congress on World Evangelization Lausanne, Switzerland*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975).

24 C. René Padilla, *Misión Integral: Ensayos sobre el Reino de Dios y la Iglesia* (Florida: Kairos, 2012).

the idea of a 3-D gospel²⁵ is gaining prominence through organizations such as the Honor-Shame Network.²⁶ That third dimension of the gospel of not just saving souls and saving bodies but also saving face is something that was very understood in 1st century Jewish contexts. It is therefore no surprise that Jesus's first miracle was turning water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee. That was an honor/shame story and it was the first act of Jesus's public ministry to demonstrate the gospel.

(4) Especially prominent nowadays is that the word "reconciliation" is often seen as one of the best definitions of "mission." Reconciliation is restoring the broken relationship. This can be seen in race (Eph. 3:6; Col. 3:11), class (Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22), or gender (Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:18-19), or all three in Gal. 3:28. But this can furthermore be seen in the fourth category of age (Eph. 6:1-4; Col. 3:20-21). These categories of race, class, gender, and age are strewn throughout a number of different Pauline epistles, showing they are a common thread in his thought. This is affirmed in three definitions of mission that Paul gives:

- 2 Cor. 5:19—"in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us."
- Col. 1:19-20—"For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross."
- Rom. 5:10—"For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life."

All of these horizontal reconciliations ("love neighbour") point to the greatest reconciliation of all, the unity of a holy Lord with sinful humanity ("love God"). This is reflected in the theme of the 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches to be held in Karlsruhe, Germany, from 31 August – 8 September 2022: "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity." The Cape Town Commitment from the Lausanne III (Cape Town 2010) Congress was also based on love as the foundation for mission.²⁷ It is

25 Jayson Georges, *The 3D Gospel: Ministry in Guilt, Shame, and Fear Cultures* (Timē Press, 2017).

26 Honor-Shame Network: <https://honorshame.com>

27 "The Cape Town Commitment," Lausanne Movement, <https://lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment>

interesting that the Apostle's Creed and the Nicene Creed say not a word about love, even though that is the chief characteristic of God and the basis of the two greatest commandments. It is heartening that finally that focus is being put as central on a worldwide scale.

Millennials and Generation Z

While reconciliation between race, class, and gender often get mentioned together, sometimes age is not included. For example, liberation theology can come in different forms, such as Latin American (about poverty), Black (about race), and feminist (about gender), but not one that fights against oppression of children. Part of the reason might be that age is constantly changing, while the other three can be fairly static. Anyone who is “discriminated against” because they are too young only needs to wait until they are older, thus it seems acceptable to have different standards or access for different age groups. This is all the more important as the developing world is getting increasingly younger in average age due to birth rate, and the developed world is aging in average age due to lack of births. This links the phenomenon and necessity of migration: in order to keep developed nations viable economically, immigration Westward, especially of the youth, is a necessity simply for workforce numbers.

Mission dedicated to the young is somewhat of a more recent phenomenon. The 4–14 Window²⁸—in contrast to the 10/40 Window which is about geography²⁹—is about age. It is a concept developed with the findings that most people accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour between the ages of 4 and 14. Not only is initiation into Christianity affirmed, but longevity as well. People who make a commitment to Christ during those ages are the most likely to stay with the faith for a lifetime. So, instead of focusing on other demographic characteristics in mission (e.g., Jews for Jesus, or the former China Inland Mission, now OMF), some have argued for evangelism of youth as a more effective strategy. The Barna Group has published several pieces on reaching Generation Z.³⁰ Several factors to consider in reaching the younger generation are as follows: (1) the greater proportion of mental health crises,

28 The 4–14 Movement: <https://414movement.com>

29 Luis Bush at the Lausanne II Congress in 1989 in Manila, The Philippines, was its champion, and this has since become standard missionary strategy. The 10/40 Window (10 degrees latitude North to 40 degrees latitude North, which covers northern Africa, the Middle East, and South, Southeast, and East Asia) has become a major focus of missionary work because it is where the majority of adherents of non-Christian religion reside.

30 Barna and Impact 360, *Gen Z: The Cultures, Beliefs, and Motivations Shaping the Next Generation* (2018).

with anxiety, depression, divisiveness, loneliness, unhappiness, and suicide on the rise; (2) the use of screen time and social media, as the iPhone (invented 2007) has come of age with this generation; (3) the scarcity of resources, whether it be time, money, natural resources, or competition, especially as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown and its after-effects; (4) declining religious affiliation (the “Nones”)³¹; and (5) Generation Z’s adeptness with diversity, whether it be race, class, gender, or sexual identity.

Classical antiquity in the Greco-Roman world sought the transcendentals of “goodness, truth, and beauty.” In many ways, there is “nothing new under the sun” except these ideals, which have been parceled out among the generations. To reach each of the current generations, we must ask the “gateway questions,” The Baby Boomers seek answers to the question, “What is truth?”³² Generation X’ers ask the question, “What is real?” Millennials ask the question, “What is good?” And Generation Z’ers ask, “What is beautiful?” Attempting to use apologetics (which may work for Boomers) does not attend to the main concerns or emphases of Generation Z. Orthodoxy is no longer the main concern; it is now love. But this is no different from what the Apostle Paul espoused in 1 Cor. 13:1: “If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.”

Morality

Not only the younger generations but also historic denominations in the West have increasingly come to accept the LGBTQ community within the church. However, the Western left-right political spectrum is not as applicable to the Majority World Christians. One of the factors of Majority World Christianity is its moral conservatism and personal piety. This is not to suggest that younger generations or more progressive denominations lack morality: it is just a different kind of morality. They may make climate change or racial oppression a higher priority than individual morality regarding personal sins (especially sexual).

However, the apparent disconnect between progressive Western denominations and people of colour worldwide has created some friction. This has especially led to a breach in worldwide ecumenism. Two prominent examples include the Church of England and the United Methodist Church. The former denomination encountered major gridlock on this issue in 2003 with the Episcopal Church in the US declaring in favour of ordaining

31 This refers to people who increasingly claim to have no religious faith.

32 This is not just a modernist question. Pontius Pilate asked this very question of Jesus in John 18:38, “Quid est veritas?”

LGBTQ clergy but Canterbury responding with sanctions against them. The more conservative faction was backed by the African Anglican clergy, which consists of the biggest constituency of the worldwide Anglican Communion. This resulted in the progressive US Episcopal clergy choosing to remain separate, while conservative US Episcopal clergy opting to be ordained under African Anglican dioceses.

By 2008 the issue still had not been resolved, and eventually there came an outright split within the North American side between the progressives (now called the Episcopal Church in the United States and the Anglican Church of Canada) and conservatives (now called the Anglican Church of North America). The United Methodist Church suffered a similar fate in 2020: unable to reach an agreement in unity, they agreed to disagree and issued a “Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation.” And again, it was the African majority that tilted the scales toward the conservative side. This reveals the disconnect between North American progressives who purport to support people of colour—but what if people of colour themselves are far more conservative than they? Thus far, the experiment has failed when it comes to LGBTQ issues in two major worldwide denominations. Is this an impassable chasm? Only the future will tell.

Discipleship

The missional shift from an emphasis on evangelism to one on discipleship is borne out by a close examination of the Great Commission. Matthew 28:18-20 has as its chief verb “make disciples” rather than “evangelize.” The Tokyo 2010 Global Mission Consultation chose as its theme a slight modification of the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference: “Making disciples of every people in our generation”³³ rather than “The evangelization of the world in this generation.” The difference between the two concerns the initiatory act (evangelism) versus the daily lived-out expression of the faith, authentically for life (discipleship). While Majority World Christians now have the quantity on their side, one must also inquire about the quality of their faith. However, unlike many nominally Christian places in the West, the Majority World actually does tend to have a majority of genuine believers (that being said, every culture on earth—after having Christianity in their land long enough—has the danger of slipping into complacency, so it may just be a matter of time before the Majority World follows suit).

33 “Tokyo 2010 Declaration,” *Mission Frontiers*, 1 July 2010, <https://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/tokyo-2010-declaration>.

But for now, these young churches are vibrant in their faith. However, they are sometimes characterized as “a mile wide and an inch deep”³⁴ in their discipleship. Sending their leaders to Western universities and seminaries is not the solution. John Stott and his Langham Scholarship attempted that with the greatest of intentions; however, there simply are not enough funds to be able to educate every capable Majority World leader in the West (this would involve airfare, housing, and other living expenses, which has proved to be prohibitively expensive). Moreover, the content of what they would be learning often proves to be irrelevant in their home culture. Plus, there is the danger of “brain drain”: the best and brightest of the Majority World choosing to remain in the West.

Evangelism and theological education and publication

Evangelism is not irrelevant, however. Even in the Majority World, there remain many who do not know the Lord Jesus. The effects of the lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic have only furthered what was already starting to happen: people are evangelizing people within their own country and within their own continent. There is no longer as much of a need to cross oceans to reach the lost. This may signal a decline in short-term missions, a convenient but expensive way for Westerners to cross continents to do missions for a few weeks, which was put on temporary hiatus because of the closures of many international borders. Now, crossing cultures can happen across the street because the “glocal” (global + local) world we live in. Many places are so multicultural they can be considered a virtual subcontinent. And in-country seminaries and publishing houses are leading to greater native theological education and production.

Examples of global educational institutions for theological education and training include the following: Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture, in Akropong-Akuapem, Ghana; Oxford Centre for Mission Studies in Oxford, UK (degrees granted by the University of Wales rather than the University of Oxford); Centro Evangélico de Misiología Andino-Amazonica in Lima, Perú; Overseas Ministries Studies Center in Princeton, US; Trinity Theological College in Singapore; Africa International University (formerly the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology) in Nairobi, Kenya; Hope Liverpool University in the UK; Christ Bible Institute in Nagoya, Japan; and Seminario Bíblico de Colombia in Medellín, Colombia. Most of these are also dedicated to the study of World Christianity. Examples of global theological publishing houses include the following: WordAlive in

34 Tokunboh Adeyemo, ed., *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi: WordAlive Publishers, 2010).

Nairobi, Kenya; Amity Press in Nanjing, China; Ediciones Kairos in Buenos Aires, Argentina; Regnum or Langham in the UK; and Open Door Publishers in Udaipur, India. These signal a move away from the three-self church (self-governing, self-propagating, self-sustaining) toward a fourth self: self-theologizing. Having polycentric theological education and theological production is necessary for expediency, frugality, and rootedness in localities. However, another factor must also be considered: the Internet as a new virtual polycentricity. With the digitization of libraries and the availability of Zoom and HyFlex learning options, theological education is now truly open to everyone.

Conclusion

Philip Jenkins writes about the Majority World churches today:

These newer churches preach deep personal faith and communal orthodoxy, mysticism and Puritanism, all founded on clear scriptural authority. They preach messages that, to a Westerner, appear simplistically charismatic, visionary, and apocalyptic. In this thought-world, prophecy is an everyday reality, while faith-healing, exorcism, and dream-visions are all basic components of religious sensibility. For better or worse, the dominant churches of the future could have much in common with those of medieval or early modern European times. On present evidence, a Southernized Christian future should be distinctly conservative.³⁵

What is interesting about these ecclesial characteristics—and the missional characteristics I highlighted above—is that they all harken back to the early church. And so current missions in the Age of World Christianity is in many ways more biblical than ever before. As such, it is more of a reformation than a revolution, and there is great reason for hope as we face the future.

³⁵ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 9-10.

CHAPTER 9

Mission in the World of Religions

Arun W. Jones

Generally speaking, Christian mission has been conducted over the past two millennia, across all the inhabited earth, in contexts where other vital and vibrant religious traditions have existed. It is important to realize, therefore, that many of the claims of Christians for a particular understanding of their religion have been made in arenas—both public and private—where other similar claims have been, and continue to be, heard.¹ Even the assertion that all religions lead to the same goal or truth is simply one assertion among many about the proper understanding of multiple religious traditions in human communities.

Certainly, the New Testament was birthed in social contexts where diverse, popular, and powerful religious traditions existed. The heterogenous groups of followers of Jesus of Nazareth who believed that he was “Messiah” or “Lord” and who either purposefully or unintentionally spread the “good news of Jesus Christ” (as they called it) in the 1st century CE, did so in conversation and communion with other religious traditions.

Ever since then, Christian mission has often been carried on in a world of a variety of religious traditions and movements. It is only in the exceptional cases when whole societies or even empires became Christian—as at times in Europe and the Americas—that Christian mission devoted itself mostly to the amelioration and strengthening of Christian communities, rather than considering the engagement with people of differing religious backgrounds and commitments as an important part of its calling. Yet even in the contexts where Christian mission was directed almost exclusively toward Christians themselves, the religious “other” could loom large in the imaginations and motivations of those who were engaged in mission.² Scott Hendrix notes that

1 For an interesting study of the claims of exclusivity by Pentecostal Christians in a slum society that includes Hindus, see Nathaniel Roberts, *To Be Cared For: The Power of Conversion and the Foreignness of Belonging in an Indian Slum* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016), esp. chapter 5.

2 Scott Hendrix, “Rerooting the Faith: The Reformation as Rechristianization,” *Church History* 69:3 (2000), 558–77.

16th-century European reformers—both Catholic and Protestant—“sharply denounced the tradition in which they were raised as something less than Christian. Indeed, reformers often called it paganism and idolatry, and sometimes, especially when they were criticizing what they rejected as the legalism of late medieval religion, they also labeled it pharisaic.”³

The missionary impulse of the Reformation in the 16th-century European church immediately raises the question of how we define the terms “mission” and “religions.” Ever since the 1st century CE, Christian mission has been understood in a number of different ways—many of them complementary, some in tension with each other. Spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ, caring for those in distress such as the poor or the sick, providing public service such as burials, working for the Christianization of whole societies, fighting against the perceived enemies of the faith—all these activities, and many more, have been understood by Christians as their mission. For the purposes of this essay, I shall define Christian mission as the work that Christians have undertaken in the world around them in response to what they believe God is calling them to do in the world. Mission, in this understanding, is the human response to the *missio Dei*, which can be understood as God the “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.”⁴ Christian mission then is taken to be a very human endeavour, relying no doubt on God, marked by human success, failure, and many mixed results.

The term religion as it will be used in this essay also needs some defining. The term is notoriously difficult to define; as the *Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* puts it, “a strange thing about religion is that we all know what it is until someone asks us to tell them.”⁵ For the purposes of this essay, a religion is a human system, no matter how inchoate or unsystematic it may seem to outsiders, for responding to perceived superhuman forces. It consists of a combination of various convictions and ideas, rituals, and other practices, along with spaces and materials that have been deemed religious or sacred. Religions of long standing, such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism, have developed innumerable variations internal to each tradition. These variations are founded on any number of bases—cultural, linguistic, geographical, theological, liturgical, organizational, political, and so on. Thus, many different groups of Christians do not recognize other groups

3 Ibid., 561.

4 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), 390.

5 *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, ed. John Bowker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), xv.

as fellow believers. They may be considered heretics, or even followers of another religion.⁶ However, for the purposes of this essay, any community will be considered part of a particular religion if members of that community, along with outside observers, identify them as part of the larger religion. Naturally, there will be religious communities according to this definition who will exist on the boundaries of a particular religion. In fact, they may be in the process of integrating or differentiating themselves more from a major religious tradition with which they are identified.

A religion can be atheistic—thus sociologists have discerned a “civil religion” in the United States and, by extension, other societies.⁷ Ideologies, such as communism, national socialism, and apartheid will be considered religions for the purpose of this essay, since they, too, have a combination of particular convictions and practices that respond to superhuman forces—even if those forces are overpowering convictions or ideas themselves.

Finally, as we think generally about Christian mission in a world of religions, it is very important to remember that interactions (or lack thereof) between religions do not take place in a social, political, economic, and historical vacuum. In fact, the general human and environmental context in which Christian mission is being carried out impinges significantly on how Christians engage persons from other or no faith communities.

Christianity and Other Religions from 1500 CE

Christianity began as a Middle Eastern religion, and in its first seven centuries it expanded eastward at least to China and Sri Lanka, southward to Ethiopia, westward to the whole Mediterranean basin, and northwestward to Ireland. A combination of various historical factors very slowly—and unevenly—led Christian populations to be more and more concentrated in Europe, until by the year 1500 Christianity was more European than it had ever been before or would be again.⁸ When Christian European explorers, merchants, and missionaries ventured into the world in the decades leading up to 1500, they came from a context in which, over the course of the

6 The use of the term pagan or heathen to describe other Christians who are deemed to be insufficiently Christian is certainly not restricted to the 16th century. For a 19th-century example from Scotland, see John Roxborough, *Thomas Chalmers: Enthusiast for Mission* (Carlisle: Rutherford House, 1999), 153.

7 Robert N. Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” *Daedalus* 96:1 (1967), 1–21.

8 Andrew F. Walls, “Eusebius Tries Again: Reconceiving the Study of Christian History,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 24:3 (2000), 105–11, at 105.

previous centuries, they had established by both missionary and military means—the two were not necessarily mutually exclusive—the supremacy and then domination of their Christian faith in their own societies.⁹ Yet the official end of religious pluralism in Europe around 1500, with the expulsion of Jews and Muslims from Spain, marked the beginning of new encounters between Christians and people of other religious traditions in the world. Iberian explorers and priests landed in the African kingdom of the Kongo in 1483, on the Caribbean island of Ay-ti (Hispaniola) in 1492, and in western India, in 1498. Protestants continued the exploration, commerce, and conquest in the 17th century. These beginnings of worldwide and cross-cultural economic, political, and military engagements by Europeans also marked the recommencement of interreligious engagements between European Christians and people of other faith communities. (In places such as Ethiopia and India, Christians had always lived in contexts where they interacted with people of other religious traditions.) From 1500 onward, depending upon social, economic, political, military, and religious factors, the interface between Christians, from both Europe and then other regions of the globe, with adherents of other religious traditions was marked by incredible variety. The interreligious encounters ranged all the way from Christian destruction of local religions to Christian conversion to other religions.

Yet, the question here is how one should conceive of Christian missions in a world of religions. There is, unfortunately, no straightforward answer. Rather, depending upon context, the religions in question, and the attitudes of Christians engaged in mission, the appropriate ways to engage or, at times, even ignore other religions will vary greatly. In order to understand Christian mission in a world of religions, we shall look at various modes of engagement used by Christians involved in mission throughout history in multireligious contexts. These modes of interreligious engagement (or disengagement) can provide helpful models for contemporary Christians in their quest to live as faithful representatives and workers of Jesus Christ in the world.

It is important to note that these various modes of engagement are not mutually exclusive, and it is not at all unusual when two or more of them are operating simultaneously. A good example comes from 16th-century Mexico, where Christian missionaries imposed “a foreign worldview that attempted cultural erasure,” while Indigenous Christians involved themselves in “creative adaptation and innovation” as the new faith clashed with the old. Yet that is not the sum total of the interreligious engagement. Even while

9 For further reflections on this history, see Arun W. Jones, “Introduction,” in *Christian Interculture: Texts and Voices from Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*, ed. Arun W. Jones (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2021), 1–14.

missionaries destroyed Indigenous knowledge, “they also sought to preserve elements of it by commissioning pictographic manuscripts or copies of older texts.” Moreover, along with the “violence, destruction and reframing of knowledge, missionary friars pursued a strategy of persuasion made possible by diverse processes of cultural and linguistic translation”—a process that can be termed a “moral dialogue.”¹⁰ Thus the interface between Christianity and pre-existing religious traditions in 16th-century Mexico encompassed a wide range of interactions, some very violent and others more peaceful. The example of the evangelization of the Americas is a good place to start reflecting on some modes of Christian engagement with other religions.

Confrontation

For many people, confrontation is the characteristic way Christians in mission deal with other religious traditions: St Boniface felling the sacred oak tree of Thor in what today is Germany in the early 8th century; Catholic missionaries destroying Native American religious cultures in the 16th to 18th centuries; Protestant missionaries publicly denouncing Hinduism in 19th century India; contemporary Ghanaian Pentecostal pastors urging their followers to break completely with their African past: these are just a few among many examples of Christian missionary confrontation with other religious traditions. These confrontations have created heated debate among both scholars and practitioners of religion, as well as the knowledgeable general public.¹¹ A few words need to be said about the confrontational mode of dealing with other religions.

To begin, Christians need to admit that their missions at times in the past and even in the present have been the cause of violence against, and destruction of, other religious cultures. Christians also need to confess that such violence and destruction have caused terrible and sometimes irreparable harm and loss, not only to adherents of other religious traditions but also to humanity in general, as the collective treasure of knowledge and wisdom, beauty, and wonder has been forever diminished. Of course, Christians have

10 Yanna Yannakakis, “Native Christianity and Communal Justice in Colonial Mexico: An Ambivalent History,” in *Christian Interculture: Texts and Voices from Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*, ed. Arun W. Jones (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2021), 107–29, at 107.

11 For St Boniface, see Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (New York: Penguin Books, 1964), 75; for Ghanaian Pentecostals, see Birgit Meyer, “Make a Complete Break with the Past: Memory and Post-Colonial Modernity in Ghanaian Pentecostal Discourse,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28:3 (1998), 316–49.

also been victims of religious confrontations and violence. Yet this fact should not blind the Christian community to the injury and destruction sometimes produced by confrontational Christian missions.

That being said, one must not jump to the conclusion that all Christian mission in its confrontation with other religions is violent and destructive. Mahatma Gandhi, a frequent critic of Christian missions, claimed in his autobiography that during his childhood, “Christian missionaries used to stand in a corner near the High School and hold forth, pouring abuse on Hindus and their gods.” He also wrote that a convert to Christianity in his hometown was compelled to eat beef, drink alcohol, and change his clothing to conform to European style. After the publication of Gandhi’s autobiography, however, the Rev. H. R. Scott, the only missionary who was living in Gandhi’s childhood hometown of Rajkot, denied ever preaching “in a corner near the High School and pouring abuse on Hindus and their gods” or knowing about any convert who had to eat beef or drink liquor. Gandhi accepted the truth of Scott’s rejoinder.¹² Thus, despite stereotypes, confrontation is not necessarily the only or, over the course of two millennia, even the most usual mode of Christian encounter with other religious traditions.

A third point to be made is that those involved in Christian missions have not usually confronted other religions as total and organic systems of belief and practice. Such a systemic view of other religions was popularized in early 19th-century Protestant circles by prominent missionaries such as William H. Ward and Alexander Duff in India.¹³ However, most confrontations have taken place over particular ideas and practices, without necessary condemnation of a religion as a whole. For example, in the first half of the 20th century, a first-generation Kenyan Quaker leader by the name of Maria Maraga led other Christian women in defying the customary taboo among her Luyia people on women eating chicken. “For Maria and other women it was viewed as a protest against an age-old custom, which was a symbol of their subordination.”¹⁴ Maria Maraga targeted one form of oppression in her ancestral religion, along with other beliefs and practices, but not the religion *in toto*.

12 Lalsangkima Pachuau, *Indian and Christian: Historical Accounts of Christianity and Theological Reflections in India* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2019), 20–21.

13 See William Ward, *A View of the History, Literature, and Religion of the Hindoos*, 2nd ed. (Serampore: Baptist Mission Press, 1815), and Alexander Duff, *India and India Missions* (Edinburgh: John Johnstone, 1839).

14 Esther Mombo, “In Search of the Women in the Archival Sources: the Case of Maria Maraga,” in *Christian Interculture: Texts and Voices from Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*, ed. Arun W. Jones (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2021), 63–78, at 73.

Fourthly, in hindsight it appears that in particular cases Christians were right in confronting and condemning specific practices common in other religious traditions, or even sometimes whole ideologies. In the 20th century, various Christians involved in mission have confronted, condemned, and mobilized against a number of popular ideologies, such as National Socialism in Germany, apartheid in South Africa, and racism in the United States of America. While these three ideologies have had their strongest grip on Christian populations, other ideologies such as communism in China have also been the target of Christian confrontation. Christian missions have also poured huge resources into confronting certain practices such as gender discrimination and violence that have been justified with reference to religion. Such confrontations have become so accepted that numerous agencies, both religious and secular, continue the work initiated by Christian missions.

Finally, while Christian confrontation with practices and beliefs of other religions may be the most publicized mode of interaction in religiously pluralistic societies, in fact confrontation might involve only a small minority of Christian mission workers and agencies. This is surely true in religiously pluralistic nations such as India and the United States, where newspaper headlines and Internet stories publicize conflicts between Christians, Hindus, Muslims, and Jews, for example, but in fact hundreds of millions of Christians in mission live and work in peace with their neighbours of other faith traditions.

Competition

Christian mission generally finds itself competing with other religions in times and places where people have a number of religious options from which to choose. Competition may actually be a special form of confrontation; what distinguishes competition, for the purposes of this essay, is that competing implies a general lack of physical or social conflict between members of different (or no) religious traditions. Thus, competition can most naturally occur in a society where religious pluralism is generally accepted, and various truth claims are allowed to exist side by side, sometimes in competition with each other.¹⁵

Christian mission has, in many instances, occurred in contexts where it is competing with other religious traditions for legitimacy. A famous example from Central Asia occurred in May of 1254, when a theological debate, described by the Flemish Franciscan monk William of Rubruck, between Muslims, Christians, and Buddhists took place before Möngke Khan, the

¹⁵ The biblical *locus classicus* for Christian mission in competition with other traditions is the apostle Paul's work in Athens, narrated in the last half of Acts chapter 17.

Great Khan at Karakorum.¹⁶ Three centuries later, the Mughal emperor Akbar in India asked for Jesuit priests for his court from the Christian mission in Goa in order to hear debates between the Catholic priests and specialists of other religions, such as Hinduism, Jainism, and Islam. The introduction of Christianity to the Yoruba people in the 19th century took place in a social context where the new faith had to present itself as a viable alternative to both Islam and the autochthonous religious traditions of the people.¹⁷ And in contemporary secular societies, those undertaking Christian missions must sometimes compete with persons of other or no faith traditions. Competition does not only take place on the theological or verbal level. Different religious traditions can offer competing sacred and secular solutions to illness and disease, to material poverty, and to numerous other afflictions which beset people in any given society.

Evangelism

Evangelism or evangelization is seen by many Christians as a duty for themselves and fellow believers. While some Christians avoid evangelism, or even condemn it as unethical, the practice of evangelism as mission is well established among Christian communities across the world. The word comes from the Greek word meaning “good news,” which in old English is “gospel.” Hence, evangelism means spreading the gospel or “good news” of Jesus Christ to those who do not accept him as their God. In a few passages in the New Testament, the resurrected Christ tells his followers to go into the world around them in order to tell others about his ministry, death, and resurrection.¹⁸ Through the centuries, many Christians have taken these words to heart, spurring missionaries to action and others to support them.

At times, evangelism has occurred as confrontation with other religious traditions, and sometimes it has occurred in the form of competition with them—although not all religious confrontation or competition is evangelistic in nature. Other evangelism, however, has simply occurred as evangelists have ventured to share their convictions about Jesus Christ to those whom they believe do not take him seriously—or seriously enough. Such sharing can take

16 William of Rubruck, *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck*, ed. and trans. Peter Jackson, with Introduction, Notes and Appendices by Peter Jackson with David Morgan (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1990), 229-35.

17 J. D. Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

18 See Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:14-18, Luke 24:44-49 with Acts 1:6-9, and John 20:19-23.

the form of interfaith dialogue, storytelling, healing, and any number of other practices. Some of the most penetrating and thoughtful interreligious conversations, dialogues, and learning have taken place as a result of the work of evangelists who were sharing their faith with persons of other religious traditions. The Jesuits Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) in China and Roberto de Nobili (1577–1656) in India engaged in years of cultural immersion, dialogue, and learning with Confucian literati and Brahmin scholars, respectively. In fact, evangelism that is done well requires that Christian missionaries or evangelists be respectful of and attentive to the people whom they seek to reach.

Evangelism has received much criticism from both Christians and those beyond the faith, especially when its purpose is seen to be the religious conversion of persons. Whether such criticism is warranted or not needs to be judged in individual circumstances. It is very true that evangelism has been carried out poorly and even harmfully—as have other Christian ministries—and must be constantly critiqued and improved. It is also true that any number of evangelists since the beginning of the Jesus movement have turned the gospel into bad news, and such perversion is rightly criticized and condemned.¹⁹ Moreover, evangelism—again, like many other Christian activities and ministries—has been carried out with mixed motives and produced mixed results. Yet the Christian conviction that the coming of Jesus of Nazareth into the world is indeed good news to be shared with the whole world, including with those of other religious traditions, is part of the historic faith, and the sharing of that conviction has brought new life and meaning to myriad people across time, space, and cultures.

Finally, often evangelism is often associated with foreign missionaries. The truth is that the most numerous and the most effective Christian evangelists have been those who have spread the faith to their own people. A few these, such as the Kongolese Kimpa Vita or Beatrice (1684–1706), the North American Aimee Semple McPherson (1890–1944), the Chinese John Song (1901–1944), and the Argentinian Luis Palau (1924–2021) rose to public prominence and fame.²⁰ The vast majority, however, are unknown to posterity—they were hidden but effective witnesses of the lordship of Jesus Christ.²¹

19 Numerous biblical examples exist, perhaps the most famous one being the evangelists criticized in Paul's letter to the Galatians.

20 Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa, 1450–1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 104–107; Edith L. Blumhofer, *Aimee Semple McPherson: Everybody's Sister* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1993); Daryl R. Ireland, *John Song: Modern Chinese Christianity and the Making of a New Man* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2020); Luis Palau, *Palau, A Life on Fire: The Spiritual Memoir of Luis Palau* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019).

21 See Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba* for a study of such Indigenous evangelists.

Interreligious Dialogue

In any religiously pluralistic society, dialogue between people of different religious traditions can occur in a variety of different arenas. From multireligious assemblies and parliaments to quotidian conversations between neighbours, from interfaith services to offering of food and drink during festivals, from the rarified conversations of theologians to the deeply spiritual sharing of nuns and monks, Christians have engaged with persons from other religious traditions for many reasons, such as genuine curiosity, a desire for deepening friendships, a hunger for personal growth, or a commitment to solidarity.²² For some Christians, however, interreligious dialogue is a part of their own vocation of Christian mission. They believe that God has called them to engage in the *missio Dei* by entering into dialogue with persons of other religious traditions. This was the case of the famous 20th-century American missionary in India, E. Stanley Jones. Although an evangelist himself, he established a Christian institution called an ashram where persons of different faiths—or no faith—could temporarily live together in community and share their religious convictions and perspectives without any pressure or expectation of conversion to another religion.

In the latter half of the 20th century, among Protestants the mission of interreligious dialogue was carried on quite vigorously by the World Council of Churches (WCC), which was formed in 1948 in the wake of World War II. The initiative and energy for interreligious or interfaith dialogue came initially from a coterie of South Asian Christian leaders, such as Paul Devanandan (1901–62), D. T. Niles (1908–70) and Stanley Samartha (1920–2001), the latter becoming the first director of the WCC's Sub-unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies when it was formed in 1971. These men came out of Christian communities in the new nation states of South Asia, especially India and Sri Lanka, where the church was most desirous of ecumenical initiatives to engage persons of other faiths with respect and understanding. The perspectives of Christian women concerning interfaith dialogue were finally brought to the fore in 1988, when a Women in Interfaith Dialogue event sponsored by the WCC was held in Toronto.²³

The growing emphasis on mission as interreligious dialogue *per se* was met with challenges from various sectors of the worldwide church, many

22 Diana Eck, "What Do We Mean by Dialogue?" *Current Dialogue* (1986), 5–15; Ingeborg Gabriel, "Like Rosewater: Reflections on Interreligious Dialogue," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 45:1 (2010), 1–23.

23 S. Wesley Ariarajah, "Dialogue, Interfaith," *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. Nicholas Lossky et al. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991), 281–87.

of which were suspicious that such dialogue was being promoted at the cost of an emphasis on Christian witness, or at the cost of an emphasis on Christian uniqueness in a world of religions.²⁴ Matters came to a head during the keynote address of Prof. Chung Kyung-Hyung at the 7th Assembly of the WCC held in Canberra, Australia, in 1991. There were strong voices of both support and opposition to the address from within the WCC. In the 21st century, there has been a rapidly growing awareness among Protestants of the diversity of views regarding interreligious dialogue, at least held on any formal level, and the need to take these views into consideration when promoting such dialogue. “All religions are marked by internal divides and variant identities. ‘Christianity’ does not relate with ‘Islam,’ for example; rather specific Christians in concrete locales and times relate, positively or negatively, to or with specific Muslims in particular situations.”²⁵

On the Roman Catholic side, since the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) there has been increased focus on and ongoing development of interreligious dialogue, paralleling the work of the WCC. In fact, the WCC and the Vatican have sometimes worked side-by-side to think through issues presented by interreligious dialogue, and even engaged in such dialogue jointly. Currently the Vatican’s dialogical engagement with other religious traditions is handled by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. Because of its hierarchical polity, which combines a centralized bureaucracy with an international episcopacy with responsibility for a widely dispersed and culturally and socially diverse laity, Roman Catholics have a number of official and unofficial entry points for dialogue with people of other religious traditions.

Peaceful Coexistence

While the religious “other” may seem to call for some sort of Christian engagement, especially from those who see themselves as involved in Christian mission, it may very well be that for long periods of time a peaceful coexistence between communities of different religions is what Christians have believed is most needed. Such an irenic approach has its biblical precedents (Jer. 29:4-7, Rom. 12:18); and over many centuries, Christians, including those in mission, have sought to live in peace with their neighbours of differing religions. Writing about Muslims, Jews, and Christians in the Middle

²⁴ See the discussion on this topic in Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 483–89.

²⁵ Douglas Pratt, “Interreligious Dialogue: A Case Study Approach in Respect to the Vatican and the World Council of Churches,” in *World Christianity: Methodological Considerations*, ed. Martha Fredericks and Dorottya Nagy (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 179–203, at 181.

East before 1914, one scholar summarizes their situation as follows: “A sober look at history suggests that, in most times and places [in the Islamic Middle East], relations between communities were, as one might say in colloquial Egyptian Arabic, *kwayyis* (“pretty good” or “okay”); Muslims, Christians, and Jews simply persisted in proximity.”²⁶

There have been times that living in peace with others has cost Christian missionaries their lives. This is what happened to seven French Trappist monks living in the monastery of Tibhirine near Médéa, Algeria, in 1996, during the Algerian Civil War.²⁷ It is not known with certainty who killed the monks, but the seven who were murdered, along with two others who escaped death at that time, had come to Algeria with a mission not to convert Muslims but to live in peace with them. Except for the night they were abducted, it seems the monks had been successful in their mission. Moreover, Christians were not the only ones killed in that era: over one hundred imams had lost their lives because they opposed the violence overtaking the country.²⁸ In this case, a mission of living in peace with one’s neighbours of a different faith involved dying in solidarity with them.

The Christian community has not always been of one mind whether peaceful coexistence or righteous confrontation is the appropriate attitude with regard to particular practices and ideologies of one’s neighbours of a different religion. A good example comes from India, where the socio-religious Hindu institution of what is known as “caste” has been variously accepted, ignored, or challenged by different groups of Christians—both Indian and foreign. While opinions among Indian Christians are currently fluid and changing, historically the Syrian Orthodox communities of South India, who trace their origins to the 1st century CE, have lived in social harmony with their Hindu neighbours. They have in fact become integrated into the caste hierarchy of their region, establishing themselves as an upper caste group, almost on par with high caste Brahmins. Other groups of Indian Christians—many of them with origins in the lowest social strata—have strongly criticized the historic posture of the Syrian Christians with regard to caste. As noted, there is much discussion in Indian Christian circles regarding the proper Christian stance toward caste—indeed, this discussion has been ongoing for centuries—and whether it should be accepted at any level or not among Christians. Even when in theory

26 Heather J. Sharkey, *A History of Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 3.

27 See John W. Kiser, *The Monks of Tibhirine: Faith, Love and Terror in Algeria* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 2002).

28 Margot Patterson, “The Last Monk of Tibhirine: ‘God Drove that History,’” *National Catholic Reporter*, 13 June 2019.

Christians can repudiate the social system of caste, in fact it is very hard to do so in practice, since the system is such a vital part of Indian social life.²⁹

The controversy surrounding caste in India is a reminder that just as Christians must confess that their missions of confrontation with other religious beliefs and practices have created much harm, violence and destruction, so they must also confess that at times they have adopted a mission of living in peaceful coexistence with ideologies and practices that themselves were harmful, violent, and destructive to human life. While some Christians certainly opposed National Socialism in Germany and apartheid in South Africa, many other Christians refused to resist, and even actively promoted and propagated, what have come to be seen as heretical or non-Christian ideologies.

Common Service

There are times when persons from different religious communities come together to be engaged in what Christians would call “mission” in the world. Often this happens during social or political crises. Attacks on houses or places of worship, for example, can mobilize persons from a wide variety of religious backgrounds—or no religious beliefs—to a mission of solidarity with those who have been victimized. At times, these sporadic acts of solidarity turn into long-term interreligious relationships where different faith communities come together to build each other up and to work together in the world for the common good. An example of such mutual support and cooperation comes from Omaha, Nebraska, in the United States, where the Tri-Faith Initiative grew out of an act of interfaith support during a religio-political crisis. On 11 September 2001, right after terrorist attacks in the United States, Rabbi Aryeh Azriel of Temple Israel in Omaha collected a group of volunteers to circle a Muslim mosque, to protect it from any acts of violence in response to those attacks. Out of that spontaneous act of charity and solidarity emerged an initiative where three congregations—one Jewish, one Muslim, and one Christian—came together to build their respective houses of worship on a piece of common property. Part of that property is shared space, and the three congregations have pledged to develop common programming so they can grow together in understanding and outreach, without sacrificing what is unique to their individual traditions.³⁰

29 For a recent critical study of Thomas Christians’ practice of caste and gender, see Sonja Thomas, *Privileged Minorities: Syrian Christianity, Gender, and Minority Rights in Postcolonial India* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018).

30 Chris Alexander, “The Tri-Faith Initiative,” *Missiology* 47:1 (2019), 24–28.

Another example of common witness comes from Dubuque, Iowa, in the United States. Here a program called Children of Abraham brings together Muslims, Jews, and Christians for joint education and service. “Dubuque’s Children of Abraham creates an atmosphere of civic life that builds inter-religious solidarity, cooperation and friendship. It does so through regular monthly topical conversations, service, activities, education outreach, and expressions of cross-cultural hospitality in sacred spaces.”³¹ In the eyes of Bonnie Sue Lewis, one of the Christian initiators of Children of Abraham, not only common witness but interfaith friendship is itself a form of Christian mission in a world that is too often religiously polarized and mobilized for interreligious mistrust, hatred and even violence.³²

As in other forms of Christian mission in a religiously pluralistic world, common witness sometimes requires people to make difficult decisions. What if a religious tradition has beliefs or practices that are completely objectionable to one’s own? How far can one cooperate or join in common service? Does such cooperation or service signal to the world (or perhaps more importantly, to other members of one’s own community) that one approves of everything in another religious tradition? To give but one example, observant Jews, Muslims, or Christians may refuse to go to a Hindu temple for conscience’s sake. This is not because the members of the so-called Abrahamic faiths are unsympathetic or antagonistic towards Hindus. Rather, their own religious beliefs prevent them from entering spaces where what they consider to be idol worship is occurring. In such cases, one needs to respect not only the boundaries between religions, but respect why persons may or may not cross those boundaries.

Support

At times Christians have felt it their call or mission to support and even advance the ideas and practices of adherents of other religions. In February 2011, in the midst of massive political demonstrations in Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt, many around the world were captivated by reports via print, picture, and video of Christians among the demonstrators who linked arms and formed a circle of human shields around vulnerable Muslim protestors saying their Friday prayers. Two days later, Muslim demonstrators returned the favour, surrounding Christians with protection as they celebrated mass.

31 Bonnie Sue Lewis, “Interfaith Friendship as Incarnational Mission Practice,” *Missiology* 47:1 (2019), 6–17, at 10.

32 Lewis, “Interfaith Friendship as Incarnational Mission,” 15–16.

While such interreligious care and protection may be episodic, coming especially during crises, many persons of good will commit their energies over a long term to promote the wellbeing of those who come from a different religious background.

Christians in mission have been known to promote the religious heritage of those from other traditions through a variety of means, over long periods of time. For example, in colonial India in the 19th and 20th centuries, missionaries and Indian Christians published a number of works from other religions, either in the original language or in translation. The Rev. Prem Chand, a Baptist working in Bengal, translated into English and published in 1911 the poems of the mystic poet Kabir.³³ Kabir became a favourite religious poet of Indian and then Western Protestants, since in his works they perceived a critic of both Hinduism and Islam, as well as a visionary whose religious instincts aligned in many ways with their own. In South India in the late 19th century, the missionary George Uglow Pope translated and edited the Thiruvāṣagam, poems of the Tamil Shaivite saint and poet Manikkavasagar.³⁴ Pope found a close “affinity” between the utterances of the poet “and those of Christian religious experience.”³⁵ As in the case of common religious witness, Christians have chosen to highlight and support the beliefs, thoughts and practices of persons from other religious traditions with whom they found sympathy and common ground.

Borrowing (and Lending)

The final way that Christians in mission have dealt with other religious traditions is to borrow beliefs, ideas, liturgies, and practices from them. In a reciprocal manner, the ideas and practices—both sacred and secular—of Christians have been appropriated by persons from other religions for their own purposes. At times this borrowing and lending has been done on purpose; at other times, it has occurred unself-consciously.

The propensity of Christians to borrow ideas and practices from other religious traditions, especially when Christian communities are first being established in societies or new cultural contexts, goes back to the first

33 Prem Chand, *A Translation of Kabir's Complete Bijak into English* (Calcutta: Lalit Mohan Singh, 1911).

34 Māṇikka-Vāṣagar, *The Tiruvāṣagam: or, "Sacred Utterances" of the Tamil Poet, Saint, and Sage Māṇikka-Vāṣagar*, trans. and ed. George Uglow Pope (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900).

35 Nicol Macnicol, *Indian Theism from the Vedic to the Muhammadan Period* (London: Oxford University Press, 1915), 173.

centuries of the Common Era.³⁶ A clear example of how Christians borrow from other religious traditions to adapt their faith to new cultures is provided in Pope Gregory's instructions to the missionary Augustine around the year 600 CE, as the latter was travelling to Britain to convert the English from their ancestral religion. Gregory wrote,

I have decided after long deliberation about the English people . . . that the idol temples of that race should by no means be destroyed but only the idols in them . . . When this people see that their shrines are not destroyed they will be able to banish error from their hearts and be more ready to come to the places they are familiar with, but now recognizing and worshipping the true God . . . And because they are in the habit of slaughtering much cattle as sacrifices to the devils, some solemnity ought to be given them in exchange for this . . . Do not let them sacrifice animals to the devil, but let them slaughter animals for their own food to the praise of God.³⁷

Pope Gregory here quite explicitly instructs the missionary Augustine to adopt ritual spaces and practices from the English people's traditional religion.

While Gregory's reasons for urging the adoptions are apparently instrumental—he believes that the adoptions will prevent alienating the English from Christianity—in other cases the borrowing comes from an appreciation of other religions. Thus, those involved in Christian mission may build churches in the style of other houses of worship in a society or may appreciatively incorporate dance, music, poetry, and art from neighbouring religious traditions. Or religious borrowing may serve other purposes. In sub-Saharan Africa, African Initiated Churches have sometimes adopted beliefs and practices from African Traditional Religions partly as a method of protest and revolt from churches established by white foreign missionaries, or “mission churches.”³⁸

36 Andrew Walls and Lamin Sanneh, noted scholars of mission and World Christianity, have argued that it is in the nature of the Christian religion to adopt and adapt the culture (including the religious culture) of the society into which it is being introduced. See Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1989); and Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of the Faith* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996).

37 Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People, The Greater Chronicle, Bede's Letter to Egbert*, ed. with an introduction and notes by Judith McClure and Roger Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 57.

38 Musa W. Dube, “Consuming a Colonial Cultural Bomb: Translating Badimo into ‘Demons’ in the Setswana Bible (Matthew 8.28-34; 15.22; 10.8),” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 73 (1999), 33–59.

Concluding Reflections

Over the past two millennia, Christians in mission have interacted with persons of other religious traditions in a variety of ways. Some of these interactions have been harmful, violent, and destructive. Others have been highly positive and mutually beneficial. Many of them have produced mixed results, with plenty of ambiguity, ambivalence, and paradox. What can Christians in mission today learn from fellow believers both past and present who have engaged facets of other religions in various ways?

First, those involved in Christian mission in a world of religions need to deepen their own faith and knowledge of their own religion, as well as increase their understanding of other religious traditions. These are parallel movements, albeit at times taking a person in different directions. It is a disservice to one's own religion if one does not know it well, and it is a disservice to followers of other religions if one does not know their traditions as well as possible. Moreover, having a deep commitment to one's own faith can make one a helpful interlocutor with those from other (or no) religious traditions, because one is secure in one's own identity and can share authentically with others.

As those in mission deepen their own religious roots and deepen their comprehension of other religions, however, tensions within themselves and even between themselves and others may also emerge as persons discover differences that they did not know existed. In fact, carefully listening to and interacting with people of other religious traditions may help Christians in mission to see more clearly the shape and delimitations of their own tradition. Such interreligious interaction can bring into clearer perspective the meaning and significance of the various understandings and practices of Christianity. It may also make people realize the depth of some of the differences between their own faith and that of their neighbors.

A deepening understanding of other religions can also help Christians in mission to expand and rethink their own faith, since through dialogue and other forms of interaction they can adopt and adapt new insights, behaviours, and convictions from other religious traditions.³⁹ However, such expansion will be superficial and not truly edifying unless Christians have a deep appreciation of their own religion, and the religions of their neighbours.

A second insight to be gained from the brief overview of engagement with persons of other religions and ideologies is that Christians in mission can interact with persons of other religions in a number of ways that are authentic to their own tradition. Sometimes the same person can take a variegated

³⁹ See Kristin Johnston Lagen, *Baby Krishna, Infant Christ: A Comparative Theology of Salvation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2011), 191-217.

approach to persons of other religions: the Christian may criticize certain aspects of another tradition but also praise and appreciate other features of it. What is harder to realize is that Christians holding differing perspectives and approaches to other religions can, taken as a whole, provide a more complicated but complete way of living and dealing with other traditions. A Christian missionary who is inclined to be sympathetic to other religious points of view may find it very frustrating to relate to a fellow missionary who is prone to viewing other traditions critically. Yet their combined witness, as riven with contradictions as it is, may in fact present a more complex and authentic Christian approach to the other tradition than either witness alone. Indeed, one of the paradoxes of mission in a world of religions is that Christian mission may become more internally contentious because of different Christian perspectives on the world's religions. Yet such internal and external variety, within certain bounds of course, can make for a richer Christian engagement with other religions.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Christian mission must be undertaken with deep respect and consideration of persons of other religious traditions. This is true even when, and perhaps especially when, Christians are criticizing others. A dismissive or haughty attitude to persons of other religions and ideologies violates the second part of the Great Commandment of Jesus Christ: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." Such love does not mean that those in mission cannot confront, criticize, or even condemn ideas and actions of persons of other religious traditions. Jesus' own ministry makes that clear. Yet such confrontation must always be done with a deep understanding of the unity of all humanity and with a firm commitment to the belief that God does indeed love all.

CHAPTER 10

Mission in an Urban World

Glenn Smith

Cliché statements seem to be standard procedure among urban ministry practitioners across the globe, regardless of the social and linguistic situation of the speaker. One endlessly hears, “The greatest innovation in history is cities”; “God’s creation begins in the garden but ends in a city.” Repeated endlessly—yes. Nonetheless, very true.¹

A little over a century ago, London was the only supercity in the world. At that time, 9 percent of the world’s population lived in urban areas. In 1950 (only 50 years later), 27 percent of the world’s population lived in cities, and 73 percent of the world’s people lived in rural areas. Year 2000 marked the dawn of the century of the city when, for the first time in human history, more than 50 percent of the earth’s population lived in metropolitan areas. These are areas defined by their boundaries according to the degree of economic and social interconnectedness with nearby communities and identified by interlinked commerce or commuting patterns.

The United Nations commission Habitat wrote that cities are “perhaps one of humanity’s most complex creations, never finished, never definitive. They are like a journey that never ends. Their evolution is determined by their ascent into greatness or their descent into decline. They are the past, the present and the future.”² Worldwide, metropolitan areas gain five million people a month. That means that the world adds the equivalent of a Census Metropolitan Area like Toronto every month. The globe adds 200,000 people a day to cities—the same number of children in primary and elementary schools on the Island of Montréal. Imagine, we add two people a second to our global urban population. The United Nations—which offers the most

1 The British author, Ben Wilson has written the most recent history of the city: *Metropolis, Humankind’s Greatest Invention* (Toronto: Anchor Canada, 2021). To coincide with the centennial period covered by this volume, the final five chapters provide urban context for this chapter on mission in an urban world.

2 *State of the World’s Cities 2008-2009: Harmonious Cities* (Nairobi: United Nations Settlements Programme, 2008), iv. A very good source for urban statistics is United Nations, *The World’s Cities in 2016* (UN Population Division, 2016); and Paul Knox, *Atlas of Cities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

conservative growth estimate—projects that by 2025, over 60 percent of the world's estimated 8.3 billion people will live in urban areas.

North America is the most urbanized continent of the globe. It is widely documented that 82 percent of people in Canada and the United States of America live in metropolitan areas. This compares with 51 percent across the globe: 73 percent in Europe, 40 percent in Africa, 43 percent in Asia, 71 percent in Oceania and 79 percent in Latin America. Despite the challenges of urban areas—traffic, pollution, noise, high cost of living, crowded and often substandard living conditions, economic disparity, stress, psychological overload, long hours of commuting, violence—cities provide people in the developing world the best hope of education, health care and income. People continue to be drawn to the city through migration and immigration.

As a heart pumps blood back and forth through the body, cities pump people around, on both a short-term and long-term basis. That has made it harder to develop stable congregations in cities; but it creates the great opportunity for global mission, as people find themselves relocating from one city to another.

Interestingly, the 2009 *Atlas of Global Christianity* also examines Christianity in cities (1910—2010) with a very insightful article by Evelyn Miranda-Feliciano. The graphs of Christianity in cities for each continent provide excellent information for interested readers.³

This chapter will not attempt to examine mission in large cities over the past century. Rather, it will attempt to provide a practitioner/researcher's perspective on the diverse ways Christianity, in an ecumenical posture, is embracing the ideological, social, political, religious, and cultural contexts of metropolitan areas, presenting a brief portrait of how congregations are responding to urban realities. I will illustrate this from two geographical case studies of startling difference—urban Canada and urbanizing Haïti.

I will begin by examining the evolving functions of metropolitan areas. Over the past century, this reality has led practitioners to think and act theologically and contextually through an urban missional lens. Therefore, the second section will look at the state of these reflections. Third, I will look at the two case studies. Finally, I will conclude with five futures of missional engagement with the urban world and propose the way forward.

3 T. M. Johnson and K. R. Ross, eds, *Atlas of Global Christianity* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 238–55.

What Is a Metropolitan Area?

Richard Sennett sees a city as “a human settlement in which strangers are likely to meet.”⁴ For this statement to be understood, the urban milieu must have a large and heterogeneous population. A density of people in a limited space providing multiple opportunities of interaction and commercial exchange must be evident.⁵ Since its 1996 *State of the World Population Report*, the United Nations Population Fund continues to document the diversity of definitions for an urban category. The British urbanologist, David Clark, clarified many of these issues in his book *Urban World/Global City*.⁶ The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) prefers to speak of a functional metropolitan area, reflecting the organization of social and economic relations.⁷

Joel Kotkin and Philip Sheldrake provide historical and spiritual insights to describe what characterizes cities. “Since the earliest origins, urban areas have performed three separate functions—the creation of sacred space, the provision of basic security and the host for a commercial market.”⁸ They both comment, “Without a widely shared belief system, it would be exceedingly difficult to envision a viable urban future.”⁹ As we will see, in the age of secularity (to quote the Montréal philosopher, Charles Taylor) and hyper-individuality, this is a critical missiological challenge in large cities going forward.

However, Paul Knox in *Atlas of Cities* draws the reader’s attention to four fundamental functions of cities: that is, their decision-making, transformative, mobilizing, and generative capacities. He then proposes a nomenclature of 13 types of cities, highlighting 94 metropolitan areas within the taxonomy. Therefore, one size does not fit all in mission!

To understand a metropolitan area, we must raise several foundational questions about its specific context. “How do we define a context?”; “How big is a context?”; “How long before major elements change?”; “Who is in

4 Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: Vintage Press, 1974), 170.

5 Ibid.

6 David Clark, *Urban World/Global City*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2003). He names a population of 50,000 people or less a “town” or a “village.” On the other hand, “cities” are human agglomerations that have up to 200,000 residents. A “metropolitan area” has more than two million “as a human settlement of 125,000 or more people.

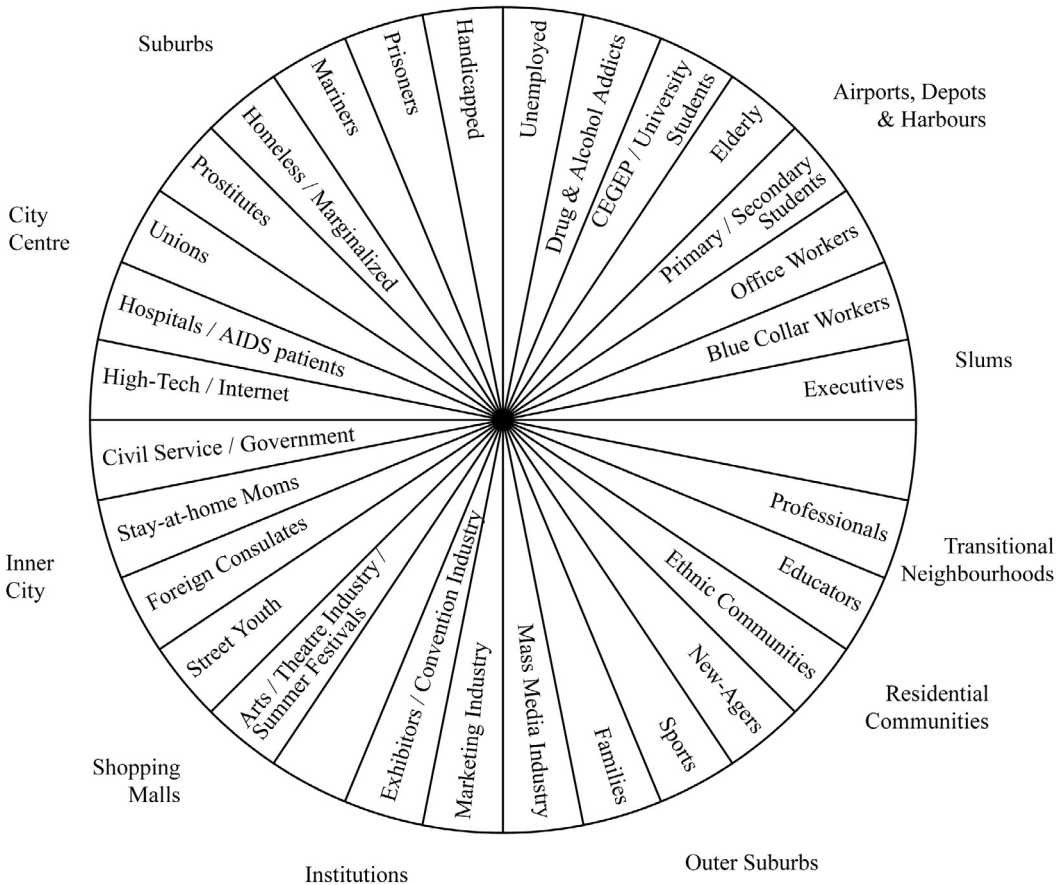
7 *Redefining Territories: The Functional Region*. (Paris: OECD, 2002)

8 Joel Kotkin, *The City: A Global History* (New York: Random House, 2005), xvi and 157–60. Philip Sheldrake quotes Kotkin in *The Spiritual City: Theology, Spirituality and the Urban* (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2014). He roots many of his propositions in Kotkin’s framework. See pages 4–5.

9 Kotkin, 159; and Sheldrake, 137.

and who is out?"; and "How do we know?" The complexity of the city means we must ask these questions constantly. The following representation inspired by the work of urban ministry practitioners in Montréal seeks to take into account most of the factors that determine context.¹⁰

Organizational and Population Segments of an Urban World - Montréal



¹⁰ I am grateful to my late dear friend, doctoral advisor, mentor, and colleague, Dr Ray Bakke for the idea on this representation. He first presented it to me when I was completing my DMin studies in 1990. We have played with it ever since in urban courses and consultations around the globe. It helps the urban practitioner to understand that a city is about functions and roles, not just geography. The present diagram represents Montréal as my colleagues understand our Census Metropolitan Area.

Doing Missiology with the City Today: Some Critical Notions

Since the middle of the 20th century, the church has been pursuing missional theology through the lens of the mission of God. The concept of *missio Dei* finds its roots in the writings of Karl Barth¹¹ and Karl Hartenstein (although Barth never used the term) who saw it necessary to emphasize the *action of God* in contrast to the human-centred focus of the liberal theology of their day.

Missio Dei establishes the priority of the triune being and characterizes God as a missionary God. In this case, mission cannot be conceived of primarily or even essentially as an activity of the church but must be rooted in God's being in action. In God's tremendous love for the created order, God engages in the salvation and reconciliation of the whole cosmos through the Father's sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Through this missionary activity of the triune God, the church is formed as a community of those who in turn are called to be an echo of God. That echo is true mission—to reach out with the salvation and redemption God is pursuing in the world.

This hermeneutical approach to the *missio Dei* in city-regions reaffirms the scandal of particularity. Urban missional theology is rooted in the very particular stories of cities in the Bible. But most specifically it is rooted in the good news of Jesus' incarnation and God's cosmic goal to re-inaugurate his reign through Jesus's death on the cross.

Missiology is the exegetical, theological, and cultural study about the mission of God in the world and the ensuing ministries of the church. For that reason, it is often defined as an interdisciplinary field of reflection and action.¹² When we shape this discussion contextually and pursue this reflection for a metropolitan area, we are seeking to relate both urban geography and mission. The former analyzes the reasons for the spatial differences of human activity in urban areas. In missiology, we seek a more adequate understanding of the apostolic mission of the church while remaining faithful to the exegetical task of understanding the mind of the biblical writer. But this "fusion of horizons" is full of potholes (an intentional metaphor for many of our global cities). As

11 Karl Barth, "Die Theologie und die Mission in der Gegenwart" [Theology and mission in the present situation], Karl Barth, *Theologische Fragen und Antworten* (Zollikon: Evangelischer Verlag, 1932), 100-126.

12 Missiology begins on the exegetical level (Christian faith is a missionary faith rooted in Jesus' practices, the hope of the rule of God and his justice) and follows with historical, theological, and practical reflection and initiatives. It is interdisciplinary because it takes into account cultural studies, holistic community transformational development theory and practice, a critique of the past, contextualization, and strategies that move the people of God in their local situation forward.

exegetes, we are dealing with, for example, Matthew's gospel written in and to house churches in Antioch. As missiologists, we accept the text as normative for the continuing mission of the church; these two aims coalesce.

Missiology is a fertile field today for a battle over the definition of three terms—mission, evangelization, and contextualization. The latter term is particularly critical to issues in urban missional practice today. Today, urban mission worldwide is interdisciplinary in scope, rooted in the urban milieu, contextualization, and practical theology.

Contextualization refers to a “weaving together.” In this chapter it implies the interweaving of the scriptural teaching about the city and the church with a particular, human situation, a specific context. The very word focuses the attention on the role of a specific context in the theological enterprise. In a very real sense, then, all doctrinal reflection from the scriptures is related in one way or another to the situation from which it is born, addressing the aspirations, the concerns, the priorities and the needs of the local group of Christians who are carrying out the reflection.

Contextualization begins by attempting to discern where God by his Spirit is at work in the context.¹³ It continues with a desire to communicate the gospel in word and deed and to establish groups of people who desire to follow Jesus in ways that make sense to people within their (cultural) context, presenting Jesus Christ in such a way that it meets people's deepest needs and penetrates their social imaginary, thus allowing them to follow Christ and remain within their culture.¹⁴

13 This approach to urban mission hermeneutics is intentional on my part. A lived experience in context is a preliminary step in all contextual theologies. This is certainly true in theologies of liberation. Leonardo Boff and Clodivis Boff call this the preliminary stage of all theologizing, a living commitment with the poor and oppressed. Robert Schreier summarizes the biblical foundation well: “the development of local theologies depends as much on finding Christ already active in the culture as it does on bringing Christ to the culture. The great respect for culture has a christological basis. It grows out of a belief that the risen Christ's salvific activity in bringing about the kingdom of God is already going on before our arrival. From a missionary perspective there would be no conversion if the grace of God had not preceded the missionary and opened the hearts of those who heard.” Robert J. Schreier, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1986), 29.

14 This reflection is inspired by an article by David Whiteman, “Contextualization: The Theory, the Gap, the Challenge,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 21:1 (1997), 2–7.

The task of contextualization is the essence of theological reflection. The challenge is to remain faithful to the historic text while being mindful of today's realities. An interpretative bridge is built between the Bible and the situation from which they sprang, to the concerns and the circumstances of the local group of Christians doing the reflection. The first step of the hermeneutical exercise involves establishing what the biblical text meant at the time it was written, what it meant "then." The second step involves creating the bridge that explores how the text is understood in meaningful terms for the interpreters today, "what it means now." The final step is to determine the meaning and application for those who will receive the message in their particular circumstances as present-day interpreters become ambassadors of the good news.¹⁵

There are two sources of information that inform contextualization. First, there is Christian tradition¹⁶ (the narratives of holy scriptures, history, and our various theologies and aesthetics¹⁷). Second, the context. But this model also implies a theological method. One needs to reflect within the confines of the two sources and then act upon one's learnings. A natural fusion of horizons takes place. One can diagram the method¹⁸ and model this way:

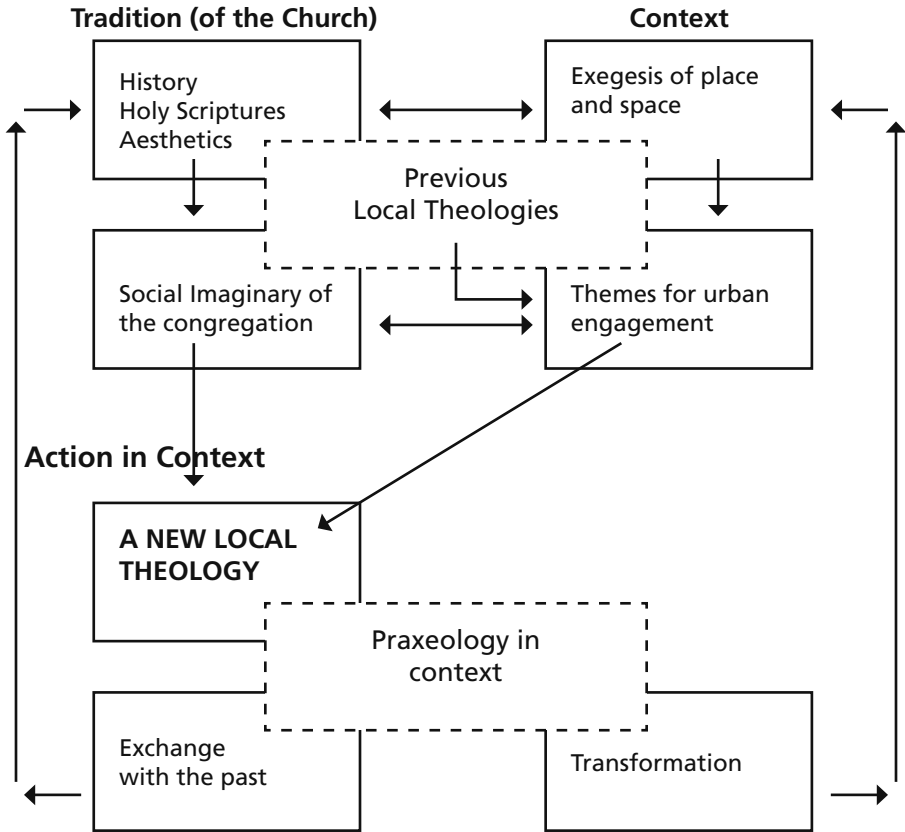
15 See Paul G. Hiebert, "Critical Contextualization," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 11:3 (1987), 110.

16 One should read the following model in light of a missional hermeneutic. John Stackhouse reminded this author of G. K. Chesterton's comment that "respecting tradition means giving your ancestors a vote: not all the votes, in our deliberations." G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (Garden City: Image, 1959), 48.

17 A contextual missional theology (for the city) would be amiss if it did not pay attention to the arts both in the Church and in the urban community. Nicholas Wolterstorff's book is pertinent to this point, *Art in Action: Toward a Christian Aesthetic* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980).

18 I am familiar with two other adaptations of Schreier's model. William A. Dyrness, *Learning about Theology from the Third World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 30. Although Dyrness footnotes the model, he does not address any of the issues that Schreier posits. In 2009, Alan J. Roxburgh and M. Scott Boren wrote *Introducing the Missional Church: What It Is, Why It Matters, How to Become One* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009). On page 89, they propose a model that is quite similar to Schreier's but does not speak to Schreier's concerns at all. John G. Stackhouse's book, *Need to Know: Vocation as the Heart of Christian Epistemology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), proposes a different yet complimentary method.

Reflection



The basic purpose of missional theological reflection has never really changed. It is most basically the reflection of Christians upon the gospel in the light of their own circumstances. Yet how does a journey through a metropolitan area help us to reflect on the Bible in our situation, remembering that theology is God in dialogue with his people in all their thousands of different situations?

Let us illustrate this from Paul's letter to the Philippians. This is a clear example of how he was desirous to relate God's truth to a specific urban context, providing a paradigm for the church in the city.

Reflections from Philippians on—**κύριος ἰησοῦς**— Jesus is LORD

After two paragraphs of general introduction (1:3-11, 12-26), Paul launches into the body of the letter with a Barthian warning: “There is no gradual introduction, no leading up to a theme, but rather an outburst.” “Only this! Live your life as a citizen in a manner worthy of Christ”¹⁹ (v. 27). Paul is teaching the church what Christ expects of them. The command is to live a citizen life in a way that would reflect the one the church serves.

The city of Philippi had been established around 30 BCE with an initial civilian military population of Italian origin. Located near the Gangites River, it became a Latin city where the Greek language dominated. It was an economically stratified city, with a population of some 50,000 people living in a densely populated area. The presence of people like Lydia involved in the silk trade and the Roman infrastructure made it a “Rome in miniature.” The city did not depend on the governor of the province for legal matters but instead was administered locally. Being centrally located on the major Via Egnatia only made life more attractive. One considered opinion described the status of the citizens of Philippi as having a unique legal position through their land rights, tax status, and local administration, exactly as if they were on Italian soil.²⁰

In this sophisticated situation, Paul found no lingering counterfeit gospel as in Galatia, or any deep moral problems as in Corinth. Rather, Paul found himself confronted with a failure on the part of the church to get along with one another. There would appear to be a fear of the opponents of the gospel, a rivalry in the community, and a self-centredness in their midst.²¹ Paul, then, is

19 It is of interest to note that the only translation in English or French that captures the sense of citizenship or “to live as citizens” is *La Bible du Semeur*, the most recent translation in French. It reads, “*Quoi qu’il en soit, menez une vie digne de l’Évangile du Christ, en vrais citoyens de Son Royaume.*” The RV (but not the NRV) does offer an alternate translation, “*Only behave as citizens worthy of the Gospel.*” The verb (POLITEUMA) has solicited much debate in the theological literature. The Philippians lived in a unique city, administered by local magistrates elected by the local senate under Roman law. They were proud of their status and would have been very sensitive to the urban image that Paul was using.

20 An exceptional source of study on the city is: Philip Collart, *Philippes: Ville de Macédoine depuis ses origines jusqu’à la fin de l’époque romaine* (Paris: Bocard, 1937).

21 In five different sections in the epistle, the apostle uses amazing clarity to name the problem(s) of social acceptance as *voluntary pseudo-kinship association*. These issues include intense ill-will, partisan behaviour, political maneuvering, factionalism, and primacy and political stasis. In pursuing this kinship, their life in Christ must affect all they are and all they do. Their life experience in Christ Jesus is not merely formal religion, but must be a substantive faith in all their affiliations.

pleading for a citizenship in the congregation that transcends these difficulties and compares it with the uniqueness of their citizenship privileges in the Empire.

In the following paragraph (1:27-2:18), Paul extends the metaphor and pleads for a citizenship that pursues unity of spirit, mind and intention (1:27-29). The imperative of this exemplary way of living is pursued through the call for encouragement, consolation from love, a sharing in the Spirit and a compassion found in Christ (2:1-4).

Then a complimentary thought is added in the form of a hymn that speaks to the church's state in this unique city environment. To those who preach the gospel from wrong motive (1:15-18), those who pursue selfish ambition, pride, and self-interest (2:1-4; 14), as well as to Euodia and Syntyche (4:2-3), "Act, in your common life, as befits those who are in Christ Jesus."

Now a new thought is added as a hymn²² that speaks to the church in its city context. This Jesus they serve receives a title. Paul is addressing the church in the midst of its struggles in a city that is rife with complexities.

*Who, though He bore the stamp of the divine Image,
Did not use equality with God as a gain to be exploited;
But surrendered His rank,
And took the role of a servant;
Accepting a human-like guise,
And appearing on earth as the Man;
He humbled Himself, in an obedience which went so far as to die.
For this, God raised Him to the highest honour,
And conferred upon Him the highest rank of all;
That, at Jesus' name, every knee should bow,
And every tongue should own that 'Jesus Christ is Lord.'
To the glory of God, the Father.²³*

Through a series of separate verses, Paul brings us to the specific notion under scrutiny and the name given to Jesus as a triumphant response for the needs of the Philippians.

22 R. P. Martin, *Carmen Christi* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 38. See also N. T. Wright, *Paul: A Biography* (New York: Harper One, 2017), 273.

23 The author's translation of Phil. 2:6-11.

Within this context, how are we then to understand this name of honour that has been conferred on Jesus? He did not choose to assume or seize it. Various interpretations have been offered throughout history concerning the actual name. Martin has best articulated the most accepted point of view. Using verse 11, he sees the name bestowed as that of Lord. In his commentary on Philippians he writes,

In light of verse 11, the supreme name is that of Lord. The root meaning of this term (*kurios*), used in the Septuagint to translate the divine name Yahweh into Greek, denotes rulership based upon competent and authoritative power, the ability to dispose of what one possesses. In view of its special connection with the name of God in the Old Testament, the giving of the name in this context declares that Jesus Christ is installed in the place which properly belongs to God Himself.²⁴

Contextually, this interpretation first does justice to the second line of the first verse. Christ did not use his pre-existent equality with God “as a gain to be exploited.” He chose not to seize glory and honour but accepted the divine honour and is proclaimed equal with God as Lord through his descent and ascent. We then see in the affirmation of the last verse, that because of his rank (role), every knee bows and every person confesses his exaltation.

We can affirm that God exalted Jesus. There are no echoes of Adam now. The reversal is complete. As *kurios*, Jesus rules the earth, every creature, and all spheres. This lordship in no way detracts from the authority of God—on the contrary, it brings glory to God and Christ fulfils the original purpose for Adam.

But the section continues with the consequences of Christian citizenship being clearly stated (2:12-18). In light of Christ’s obedience, the Philippian Christians are to work out God’s liberation in their community in a spirit of reverence, with no discord. Again reference is made to the internal conflicts that could impinge on their role as God’s people in the city. The section began with citizenship. It now concludes with their responsibility to “shine as lights in the world” (2:15).

The circumstantial participle that follows λόγον ζωῆς ἐπέχοντες, (2:16a) describes how citizens in Philippi are to shine like stars (ἐν οἷς φαίνεσθε ὡς φωστῆρες ἐν κόσμῳ, 2:15b). The verb *epochò* evokes various translations. Some translate the verb as meaning “to hold fast.” Others translate the verb as “hold forth.” Lexicons are equally divided. James P. Ware provides the most comprehensive study of the verb.²⁵ However, in the semantic context of the

²⁴ Martin, *Carmen Christi*, 125.

²⁵ James P. Ware, *Paul and the Mission of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 2011),

paragraph and the purpose of the letter, as we have seen, it is rather obvious that citizens hold their light; therefore, they shine! As Ware summarizes, “The clause λόγον ζωῆς ἐπέχοντες is an exhortation to spread the Gospel.”²⁶

Therefore, to a divided church in a complex city, there is a majestic declaration. It is a challenge, contextualized to address their situation. The humiliated, obedient servant is actually Lord. Everything is under his domination and rule. God is in charge and his caring person has not left the Philippian Christians to the whims of either their struggles or the fate of the spirit of the city. This Jesus is Lord of all. But this lordship must be understood in the terms of the one who humbled himself and accepted the form of a servant. The Philippians, too, must give themselves in self-denying service for others. The consequences, as Paul clearly states, are a civic responsibility. By addressing contextual themes, well understood by his readers, Paul points a way for God’s people to reflect on God’s word in their contexts.

The Tales of Two Urban Cultures: Canada and Haiti

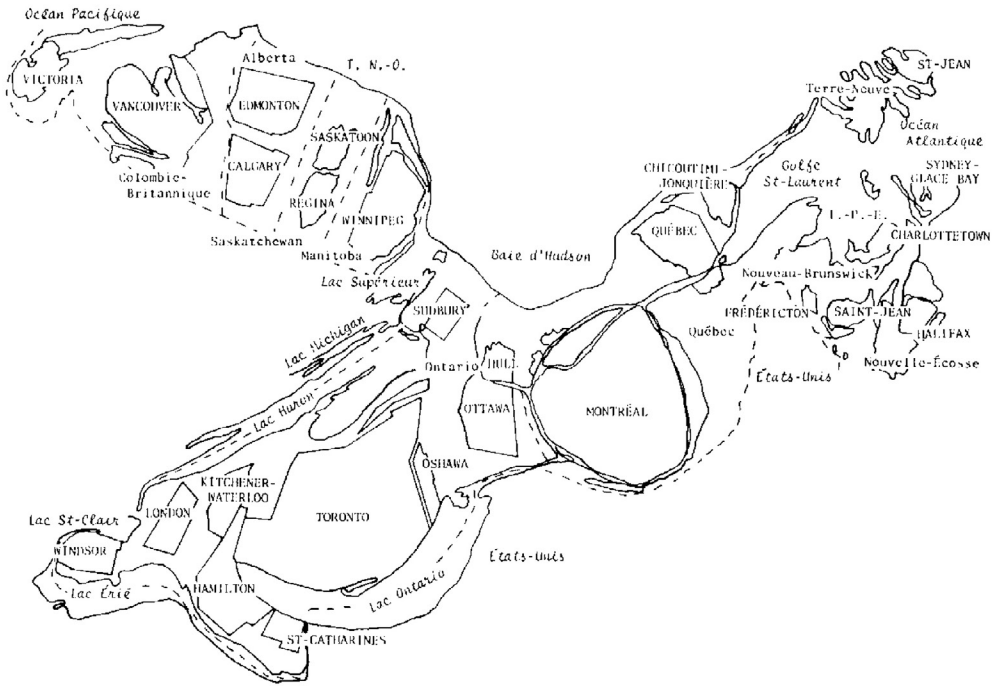
It is remarkable how the urban landscape has evolved throughout the history of Canada. At Confederation in 1867, fewer than one in five citizens lived in towns and cities of 1,000 or more. By 1924, Canada was considered an urban nation by Statistics Canada, as better than 50 percent of the population lived in an area of 1,000 people or more. In 1965, the country was truly metropolitan as 50 percent of the population lived in cities of 10,000 people or more. Now, there are 140 urban centres, occupying less than 3 percent of the land. In the three largest urban centres—Vancouver, Toronto, and Montréal—we find 35 percent of the population occupying 0.8 percent of the land. It is for this reason that this author says, “*The urban system of Canada is Canada.*” This isodemographic map²⁷ of Canada illustrates this reality:²⁸

256–71.

26 *Ibid.*, 270.

27 Isodemographic maps show the area of each part of the map as proportional to the population. Traditional maps show area as a proportion of map units to ground units of measurement.

28 This adapted isodemographic map was inspired by L. Skoda and J. C. Roberts, *Isodemographic Map of Canada*. Geographical Paper No. 50. Ottawa: Department of Environment, 1972.



However, these percentages and numbers camouflage reality. It is virtually impossible to make generalizations about the North American city.

For years, urbanologists spoke about the North American city, combining Canadian and American cities in their analysis. Although most Protestant and Evangelical denominations in Canada have separate administrative structures from their American counterparts, the missional approach is still amazingly (North) American. However, if one applies the urban method, it becomes obvious that Canadian cities are distinct. In our urban form, Canadian cities are more compact in size and therefore considerably denser in population. In transportation and travel, Canadian cities have four times fewer freeways, relying two and a half times more per capita on public transportation. (Interestingly, Americans own and operate 50 percent more motor vehicles than Canadians, per capita.) Urban populations represent more ethnic diversity, higher incomes, and more "traditional family" units. Canadian middle-income families show more propensity to stay in the central city. In monetary terms of urban growth and decline, Canadian cities are more stable, perhaps because urban areas are safer. Finally, urban government is radically different between the two countries. However, in urban fiscal

policy, American cities depend on property taxes for only 27 percent of their total revenue in contrast to 52 percent for Canadian cities.²⁹ US cities have more access to local sales taxes and income taxes and receive greater state and federal transfers than Canadian cities. Secularity and galloping pluralities are the essence of the Canadian urban landscape today.

The island of Hispaniola was divided in 1697 between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. It is important to place this discussion in the historical context. This began the first of four “globalizations.” First was colonial exploration that decimated the indigenous population. Then came the globalization of the sugar trade that included the slave trade and its horrible results. The globalization of imperial power and the struggle for political control followed, and finally the globalization of free trade that includes the drug trade that dominates the economics of Haiti today. From Independence on 1 January 1804 to the fall of the Duvalier regime on 6 February 1986, to the catastrophic earthquake of 12 January 2010—history in Haiti has deep defining moments!

Several factors shape an urban missional engagement in this country. First, for the past six decades, the average annual rate of growth in the agricultural sector (which employs 64 percent of the country) has been stagnant. Second, every social indicator now places this nation as unquestionably the poorest in the Western Hemisphere; less than 1 percent of the population control 46 percent of the national revenue; 2700 families receive 72 percent of all revenue in the country and 80 percent of Haitians live below absolute poverty at 150 US dollars a year.³⁰ It is only because of transfers that the country can continue. It is estimated that 1.1 billion US dollars is transferred by families back to Haiti each year. In the most recent studies, better than 52 percent of the population is under 24 years of age. Illiteracy is now running at 80 percent in rural areas and 47 percent in urban areas.

Third, one must never underestimate the gravity of the undernourishment of the Haitian people. The daily caloric supplement was at 84 percent of recommended United Nations levels in 1989. This means that there is a deficit of 300 calories and 42 grams of protein on a daily basis. More than one author attributes the high birth rate to the medical consequences of these

29 In Québec municipalities, 76 percent of total revenue is from property taxes, severely limiting (for example) Montréal’s ability to manoeuvre.

30 Sauveur Pierre Étienne, *Haiti: l’invasion des ONG* (Montréal: Les Éditions du CIDIHCA, 1997), 118–19. In 1999, the World Bank produced a two-volume study on Haiti entitled, *Haiti: Les Défis de la lutte contre la pauvreté*, which was the best effort in three decades to describe the extent of the challenge. The most recent government statistics can be found on the website of the Ambassade d’Haiti in Washington, DC.

facts. The simple lack of protein alters the functions of the liver and especially folliculin, therefore stimulating reproductive capacities.³¹

Finally, in-country migration and emigration makes all census figures highly suspect. It is reported that Port-au-Prince has grown from 750,000 to 3.1 million since 1979 and that Cap Haitian has grown from 40,000 to 1.25 million in the same period. Infant mortality rates are still the highest in the hemisphere at 42 per 1000 births, but the rate has declined from 119 in the past three decades. Over one million Haitians live in major urban areas in Canada and the United States.

To understand the very essence of the social imaginary of Haitians, it is critical to grasp how the volatile mix of superstition, fatalism, paternalism, population explosion, illiteracy, malnutrition, and AIDS are affecting this people. Furthermore, Laënnec Hubron illustrates how voodoo runs through the nation's total economic and social framework.³² This dialectic goes on between the poor, taxed by superstitions and voodoo practices and the dominant classes who use this belief system to oppress the poor. Everything from "spells" on the tap-tap (taxi) to protect it to participation in the national lottery (three per day) provides a lens to living in Haiti.

All of these factors surface in the Haitian urban context. More than 55 percent of urban dwellers live in absolute poverty. The causes are extensive unemployment and underemployment—90 percent of the urban population earns less than \$150 per annum and only 20 percent receive the official daily 3 US dollars wage. Other causes are inadequate and unaffordable housing and inadequate municipal infrastructure—only 21 percent of city dwellers have access to sewers and drinking water. Automobile emissions, open waste, and the persistent use of charcoal continue to make ecological concerns a major preoccupation of non-governmental agencies involved in transformative community development in cities.

The notion of space or "territory" for a Haitian is also a critical factor in articulating an urban missional practice. Personal/private space is not a practiced category; place is the whole island. Henry Hogarth states,

31 Jules Casseus, *Pour une Église authentiquement Haïtien* (Limbe: Séminaire Théologique Baptiste d'Haïti, 1987), 13.

32 Laënnec Hubron, *Dieu dans le vaudou haïtien* (Paris: Payot, 1972) and *Les mystères du vaudoo* (Paris: Gallimard, 1993). Charles-Poissant Romain has written a very good article examining the religious dimensions of Voodoo, "La Religion et le développement paysan en Haïti," *La Nouvelle Revue du Monde Noir* 1:1 (1986), 149–61.

The most telling expression used by traditional, rural Haitians that describes the inherent separateness between themselves and the urban dwellers is: *M'ap tounen andeyò*—I'm returning outside. No less significant is: *m'pral nan peyim*—literally, I am going to my country, meaning, of course, I'm going home. Both expressions indicate the sense that the Haitian countryman or woman has in regards to what is considered home, “country”: the hills, the plains, the valleys of the rural area. Home is definitely not the city.³³

But he goes even further and is indeed evident: “One might even infer that the average Haitian countryman does not relate much to the notion of Haiti as nation-state or *res publica*.”³⁴ This raises very interesting questions as one tries to teach both urban theology and missiology and to wrestle with holistic urban community development. As one examines biblical texts dealing with *place*, enthusiasm for cities and neighbourhoods grows. Exploring a biblical theology of creation becomes the basis and orientation for all mission with the city.

Engagement Strategies of Note

The contextual, urban, missional, theological conversation offers an ongoing opportunity for congregations to reflect afresh and to act contextually. This is leading to an authentic missionary encounter with our metropolitan areas. This conversation includes the following:

A re-reading of the scriptures

Perhaps our initiatives in our cities have been wanting because we fail to read the biblical texts in their social contexts. A congregation's inability to read the texts in context inevitably leads to de-contextualized, even inappropriate strategies. Congregations across the globe love to pick one passage to pursue their mission, such as Jeremiah 29:1-7. But this one text would never inform all that the mission of God could be in a community.³⁵

33 Henry Hogarth, “The Garden and the Gods,” *Spring: A Journal of Archetype and Culture* 61 (Spring 1997), 61–82.

34 Ibid.

35 One of the author's doctoral mentors, Harvie Conn, often commented, “Picking one biblical text to sum up my view of urban ministry is an assignment too awesome and dangerous for me. Too awesome, because wherever I turn in my Bible it shouts ‘urban’ to me. Too dangerous, because the text I select could leave out a piece of the picture too crucial in another text and distort the whole. We need a hermeneutic serious enough to link Genesis to Revelation in the unending story of Jesus as an urban lover and the Church as God's copycat.”

This theme that informs an authentic missional encounter with a metropolitan area means we take our Christian traditions more seriously. This includes our study of the narratives of scriptures, history, theology and the arts. The hermeneutical process becomes a true exchange between gospel and context. We come to the authoritative message with an exegetical method enabling us to understand a biblical theology of place. We ask, “What does God say through scripture regarding this particular context?” This initial dialogue sets us off on a long process in which understanding the context brings fresh readings of the Bible. Scripture illumines life, but life also illuminates scripture. This dialogue must also include the practitioners’ own perspectives and that of the community in which they base their initiatives.

Biblical and social hermeneutics conceived in this fashion represent a holistic enterprise in which the Holy Spirit guides the interpreters to a more complete reading and understanding of scripture and a more complete understanding of their context. There is an ongoing mutual engagement of the essential components of the process. As they interact, they are mutually adjusted. In this way, we come to scripture with the relevant questions and perspectives. This results in a more attentive ear to the implications of the exegetical process, and a resulting theology that is more biblical and more pertinent to the culture. As we move from the cultural context seen through our own evolving worldview to the Bible and back to the context, we adopt increasingly relevant local reflection and initiatives. As we listen to scripture and walk through our various situations in life, we are faced with a question: How can we hear and apply God’s word in our cities and neighbourhoods? In reality, the complexity of our communities means we constantly ask these questions. Holding text and context together is vital as we continue in an era of rapid urban growth, urbanization and globalization.

A thorough renewal of our abilities to exegete our neighbourhoods and their social imaginaries

When we use the word “missional,” we are affirming that the church by its very nature is sent into our neighbourhoods as people living out the gospel. In order for the church to do this effectively, it is beneficial to know how to “exegete the neighbourhood,” in much the same way that they have learned to study a biblical text. Reading one’s community is the first step to demonstrating a commitment to the community and establishing relational trust. This fosters a greater openness to a discussion of deeper, spiritual needs, and to Christ who meets all needs.

To begin the process of reading a community, there are specific steps to consider. These are best undertaken by teams—usually ecumenical “task

forces”—that try to understand their community context. After the “exegesis” or community assessment, it will be important to prioritize the initiatives that congregations will undertake.

First, it is obvious that we need to place each individual city in its own context, yet understand its place in the larger urban system. Because of globalization, no metropolitan area exists in isolation from others. When someone asks you where you live, the answer depends on where you are, but also to whom you are talking. For example, you would tell a neighbour which street you live on, a person from your region which community you live in, someone from your country, you would say which province our state you live in, or you would probably name the metropolitan center closest to your place of residence. Each “address” tells something about you: the living environment, the languages you use on a day-to-day basis, your lifestyle, and perhaps your social status. It is not important if we begin with what is happening globally and then move locally or the opposite approach. What is important is to see the interrelationships among the different addresses in which we live, from local to national to global. It is also important to adjust these “addresses” for the audience in question. Second, when the church addresses the city, we must direct our attention to urban realities, take note of our own assumptions, and keep our focus on a biblical perspective on cities.

An engagement with the secularity of cities and the galloping pluralities that are the essence of the urban landscape today

Charles Taylor’s word “secularity,”³⁶ in counter distinction to secularism or secularization, refers to the conditions of beliefs or the shift in our understanding on which our society is grounded. This becomes for Taylor the immanent frame: “[T]he life of the buffered individual, instrumentally effective in secular time, created the practical context within which self-sufficiency of this immanent realm could become a matter of experience . . . we come to understand our lives as taking place with a self-sufficient immanent order . . . *(that) can slough off the transcendent.*”³⁷

Taylor believes that this shift gives rise to hyper-individuality and dedicates 776 pages in *A Secular Age* to describe this shift. He summarizes it this way: “[O]ne could offer this one-line description of the difference between earlier times and the secular age: a secular age is one in which the eclipse of all goals beyond human flourishing becomes conceivable; or better, it falls within

36 Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Boston: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

37 *Ibid.*, 543. My italics.

the range of an imaginable life for masses of people. This is the crucial link between secularity and a self-sufficing humanism.”³⁸

(Post) Christendom urban cultures produce a separation between the private and public spheres of life and therefore focus on the personal dimensions as the arena for the development of individual freedom and fulfillment. The church wholly buys into this and further marginalizes the social significance of faith in the city.

Addressing the increasing inequality, deepening segregation and the failing middle class in our cities

Richard Florida has made a very clear contribution to the situation of our cities with his most recent publication, *The New Urban Crisis*.³⁹ He highlights four dimensions that congregations across the globe are considering every day:

- The deep and growing economic gap between a small number of superstar cities . . . and other cities across the globe.
- The consequences of success of these cities: what might be called “plutocratization . . . Some of the most vibrant, innovative, urban neighbourhoods are turning into deadened trophy districts where the global super-rich park their money in high-end housing investments as opposed to places where they live.”⁴⁰
- The increasing economic poverty of suburbs.
- The crisis of urbanization across the majority world.

The urgency of training local urban practitioners

Our understanding of the challenges of contextual urban formation is inspired by two quantitative studies that were done by URBANUS in 1994 and 2014.⁴¹ The purpose of those studies was to measure the quality and quantity of the training that practitioners receive and how this influences strategies and effective projects in French urban areas. Although the relationship between training and strategy was at the centre of this study, this must be placed in the larger context of the specific needs of practitioners working

38 Ibid, 19–20.

39 Richard Florida, *The New Urban Crisis: How Our Cities Are Increasing Inequality, Deepening Segregation, and Failing the Middle Class—and What We Can Do About It* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 6–8.

40 Ibid., 8.

41 URBANUS was a global francophone network of faculties of theology, denominations, agencies, and churches across *La Francophonie* dedicated to urban practical theological formation.

in metropolitan areas across *La Francophonie*. The results from both surveys inform us that there are a small number of practitioners working in cities, and less than 15 percent are involved in ministries addressing issues of justice, compassion, or poverty alleviation and financial capability.

The survey indicates that a real distinction is made between formal (traditional), theological education, and a more missiological, contextual, sociological and hands-on orientation in terms of both time and content. In general, the result is that both agencies and practitioners perceive an increased ability of a graduate to choose a strategy, implement it, evaluate its effectiveness, and work independently if that person had more extensive education in the contextual, sociological, and hands-on orientation. In statistical terms, agencies think that 40 percent of their practitioners with such a practical training are excellent or very good in choosing pertinent urban strategies versus 14 percent of those without the background. (Practitioners themselves are much less optimistic: only 15 percent with the background are excellent or very good in choosing a strategy versus 11 percent without the training.) Agencies think that 50 percent of their people are excellent or very good at implementing strategies with a practical training versus 21 percent without it. (Again, practitioners are less optimistic: only 15 percent of the trained people see themselves as excellent or very good at implementation.) But the greatest discrepancies appear when you ask the question, “How would you rate a formally trained practitioner in their capacity to be self-initiating and autonomous in their ministry-learning once they are on the field?” Sixty-two percent of the agencies rate their people as excellent or very good. Fifty percent of the practitioners themselves say the same thing. However, this percentage drops to 29 percent for untrained workers through the eyes of their agencies and 23 percent for the practitioners themselves.

The Way Forward

Karl Barth’s missional theology provides a framework for reflection and action for the church. “It is the Church of Jesus Christ as this missionary Church which is sent out into the world or not at all.”⁴²

But, as we can clearly see in scripture, the very nature and mission of the church in a city like Philippi (for example) is explained through the metaphor of citizenship and extending the word of life. As Avery Dulles reminds us, “The Bible, when it seeks to illuminate the nature of the Church, speaks

42 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. 4, Part 4 (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 200.

almost entirely through images.”⁴³ Paul Minear isolates 96 metaphors for the church in the New Testament.⁴⁴

A metaphor, in picturesque language, implies a comparison between two to create an understanding beyond the simple use of a definition or a discussion, especially in the midst of complexity. As description of the church is highly complex, a metaphor helps people break through the complexity by “picturing” it. Whereas discourse or even philosophical writing strives for exactitude and clearness, an image brings it “right into your living room.”

The church in cities across the globe needs to take the text and the use of metaphor seriously. We need a new set of images to describe our experience and purpose as God’s people in the city. Douglas Hall did this through the metaphor of the church as “the disciple community.” Inspired by the continuity that the word “disciple” gives us with the biblical record, Hall uses this metaphor to describe a community that reflects on her role as that of a minority, “potentially, a significant minority whose significance does not lie in quantitative considerations but in the quality of the alternative vision it represents.”⁴⁵

Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder take a slightly different angle as Roman Catholic missiologists. Fully cognizant that mission has a church, they propose the metaphor of “prophetic dialogue” to describe mission and the church: “For us, mission is first and foremost *dialogue* . . . But authentic mission also involves prophecy.”⁴⁶

The comprehensiveness of the mission of the church in the city requires the proclamation of the gospel, the planting and nurture of congregations, and the application of the principles of Christ’s lordship to all areas of community life. It means concern for all that is city, even for the cosmos above and beneath the city, from the quality of the air people breathe to the purity of the water in the river and canals, to the replanting of gardens and green spaces.

Following Jesus in the city means getting serious about issues like good schools, responsible government, sanitation and clean streets, fairness in the marketplace and justice in the courts. It means working to eliminate squalor slums and every depressing condition that dishonours God by degrading human life. Once urban disciples see the big picture of what it means to be

43 Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 2nd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 19. In this second edition Dulles adds the disciple community as a model for the Church.

44 Paul Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960).

45 Douglas Hall, *Thinking the Faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 58–59.

46 Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2011), 59, 60.

citizens of the Kingdom in the cities as they are, they begin to work from a new and enlarged perspective. Obedience to King Jesus takes them to every nook and cranny of city life. They find the challenges innumerable and the cost often high. But they know that while the dark powers are awesome, God's rule is greater and its advance is worth every sacrifice.

Appendix: Biblical, Hermeneutical and Missiological Engagement with Metropolitan Areas in the Past Century: Some Key Authors and Researchers

The work of Jacques Ellul was critical to understanding the sociological and theological transitions in our understanding of cities. After the sweeping urbanization in post-World War II, Ellul reacts to the work of Harvey Cox, yet completes the contributions of Joseph Comblin.⁴⁷

Many people of the author's generation were influenced by the Archbishop of Canterbury's report from the Commission in 1985, *Faith in the City*. It is still a point of reference for how Christians can think about issues in and of the city. John Rogerson and John Vincent provide a clear overview of the biblical data. David Smith has contributed one of the finest recent pieces to the dialogue on a theology for the urban world. The bibliography makes references to several publications.⁴⁸ Bruce Winter's book, *Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citizens* is instrumental to understanding Paul's letters to the Philippians and the Romans.⁴⁹

Fredéric de Connick's contribution to two consultations in France in 1992 was subsequently published as *Villes, territoires, apparences, L'incarnation de l'Évangile dans l'espace aujourd'hui*, a piece quite helpful to grasp urban theological issues in France. Jean-Bernard Racine's fine work, *La ville entre Dieu et les hommes*, especially the third section, presents a biblical theology of the city.

As the author works and teaches in Haïti, it is important to acknowledge the contributions of the former Dean of the Faculty of Theology in Limbé,

47 J. Ellul, *Sans feu ni lieu* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975). H. Cox, *La cité séculière*. Essai théologique sur la sécularisation et l'urbanisation (Bruxelles: Casterman, 1968). J. Comblin, *Théologie de la ville* (Paris, Seuil, 1968).

48 The most recent works on biblical texts for the city include two that were published in Great Britain: John W. Rogerson and John Vincent, *The City in Biblical Perspective* (London: Equinox, 2009) and David W. Smith, *Seeking a City Without Foundations: Theology for an Urban World* (Nottingham: IVP, 2011).

49 Bruce W. Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1994).

Jules Casseus. Dr Casseus has done more than anyone else to articulate a theology for Haïti, including urban issues.

For the past 15 years, the author has been privileged to work with African francophone doctoral students in missiology. Celestin Koffi has contributed a fine overview of urbanization and the Church in Africa in the past decades. Dr Martine Audeoud has been instrumental with her research on the intersection of urban theology and transformational leadership in African cities.

There are any number of American authors that have contributed to the subject over the past 50 years: Raymond Bakke, Harvie Conn, Orlando Costas, Roger Greenway, Sister Kafi Mashariki Carrasco, Tim Keller, Robert Linthicum, and Manny Ortiz.

CHAPTER 11

Mission in the Age of Digitalization: Metaverse, Metamodernism, and Metanarrative

Guichun Jun

We are living in a rapidly changing world. In particular, the speed of developing smart machines embedded with cognitive computing systems and deep learning such as artificial intelligence is incredibly fast, and the anticipation of its ramification is widely polarized. The World Economic Forum, the so-called Davos Forum, in 2016 dealt with the issues and impacts of the fourth industrial revolution at all levels of human life. Its website clearly states that the extraordinary technology advances may create both huge promise and potential peril.¹ Whenever human history faces a major transition, there is a mixture of responses between hope because of the promise that the world will become better and fear that the change may create peril to humanity. Smith and Browne similarly state that the unprecedented advancement of technologies in our time can be either a useful tool empowering us or a formidable weapon threatening democratic values.²

The fourth industrial revolution is a convergence of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, the internet of things, biotechnology, robotics, and quantum computing. This revolution has already changed the way that we live and work. In addition, the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the development of various online platforms and networks to meet and work. One of them is the metaverse, which merges virtual reality, augmented reality, and physical reality. The metaverse is cyberspace where users create their avatars for interactions for various social, educational, religious, and economic purposes. In particular, the metaverse creates an enormous market opportunity for monetization in the virtual world by selling and buying digital goods, services, and assets that generates real-world

1 “Fourth Industrial Revolution,” World Economic Forum, <https://www.weforum.org/focus/fourth-industrial-revolution>.

2 Brad Smith and Carol Ann Browne, *Tools and Weapons: The Promise and the Peril of the Digital Age* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2019).

value for users.³ The metaverse certainly shapes a new economic landscape, especially among Generation Z and Millennials, who find the metaverse to be more appealing than physical reality.⁴ This is the reason Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook, recently changed the name to Meta and announced to invest an astronomical amount of money in the metaverse. It is obvious that we are living in a transition in which the metaverse is shaping our future in all aspects of our lives. Therefore, it is the right time to consider how mission needs to respond to be effective and appropriate to the social and cultural changes in the era of the metaverse.

Modern mission history proves that mission and its strategic approaches have been focused primarily on emerging issues in the mission field. The modern mission began with William Carey, a missionary to India in the 18th century. Mission movement in this early era of the modern mission took place at the coastlands. About a century later, the second generation of the modern mission was opened by missionaries such as David Livingstone and Hudson Taylor, who moved inland. The third era of the modern mission began in the early 20th century, with a significant recognition that mission was not undertaken by geography alone. Missiologists such as William Cameron Townsend and Donald McGavran could recognize the importance of people groups, in particular, hidden and unreached people groups. Ralph Winter differentiated the distinctive feature of mission in this third generation from the two previous ones by saying that it was a significant transition from “where we go” to “to whom we go.”⁵

The metaverse and other relevant computing technology have already led us into the fourth generation of the modern mission. Until the third era, the focus in mission was “going” to either a geographic location or a people group. However, the focus in mission has shifted to “connecting and networking” through digital platforms in the fourth era. Allen Yeh rightly anticipated this new mission era and introduced a new perspective for a 21st-century mission called polycentric missiology, meaning that mission should be carried on from everyone to everywhere.⁶ Yeh, of course, does not mention mission led and

3 Grayscale Research Report, “The Metaverse: Web 3.0 virtual Cloud Economies,” November 2021, https://grayscale.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Grayscale_Metaverse_Report_Nov2021.pdf.

4 Daniel Grassian, *Hybrid Fictions: American Literature and Generation X* (Jefferson: McFarland and Co., 2015), 143.

5 Ralph Winter, “Four Men, Three Eras, Two Transitions: Modern Missions,” in *Perspective on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, eds. Ralph Winter, Steven Hawthorne, Darrell Dorr, Bruce Grah, and Bruce Koch (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1999), 253–61.

6 Allen Yeh, *Polycentric Missiology: Twenty-first-century Mission from Everyone to Everywhere* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016).

directed by digital technology. However, Yeh's missiological concept based on polycentrism in mission, specifically poly-directional mission, provides a significant missiological foundation for the fourth era of the modern mission.

In the fourth era, mission does not take place in one direction like the Christendom model emphasizing "from the West to the rest" or like the reverse mission model emphasizing "from global South to global North." In the era of digitalization, mission can take place everywhere by everybody through omnidirectional internet technology without geographical and time limitations. Mission in the fourth era will be more than a linear movement through agencies. It will be more like multidirectional dynamic interactions between Christians and non-Christians in virtual space regardless of their geographic locations. At the dawn of this new mission era, this chapter aims to address some of the core social and cultural phenomena caused, in particular some of the negative effects, in the metaverse and the underlying philosophies underpinning the phenomena in order to suggest several significant considerations as missional responses toward them.

Metaverse as the Fourth Place

Sociologist Ray Oldenburg used the term "Third Place" first time in his book *The Great Good Place* in the 1980s. According to Oldenburg, there are three major places in society where we spend most of our lives: the first place is the home; the second is the work setting; and the third places are the social surroundings where people build social relationship and connections with neighbours, such as cafés, gyms, restaurants, and playgrounds.⁷ Before the COVID-19 pandemic, first, second, and third places remained distinct, with clear boundaries between them. However, the pandemic caused two major social phenomena in terms of these places in society. Firstly, the boundaries between the first and second places have collapsed, as many people work from home. While these boundaries had been gradually eroding because of the development of internet technology, the pandemic accelerated their collapse. Secondly, since the pandemic, third places have been seriously affected by social distancing rules. In particular, during the several lockdowns in the UK, third places were physically closed, and individuals, clubs, and organizations moved to virtual platforms to continue their social networking and community building. The general development of internet technology and the particular phenomena during the pandemic have converged the roles and functions of the first, second, and third places.

7 Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press Books, 1999).

The metaverse is the representative example for the convergence of the first, second, and third places. People have begun to live, work, and socialize in the metaverse. Experts are convinced that the metaverse is the next-generation digital world, which provides platforms for humans through their avatars to play, work, and socialize.⁸ This means that the metaverse is gradually replacing the first, second, and third places by converging their roles and functions through digital technologies, providing immersive experiences, and it will become the dominant fourth place in the fourth era of the modern mission.⁹

Metaverse is a compound of the words “meta” meaning beyond, and “verse” as an abbreviation for universe.¹⁰ The term metaverse was used first time in the science-fiction novel *Snow Crash* in 1992. Author Neal Stephenson coined the term to describe a virtual reality in which people created their avatars not only to explore the unknown digital space but also to escape from the dysfunctional physical reality due to the collapse of the global economy.¹¹ It means that the original concept of metaverse contains the idea of escaping from a dystopian reality to a utopian reality. In the 30 years since *Snow Crash* was published, the imagination of metaverse has become a reality. However, the metaverse is far from the idea of utopia that Neal Stephenson desired, as it has become another challenging area to deal with various cyber-crimes, such as fraud or virtual theft.¹² For this reason, James Cooper, a professor of law,

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- 8 Minrui Xu, Dusit Niyato, Jiawen Kang, Zehui Xion, Chunyan Miao, Dong In Kim, “Wireless Edge-Empowered Metaverse: A Learning-Based Incentive Mechanism for Virtual Reality,” *arXiv:2111.03776*, 7 November 2021, <https://arxiv.org/pdf/2111.03776.pdf>; James Heskett, “How Metaverse Could Change the Way People Work and Live.” *Quartz*, 3 December 2021, <https://qz.com/2097559/how-metaverse-could-change-the-way-people-work-and-live/>; Jack Kelly, “Remote Work, Job Interviews, Business Meetings and Live Events Will All be Conducted on the Metaverse in the Near Future,” *Forbes*, 13 December 2021, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jackkelly/2021/12/13/remote-work-job-interviews-business-meetings-and-live-events-will-all-be-conducted-on-the-metaverse-in-the-near-future/?sh=5cdeddd27023>; Thomas Frey, “Will We be Living in the Metaverse?,” *Futurist Speaker*, 2 September 2021. <https://futuristspeaker.com/future-trends/will-we-be-living-in-the-metaverse/>
- 9 Some experts, such as Karrinna Nobbs, who is the Co-CEO of the Dematerialised, regard the metaverse as the emerging significant third place. See, Cathy Hackl, “Defining the Metaverse Today,” *Forbes*, 2 May 2021, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/cathyhackl/2021/05/02/defining-the-metaverse-today/?sh=755b61206448>. However, she only focuses on the social aspect of the metaverse. The metaverse will be the transformative phase of the internet that allow users to purchase homes, work, interact with family and friends, attend concerts, sports events and religious services, and so on. See Kelly, “Remote Work.”
- 10 Eliane Schlemmer and Luciana Backes, *Learning in Metaverses: Co-existing in Real Virtuality* (Pennsylvania: IGI Global, 2014), 49.
- 11 Neal Stephenson, *Snow Crash* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992).
- 12 Christian Laue, “Crime Potential of Metaverse,” in *Virtual Worlds and Criminality*, ed. Kai

asserts that there is an urgent need for meta jurisdiction for the metaverse to bring out the best of humanity by promoting basic human rights, sustainable environmental protection, and equitable labour standards in virtual reality.¹³

This is one of the significant and urgent reasons that churches and Christians need to get involved in mission in the metaverse not only to spread the Good News of Christ but also to make the virtual world a better place by upholding good social norms and values. It is almost certain that the metaverse will replace the internet in the near future. Most of the social and business activities that we do on the World Wide Web (Web), such as social media, work, banking, education, and entertainment, are already available in the form of reality in the metaverse. As mentioned, the metaverse is being positioned as the fourth place where all human activities in the first, second, and third places converge. Thus, it is vital to gain socio-cultural and theological understandings of what happens and what will happen in the metaverse as the dominant fourth place, of how they impact human lives and communities, and of what the appropriate missional responses will be.

Distinctive Features of the Metaverse as the Fourth Place

Digital identities and *imago meta*

There is no doubt that the metaverse is a significant mission field for the next generation. Churches and mission agencies need to recognize the urgency for developing practical strategies and methods for mission in the metaverse. However, it is equally vital for them to realize some of the negative trends manifested in the metaverse, which need attention from cultural, social, and theological perspectives in order for us to consider missional approaches to deal with the underlying thoughts underpinning the trends. The first negative trend of the metaverse is digital identities and “*imago meta*.”¹⁴ In the metaverse, everyone needs to create a digital version of themselves, which is called an avatar. It means that users create digital identities by customizing their

Cornelius and Dieter Hermann (Berlin: Springer, 2011), 19–30.

13 James Cooper, “Why We Need Meta Jurisdiction for the Metaverse.” *The Hill*, 13 February 2021, <https://thehill.com/opinion/technology/583529-why-we-need-meta-jurisdiction-for-the-metaverse>.

14 The term “*imago meta*” was coined by Ian Harber and Patrick Miller in their article “How to Prepare for the Metaverse” to describe a virtually created being by a human user in opposition to “*imago Dei*” describing human being created by God in God’s image. *The Gospel Coalition*, 2 November 2021, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/prepare-metaverse>.

pseudonymous avatars.¹⁵ Avatars are users' virtual self-representations, which typically are not identical to their real identities. Most users use pseudonyms to disguise or mask themselves, or even change their race, age, or gender. Using pseudonymity in virtual space means bearing a set of fabricated, artificial, or false distinctive characteristics.¹⁶ In addition to the issues of pseudonymity, polynymity, where users present themselves with many different identities to interact with different people and groups, is another problem when it comes to creating trust-based interactions in the metaverse. However, according to research, eponymity is not an alternative solution to enhance the prerequisites of virtual interactions such as identification, approachability, and authentication.¹⁷ This raises a serious question about credibility and trust in the users' avatar-mediated interactions in the metaverse. There can only be limited credibility and trust in virtual relationships when we only perceive anthropomorphic images of avatars without any clues about other users' physical characters and identities.¹⁸

The aforementioned description of the different types of digital identity acknowledges the tension between being autonomous in the metaverse and being authentic in avatar-mediated human relationships. However, a more profound theological issue concerns digital identities, in particular, in the user-avatar relationship. It is not difficult to foresee that humans will identify themselves more with their digital identities created by them than with their real identities given by God when the metaverse is deeply permeated our lives and becomes an irresistible momentum of lifestyle in the future. Why is this a theological problem? God created humans in God's image so that we are the image-bearers of God. However, there is a reasonable concern that the God-given identity *imago Dei* would be conflated with the self-made identity *imago meta* crafted in the metaverse.¹⁹ As users gradually transfer and eventually migrate to the online environment, it will be certain that the human sense of *imago Dei* will be converged with their avatars' *imago meta*, not only by sharing emotional intimacy but also by sharing experiences, moral

15 Mary Anne Franks, "Unwilling Avatars: Idealism and Discrimination in Cyberspace," *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law* 20:2 (2011), 225.

16 Mikko Jakala and Eleni Berki, "Communities, Communication, and Online identities," in *Digital Identity and Social Media*. ed. Steven Warburton and Stylianos Hatzipanagos (Hershey: Information Science Reference, 2013), 8.

17 Ibid.

18 Guichun Jun, "Virtual Reality Church as a New Mission Frontier in the Metaverse: Exploring Theological Controversies and Missional Potential of Virtual Reality Church," *Transformation* 37:4 (2020), 302.

19 Harber and Miller, "How to Prepare for the Metaverse."

decisions, and responsibilities of their behaviours in the metaverse.²⁰ The metaverse as the dominant fourth place in the future will create a culture of fusion that confuses the users' God-given real identities but also their biblical worldviews, values, and views of life formed and developed in the real world.

Disembodiment and discrepancy between presence and existence

The metaverse is a new digital ecosystem that integrates virtual and real worlds through an immersive experience. In their immersive experience, users are physically located in their real world while their minds are transferred to the three-dimensional virtual environment created with electronic data through the internet. This is the second negative metaverse trend, called disembodiment, which separates the physical body from virtually expanded consciousness. This means that a user's consciousness is transferred from the location of their physical bodies to a space where they have an immersive experience of the constructed virtual reality.²¹ One particular problem of disembodiment through immerse experience is that a user's internal sensations are stimulated only by the senses of vision and sound, and other somatosensory organs, such as senses of smell, taste, and touch are not used.²² According to the philosopher Richard Kearney, "If we lose touch with ourselves, we lose touch with the world. No tactile connection, no resonance between self and other."²³ Thus, the experience of disembodiment in the metaverse downgrades what God intends humans to be as holistic beings. Similarly, Sushma Subramanian asserts that humans increasingly fear being trapped inside the digital world and become less in tune with their bodies and lose their connection to the physical world.²⁴

People have rapidly adopted the idea of using the metaverse to become a disembodied self in order to escape from the miseries of the brick-and-mortar world.²⁵ However, they soon realize the contradiction between their physical

20 Guichun Jun, "Virtual Reality Church as a New Mission Frontier," 301.

21 Marko Suvajdzic, Azra Bihorac, Parisa Rashidi, Triton Ong, and Joel Applebaum, "Virtual Reality and Human Consciousness: The Use of Immersive Environments in Delirium Therapy," *Technoetic Arts* 16:1 (2018 March), 76.

22 Ibid.

23 Richard Kearney, *Touch: Recovering our most vital sense* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021), 101.

24 Sushma Subramanian, *How to Feel: The Science and Meaning of Touch* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021).

25 David Casacuberta, "One Bright Byte: Dogen and the Re-embodiment of Digital Technologies," in *Co-designing economies in transition: Radical approaches in dialogue with contemplative social science*, eds. Vincenzo Giorgino and Zack Walsh (New York: Palgrave Macmillan; Berlin: Springer, 2018), 300.

existence of body in the real world and virtual presence of mind in the metaverse. To borrow Heidegger's thought to explain the discrepancy between physical existence and virtual presence as a phenomenon of disembodiment, the user's avatar is ontically present as a mere entity in cyberspace without understanding the meaning of human existence, like animals or plants in the real world; but the user exists ontologically, as only humans can ponder existence and its meaning in their relationship with their Creator.²⁶ Based on the concept of Heidegger's existence and presence, the location of an ontological being and the place of the presence of the being are inseparable.²⁷ If one's existence is closely related to self-awareness recognizing one's ontological existence in the real world and one's presence is connected to consciousness realizing one's experiences in the virtual environment through one's ontic avatar, then disembodiment in the metaverse causes depersonalization by disabling self-awareness of users and increasing the sense of presence through reinforcing the sense of spatial presence, involvement, and realness in their immersive virtual experiences.²⁸

Virtual Immortality and Digital Resurrection

As mentioned above, the metaverse was first used in *Snow Crash* as a utopia to escape from this earthly dystopia. Metapia is a newly coined term, combining metaverse and utopia, to describe the ultimate aim of a metaverse that is to create a virtually ideal society,²⁹ where everyone feels happy and satisfied without fear of violence, conflict, or the economic and social gaps between the rich and the poor. In the discourse of virtual utopia, the hottest topic is digital immortality. There are people who pursue the possibility of immortality by uploading their consciousness into cyberspace.³⁰ Although users are physically deceased, their avatars will live, behave, and interact with others indefinitely as they have been evolved through the deceased users' digital

26 Claude Cernuschi, *Barnett Newman and Heideggerian Philosophy* (Lanham, Md: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2012), 58.

27 Ibid.

28 Thomas Schubert, "The Sense of Presence in Virtual Environments: A Three-Component Scale Measuring Spatial Presence, Involvement and Realness," *Journal of Media Psychology* 15:2 (2003), 69.

29 Si Han Lee, *The Era of Metaverse* (Metaverseui Sidae) (Seoul: Dasan Books, 2021), 75.

30 Tim Jordan, *Cyberpower: The Culture and Politics of Cyberspace and the Internet* (Milton Park, UK: Taylor and Francis, 2002), 28. Jonna Quitney Anderson and Harrison Rainie, *The Future of the Internet: Ubiquity, Mobility, Security* (New York: Cambria Press, 2008), 311.

archives.³¹ The term “avatar” in Hinduism is considered to be the mortal manifestation of an immortal being.³² However, an avatar in the metaverse is considered to be the immortal manifestation of a mortal being. The collective digital information of users is the sum of their personality, interests, and beliefs recorded and archived in their avatars, and this collection of data is called “digital soul.”³³ This digital soul is to be immortal.

An internet company called Eternime (eterni.me) has already launched a service for those who want to remain as digital souls in the virtual space after their physical death. The theory that their customers’ avatars will eventually become their immortal digital egos has come true in reality.³⁴ This is called digital cloning technology, which will allow people to make a speech at their own funeral services and even to have interactions with their offspring who are born after they pass away. In fact, this digital cloning technology, in combination with holographic technology, was already used by a South Korean digital company to allow a mother to meet her deceased young daughter in virtual reality.³⁵ This particular experiment in virtual reality proved that the “digital resurrection” of the deceased is not in its conceptual stage but already at the stage of practical use. This is more advanced technology than “deep-fake,” synthesizing “deep learning” and “fake,” which is used to replace the likeness of someone, and recently, deceased Margaret Thatcher was digitally resurrected in the Virtual Maggie project in a contemporary film drama.³⁶ This particular social and cultural trend of the metaverse has raised the alarm in the area of ethics and theology, as it does more than declutter digital legacies left behind after death or develop a new form of post-mortem veneration. Rather, it is developing a culture of social interactions of the dead through cloning human minds in the digital version.³⁷

31 Simon Parkin, “Back-up Brains: The Era of Digital Immortality,” *BBC*, 23 January 2015. <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20150122-the-secret-to-immortality>.

32 Eliane Schlemmer and Luciana Backes, *Learning in Metaverses: Co-Existing in Real Virtuality* (Pennsylvania: IGI Global, 2014), 87.

33 Sumit Paul-Choudhury, “Digital Legacy: The Fate of Your Online Soul,” *New Scientist* 210:2809 (2011 April), 42.

34 Marius Ursache, “The Journey to Digital Immortality,” *Medium*, 23 October 2015, <https://medium.com/@mariusursache/the-journey-to-digital-immortality-33fcbd79949>.

35 You can watch the video clip here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uffTK8c4w0c>.

36 Dominic Lees, Tom Bashford-Rogers, and Marcus Keppel-Palmer, “The Digital Resurrection of Margaret Thatcher: Creative, Technological and Legal Dilemmas in the Use of Deepfakes in Screen Drama,” *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* 27:4 (2021), 954.

37 David Burden and Maggi Savin-Baden, *Virtual Humans: Today and Tomorrow* (Florida: CRC Press, 2019), 236.

Underlying Philosophies: Metamodernism and Transhumanism

Metamodernism: Ontological and epistemological challenges

The above-mentioned trends of the metaverse will bring complex and multifaceted challenges, not only in Christian ethics and theology but also in the Christian worldview concerning Christian ontology, epistemology, and anthropology. The biblical understandings of the ontological nature of human and epistemological understanding of reality will be seriously challenged in the era of the metaverse. These challenges look like socio-cultural phenomena on the surface at the age of the fourth industrial revolution, but in reality they are related profoundly to a newly emerging philosophical paradigm called metamodernism.³⁸ All socio-cultural phenomena have their underlying philosophies. In other words, socio-cultural phenomena are incubated and manifested within specific contextual conditions, underpinned and influenced by philosophies of the time. Socio-cultural phenomena are products of human actions and interactions influenced by the thoughts of the time as emergent patterns become established regularities. The negative socio-cultural trends of the metaverse are at the stage of producing emergent patterns at present, but they will become dominant cultural regularities nurtured and underpinned by metamodernism.

From a chronological point of view, metamodernism emerges after postmodernism. In this sense, metamodernism can be called post-postmodernism, emerging in reaction to postmodern critics and philosophical frameworks. However, in terms of its ontological and epistemological stance, metamodernism is located in the third position between modernism and postmodernism,³⁹ not only to overcome the polarity between the modernists' thesis about rationality and conviction and the postmodernists' cynical, relativistic, and ironic antithesis, but also to synthesize them to establish a platform for more integrated pluralism.⁴⁰ Vermeulen and van den Akker in their article "Notes on Metamodernism" explain that the prefix "Meta" was derived from the word "Metaxy" in Plato's *Symposium*, which means

38 Gregg Henriques and Daniel Gortz, "What Is Metamodernism?," *Psychology Today*, 17 April 2020. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/theory-knowledge/202004/what-is-metamodernism>.

39 Eun-Nyoung Choi, "Metamodernism as a New Direction in Art Aesthetics of the 21st Century: Focusing on the Wachowski Brothers' Movie *The Matrix Series*," *Korean Kafka Society* 37 (2017), 115.

40 Henriques and Gortz, "What is Metamodernism?"

“Betweenness.”⁴¹ Vermeulen and van den Akker interpret the term betweenness as oscillation that engages two opposed philosophical stances, modernism and postmodernism, like a pendulum swinging between the two poles.⁴² Eric Voegelin, a German philosopher, sees betweenness (or in-between) as the intangible mysteriousness of human existence and as the tension between birth and death, immanent and transcendent, mortality and immortality, external and internal, this world and the other world, and so forth.⁴³ These kinds of mysteriousness and tensions are expressed as oscillations of human existence in the era of metamodernism not only in the cultural domains, such as paintings, films, music, architecture and literature, but also in metaphysics to develop philosophical principles in ontology and epistemology.

Conceptually, metamodernist oscillation is similar to Hegelian dialectical synthesis, which intends to accommodate both modernism and postmodernism while being neither one nor the other.⁴⁴ On the one hand, from a general point of view, metamodernists intend to create more holistic visions and environments for human flourishing to solve human and social problems by integrating modernists’ positivism, objectivism, sincerity, and conviction and postmodernists’ fragmentations, deconstruction, irony, cynicism, and nihilism. On the other hand, the oscillation of human identities and perceptions of reality between the real and virtual worlds challenges biblical ontology and epistemology. This particular oscillation between the real and virtual worlds forces humans to restructure the norm of human identity and existence. Metamodern ontology, in particular, emphasizes co-existence and hybridity between humans and their avatars in the metaverse. The concept of human-avatar symbiosis is not only about the co-existence of biological humans and digital humans (avatars) but also about co-evolution by reciprocal interactions and mutual dependence,⁴⁵ which seems to be a new type of ontological syncretism, amalgamating human and avatar ontologies. As far as metamodernist epistemology is concerned, the metamodern episteme transcends the boundaries of modernism’s certainty and postmodernism’s scepticism through the “both and neither” dynamics. Postmodern epistemological

41 Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker, “Notes on Metamodernism,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture* 2:1 (2010), 5.

42 Ibid.

43 Thomas Heilke, *Eric Voegelin: In Quest of Reality* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 36.

44 Robin van den Akker, Alison Gibbons, and Timotheus Vermeulen, *Metamodernism: Historicity, Affect, and Depth after Postmodernism* (London: Rowman and Littlefield International, 2017), 199.

45 Peter Hancock, *Mind, Machine and Morality: Toward a Philosophy of Human-Technology Symbiosis* (London and New York: CRC Press, 2009), 56.

perspective is at once modern and postmodern and neither of them.⁴⁶ For example, the metamodernist view on life in the real world is both meaningful and meaningless and neither of them. This is why some scholars understand indeterminacy as the core of metamodernism because of the epistemological ambiguity generated by a perennial state of uncertainty as a result of the unending oscillation between modern and postmodern epistemologies.⁴⁷ The conceptual understanding of metamodern epistemology by Vermeulen and van den Akker as a perpetual movement and changes between position and outlooks fits perfectly into the epistemological understanding of people's cognitive process for acquisition of knowledge and justification for it in the metaverse. This is because their self-awareness and consciousness swing endlessly between reality in the real world and hyperreality in the virtual world.

Transhumanism: Theological challenge

Another underlying philosophy underpinning the phenomena of the metaverse is transhumanism. Although the term transhumanism was coined and popularized by Julian Huxley, a biologist and philosopher, in his essay of the same name written in 1957,⁴⁸ its philosophical concept and practical applications to improve the human conditions through social and cultural changes have a long history. Humans have been always trying to overcome physical limitations and enhance living conditions for a better life. However, the contemporary version of transhumanism is more than an intellectual movement but becomes a religion that conceives of a superhuman state free of illness, unhappiness, and death⁴⁹ through the use of advanced technology. It means that transhumanists define value and meaning for individuals in the here and now.

Many transhumanists have professed faith in the eventual uploading of human minds into machine bodies and virtual reality in the pursuit of immortality,⁵⁰ which is their religious concept of salvation. In the lecture at St Antony's College University of Oxford in June 2019, Professor Thomas Fuchs made a connection between virtual immortality through mind-uploading

46 Vermeulen and van den Akker, "Notes on Metamodernism," 2.

47 Wolfgang Funk, *The Literature of Reconstruction: Authentic Fiction in the New Millennium* (London, Oxford, New York, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 3.

48 Baris Bayram, "Utilizing Transhumanism for the United Nations Global Goals," in *The Transhumanism Handbook*, ed. Newton Lee (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 682.

49 Robert Geraci, *Virtually Sacred: Myth and Meaning in World of Warcraft and Second Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 287.

50 Ibid.

and neo-Gnosticism that emphasizes the secrete knowledge to be saved from the inferiority of the human body and the imperfection of this world. Fuchs rightly points out that transhumanists' techno-optimistic view of digital immortality is the ultimate soteriological goal of technological development to liberate the human mind from the prison of the body after physical death.⁵¹ Thus, it is critical to keep in mind Fuchs' balanced view on the human body and mind to overcome the theological challenge of neo-gnostic soteriology permeated in transhumanism: "human body and mind are inseparable as they are intertwined: the body is alive and therefore also mindful; the mind is alive and therefore also truly embodied."⁵²

In terms of the fate of humanity, there are two incompatible views between hope and despair. Transhumanism is a futurist philosophy for those who have a utopian hope for transformed future humanity that will eventually emancipate from all kinds of human limitations, including mortality. However, Christianity has judged immortality in this present world negatively because the present life is like a dystopia in contrast to the afterlife that awaits the faithful believers, and immortality would only prolong this world and its suffering.⁵³ There is no doubt that technology has enhanced the human condition and provided endless opportunities to overcome barriers; yet it is necessary to have a theological scepticism toward the quasi-religious promises of transhumanism offering digital immortality and utopia.

Biblical Metanarratives as Missional Responses to the Metaverse

Jean-François Lyotard, a postmodern philosopher, captured the essence of the postmodern sensibility as being the absence of the metanarrative⁵⁴ with the words, "Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives."⁵⁵ Whereas postmodernists deconstruct metanarratives by being relative and sceptical of universal narratives such as the biblical

51 Mikael Leidenhag, "Saved through technology: Exploring the Soteriology and Eschatology of transhumanism," *Religious Compass* 14:11 (2020), 7.

52 Thomas Fuchs, *Ecology of the Brain: The Phenomenology and Biology of the Embodied Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 282.

53 Richard Ned Lebow, *The Politics and Ethics of Identity: In Search of Ourselves* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 65.

54 Gregg Henriques and Daniel Gortz, "What is Metamodernism?"

55 Jean-Francois Lyotard and Geoff Bennington, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiv.

truths, metamodernists make efforts to rediscover the valuable things constructed by modernists but deconstructed by postmodernists. In other words, one of the noticeable aspects of metamodernism is that it engages in the resurgence of metanarratives and universal truths.

This is the ambivalence of metamodernism. On the one hand, its philosophy challenges the biblical human ontology and epistemology by underpinning the phenomena of virtual identity crisis and disembodiment. On the other hand, it opens a tremendous opportunity for Christian mission in the era of the metaverse by resurging some of the important modern values and by reinforcing the importance of the biblical metanarratives. This positive side of metamodernism can be used as a missional tool to reintroduce the biblical metanarratives, which can bring hope to humanity by overcoming the hopelessness and deconstruction caused by postmodernism's cynical irony and relativistic scepticism toward the universal truths. The following sections outline the three main narratives that Christian mission needs to particularly focus on as responses to the phenomena and philosophies of the metaverse to reconstruct the biblical truths.

The narrative of God's creation: *Imago Dei*

Genesis 1:26-27 exposes that the *imago Dei* is best understood as human identity since humanity was created in a manner appropriate to the realization of its God-given identity.⁵⁶ This God-given identity has a distinctive theological role to play, which is the unique office as a divine representative and divine reflection.⁵⁷ In the era of the metaverse, it is likely to happen that humans will identify more with their digital identities than their real identities. In other words, humans will replace their God-given identity with the virtual identities that they create in the metaverse. This will result in two serious theological consequences.

First, the very nature and foundation of human identity will be altered from the triune God who created humans in their image to humans who create their virtual beings. This is more than humans' evil ambition and desire to be ontologically independent from God. This is also more than a distorted anthropocentric perception of God and God's created world without acknowledging the existence of God and theocentric perspective on reality. This is a vain endeavour to place humans in the place of the Creator by creating the metaverse and controlling their anthropomorphic avatars. The

56 Ryan Peterson, *The Imago Dei as Human Identity: A Theological Interpretation* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016), 120.

57 Richard Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and Its Inversion* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 184.

Israeli philosopher Yuval Harari anticipates in his book *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* that one of the human agendas in the age of digitalization is to attain divinity.⁵⁸ Although he explains that the term divinity does not mean the omnipotent biblical God but superhuman like Greek gods or Hindu devas, the term *homo deus* per se reveals the latent human desire of being rebellious against the Creator by continually evolving to the status of divine beings through their anthropomorphic avatars created in and reflecting their images. In the era of the metaverse, *imago Dei* that emphasizes the very nature of human identity in God will be seriously challenged by *imago meta* persuading humanity to identify with the virtual version of themselves to progress toward divinity.

The second consequence is related to altering God's mandate from actualizing God's divine purpose to actualizing human ambition. First and foremost, *imago Dei* implies God's own self-actualization through humankind.⁵⁹ God created humans in his image to make his plans and purposes known and actualize through them.⁶⁰ It means that *imago Dei* is related not only to who we are but also to what we are created for as God's image bearers. After creating the first human in his image, God gave them the mandate to act as God's agent to cultivate the real world that God created. This mandate is the original mission of God given to humankind so that *imago Dei* is inseparable from *missio Dei* since both are central to human existence as the cultural mandate of God ties both together.⁶¹

It is obvious that the metaverse is an important emerging mission field where Christians share the gospel of Christ and cultivate the virtual environments to fulfil the missional and cultural mandates of God. This actualization of God's mandates in the metaverse will only be possible when God's people are constantly aware of who they are and what they are created for in relation to *imago Dei*. In the era of the metaverse, experts anticipate that people, even Christians, will be confused between their God-given identity and their self-created virtual identities or simply conflate them as they are more inclined

58 Yuval Harari, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* (New York: Vintage Publishing, 2017), 114.

59 Jacob Kavunkal, Errol D'Lima, Evelyn Monteiro, and Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth, *Vatican II: A Gift and a Task: International Colloquium to Mark the 40th Anniversary of Vatican Council II* (Mumbai: St Paul's, 2006), 179.

60 Ibid.

61 Clark Fobes, "Imago Dei in Missio Dei: Biblical Foundations for Work and Mission," *The Evangelical Missiological Society Southwest Regional Conference 2018*, 2–3, https://www.academia.edu/36262616/IMAGO_DEI_IN_MISSIO_DEI_BIBLICAL_FOUNDATIONS_FOR_WORK_AND_MISSION.

to immerse themselves in the virtually constructed world and live a kind of blurring of the distinction between real and nonreal.⁶² The disenchantment of the biblical human identity, which began through the Enlightenment and followed postmodernism's deconstruction, will be accelerated through the identity confusion and crisis in the metaverse. Hence, re-enchantment of the creation narrative, in particular *imago Dei*, needs to reinforce the biblical understanding of human identity, dignity, mission, and destiny as well as to differentiate the God-given identity from the self-created virtual identities.

The narrative of Jesus's incarnation: Corporeal embodiment

The term "Avatar" is derived from "Ava-tri," which means descent in Sanskrit.⁶³ The word "ava-tri" in the religious context means divine descent, and Indian Christians have used *ava-tri* to understand the concept of the incarnation of Christ.⁶⁴ However, there is a fundamental discrepancy between avatar in the Indian religious context, in particular in Hinduism, and the incarnation of Jesus in Christianity. Avatars in Hinduism refer to divine beings taking various earthly forms for fulfilling different tasks, and they are mythical and perfect while the incarnation of Christ is real but imperfect because he became a human in history although he was without sin.⁶⁵ Furthermore, in Christianity, Jesus' divine nature is not blended with his human nature because he, the transcendental God, became completely embodied in human flesh while avatars in Hinduism are the manifestation of divine beings taking forms of human or animal, so that they are not truly embodied in flesh. The 8th-century philosopher Sankara raised a reasonable question about dualism in the notion of the avatar with the example that Brahma is only one, and it is impossible for him to be two—both Brahma and his avatar at the same time⁶⁶—if he is truly embodied. The conclusion was that Brahma's avatar is not a real incarnation but merely another image within *Maya* (the veil of illusion).⁶⁷ Sankara's question can be extended to the concept of virtual avatars in the metaverse. The online avatar is not a true presence of the

62 Leila El Kamel, "For a Better Exploration of Metaverses as Consumer Experiences," in *Virtual Social Identity and Consumer Behavior*, ed. Natalie Wood and Michael Solomon (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2015), 29.

63 Guichun Jun, "Virtual Reality Church as a New Mission Frontier," 303.

64 *Ibid.*

65 Noel Sheth, "Hindu Avatars and Christian Incarnation: A Comparison," *Philosophy East and West* 52:1 (2002 January), 108.

66 Zoe Detsi-Diamanti, Katerina Kitse-Mytakou, and Effie Yiannopoulou, *The Flesh Made Text Made Flesh Cultural and Theoretical Returns to the Body* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 30–31.

67 *Ibid.*

human users in virtual reality but their graphic representation in the veil of cyber-Maya.

As aforementioned, the metaverse ushers in the disembodied age. Some scholars criticize that avatar-mediated immersive experiences may cause serious mental problems, such as schizophrenia, since users constantly experience fragmentations and disembodiment between their corporeal existence and virtual presence.⁶⁸ But even more profound, avatar-mediated immersive experiences will jeopardize the biblical understanding of humanity that God created in combination of earthly material (dust) and God's breath (Spirit). It means that a biblically authentic human consists of body, mind, and soul that are holistically and mysteriously integrated. God created humans as embodied beings that do not allow compartmentalization of body, mind, and soul until death. Thus, it is only possible for a human to have a fully embodied existence when we interact with God, fellow humans, and nature in physical reality. Incarnated Christ was a completely embodied human who was seeable, touchable, and even killable to offer himself as the eternal atonement for our sins. The real theological peril expected in the disembodied age is that the metaverse can play a role to foster a disembodied theology: such as digital Docetism, which denies corporeality to be fully embodied human, or digital Gnosticism, which undermines the significance of physical experiences of humans in the ordinary earthly life. These theological tendencies in the era of the metaverse will lead humans to disregard the well-being of their physical bodies, to disengage from the mundane responsibilities of life, to withdraw from social interactions and engagement with God's created world. Hence, the narrative of Jesus' incarnation as an authentic model of human embodiment needs to be re-emphasized in the age of disembodiment to overcome the digital version of Platonic dualism separating physical life from virtual life and to allow us to live as fully embodied humans whose existence of physical body and presence of soul continue until death separates them.

The narrative of the eschatological event: The final restoration of utopia

Religion is closely related to human suffering. All the major religions have developed their own soteriology and eschatology for humans to be rescued from suffering or to permanently escape from the suffering world (dystopia) to a utopia where there will be no more pain and death. Soteriology and eschatology are essential in all major religions not only to provide meaning to life at present but also to give people hope for an uncertain future. In this

68 Kamel, "For a Better Exploration of Metaverses as Consumer Experiences," 29.

light, transhumanism is more than a philosophy. It is a religion because it pursues the evolutionary development of cloning human minds for the very telos of human existence in the metaverse and of cybernetic immortality after death as its soteriological goal.⁶⁹ In addition, transhumanism is based on a techno-optimist perspective on the eschatological end of the physical world, which will be accomplished by human efforts alone.⁷⁰ This soteriological goal and eschatological hope of transhumanism aim to replace traditional religions by proclaiming that through technology transhumanism can achieve what traditional religions have sought for millennia: immortality and the establishment of a cyberspace utopia.⁷¹ The technologically transformed digital human will eventually be elevated to a god-like status, an immortal “*homo deus*” in the metaverse.⁷² The ultimate goal of transhumanism is to create a cyberspace utopia where there will be no Christian God, Creator, Sustainer, and Judge, but which will be full of digitally transformed humans who deify themselves to reign in their cyber heaven.

Transhumanism in the metaverse seems to entice humans by offering great religious comfort and the vision that humans will be redeemed from this dystopia full of sufferings caused by war, disease, and death. They will enter into the cybernetic utopia without experiencing the apocalyptic eschatological process that everyone must go through to face divine justice. However, many experts anticipate that the metaverse will be a virtual dystopia, where financial inequality between the haves and the have-nots will lead to social inequality in the virtual space.⁷³ There will be different kinds of cyber-crimes too. All the problems that we observe and experience in the real world will be transferred to the metaverse because transhumanism cannot resolve the sinful nature of humans. The ultimate goal of transhumanists using the metaverse as a medium is to establish a God-less society where superhumans can reign. From the perspectives of biblical soteriology and eschatology, the promise of transhumanism for superhumanization will actually end as a dehumanization

69 Mikael Leidenhag, “Saved through Technology: Exploring the Soteriology and Eschatology of Transhumanism,” *Religion Compass* 14:11 (2020), 1–9.

70 Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, “Transhumanism as a Secularist Faith,” *Journal of Religion and Science* 47:4 (2012), 725.

71 Tirosh-Samuelson, “Transhumanism as a Secularist Faith,” 715.

72 Giulia Isetti, Elisa Innerhofer, Harald Pechlaner, and Michael De Rachewiltz, *Religion in the Age of Digitalization: From New Media to Spiritual Machines* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2021), 8.

73 Jean-Philippe Vergne, “The Future of Trust will be Dystopian or Decentralized: Escaping the Metaverse,” forthcoming in special issue of *Revista de Occidente on The Future of Trust*, 17 September 2021. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3925635> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3925635>.

that deprives humans of their God-given identity, dignity and destiny. Furthermore, transhumanism will deprive humans of the opportunity to fully trust in Christ who died and resurrected to redeem us from our sin and death and to participate in the glorious eschatological event when Christ returns to restore the fallen humanity and world. Hence, it is significant for Christians to proclaim the biblical version of eschatology so that they can live their ordinary lives either in joy or suffering through embracing the suffering of Christ and the hope that he will restore his kingdom to bring them into the perfect utopia.

Conclusion

Advanced technology in the fourth industrial revolution and COVID-19 have opened the fourth mission era, in which connection and networking through internet technology will become the main platform for mission. In particular, the metaverse is expected to replace the 3W based internet service by creating virtual environments as the fourth place in human society, where home, work and socialization are converged. Thus, it is significant to understand the potential effects of the metaverse in both our daily lives and God's mission by analyzing its positive and negative impacts and the philosophies that underpin the phenomena.

The scope of this chapter was to describe the negative effects of the metaverse to propose some theological reflections as missional responses to the phenomena and philosophies. In the age of digitalization and the metaverse, human identity based on *imago Dei* will be challenged by *imago meta*, which will lead to confusion about the original mandate of God to cultivate his created world. The disembodiment of humans through the discrepancy between their physical existence and virtual presence will cause other ontological and epistemological problems because their perceptions of themselves and their realities will be illusionary. Finally, the metaverse will be a platform to foster a God-less culture and society by enticing humans with anthropocentric hope for immortality and utopia. The concept of oscillation in metamodernism seeking the third position underpins the ontological and epistemological claims of metaverse that the human-avatar symbiosis will provide not only co-existence but also co-evolution between biological humans and digital humans. The long-standing human desire for redemption from the dystopian world and deification in the virtual environment is well supported by the goal of transhumanism, which is regarded as a secularist faith for human flourishing.

In this fourth era of mission in the metaverse, the fundamental missional approach as a countermeasure is to reintroduce the biblical metanarrative: *imago Dei* in the narrative of God's creation; embodiment of Jesus in the narrative of Christ's incarnation; and restoration of fallen humanity and the world in the narrative of the apocalyptic eschatology. Interestingly, the creation narrative is located at the very beginning of the Bible. The incarnation narrative can be found in the middle of the Bible. And the narrative of the apocalyptic eschatology is the ending part of the Bible. The three narratives are the essential parts of the Bible containing the core messages for biblical soteriology and eschatology. This feature is a strong justification to emphasize the need reintroduce the biblical metanarrative in a fresh way, not only to rescue God's people from the complicating confusion of the philosophies of this age but also to expand the kingdom of God in both this physical world and the virtual world.

CHAPTER 12

The Future of Mission: Points of Convergence?

Compiled and introduced by Kenneth R. Ross

The International Missionary Council (IMC) was created during tumultuous times. The Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference had sparked great hopes for the attainment of a higher level of cooperation and unity that would take the worldwide missionary enterprise to new heights. These hopes were brutally crushed in the trenches of Flanders and the many places around the globe where the First World War left its devastating effects. As communities and nations struggled to come to terms with their losses, almost immediately they were hit by the Spanish flu pandemic, which took even more lives than the war. It was in the aftermath of these events that missionary leaders gathered at Lake Mohonk in 1921 to try to salvage what they could of the dream that had been so inspiring a decade earlier. It is testimony to their faith, courage and spirit of unity that they could bring the IMC into being, with high hopes of what could be achieved through shared thinking and common action.

A hundred years later we find ourselves once again in tumultuous times. The neo-liberalism that prevails in the global economy has a violent edge to it, stoking conflict and warfare in many different parts of the world. With ever more lethal weaponry being deployed, the death and destruction is on an even greater scale than it was a century earlier. Not only soldiers but also civilians, including children, are often losing their lives. Even for those who live in relatively peaceful conditions, the great majority have to struggle with the exploitation and oppression that comes with the neo-liberal system. On top of this has come the COVID-19 pandemic, which has taken many lives and brought much economic hardship since it spread around the world in 2020. There is also a battle to be fought for the earth itself as climate change raises very serious questions about the future of the natural environment on which human life depends. Can the faith, courage, and spirit of unity that inspired the formation of the IMC in 1921 find fresh expression in meeting the challenges before us in 2022?

The genius of the IMC was that it was able to work from connection to many local contexts to discern on a global basis what were the crucial ideas with which mission was informed and defined. In our highly networked age, we have the opportunity to exercise such discernment and to discover the points that will energise missional thinking and action in our time. This chapter is a modest attempt to make a start on this task as we take account of our local and global context in the 2020s. Rather than depend on one author to do this, we have worked collectively as a group of ten, with each member leading on a point that has emerged as potentially a crucial one for the integrity and credibility of Christian mission in our time.

One outcome of our attempts at discernment is a growing awareness that there is a convergence in thinking about God's mission in our days. Even those who at times in the past have found themselves quite polarized are discovering more and more common ground. The challenge taken up by this chapter is to propose points of convergence around which mission cooperation might revolve in the future.

The first of these is spirituality. It might seem like a statement of the obvious that Christian mission would be understood in terms of spirituality. Indeed, in every generation it is out of spiritual experience that missionary motivation has been born. Nevertheless, there have been times when the organizational or intellectual or activist expressions of mission have claimed centre stage to the extent that the spiritual dimension was almost obscured. In particular, as Western Christianity responded to the 18th-century Enlightenment, it tended to put a premium on the cerebral at the expense of the spiritual. When non-Westerners came to Christ, they often took a critical stance towards the Western expression of the faith because it minimized the spiritual quality that loomed large in the Bible. They have set about recovering that spiritual quality and given it its place as the beating heart of mission.¹ Each in their own way, the Eastern Orthodox and the Pentecostal expressions of Christianity have highlighted the reality of the Holy Spirit as the giver of life. Under this inspiration, a growing consensus has emerged that mission, first and foremost, is a matter of spiritual authenticity. This involves retrieving the best of mission thinking and practice from the past as well as critically engaging our present, as demonstrated by Atlanta-based Brazilian theologian Luis Wesley de Souza.

1 See further Kenneth R. Ross and Wonsuk Ma, "Conclusion: Spirituality as the Beating Heart of Mission," in *Edinburgh Centenary Series Compendium*, eds. Knud Jørgensen, Kirsteen Kim, Wonsuk Ma and Tony Gray (Oxford: Regnum, 2018), 580–86.

Spirituality by Luis Wesley de Souza

What you know of *mission spirituality* and what you may think of the practice of mission today was deeply influenced by two conferences in the early 20th century: the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910 and the founding meeting of the IMC, held at Lake Mohonk, New York, in 1921. The World Missionary Conference put forth the vision that making Christ known in the world is not a matter of assembling an evangelizing “machinery” or having highly sophisticated strategies developed by mission agencies and church bodies. It is about *life!* For Edinburgh 1910’s Commission Six on “The Spiritual Resources of the Church,” power is not increased by a mechanical functioning of evangelization, but by “the spiritual condition of the . . . Church.”² The report of Commission Six straightforwardly affirmed the need for “supreme reliance upon prayer” and recognized “the pre-eminent place which Jesus Christ gave to prayer.”³

Although the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 reaffirmed and set the stage for a much “greater co-operation and collaboration needed for the sake of effectiveness in mission,”⁴ the main question was still about the church’s vitality for such a task. In short, how “possessed, mastered, and dominated by the faith which it professes”⁵ was the church? It had to do with more than holding doctrines or beliefs, but rather with putting them into practice. That means that spirituality remains the foundation that provides meaning and sustains mission at its core, while advancing ecumenical and fraternal relationships, in addition to cooperation as a crucial element in the practice of mission.

Evolving post-Edinburgh and post-IMC spirituality

Among many implications and consequences for today’s practice of mission resulting from the World Missionary Conference and continued by the IMC, was the need for a broad, expanded, inclusive, and dialectical understanding, experience, and practice of spirituality. These momentous meetings foregrounded, “the depth and sincerity of the religious experience of the Church, the quality of its obedience, the intensity and daring of its faith.”⁶

2 Kenneth R. Ross, Jooseop Keum, Kyriaki Avitzi, and Roderick R. Hewitt, eds, *Ecumenical Missiology: Changing Landscapes and New Conceptions of Mission* (Oxford: Regnum and Geneva: WCC Publications, 2016), 33.

3 *Ibid.*, 33.

4 *Ibid.*, 7.

5 *Ibid.*, 33.

6 *Ibid.*

The assumption was that missional action is not divorced from holistic spirituality.

In the measure and intensity with which the world evolves today, there has been a robust, intrinsic demand for an integral spirituality that streams from and unfolds within both individual and communal consciousness of the kingdom of justice, but also emerges through a nurturing, deep, committed, contextualized, consistent, growing, and meaningful connection with the real-world experience of people. In turn, spirituality becomes the source of motivation for doing mission and the very mould within which our actions are designed, conceived, and implemented.

Cooperating mission spirituality

When we speak of Christian practices in mission, we are talking not of separate, unrelated parts but of a unity that generates and regenerates contemplation, engagement, and transformation. WCC's *Together towards Life* calls this "mission spirituality."⁷ It has much in common with what Latin American theologians call "integral spirituality." In a similar way to the hermeneutical cycle of Latin American liberation theology (reflection > action > new reflection > new action), the mission spirituality which germinated and blossomed from IMC, as I see it, cycles like this: Contemplation > Prophetic Imagination > Mission Cooperation and Engagement > New Contemplation > New Prophetic Imagination > New Mission Cooperation and Engagement. This cycle suggests there must be no mission without spiritual contemplation and experimentation of Christ's life in us, and there is no authentic Christian spirituality that does not translate itself into prophetic imagination, mission cooperation, and engagement.

Consensus?

In the movement to which I belong—pan-Methodism—I see some effort to maintain a particular line of consensus around the holistic spirituality proposed by John Wesley. However, there have been growing contradictory voices in that matter as well. Some segments recognize and develop consequential spiritualities and are flexible enough to take its implications to crucial areas of human concerns and survival, such as environmental sustainability, gender equality, and racial justice. Others understand the church's mission to be wholly divorced from such matters, still seeing and emphasizing mission as soul-saving and church growth enterprises. Guided by such thinking, some

7 Jooseop Keum, ed., *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), §30.

are pushing imported, prefabricated renewal models that make churches grow but with little, if any, constructive action for social transformation.

Most mainline churches in Latin America are in a deep identity crisis caused mainly by the brutal influences of neo-Pentecostalism. Christian communities and individuals are swallowed by spiritual models that do not create prophetic imagination and liberating consciousness, leading adherents to alienation or conformity (passivity) with their harsh realities. Consequently, a great deal of the church is spiritually diseased with high levels of individualism, consumerism, narcissism, and showmanship to attract new members. Other contemporary Protestants, Pentecostals, and Catholics also show a lack of homogeneity within their respective confessional identities and, even more so, among them. That is to say that we are seeing and experiencing a considerable conflict of projects based on disarticulated, often paradoxical views of mission and spirituality.

Permeating Spirituality

I believe that across the whole spectrum of Christian traditions people would agree that spirituality permeates every aspect of the experience of being in Christ and the journey of life on earth. It motivates and determines our actions. It goes from being born again to being filled and guided by the Holy Spirit, from perceiving the sacredness of life to crying out against the causes of human suffering and the robbing of human dignity by any oppression or exclusion, from rooting passion to practising radical compassion, from being heralds of justice to participating in the stewardship of creation, from making disciples to creating a consciousness that generates individual and social transformation, from seeing ourselves being transformed to seeing the other's right and potential of experiencing the fullness of life. In seeing ourselves and the other, we see God's love and determination to reconcile the world with Godself. In doing so, we share God's justifying and sanctifying grace found in Christ, affirming the *abundant life* that was established by God's wisdom in creation. We must affirm the importance of being spiritually empowered for witnessing, with the power that comes not from Westernized strategies and resources but the deep-rooted, wide-reaching and unifying spirit of the gospel in us.

One way of expressing this rediscovery of mission spirituality is to speak in terms of discipleship. It is no secret that Jesus called women and men to follow him. When they did, they became known as disciples. Revisiting the biblical idea of discipleship has proved to be immensely fruitful for the reimagining of mission in the 21st century. The Lausanne Movement's Cape Town Commitment of 2010 called for renewed attention to discipleship, as did Pope Francis's 2013 Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*.⁸ With the WCC's 2013 *Together towards Life mission affirmation chiming with the evangelical and Catholic documents*, it became apparent that there was a remarkable convergence in mission thinking.⁹ This was cemented by the WCC's 2018 "Arusha Call to Discipleship," which invited readers to make discipleship the primary category for the understanding of God's call to mission. No one has done more to explore the meaning of mission in terms of discipleship than the veteran Chicago-based Catholic missiologist Stephen Bevans.

Discipleship by Stephen Bevans, SVD

Sustained reflection on the nature and practice of discipleship—transforming, missionary discipleship—might very well be pivotal in the future of mission. In his important commentary on "The Arusha Call to Discipleship" (Arusha Call), Kenneth Ross calls discipleship a "game-changer"¹⁰ in thinking about and engaging in mission, and I believe that this is indeed the case. "Moving in the Spirit: Called to transforming discipleship" was the theme of the Arusha World Mission Conference, held in Arusha, Tanzania, in March 2018. The conference continued the "enduring legacy"¹¹ of the IMC, the 100th anniversary of which this volume is celebrating.

8 See *The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action* (Lausanne Movement, 2011), at: www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctccommitment; Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium: Apostolic Exhortation to the Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World*, 24 November 2013 (Vatican Press), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

9 See John H. Armstrong, "The Church in the Contemporary Ecumenical-Missional Moment: Together towards Life in Dialogue with The Cape Town Commitment and *Evangelii Gaudium*," *International Review of Mission* 104:2 (2015), 232–41.

10 Kenneth R. Ross, *Mission Rediscovered: Transforming Disciples—A Commentary on the Arusha Call to Discipleship* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2020), 10.

11 Metropolitan Geevarghese Coorilos, "Moderator's Address: WCC/CWME World Mission Conference—Arusha, Tanzania, 8–13 March 2018), *International Review of Mission* 107:2 (407) (2018), 311.

Three dimensions of discipleship

“Discipleship is a vocation of transformation,” the Conference Report on the Arusha meeting insisted.¹² Echoing the conference’s preparation documents, the report described discipleship in terms of three interconnected dimensions.

In the first place, “the very idea of discipleship needs to be transformed,”¹³ from a cozy kind of one-on-one relationship with Jesus to a commitment to follow him by participating in his continuing mission in the world. In a wonderfully ecumenical connection, this idea is very close to Pope Francis’s idea of “missionary discipleship.”¹⁴

Second, growth in discipleship calls for an authentic “moving in the Spirit,” committing ourselves as individuals and church community to great and greater “Christ-connectedness,” as the Arusha Call puts it. In this way we allow ourselves to be transformed by what Orthodox Christians call “deification” or *theosis*—a transformation that opens up greater and greater participation in God’s mission.¹⁵ We see here how discipleship converges with a missionary spirituality and is the fruit of it.

Third, since God’s mission is one of radical spiritual, personal, communal, and social transformation, disciples commit themselves to the transforming work of the Spirit in all these dimensions, creating “a movement of resistance and hope, countering the death-dealing forces of our time and discovering fullness of life.”¹⁶ Thus, discipleship is the foundation of all the commitments to justice described in this chapter. Because of this, an active, growth-filled, and world-transforming discipleship always and inevitably embraces the cross, hopeful and even confident that suffering and even death brings surprising new life.¹⁷

Discipleship into the future

Disciples live into the future as they faithfully preserve the biblical witness and Christian tradition, and creatively and imaginatively engage the present,

12 “Conference on World Mission and Evangelism Report,” *International Review of Mission* 107:2 (407) (2018), 551.

13 “Conference on World Mission and Evangelism Report,” 551.

14 Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 24.

15 See “The Arusha Call to Discipleship,” *International Review of Mission* 107:2 (407) (2018), 542–43; see also “Conference on World Mission and Evangelism Report,” 552, and Ross, *Mission Rediscovered*, 19–20, 23–24.

16 “Conference on World Mission and Evangelism Report,” 552; see “The Arusha Call to Discipleship,” 543, and Ross, *Mission Rediscovered*, 95–101.

17 “The Arusha Call to Discipleship,” 543 and Ross, *Mission Rediscovered*, 103–17.

particular contexts in which they do mission. This movement might be characterized by four practices:

First of all, disciples LEARN. “Disciple” has its roots in the Latin word *discere*, which means “to learn.” Like Jesus’ disciples (John 1:39; Acts 1:1-3) and, perhaps most graphically, like Mary of Bethany (Luke 10:39), disciples need to sit at Jesus’ feet, learning about Jesus’ gentleness and humility (see Matt. 11:29). Disciples learn by paying attention, engaging in contemplation, *lectio divina*, and study. “As Jesus was shaped and formed as he moved in the Holy Spirit (see Luke 4:18-19), so Christian disciples are led and formed by the same Spirit as they stay connected to him.”¹⁸

Second, disciples IMITATE. “To become a disciple is to follow Jesus,” proclaimed Merlyn Hyde-Riley at the conference at Arusha.¹⁹ Disciples not only sit at Jesus’ feet; they also walk in his sandals, as it were, taking on his “yoke” (Matt. 11:30)—his vision, his compassion, his passion for justice, his inclusive behaviour, his practice of prayer. They imitate Jesus as well by imitating Christ in other Christians and holy persons—the saints and prophets of the past, in their own times, within the Christian community and outside it as well. “Be imitators of me,” Paul writes, “as I am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1).

Third, disciples INTEGRATE. Jesus’ sandals might be too large at first, but as we wear them day after day our feet become accustomed to them, and they become our own. What begins in imitation gradually becomes integration as we ourselves become “other Christs.”²⁰ As we follow Jesus with our whole hearts, ultimately embracing his cross, we can say with Paul, “I have been crucified with Christ, and is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2:20).

Fourth, disciples INNOVATE. Here is where disciples move mission into the future. They take on the “mind of Christ” (Phil. 2:5), not only in his self-emptying but in his own following of God’s surprising and sometimes disturbing Spirit (see Luke 4:18-19; Matt. 15:21-28). They follow the Spirit of Jesus in their own time, in their own contexts, letting the Spirit transform their imaginations in ways they might not have anticipated, like the disciples in Acts. New questions and possibilities emerge from technology, from

18 Stephen Bevans, “Transforming Discipleship and the Future of Mission: Missiological Reflections after the Arusha World Mission Conference,” *International Review of Mission* 107:2 (407) (2018), 364.

19 Merlyn Hyde-Riley, “Following Jesus: Becoming Disciples, Mark 6:1-13,” in *Called to Transforming Discipleship: Devotions from the World Council of Churches Conference on World Mission and Evangelism*, eds. Risto Jukko, Jooseop Keum, and (Kay) Kyeong-Ah Woo (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2019), 9.

20 Bevans, “Transforming Discipleship,” 375; see Ross, *Rediscovering Mission*, 20.

science, from women and men on the margins, from people of other faiths or no faith. True disciples embrace the future with enthusiasm, creativity, and critical discernment.

Indeed, the future of mission lies in transforming, missionary disciples. Women, men, and young people of action—yes. But rooted in spirituality, prayer, contemplation, like the Lord they follow and proclaim in example, action and word.

The life of discipleship lies at the heart of evangelism. As disciples grow in their likeness to Christ so they become witnesses to their Lord. From the beginning, those who encountered Jesus were inspired to tell others about him. Evangelism is built into the faith. Yet we have lived through a period when, in many contexts, Christians have been hesitant and divided about the question of evangelism. There has been a gulf in understanding between, for example, the World Evangelical Alliance and the World Council of Churches. Leicester-based Anglican Evangelical Rob Hay is someone who was tasked to bridge this gulf as, over the last decade, he represented the WEA on the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. He is therefore uniquely well-placed to reflect on the future of evangelism.

Evangelism by Rob Hay

Evangelism is mission activity which makes explicit and unambiguous the centrality of the incarnation, suffering, and resurrection of Jesus Christ without setting limits to the saving grace of God. It seeks to share this good news with all who have not yet heard it and invites them to an experience of life in Christ . . . including ‘the invitation to personal conversion to a new life in Christ and to discipleship.’²¹

In Matthew 4:18-22 and Luke 5:1-11, we read that the invitation to follow Jesus was given to Simon and Andrew: “Come follow me . . . and I will make you fishers of men.” *All* who follow Jesus are to be fishers of people. The 2018 WCC World Mission Conference at Arusha found, “Across the world church we are living through a rediscovery of the reality that the mandate for evangelism is not restricted to any select group but is given to all disciples of Jesus Christ. Evangelism is from everyone to everyone, extending to all the invitation to personal conversion to a new life in Christ.”²²

²¹ Keum ed., *Together towards Life*, §80–81.

²² “The Arusha Conference Report,” in Risto Jukko and Jooseop Keum eds., *Moving in the Spirit: Report of the World Council of Churches Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, 8–13 March 2018, Arusha, Tanzania* (Geneva, WCC, 2019), 5–19, at 13.

Being fishers of people means we are to give an account for the hope we have (1 Pet. 3:15), but increasingly we have relied on *some* to do that on behalf of the many—ministers, priests, evangelists—they are to give the account. We have professionalized “accounting for our hope” and it remained an expectation on each individual only in some pockets of the Christian world, primarily non-conformist and evangelical. In asking, “What is an Evangelical?” in 1944, Max Warren, General Secretary of the Church Missionary Society, gave priority to evangelism over everything else, even worship.²³

And yet in recent decades, even there it had shifted. Recently an evangelical leader said he feared self-esteem was now the core of the gospel in 2021—“We tell you how to live your best life, not why you should have eternal (resurrection) hope and certainly not how to die well.” There has been something of a loss of confidence in evangelism, even in evangelical circles. The painful history of proselytism and the link between church and empire, when evangelism was tied up with imperial domination and cultural hegemony, has left a lingering feeling that there is something shameful about it.

So, has evangelism died out? Have the abuses of the past rendered us impotent and silent in the present? As an Evangelical who has had the privilege to sit for the past decade in an ecumenical space, it has been both puzzling and exhilarating to witness a reversal of roles. My own invitation into the WCC was prefaced with the words, “We have realized in emphasising unity, we have marginalised mission and lost our cutting edge. We want to learn from our evangelical colleagues how to put mission and evangelism back at the heart of WCC.” As evangelicalism has struggled with the place and priority of evangelism (alongside issues of justice and social action), ecumenism has not just woken up to the importance of evangelism but has now centred it as a core mark of discipleship. The WCC’s 2013 mission affirmation states that “mission becomes for Christians an urgent inner compulsion (1 Cor. 9:16) and even a test and criterion for authentic life in Christ, rooted in the profound demands of Christ’s love, to invite others to share in the fullness of life Jesus came to bring.”²⁴

This change has coincided with two events, the publication of *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct* and the work on the new mission affirmation, *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*.²⁵ The first was a response to the often-appalling

23 See D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (London: Routledge, 2003), 14.

24 Jooseop Keum, *Together towards Life*, §67.

25 World Council of Churches, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and the World Evangelical Alliance, “Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World,” Keum, *Together*

coercive behaviour in the history of mission endeavour; the second, a deep work centred around transforming discipleship and placing evangelism as an unambiguous requirement and marker for authentic discipleship.²⁶ These two events laid the groundwork for the current emerging reality that in the ecumenical space there is a newfound confidence around evangelism, even as evangelicals have struggled (and, I would argue, have yet to find a comfortable resting place).

Rather than making me anxious or leaving me discouraged, I find that this current situation evokes an open space that is already proving, in small individual conversations, to be a fertile meeting point for evangelicals to meet ecumenicals and find common ground.

And yet, I would want to highlight just how quickly the norms have changed within this realm and how disorientating I believe it is for the evangelical wings of the church. David Bosch, writing in 1987, laid out a continuum of definitions of evangelism:

1. Winning souls and saving them from eternal damnation
2. Soul-winning is the priority, other works might be useful but are a distraction
3. Acts of service are a means to win souls
4. A converted soul is a prerequisite for any good acts of service
5. All mission must include a call to conversion
6. Mission and evangelism are projects to change the structures of society.²⁷

Positions one to four would now seem untenable to most churches and Christians, including evangelicals, simply because they understand God's redemptive work more broadly. In a similar way, position six would fail the test for authentic life in Christ set by *Together towards Life* since it lacks the element of personal conversion.²⁸ This lands almost all of us in the realm of position 5.

towards Life, §88.

26 See Stephen Bevans, "Transforming Discipleship: Missiological Reflections," *International Review of Mission* 105:1 (402) (2016), 75–85.

27 David J. Bosch, "Evangelism: Theological Currents and Cross-Currents Today," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 11 (1987), 98–103.

28 Keum, *Together towards Life*, §67.

Evangelism ironically now offers common ground for co-working. The bone of contention 50 years ago has now become the point of convergence. The breadth of mission captured so beautifully in the Arusha Call provides a wholistic mandate with a clear inclusion of proclamation—of giving account of the hope. My prayer is that this not only provides common ground, but a rallying call around which the whole church can proclaim a whole(istic) hope. Then evangelicals too will find renewed confidence to humbly proclaim (in word and deed) the gospel of Jesus Christ which calls us “to live in the light of the resurrection, which offers hope-filled possibilities for transformation.”²⁹ Together as the worldwide church of Christ, we will discover what it is to be transforming disciples—working together towards life.

The note of transformation that has been struck when talking of discipleship and evangelism signals an outward-looking kind of faith. Without underplaying personal repentance or the nurturing of healthy church life, disciples are expected to make an impact on the society around them. As Together towards Life explained, the proclamation of the gospel “must involve transformation of societies with a view to creating just and inclusive communities . . . , To that extent, evangelism is also a prophetic vocation that involves speaking truth to power.”³⁰ Talk of evangelism leads naturally to the question of justice. Allahabad-based theologian Samuel George explores what mission means in terms of justice.

Justice by Samuel George

Lesslie Newbigin wrote, “The Mission of the church is everything that the church is sent into the world to do: preach the gospel, healing the sick, caring for the poor, teaching the children, improving international and interracial relations, attacking injustices.”³¹ He further states that the task of the mission should aim to fight against injustices.³² Botha, Kritzinger, and Maluleke likewise suggested that “mission is the ‘cutting edge’ of the Christian movement—that activist streak in the church’s life that refuses to accept the world as it is and keeps on trying to change it, prodding it on towards God’s final reign of justice and peace.”³³

29 “The Arusha Call to Discipleship,” in Jukko and Keum, *Moving in the Spirit*, 45-47, at 47.

30 Keum, *Together towards Life*, §91.

31 Lesslie Newbigin, “Mission and Missions,” *Christianity Today* 4:22 (1960), 911.

32 Ibid.

33 Nico Botha, K. K. Kritzinger and Tinyiko Maluleke, “Crucial issues for Christian

Confronting injustices is part and parcel of the Christian mission agenda. However, as a mission mandate, the issue of justice has been a thorny topic among teachers and practitioners of mission. This is seen in the tension between “spiritual Gospel” and “material Gospel”; between evangelization and humanization; between interior conversion and improvement of conditions; between the vertical dimension of faith and the horizontal dimension of love.³⁴

Overcoming the dichotomy

Mission as social gospel or spiritual gospel? Mission as social witness or personal evangelism? These are the questions that often confront practitioners of mission. Some emphasize the social aspect and others the spiritual. Seldom is an inclusive approach maintained. A “spiritual only” position has often led to injustices that are glossed over by nationalism, fundamentalism (spiritualism) and parochialism. On the other hand, a “social only” position often leads to a gospel devoid of salvific values. Bosch pointed out that “the relationship between the evangelistic and the societal dimensions of the Christian mission constitutes one of the thorniest areas in theology and practice of mission.”³⁵ In the history of Christianity, one sees this dichotomy as early as in Augustine’s *City of God*. Reinhold Niebuhr calls it the difference between the “radiance of divine holiness and the darkness of the world.”³⁶ Today, one sees this legacy among all traditions of Christianity, that is, “the world was evil and unredeemable and changing its structures did not really fall within the sphere of the church’s responsibilities.”³⁷

One attempt to overcome this dichotomy was to distinguish between two different mandates, the one spiritual, the other social. The first refers to the commission to announce the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ; the second calls Christians to responsible participation in human society, including working for human well-being and justice.³⁸ However, in the history of Christian mission, one finds a subtle shift toward the primacy of the

Mission—A Missiological Analysis of Contemporary South Africa,” *International Review of Mission* 83:328 (1986), 21–36.

34 See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Experiment Hope* (London, SCM Press, 1975), 4.

35 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2011, 20th Anniversary Edition), 342.

36 Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1960), 69.

37 Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 343.

38 See Rodger C. Bassham, *Mission Today 1948-1975: Years of Worldwide Creative Tension, Ecumenical, Evangelical, and Roman Catholic* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1973), 343.

“evangelistic mandate.” There was a revolt against the “social mandate” of the gospel which, ultimately led to a “gospel” that does not challenge the injustices of totalitarianism, evils of racism, injustices arising out of rampant globalization. The work of the IMC proved to be a watershed moment in the history of the mission. The “social mandate” became an integral part of Christian mission. Even among the evangelicals, there was a change. World Evangelical Fellowship’s Wheaton 83 Statement declares, “Evil is not only in the human heart but also in social structures. The mission of the church includes both the proclamation of the Gospel and its demonstration. We must therefore evangelize, respond to immediate human needs, and press for social transformation.”³⁹ After Vatican II, among the Roman Catholics there has been a shift. *Evangelii nuntiandi* underscored the importance of the social aspect of the gospel.⁴⁰ Today, there is widespread agreement among almost all the traditions in Christianity that mission is not just preaching the gospel or evangelism only. It is inclusive of a “social gospel.”

Mission as justice: Its importance today

Today there are urgent issues inviting prophetic engagement like that of Amos (5:24): “let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream.” These include climate justice, the plight of refugees, and violations of human rights. The recently concluded COP26 has highlighted how difficult it is for the nations to come together for a united front on the climate crisis.⁴¹ Since the time of the Industrial Revolution, a climate crisis has been looming over humanity. However, very few tangible efforts have been made to contain this human-threatening situation. Human greed and insatiable desire to control has been the major source of this crisis. It is a fact that the poor and marginalized suffer the most. Climate change is threatening the existence of Indigenous communities and nations like Tuvalu and many of the Solomon Islands.

Meanwhile a refugee crisis is shaking the nations like never before. War, rampant poverty, and lack of basic needs are forcing people to be displaced from their native lands. The migration crisis in Europe has exposed the fallacy and hypocrisy of the Western nations in creating situations (in the global South) that are detrimental to the existence of both people and ecology in these places. Images of bodies lying on European shores and refugees living

39 Quoted in Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 347.

40 Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi: Apostolic Exhortation* (Rome: Vatican Press, 1975).

41 The 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (commonly called as COP26) was held from 21 October to 13 November 2021 at Glasgow, Scotland.

in the most wretched conditions on the borders have yet to move the consciences of the “HAVES.”

Human Rights violations are escalating around the globe, affecting especially minorities—religious, ethnic, gender. There is an upsurge of ultra-nationalist, far-right movements around the globe. This has threatened the existence of minorities. There is a tacit support for majoritarianism (religious, lingual, ethnic, gender) which threatens the lives of many. Unfortunately, this finds expression through democratic processes (e.g., India, Turkey).

The biblical vision

The covenant God of the Old Testament is a God of justice. In the New Testament, Jesus’s life, ministry and teachings encapsulate the justice of God. In the Bible, justice and righteousness are the mission of God. Yahweh demands justice, not sacrifices. The God of justice prefers human justice to worship because justice and righteousness emerge from God.

The Hebrew word *mishpat* (justice) contains the establishment of law, the interpretation of the ordinance, the pronouncement of the verdict, and the legal foundation of the authority to execute the sentence. The Bible speaks of it as emanating from God. It is at the seat of the divine throne that rights are determined. The Hebrew word *tsadaq* (righteousness) is *mishpat*, the justice of God, enacted. It means to be or to make right in a moral or forensic sense. It can also mean equity and prosperity. It is not individual but communal. It is rightness, straightness, justice, virtue. It is *shalom*. God’s mission mandate and requirement is the prevalence of justice and righteousness with others, with the creation and with ourselves. Therefore, a mission mandate where justice and righteousness are not focal points cannot be the *missio Dei*.

Of course, some would argue that mission as justice will reduce the mission of the church to simply a temporal project. However, the overarching biblical message points toward a gospel of the justice of God. As the biblical notion of justice is prophetic, so too is the mission of God. It is this prophetic dimension that prompts the believer to get involved in society for the sake of the neighbour.⁴² The just God of the Bible calls us to be involved in the prophetic mission of God, working for justice for the sake of humanity and the whole creation.

⁴² Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 343.

Injustice can take many forms. One that has proved especially insidious and intractable is racism, so often used to entrench the power and privilege of one community by inflicting exploitation and suffering on another. Already one hundred years ago when it was founded, the IMC was aware that issues of race presented a very significant challenge to the integrity of Christian witness. Indeed, one of the first assignments the IMC gave to its Secretary J. H. Oldham was to write his seminal book on the race question.⁴³ However, far from the Christian vision leading to a decline in racism, the 21st century has seen a resurgence of this scourge in many different contexts. It has emerged again as a point of testing for Christian faith and Christian mission. The implications of this are explored by Seoul-based Zambian theologian Chammah Kaunda.

Race by Chammah J. Kaunda

Whatever might be celebrated at the centenary of the founding of the IMC, it will not be the disappearance of racism. Despite all the inventions, scientific and technological progress, abundant moral and cultural resources meant to humanise us, we remain deeply entrenched intellectually and invested emotionally in the primal chaos of racism. We seem to have failed to find a cure for the racism virus that has devastated us since our advent. Racism “is fundamentally a technology of dispossession.”⁴⁴ The racialized were ontologically emptied of their being and essence as well as of their lands and cultures. They were fictionalized into nonbeing and relocated outside of time into “zones of nonbeing.”⁴⁵ Such zones of nonbeing have turned into perpetual liminalities of living death where people feel trapped and unable to escape. Instead, they are ever mimicking *ubusungu* (whiteness). As Frantz Fanon laments, “since I realised that Blackman is the symbol of sin, I started hating the Blackman.”⁴⁶ The hatred of Black people by Black people and by all other races is a deeply rooted reality which is often unconsciously reproduced in the everyday negative attitudes toward people of African descent.

Whenever I think about racism, Saint Paul’s words always come to my mind: “But among you there must not be even a hint of [racism], or of any kind of [racist talk or thought], because these are improper for God’s holy

43 J. H. Oldham, *Christianity and the Race Problem* (London: SCM, 1924).

44 Achille Mbembe, *Out of the Dark Night: Essays on Decolonisation* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2020), 53.

45 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008/1952).

46 *Ibid.*, 174.

people” (Eph. 5:3). Even to combine Christian mission and racism is a topic that sounds morally wrong. The church was birthed through the outpouring of “the Holy Spirit on all flesh” to fulfil and actualize God’s vision of a post-racial world in which “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). However, we know that “humanity is not given. It is pulled up and created over the course of struggles.”⁴⁷ There have been calls to rethink the ideological function of mission in reproducing and perpetuating racism. Mission history reveals a tension of both resistance and complicity along the lines of slavery, colonial domination, and exploitation.⁴⁸

While some claim to maintain indifference to difference, the way I see it, there is no such thing as *in-between* when it comes to racism. Neutrality is illusory. One is either on the side of the racist or on the side of the racialized. Racism is complex and multifaceted because of its psychological nature. It is not just the racists who racialize, the racialized often reproduce and perpetuate their own racializations in the automatization of everyday mindset. These everyday mentalities are often the locus of racialization. Everyday life is permeated by gestures of racism and racialization. Racism defines and determines elements of everyday life such as culture, language, labour, social relations, sexualities, education, and knowledge production. The history of mission suggests the need to search for everyday mobilising discourses for advancing an everyday post-racial moral practice. The future reflections on racism will make more sense by focusing on constructing everyday mobilizing discourses for a post-racial world order where all lives matter. Here I outline five emphases.

First, the church must arise and confess Jesus Christ as Lord as a radical form of *participating* in and the sharing of Christ, “the *sharing of singularities... is a precondition to a politics of relation and of the in-common.*”⁴⁹ Jesus Christ is a metaphor of the humanity of grace that morally witnesses to accountability for the creation of post-racial social order and to the flourishing of creation, not because there it is a command but because there is a recognition that all belong to one another.

Second, giving attention to subtle ways in and loci from which racism and racialization are unconsciously legitimized and those spaces in which they are contested. For example, in the way local people *think of* and *treat* white people like divinities. The self-humiliation and self-condescension in

47 Mbembe, *Out of the Dark Night*, 229.

48 Paul V. Kollman, *Catholic Missionaries and Slaves in Eastern Africa: The Evangelization of Slaves and Catholic Origins in Eastern Africa* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2005).

49 Mbembe, *Out of the Dark Night*, 109.

the presence of white people not only reproduce self-racialization but also legitimises racism. It is crucial to engage the local identities which appear to be lived in the shadow of white universality. In what ways can we deal with local mentalities that reproduce and perpetuate self-racialization?

Third, we must overcome political correctness and identity politics that come with white liberals who appear to fight against racism but clandestinely, or perhaps unconsciously, maintain positions of racially prescribed power. As Slavoj Žižek argues, “black people and other races do not need white liberal identity politics.” The real fight against racism “is not a coexistence of particular identities, it is a struggle of universalities. It is not the white particular mode of existence” which racializes the world, it is the universality that comes with white particularity.⁵⁰ Following Žižek’s lucid observation, the future struggle against racism should focus on dismantling white superiority, colour privilege, and entitlement and decolonize and redefine white universality. How can we create safe spaces of equality to engage in mutual struggle to overcome political correctness and identity politics that both maintain monopoly and police particularities?

Fourth, reconceptualizing the theology of self-emptying (*kenosis*)⁵¹—becoming flesh, becoming human, becoming the other.⁵² In a neoliberal capitalist world, *kenosis* has often meant that the poor and marginalized, and nonhuman creation continue emptying themselves for the powerful to remain in power and the rich to become richer. We need an emancipatory *kenosis* that is radical and dynamic, promoting encounter and exchange between human beings, and between human beings and all creation. Such life-giving and liberating mutual *kenosis* would allow us to imagine and experience a post-racial humanity.

Fifth, healing a racially wounded world requires intentional and decisive commitment to equipping saints and discipling the world for the creation of post-racial societies. The mission of participating in Christ calls the church to live, demonstrate and develop a post-racial lifestyle and to resist cultures of death in the power of the Holy Spirit who does not segregate any flesh.

While various human races may never die, racism is surely curable.

50 Slavoj Žižek, “Evening Lecture—‘Disorder Under Heaven,’” 13 June 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hh-5m8Xm4-4>

51 Philippians 2:7.

52 John 1:14.

Historically, the driving force in Christian mission was often a matter of “mission to.” Mission to the lost. Mission to the poor. Mission to Africa. Mission to China. However, when we start to think of mission in terms of the mission of God (missio Dei) it raises the question of “mission with.” This distinction was acknowledged by Together towards Life: “We acknowledge that there is inherent value and wisdom in diverse life-giving spiritualities. Therefore, authentic mission makes the ‘other’ a partner in, not an ‘object’ of mission.”⁵³ Given that mission is about the initiative of God and the action of God embracing the whole creation, it makes sense to ask “with whom” we might join hands as we seek to play our part in the fulfilment of God’s missionary purposes. When this question is asked it can open the eyes of disciples of Christ to movements with which they might make common cause. Silvia Regina de Lima Silva, a Black feminist theologian from Brazil who is Director of the Ecumenical Research Department in Costa Rica, takes the example of Social Movements in Latin America.

Social Movements by Silvia Regina de Lima Silva

Social movements are an expression of the political and social dynamism that characterizes Latin America. They are shaped by socially marginalized people and groups, who, while aware of their rights and the importance of collective and community work, become agents working for their civil rights to be recognized. If, on the one hand, market hegemony continues to grow, on the other hand, there are people getting organized who propose alternative societies and communities, and emancipatory movements where new voices promote and act based on different ways of and commitments to social change.

From their diversity, social movements assert their transformative political action by taking on the neoliberal market that worsens the levels of poverty, inequality, and exclusion across the continent. The movements adopt different faces and do not conform to traditional expressions of democracy. Instead, their proposals are radical in that they demand greater social, political, and economic participation and bring these concepts together with demands from movements organized around particular identities and from groups defending their rights and advocating self-governance.

Women and feminist movements, Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendant peoples, peasants, youth, student movements, persons and groups with diverse sexual orientation, environmental groups, the older adult movement, and the landless movement are some of the faces of social movements across the continent. The action of these groups is threatened by hegemonic market forces

⁵³ Keum, *Together towards Life*, §93.

and oligarchic elites. The latter, together with fundamentalist religious groups, create media campaigns to delegitimize the demands of social movements, generating threatening situations that result in reversals of the gains achieved.

Liberating spirituality has been a source of inspiration and is part of the history of some social movements; it is a mysticism that strengthens resistance and inspires the groups in their mission towards social change and in their relentless fight for human rights and the rights of mother earth. When thinking about the social dimension of Christian mission in Latin America, churches are challenged to work alongside social movements. The Latin American liberation theologies emerged in a context of listening to and dialogue with the realities of marginalized groups, grassroots experiences, and social movements. In the context of the emergence of these theologies, mission was understood as opting for the poor, giving them a voice, and being a liberating presence in the fight for their rights, recognizing in their faces the face of Jesus.

A mission that is built through listening and dialoguing with social movements is taking on new challenges today. It is a mission that sets aside its own prominence in order to recognize agents within different social movements as subjects of their own history. Mission thus construed is possible as long as it radically embraces ecumenism. To that end, it will be necessary to rethink the theologies that uphold and inspire both ecumenism and mission. The challenge is to break away from the limits of Christian ecumenism, of a mission centred on the church and on a specific understanding of the kingdom. It means going to meet the God who reveals Godself in the other, in the religions of Indigenous peoples, of Afro-descendant peoples, in the insubordinate theologies that arise from feminist movements and from young people. To live the mission in dialogue with the social movements is to listen to God, who is present in the passion of the rural people and the peasants' movement for the land, and to learn from the environmentalists, the martyrs who give their lives out of love for mother earth.

In a continent where injustices have been, and continue to be, committed in the name of Christ, through rights violations, silencing, exclusion of individuals and groups because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, culture and religion, and denial of land rights, first and foremost, mission is called to a profound and permanent process of conversion. The future of Christian mission alongside social movements involves the task of deconstructing these fundamentalist interpretations with their manipulated and distorted images of God, which justify oppression in the name of a God who has been captured to serve economic, political, and religious powers.

The mission that is committed to walk alongside the social movements will recognize and strengthen their initiatives, which implies accepting the central role and agency of communities at the grassroots. It will definitively renounce the part played by the churches in the colonization of the continent by joining the decolonization processes promoted by groups committed to reclaiming and affirming their identities. This will give them an opportunity to rediscover a way of being among the impoverished and excluded from a place of powerlessness. It will mean abandoning the comfortable assumption that they hold the sole truth, in order to enter a place of listening to the different truths and wisdoms of those who lived and still live in Latin America and the Caribbean. This change of place and attitude will strengthen the Christian witness, enable us to experience and celebrate the Good News of Jesus in cultures and in liberation struggles, which, through conflicts, strides, and setbacks, live on through social movements. Such issues as the life of the earth, human rights, and the dignity of the impoverished and excluded will continue to be a place of encounter between social movements and those who bear witness to Jesus.

Among those who have suffered discrimination and exclusion and who are now rising to defend their identities and their rights are Indigenous peoples in many different parts of the world. For many of them, "mission" evokes mixed feelings. They cherish the gospel that they received through missionary endeavour, yet they cannot forget the cultural (and often physical) violence of the colonial conquest with which the missionary project was closely aligned. As the world has awoken to the injustices of colonialism so it has belatedly become aware that the once-despised Indigenous peoples carry wisdom that is vital to the future of humanity and the earth itself. Likewise, the church has discovered that people once regarded as backward and in need of enlightenment, turn out to have profound understanding of the nature and challenge of the gospel, from which the whole of world Christianity stands to benefit. Taking the case of the Americas, Lima-based Peruvian theologian Tito Paredes spells out what is at stake.

Indigenous Peoples by Tito Paredes

By Indigenous peoples, we refer to the original peoples who have lived in their respective lands for thousands of years prior to the arrival of the Europeans or other peoples who invaded and colonized their territories. The descendants of these peoples today are still significant, not only in numbers but especially because of their vigorous cultural and linguistic expressions,

despite centuries of exploitation and denigration by outsiders. According to UNESCO, “Indigenous peoples live in all regions of the world and own, occupy or use some 22% of global land area. Numbering at least 370–500 million, indigenous peoples represent the greater part of the world’s cultural diversity and have created and speak the major share of the world’s almost 7000 languages. Many indigenous peoples continue to be confronted with marginalization, extreme poverty, and other human rights violations.”⁵⁴

Mission and Indigenous peoples: The case of the Americas

The missiological implication of the above is the need to make it clear that the church’s agenda must include a holistic approach to mission that includes not only the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour but also, the struggle for justice, defence of the lands, and human rights of the Indigenous peoples of the world, as well as the promotion of their holistic wellbeing, language, and cultural expressions. This also includes their right to their lands, socio-political autonomy, and access to socio-political power in their respective countries.

In the case of the Americas, it is estimated that there are over 40 million Indigenous peoples as part of around 400 distinct ethnic groups who have their own languages, customs, social structures, and cultures.⁵⁵ They constitute between one-third and one-half of the population of Guatemala, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia.⁵⁶ Until recently it was thought that these populations were dying out and losing their ethnic identity by being absorbed into the dominant Hispanic and Portuguese populations. However, this is only partially true. The bigger picture is that in the last 40 years they have experienced an ethnic revitalization and have also gained political clout to the point of having been influential in the resignation of presidents and government ministers in several Latin American countries and having achieved the presidency of their country, as demonstrated by Evo Morales in Bolivia and Pedro Castillo in Peru.

The political independence of most Latin American countries from Spain and Portugal did not translate into significant socio-political benefits for Indigenous peoples. Conditions for them continued the same and in some cases worsened. In a sense, they still await their liberation and have become conscious that unless they themselves take the initiative and leadership to

54 “Indigenous Peoples,” UNESCO, <https://en.unesco.org/indigenous-peoples>, accessed 27 November 2021.

55 Anne Deruyttere, “Pueblos Indígenas y Desarrollo sostenible,” *Foro de las Américas del Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo*, 8 April 1997.

56 *Ibid.*

claim their basic human rights as full citizens in their own countries, non-Indigenous peoples will not willingly share power with them. As a result, there is a confrontation between Indigenous peoples and the non-Indigenous ruling elites who are unwilling to share the power they already hold. The globalized states in the world today, with Indigenous peoples in their midst, must learn to deal with the affirmation and revitalization of local ethnicities and cultures. Christian churches throughout the world are challenged to work for justice with Indigenous peoples today.

Indigenous cultures have been discriminated against throughout the world. When Indigenous peoples accepted Christianity, they were told, *explicitly* or *implicitly*, that their cultures were inferior or not good enough to express the Christian faith. Therefore, they should become Westernized and adopt Western cultures and worship. Yet Indigenous cultures are the space where God is actively involved—affirming Indigenous peoples and all that is good in their cultures. God is also transforming all that is sinful and demonic in culture. Cultures, as well as religions, are the arena of God’s activity and presence as well as of sinfulness and evil. Just as there are aspects of culture that are in harmony with God’s kingdom and values, so there are sinful and evil dimensions in cultures and religions that need the transforming power of the gospel. There are also elements in cultures and religions that may serve as bridges and connectors between the gospel and the people who profess a given set of beliefs and practices. Those aspects of Indigenous cultures and religions that do not contradict the teaching of the gospel must be affirmed and celebrated. Those aspects of our cultures and religion that drive us away from God and the gospel of Jesus Christ must be critiqued and transformed.

Indigenous peoples and the future of mission

Among many Christians, until recently, the “Christ against culture” attitude has been the norm; Indigenous peoples were told that unless they forsook their cultural ways, such as their music and musical instruments, they could not truly be Christians. For many years they could not worship God with their own music, with their own instruments, in their own language. They were denied basic aspects of their cultural expressions. In the last 40 years this has changed considerably throughout the world. Many Christian Indigenous movements have risen and have begun to revalue and rescue their own language and culture to express and live their Christian faith. New Indigenous leadership has been searching for contextual theological reflection and practice. They will continue to lead the Indigenous churches and peoples responding to the spiritual and socio-economic needs of millions of peoples, who yearn for full freedom and abundant life in Jesus Christ.

Indigenous people have great contributions to make to the world and the universal church, particularly in expressing practical solidarity with other needy human beings and also in their relationship to creation and the integration of the sacred and secular. An ecological sensitivity and integration of the totality of life are practical contributions and consequences of Indigenous people's holistic view of the gospel and creation. Indigenous cultures and religions can help global Christianity be more sensitive to aspects of God's creation. The integration of the natural and the supernatural, the integration of the sacred and the profane, the integration of the individual in the community resulting in behaviours of solidarity and reciprocity are some of the contributions of Indian religions and conduct to global Christianity.⁵⁷ Archbishop Mark MacDonald, National Anglican Indigenous Bishop in Canada, reflected that while the larger culture has lost its understanding of its relationship to nature, "A fifth of the land is under the protocols of indigenous peoples, 80% of biodiversity is under the oversight of indigenous peoples." There is no livable future for this planet that does not address the rights of Indigenous peoples. MacDonald affirmed, "We are braided together with each other and with creation."⁵⁸

Christian Indigenous peoples are part of the new centre of gravity of Christianity in the Global South. Andrew Walls reminds us that this means that "Third World theology is now likely to be the representative Christian theology."⁵⁹ In this light, global Christianity has a tremendous opportunity for transformation if it can get to know, value, understand, and contextualize the gospel by learning from the worldview and cultures of Indigenous peoples. The challenge is whether Christians elsewhere, especially in the West, are willing to get over the negative attitude that asks, "Can any good thing come out of Galilee"?

57 Tito Paredes, "La Nueva Presencia Evangélica Indígena," *ibid.*, 183–92; see further, Tito Paredes, *El Evangelio: un tesoro en vasijas de barro*, Colección FTL 8 and 9 (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Kairos, 2000), 125–32, 183–92.

58 "How Do We Make Peace with the Earth? 'We Need to Create a New Story of Reclamation and Rebirth,'" World Council of Churches, 5 November 2021, <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/how-do-we-make-peace-with-the-earth-we-need-to-create-a-new-story-of-reclamation-and-rebirth>.

59 Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996), 3–15.

Another set of people calling for particular attention at this time are the many migrants who are in the process of moving from one context to another. Migration has always been a feature of human life but is occurring today on an unprecedented scale. This raises issues of justice as many migrants have been forcibly displaced and, all too often, meet a hostile reception in their destination countries where they face xenophobia and racism. Yet it also represents an opportunity for mission since many migrants are people of faith. Indeed, evidence suggests that faith can be born or deepened through the experience of migration. A major dynamic currently at play is the arrival of committed Christians from the global South in European and North American contexts where church life is in decline. It remains to be seen whether migrant Christians can challenge or even reverse the recession of church life in the West. Already, however, it is clear, as Together towards Life observes, that “Migration has become a worldwide, multi-directional phenomenon which is reshaping the Christian landscape.”⁶⁰ “Rather than being perceived as a problem” it goes on to suggest, “migration can be seen as offering new possibilities for churches to re-discover themselves afresh.”⁶¹ Wanjiru Gitau, a Kenyan theologian currently based in the USA, explores what might be involved in the intersection of mission and migration in the future.

Migration by Wanjiru M. Gitau

Migration is imprinted on the soul of human existence. When I studied linguistics as an undergraduate, I was fascinated by the patterns of Bantu migration from central West Africa into South and East Africa. Among the wide variety of communities occupying the central and southern core of the African expanse, there is what anthropologists refer to as “family resemblance” in morphological and phonological structures among Bantu languages. These are starkly different from Nilotic and Cushitic languages in the same spatial range. Africa is a geographically complex continent with large barrier rivers, forests, mountains, and deserts, so the processes of people movements over millennia and centuries reveals the dynamism of migratory patterns.

Linguistic studies replicated across the globe makes for a revealing lens on how people moved and resettled in their present-day homes. Whether dislocated by conflict, disease, famine, and drought, or whether pulled by the quest resources, a variety of human and natural conditions have precipitated physical movement for millennia. Alongside language and diverse aspects of

⁶⁰ Keum, *Together towards Life*, §5.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, §75.

culture, religion is a portable and transferable artifact of human movement because it is embedded into intergenerational patterns of socialization. To me, this creates a rationale in how migration is going to play a role in the transmission of the Christian faith to future generations.

Christianity is a faith whose geographical spread and transmission is shaped by migratory patterns. The origins of the Christian faith in the family of Israel are constructed around a narrative about people who move after a few generations, and who then reshape the religious life of societies where they settle. Abraham's family migration from Ur of the Chaldeans to Canaan; his descendants to and later out of Egypt to Canaan. Israel's migration to Assyria and Babylon in forced exile. Young Jesus' refugee status in Egypt. Disciples' dispersion by persecution, and other disciples following Roman civilization and trade routes.⁶²

What is notable in all these ventures is that the faith is primarily passed along and down to new generations by families and in communities of affinities within pre-existing relationships before it is shared with strangers. As we move into Christian history, there is a similar pattern to be observed. In David Bosch's interpretation of the six epochs of Christian history, namely, the Primitive, Hellenistic, Roman Catholic, Protestant, and the enlightenment Era, one overriding factor in the transmission of the Christian faith is the geographic reconfiguration caused by people movements.⁶³ The Christian gospel, the good news of the love of Jesus Christ becomes a catalyst of transformation of new societies. Jehu Hanciles observes that the missionary movement was part of a much larger wave of people movement all around the globe.⁶⁴ Anywhere between 40 to 60 million people moved across the globe in the two most dynamic centuries of Christian mission. Mission studies usually focus on those who migrated to spread the gospel, but in fact the missionary movement was only a small part of that massive people movement in which the Christian gospel was then spread around the world. For those who ventured into new frontiers, their evangel goals were facilitated, or equally hindered by progress in transport, evolving communication technology, and expanding trade networks.

One notable thing about migration in our time is that in earlier people movements, the church was being introduced to new geographical frontiers

62 See further Jehu J. Hanciles, *Migration and the Making of Global Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021).

63 See Bosch, *Transforming Mission*. The sixth epoch is ecumenical.

64 Jehu J. Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration and the Transformation of the West* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2008).

for the first time. In the era of world Christianity, some form of the Christian church exists in nearly every country and continent on earth, even if such existence is minimal.⁶⁵ A significant majority of global inhabitants are marginally aware of the Christian faith. This means that the era of frontier and pioneering foreign work is possibly at an end. Instead, it might be more useful to strengthen the faith practices and witness of those who are already Christians, whether they move or not, because the subject of witness is now a “culturally familiar other,” not a “foreign other.”

What might this imply in terms of unity and collaboration in Christian mission? First, migration in the 21st century represents an opportunity to Christianize future generations by discipling existing Christians. Faith is passed within family and kinship relations, and then within ethnic networks. Migrants mostly gather in church groups already planted by earlier migrants, and any newcomers tend to gravitate to churches where there are cultural and linguistic affinities. Collaborative work should focus on building solidarity and resilience within families of migrant populations through reinvigorated discipleship, worship, and spiritual practices that affirm faith in the redeeming power of Christ. Robust faith, alongside community support, tends to strengthen the capacity to adapt and cope with the inevitable challenges of life in a foreign country. In such contexts, intra-migrant witness to strangers may then occur through networks cultivated for other purposes, for example, trade and work; but first it is about showing loving care for people struggling to adjust to a whole new world.

Second, in a migrant saturated world, world religions co-exist, even flourish side by side alongside worldview pluralism. Contrary to fears that other religions might erode confidence in Christ, religious pluralism is friendly to faith formation because it creates boundary markers that encourage conditions of religious competition, inviting greater rather than lesser participation in religious communities. In contrast, profane and desacralized societies with little respect for religion provide little incentive to believe. Mission activity needs to explore how pluralistic dialogue can become part of missionary outreach. In addition, technology-formed societies tend to be desacralized, either by worldview pluralism or by jaded Christian experience, not least the association of the Christian religion with invidious power dynamics. In these situations, religious pluralism introduced by migrants from different contexts encourages faith formation, particularly for families keen to preserve their heritage. Mission collaboration should create space for interreligious dialogue.

65 For details, see Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross eds, *Atlas of Global Christianity 1910–2010* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

Third, migration is usually from resource poor to resource-rich geographical locations. In migrant host societies, mission-minded communities or organizations need to be a lot more intentional in shaping the educational institutions that form the developmental life cycles of migrants, especially schools for children and youth. Migrants struggle to understand and adapt to host cultures, and the best place to facilitate understanding is through a school curriculum. Advocating for an education system, in curriculum, structure and resource allocation in ways that are sensitive to immigrants can empower migrants within the new host societies. Christian education in theologically shaped institutions, as well as through parachurch agencies can also play a role in imparting faith formation through developmental lifecycles of migrants.

A consistent element in Christian confession, across all generations and in many different contexts, has been the belief that the world was created by God. An equally broad consensus has marked the conviction that Christians are called to mission, even if there have been many different interpretations over the years of its meaning. What, however, has been rare is any committed attempt to think through the implications of believing in both creation and mission. In our time, with the earth itself at stake in face of climate change and environmental degradation, this has become a matter of great moment. Together towards Life in 2013 highlighted the damage being done to the earth by human greed and exploitation and asked the haunting question: "If this trend continues and earth is fatally damaged, what can we imagine salvation to be?"⁶⁶ Its conviction that "eco-justice cannot be separated from salvation" set a vital agenda for mission.⁶⁷ It is one that will loom large for the foreseeable future and that will call upon the churches to muster their theological resources. Of particular relevance is the Eastern Orthodox tradition with the premium it sets on belief in creation. It is from this perspective that Romanian theologian Cristian Sonea, based in Cluj-Napoca, addresses the question of ecology in a mission perspective.

Ecology by Cristian Sonea

From a pastoral and missionary standpoint, ecological issues officially became part of the agenda of Eastern Orthodox theology in 1989, when the Ecumenical Patriarch, Demetrios I, proclaimed 1 September the World Day

⁶⁶ Keum, *Together towards Life*, §23.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

of Prayer for the Protection of Creation.⁶⁸ Setting this day of prayer at the beginning of the church year is not a mere coincidence, but a warning sign by which Christians are made aware of the current dangers facing God's creation through uncontrolled exploitation and are exhorted to take responsibility for it (see Gen. 1:28). In contrast to the modern utilitarian vision of nature, this initiative brings creation (back) to the centre of theological discourse, as a mystery and a liturgical medium of human spiritual growth.⁶⁹ Crina Gschwandtner rightly describes the instituting of this world day of prayer as a "liturgical response" to the current ecological crisis.⁷⁰

All Christian eco-missionary praxis models should be based on the recovery of the cosmological and sacramental perception of creation, which was lost by sinning and straying away from God. Consequently, I will attempt to systematize the theological principles underlying eco-missiology and missionary praxis, using the eco-theological arguments of the "green" Patriarch Bartholomew I and other Orthodox theologians.

Theological key points for an eco-missionary praxis

Christian cosmology emerged as a synthesis of Greek and Jewish thought. It holds that the world and human beings are God's creations. Only in relation to its eternal Creator does creation exist and survive, that is why the human being, the crown of all creation, bears a great responsibility, as the one who can offer the world to God, as a priest of creation.

In order to accomplish this, God comes as close as possible to creation, bestowing infinite transcendental dignity upon it through the incarnation of the Word, the apex of the communion between creature and Creator. Christ's incarnation confers infinite dignity not only on humans, but on all creation, sanctifying the entire biosphere. This ecological aspect of salvation is emphasized by Orthodox cosmic Christology. The cosmic Christ is the eternal Logos of the whole universe, imperceptibly incorporating it and being inherent in all creation, because He rules over everything. Simultaneously, since Christ is always in the Holy Spirit, the incarnation of the Logos

68 Chryssavgis, ed., *Cosmic Grace, Humble Prayer: The Ecological Vision of the Green Patriarch Bartholomew I* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 5–6.

69 Gabriel Noje, "Teologie și ecologie în viziunea Patriarhului Ecumenic Bartolomeu I," *Tabor* 11 (2019), 27, http://www.tabor-revista.ro/en.php?module=content_full_en&id=11866.

70 Crina Gschwandtner, "Orthodox Ecological Theology: Bartholomew I and Orthodox Contributions to the Ecological Debate," *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 10 (1 May 2010), 131, doi:10.1080/1474225X.2010.510315.

causes the Spirit to live in the creation. Orthodox theology is, in the fullest sense, a pneumatological eco-theology.⁷¹

Furthermore, Orthodox eco-theology is liturgical. In the Divine Liturgy, at the epiclesis, the Holy Spirit sanctifies and transforms both the eucharistic species and the faithful into the mysterious body of Christ. Elements of creation are used in the holy sacraments and thus acquire a symbolic character of the divine presence. Therefore, we say that liturgical theology is simultaneously *cosmic* and *ecological*. It can give new impetus to ecological sensitivity, culture, and practice by opposing an understanding of nature as a mere object of scientific analysis. St Maximus the Confessor understood the universe as a vast “cosmic liturgy” in which heaven and earth unite in praise. The mission of the human being is to be a mediator in this cosmic liturgy.⁷² This means that the salvation of human beings cannot be separated from the transfiguration of the cosmos. All this presupposes the existence of an interdependence between humans and nature, and this is achieved within the liturgical act, where nature takes part in the mystery of the world’s transfiguration. Thus, if human beings want to overcome the ecological crisis, they must become liturgical beings.

Models of an eco-missionary praxis for Christian communities

Ascetical and monastic model

By living in harmony with nature and reducing their needs to a minimum, monastic communities send the message that the earth belongs to God and it should not be used to satisfy human greed. These communities can be regarded as a living protest against waste and lack of responsibility towards nature and all creation.⁷³ The ascetic ethos involves seeing the resources of the natural world as gifts from God that should not be abused but shared with others and with the generations to come. In this sense, Patriarch Bartholomew sees in the ascetic ethos the intention and the disciplined effort to protect creation by practising abstinence.⁷⁴ An ascetic attitude rooted in *metanoia* and abstinence constitutes a way in which people can adopt a correct attitude towards creation as a whole and thus the contemporary ecological crisis could

71 Daniel Munteanu, *Pe urmele iubirii: contribuții trinitare la o cultură a comunicării sfințitoare* (Târgoviște: Bibliotheca, 2013), 358–59.

72 Confessor Maximus, *Ambigua*, trans. Dumitru Stăniloae, Scrieri. Traduceri 5 (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 2006), 260.

73 See Chryssavgis, *Cosmic Grace, Humble Prayer*, 178.

74 Patriarhul Ecumenic Bartolomeu, *Întâlnire cu Taina. O prezentare contemporană a Ortodoxiei*, trans. Toma Ștefan L. (Sibiu: Editura Andreiana, 2016), 179.

be overcome.⁷⁵ Human beings, who have the tendency to conquer and rule the world through their will and to use it for personal satisfaction, can learn through self-denial not to place themselves in the centre of the universe.

Sacramental/eucharistic model

In the case of a sacramental/eucharistic model, life and all the relationships it involves are brought before God and through God they are constantly renewed. The emphasis falls on contemplation as a source of renewal. A praxis for environmental protection can be derived from this type of sacramental contemplation. The priesthood of the human being involves using the creation not just as a resource for survival, but as something that needs to be consecrated by human beings. When human beings take the world in their hands and complete it through their creativity then they allow the creation to truly exist and when they are “priests of the creation,” they become creators themselves.⁷⁶ This is how we become a missionary community that takes certain elements from the created world and offers them to God, hence recognizing that creation belongs to God, not to us. This way, creation gains a sacredness that is not inborn, but acquired: it is acquired when the human beings freely achieve their priesthood, thus fulfilling their missionary destiny.⁷⁷

Doxological knowledge of creation found in God's saints

Human beings can sanctify the surroundings through their life and actions, while the world conditions the human experience. According to Doru Costache, only saints, who always have a “cosmic psychology,” understand that everything that happens in the human being has a universal resonance and significance, either causing order or disorder in the universe. The saints managed to change their relationship with the world, by replacing the superficial attachment to creation, which enslaves us, to attachment to God, in which the human being discovers true freedom and the world the iconic function as epiphany.⁷⁸ “What is a charitable heart?” asks St Isaac the Syrian. “It is a heart that is burning with charity for the whole of creation, for men, for the birds, for the beasts, for the demons—for all creatures . . . He will pray even for the reptiles, moved by the infinite pity that reigns in

75 Alexander Maros, “The Ecological Theology of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I,” *International Journal of Orthodox Theology* 8:1 (2017), 167–68.

76 Ioannis Zizioulas, *Creștia ca Euharistie*, trans. Caliope Papacioc (Bucharest: Editura Bizantină, 1999), 87.

77 *Ibid.*, 88–89.

78 Doru Costache, “Omul și lumea în viziunea Părinților Răsăriteni. Sau despre ieșirea din criză,” *Glasul Bisericii*, no. 6–12 (1995), 95.

the hearts of those who are becoming united to God.”⁷⁹ The environment can and should be protected by legislation or by encouraging a more ecologically friendly attitude. However, in order to attain more profound and long-term changes, the entire system of relationships between human beings and nature must be reconsidered from the perspective of holiness.⁸⁰

Deep solidarity

According to this model, the church should act in the spirit of solidarity with the more vulnerable parts of creation. According to the Ecumenical Patriarchate,

We must understand that serving our neighbour and preserving the natural environment are intimately and inseparably connected. There is a close and indissoluble bond between our care of creation and our service to the body of Christ... The Church calls, therefore, upon the governments of the world to seek ways of advancing the environmental sciences, through education and state subventions for research, and to be willing to fund technologies that might serve to reverse the dire effects of carbon emissions, pollution, and all forms of environmental degradation.⁸¹

In conclusion, the incarnation and the presence of the Holy Spirit in creation are central to the development of sound eco-missiology and missionary practice. They create the premises for an integrative cosmology, in which both the human being and the creation have undeniable dignity. On this basis, several models of an eco-missionary praxis can be built: an ascetical model, a sacramental/eucharistic model, a doxological model, and, finally, a model of deep solidarity in creation.

Courage for the Journey

No one can know the future. A moment's reflection on the history of the IMC reveals that the future turned out to be very different in many respects from what its founders had imagined. In fact, the devastating effects of

79 Dumitru Stăniloae and Sfântul Isaac Sirul, trans., “Cuvinte despre sfintele nevoițe,” in *Filocalia sau Culegere din scrierile Sfinților Părinți care arată cum se poate omul curăți, lumina și desăvârși*, vol. 10 (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1981), 393–94.

80 Costache, “Omul și lumea în viziunea Părinților Răsăriteni. Sau despre ieșirea din criză,” 96.

81 “For the Life of the World: Toward the Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church” 2020, para. 76, https://www.goarch.org/social-ethos?p_p_id=56_INSTANCE_km0Xa4sy69OV&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-1&p_p_col_count=1&_56_INSTANCE_km0Xa4sy69OV_languageId=ro_RO.

World War I had already amply demonstrated to Mott, Oldham, and their colleagues that they had to deal with a much more sombre and challenging reality than the rosy future for Western missions that had been imagined at Edinburgh in 1910. Nor did the challenges grow any less during the forty years (1921–61) when the IMC operated as an independent body. It only became ever clearer that the time when Western churches and missions held the initiative in world Christianity (if they ever did!) was now passing. Yet far from this marking the end of mission, what was discovered on the IMC's journey was that mission is something much bigger than they had imagined. The Western missionary project was but an ephemeral and flawed expression of a much deeper reality. The mission of God (*missio Dei*) continued, inspiring new agency and new forms of expression.

It is this that supplies courage for the journey ahead. The mission does not belong to any human agent: it is the mission of God. Therefore, people of faith continue, not through any strength of their own, to discern the action of God's Spirit in the life of the world and to play their part in witnessing to the abundant life promised by Christ. In highlighting spirituality, discipleship, evangelism, justice, racism, social movements, Indigenous peoples, migration and ecology, contributors to this chapter have suggested points at which the mission of God can be discerned in the 2020s. From what we can see at this stage, these are points that might shape the future of mission. No doubt there are surprises ahead. How could it be otherwise when God prefers to work from the margins?⁸² Mission will be shaped by challenges and opportunities not yet imagined, as well as by further reflection on the Bible and church tradition, dialogue with people of other faiths, and ever-changing local and global contexts.

Meanwhile, one source of courage is the convergence taking place in the understanding of mission across the world church. This became apparent during the interaction prompted by the centenary of Edinburgh 1910, found definitive expression in *Together towards Life* (2013) and a compelling articulation in the 2018 "Arusha Call to Discipleship." One hundred years after the foundation of the IMC, both the world and the church are very different from what its founders imagined. Yet their dream of ecumenical mission—a shared understanding and a common commitment—has perhaps been fulfilled more extensively and more profoundly than they could ever have guessed. The vision of being "together in the mission of God" is one that supplies courage for the journey ahead in the face of the challenges of the next century.

82 See Keum, *Together towards Life*, §36–42; Risto Jukko, ed., *Call to Discipleship: Mission in the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace* (Geneva, WCC Publications, 2021), 59–69.

CHAPTER 13

Toward Prophetic Missionary Discipleship

Risto Jukko

The world has seen drastic changes in the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century. The Christian Church and its mission have encountered various changes and trends emerging in civic society. Sometimes the result of the encounters has been an adaptation, even submersion, into civic society; other times there has been a confrontation, leading to exclusion, even persecution, of the church. Emblematically, the World Council of Churches (WCC) mission statement in 2012 was *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (hereafter, TTL).¹

In Africa, Asia, and Latin America, decolonization has been rapid in the 20th century, creating new nation states with independent national churches having a colonial past. These churches have a special relationship with Western missions. In Europe, the destruction of the two world wars shook the confidence of human beings. The 20th century brought a slow erosion of the European welfare society, established after World War II, toward the end of the century. This slow transformation was caused by political, economic, and technological changes.² The phenomenon has caused a great deal of pressure on *diakonia*, or social work, and witness of the church, with repercussions on theology as well, as people in the both the global South and North have had increasing difficulty finding their livelihood. This happened at roughly the same time that two important interrelated factors were causing unrest in both the church and society: in the church, this was the “anthropological turn,”³

1 *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*, World Council of Churches, 2012, https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/Document/Together_towards_Life.pdf, accessed 12 December 2021.

2 Bryan S. Turner, “The Erosion of Citizenship,” *British Journal of Sociology* 52:3 (2001), 189–209, at 189.

3 “Anthropological turn” basically means a shift or change of starting point of doing theology from God (and church) to human beings and their needs and perceptions. It is born out of the tension between two great axioms in Christian theology: theology of creation, according to which human beings are created by God, originally without sin, and the existence and

with all its ramifications; and in society, this was so-called postmodernity.⁴ These developments led to a demand by people in the North and in the South for their legal, political, and social rights⁵—as well as cultural, environmental, and Indigenous rights and agencies. Echoing this development, TTL states that “people at the margins are claiming their key role as agents of mission and affirming mission as transformation” (para. #6). These ideological, economic, and philosophical currents have created pressures for us to think more deeply in theology and missiology about, first, the relationship mission has with *diakonia*, given that the service of the most vulnerable has always been important to the church’s mission and, second, what the appropriate answer of Christian faith and witness would be to the end of “great stories” claimed strongly and proudly by postmodernity.

The “anthropological turn” in 20th-century theology, with its consequences for missiology, is often associated with Karl Rahner (1904–84), one of the giants in Catholic theology. However, there has been another important “turn,” or “renaissance,” namely the “Trinitarian renaissance” in 20th-century theology, which has had direct impact on the theology of mission. The importance of the other turn to missiology was emphasized by two other Karls: Protestant theologians Karl Barth (1886–1968) and Karl Hartenstein (1894–1952).⁶ The former traced the original meaning of the word “*missio*” back to the intratrinitarian theology, in which God the Father sends the God the Son to the world, in his Berlin lecture “Mission and Theology” in 1932. Through Barth, Hartenstein became the first mission theologian to develop and introduce the concept of *missio Dei*. Hartenstein served as the mission director of the Basel Mission (1926–39) and was member of the International Missionary Council (IMC). The IMC meeting in Willingen in 1952 clearly highlighted that mission begins in God, from God, and by God.⁷ In other

impact of original sin in—and on—humans. The “anthropological turn” wants to highlight the centrality of human beings in the understanding of Christian faith. See, e.g., Anton Losinger, *The Anthropological Turn: The Human Orientation of the Theology of Karl Rahner* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000).

- 4 See, e.g., Jean François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).
- 5 See, e.g., Thomas H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class, and Other Essays* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1950).
- 6 On Karl Rahner, see Gerald H. Anderson, ed., *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions* (New York: Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1998), 556. On Karl Barth, see Anderson, *Biographical Dictionary*, 45–46. On Karl Hartenstein, see Anderson, *Biographical Dictionary*, 282.
- 7 “The missionary obligation of the Church comes from the love of God in His active relationship with [humanity].” Quoted in Norman E. Thomas, ed., *Classic Texts in Mission*

words, God is a missionary God, God is God in mission, God has a mission, and consequently it is theologically correct to speak about “God’s mission,” *missio Dei*. This insight found in trinitarian theology changes the relations between church and mission. Theologians and missiologists often say that the church has a mission.

However, the concept of *missio Dei* turns this upside down. Mission has the church. Affirming this, we mean that the church is the privileged way through which God works in the world created by Godself. Being a Christian, baptized into the fellowship of the church and other Christians, also means the privilege of being involved in God’s mission whose purpose is to call all people to an eternal, reconciled communion with God (John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:18–20). Swiss theologian Emil Brunner (1889–1966) has famously said, “The Church exists by mission, just as a fire exists by burning. Where there is no mission, there is no Church.”⁸ In practical terms, the less motivation there is to engage in God’s mission of the church, the less potential there will be for abundant life in the church (John 10:10)—and vice versa. Those churches in Global Christianity that engage with and see themselves as important parts of God’s mission in the world and orient themselves to give Christian witness to the world in various, contextual-defined and context-bound forms are churches that have active and dynamic spiritual and worship life—because they participate in God’s own life. They are “the only hermeneutic of the gospel.”⁹ In light of these trends and because we live now in the era of World Christianity and “world church,” mission and missiology have undeniably become polyphonic. In this concluding chapter of the Jubilee volume of the IMC Centenary (1921–2021), I will highlight two prominent aspects in current ecumenical missiology that will be crucial for the church’s mission in the years to come, and then I will focus on one specific theme whose importance has increased during last years and which will be a central theme in the 2020s and beyond.

and World Christianity (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995), 103. Originally in N. Goodall, ed., *Missions under the Cross* (London: Edinburgh House Press for the IMC, 1953), 241.

- 8 Emil Brunner, *The Word and the World* (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1931), 108.
- 9 British missiologist Lesslie Newbigin said, “I am suggesting that the only answer, *the only hermeneutic of the gospel*, is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it. I am, of course, not denying the importance of the many activities by which we seek to challenge public life with the gospel—evangelistic campaigns, distribution of Bibles and Christian literature, conferences, and even books such as this one.” Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 227 (italics mine).

Mission Is Discipleship

A prominent emphasis in the ecumenical mission theology of recent years has been discipleship. The concept combines the central elements of *Together towards Life* and places them before Christians in the form of a personal call by Jesus: “Come and follow me.” It makes mission more concrete, as it is so clearly linked with the life and ministry of Jesus and starts with the gospels. The concept of “discipleship” is nothing new in the ecumenical mission movement. The first official WCC mission statement (TTL being the second one), *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation* (1982),¹⁰ coined the expression “mission in Christ’s way” and defined discipleship as follows: “The self-emptying of the servant who lived among the people, sharing in their hopes and sufferings, giving his life on the cross for all humanity—this was Christ’s way of proclaiming the good news, and as disciples we are summoned to follow the same way” (para. #28).¹¹ This quotation is still valid in the 2020s.

The WCC Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Arusha, Tanzania, in 2018 underlined that discipleship is transforming in two senses of the word.¹² First, it transforms the disciples, and through them, the context or the society in which they live. But it is also transforming in the sense that discipleship does not mean a nominal membership of a church, a kind of only-Sunday-Christianity, but a change—sometimes a radical change—of values, attitudes, and behaviour, individually and collectively.¹³

Discipleship is both a thoroughly individual and thoroughly community-oriented concept, as nobody is a disciple in a vacuum.¹⁴ The word itself is relational: it implies a relationship between the master and the student, follower, or disciple, but also the discipleship’s relationship with the community of the master and with other people. Discipleship emphasizes this relational

10 In world mission, the WCC mission document was preceded by two other important mission documents in the 1970s, namely the Lausanne Covenant (1974; evangelical) and the papal encyclical *Evangelii nuntiandi* (1975).

11 Jacques Matthey, ed., *You Are the Light of the World* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005), 19.

12 See Risto Jukko and Jooseop Keum, eds, *Moving in the Spirit: Report of the World Council of Churches Conference on World Mission and Evangelism* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2019).

13 See Stephen Bevans, “Transforming Discipleship and the Future of Mission: Missiological Reflections after the Arusha World Mission Conference,” *International Review of Mission* 107:2 (2018), 362–77.

14 “The Arusha Call to Discipleship” indicates this clearly when it states, “As disciples of Jesus Christ, *both individually and collectively...*” (italics mine). The Arusha Call can be found in Jukko and Keum, *Moving in the Spirit*, 2–4, as well as in Risto Jukko, ed., *Call to Discipleship: Mission in the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. World Council of Churches Commission on World Mission and Evangelism Documents 2018–2021* (Geneva: WCC Publications 2021), 12–14.

nature of faith. It thus fits both the Western, more individualistic understanding of Christian faith and the non-Western, more community-based understanding of Christian faith. The emphasis on discipleship can be seen as one theological and spiritual consequence of the growth of World Christianity.¹⁵ Through discipleship, the questions of Indigenous peoples and those in the margins are strongly highlighted. In a certain way, Jesus's first followers were in the margins: they were poor people, mostly uneducated, and in themselves had no power to change anything in society. However, being materially poor did not mean having nothing: "But Peter said, 'I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk'" (Acts 3:6; see also 1 Cor. 1:26).

Discipleship is, of course, a well-known biblical concept. In the New Testament, the closest disciples of Christ were those who heard and answered positively to a personal call from Jesus: "Come and follow me" (see, e.g., Matt. 4:19, 8:22, 9:9, 16:24; Mark 1:17, 2:14, 8:34; Luke 5:27, 9:23; John 1:39, 1:43, 21:19). In Jesus's time, as today, nobody became a disciple of Jesus by accident. Jesus calls us to follow him, and it is up to each human being to respond in their own way, either positively or negatively—or to not respond at all. For the followers of Jesus, the only road is the one Jesus Christ showed them—after all, he called himself the "way" (John 14:6).¹⁶ In relation to mission, we see in the gospels that the disciples are not only called to follow Jesus but also sent out to mission to witness to him (Matt. 28:18–20; Mark 16:15–18; Luke 24:48 [Acts 1:8]; John 20:21). Witness is possible only because the Holy Spirit enables it, equipping each Christian to do it. The intratrinitarian relations (God the Father—Jesus the Son—the Holy Spirit) are clearly visible when Jesus in the gospel according to John commissions disciples and promises them the presence of the Spirit for their lives: "Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (John 20:21–22; compare with Acts 1:8).

15 It is interesting to highlight what happened after David J. Bosch's book, *Transforming Mission* (published in 1991), between discipleship and Global Christianity: "The WCC's eighth Assembly in 1998 discussed a proposal for a forum of Christian churches and ecumenical organizations that would bring together churches participating in the ecumenical movement, e.g. WCC member churches, the Catholic church, other churches, and Evangelical, Pentecostal and Independent churches, as well as ecumenical and para-church organisations." See <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/global-christian-forum>, accessed 12 December 2021.

16 It is worth noting that the first Christians were called "those who belonged to the Way" (Acts 9:2; see also Acts 24:14).

Many people, especially in the global North, think that discipleship is something individual, an intimate relation only between Jesus and his follower. While it surely is this, the relationship combines personal with communal. Christians are not left in a spectator's position, but instead are challenged both individually and as members of a fellowship. What do we do when we hear Christ's call: "Come and follow me"? If we answer affirmatively and start to follow him, this will immediately engage us with him "who lived among the people, sharing in their hopes and sufferings, giving his life on the cross for all humanity,"¹⁷ as well as with the other followers of "the Way." The communal aspect is inherent in the personal call. In the service of mission, disciples are "broken and poured out for others."¹⁸ Being a disciple of Jesus means being where Jesus is and, together with other followers of Jesus, participating in and sharing Christ's compassion for people.

The relationship between mission and discipleship is re-affirmed in the main outcome document of the WCC Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Arusha, Tanzania, 2018, "The Arusha Call to Discipleship" (hereafter, Arusha Call) in which disciples are called to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ in word and deed. Discipleship is defined as "a gift and a calling to be active collaborators with God for the transforming of the world (1 Thess. 3:2)."¹⁹ The Arusha Call is a sign of renewal and hope of mission. The mission document was approved unanimously by the participants at the conference in Arusha and has been translated into several languages. Its first systematic analysis and commentary so far, Kenneth R. Ross's *Mission Rediscovered: Transforming Disciples. A Commentary on the Arusha Call to Discipleship*, was launched by the WCC in December 2020.²⁰

South African missiologist David J. Bosch in his seminal book *Transforming Mission* talks already in 1991 about "missionary discipleship" as Matthew's paradigm of mission,²¹ and most Christian denominations in the world, at least during the last 10 or 15 years, have highlighted discipleship as a key issue in World Christianity. In his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* (2013), Pope Francis strongly expressed the relationship between mission and discipleship

17 Jukko and Keum, *Moving in the Spirit*, 17.

18 Ibid. See also Anthony J. Gittins, *The Way of Discipleship. Women, Men, and Today's Call to Mission* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2016), 63.

19 Jukko, *Call to Discipleship*, 12.

20 Kenneth R. Ross, *Mission Rediscovered: Transforming Disciples* (Geneva: WCC Publications and Globethics.net, 2020) <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/mission-rediscovered-transforming-disciples>.

21 David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Shifts in the Paradigm of Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 79–83.

and stated that through baptism Christians are always “missionary disciples.”²² The Arusha Call expresses the same theological insight: “We are called by our baptism to transforming discipleship: a Christ-connected way of life in a world where many face despair, rejection, loneliness, and worthlessness.”²³ Both documents see baptism as an entry to discipleship.²⁴ The Anglican Communion also refers to discipleship. Archbishop Justin Welby stated, “The best decision anyone can ever make, at any point in life, in any circumstances, whoever they are, wherever they are, is to become a disciple of Jesus Christ.”²⁵ In addition to the WCC member churches, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Anglican Communion, The Cape Town Commitment of the Evangelical Lausanne Movement (2010) also refers to discipleship:

We encourage all believers to accept and affirm their own daily ministry and mission as being wherever God has called them to work . . . We need intensive efforts to train all God’s people in whole-life discipleship, which means to live, think, work, and speak from a biblical worldview and with missional effectiveness in every place or circumstance of daily life and work.²⁶

In November 2019 at its General Assembly in Indonesia, the World Evangelical Alliance pledged itself to intentional, holistic disciple-making in the 2020s: “After much prayer and consultation with evangelical leaders across

22 “In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God’s saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are ‘disciples’ and ‘missionaries’, but rather that we are always ‘missionary disciples.’” Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium* (Vatican Press, 2013), para. #120, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html; accessed 12 December 2021.

23 Jukko, *Call to Discipleship*, 13.

24 The emphasis of baptism, for example, in *Evangelii gaudium* and the Arusha Call are in close connection with the Nicene Creed, “*confiteor unum baptisma in remissionem peccatorum*” [We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins] (1975 Ecumenical version).

25 *Intentional Discipleship and Disciple-Making: An Anglican Guide for Christian Life and Formation* (London, 2016), xi.

26 *The Cape Town Commitment*, Lausanne Movement, 2010, Part II, 3B–3C, <https://www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment>, accessed 12 December 2021.

the globe, we commit ourselves to promoting the following principles as part of our pledge to intentional, holistic disciple-making, fulfilling the call that our Lord Jesus gave us some 2000 years ago.” The principles are the following: articulating evangelical essentials in the 21st century; being authentic followers of Jesus; intergenerational leadership; global focus, and national impact.²⁷

In this rapidly changing world, the message that the universal church of Christ can bring to the world is the message of hope based on the gospel. To do that, the church needs to find new ways to express its inherent missionary nature, that is, Christians need to discover that as followers of Jesus Christ they are called to missionary discipleship in the world. Missionary disciples are called to face and confront the world as it is.

Mission Is Prophetic

Connected to the idea of missionary discipleship, starting from the individual level and advancing to the community level, is the prophetic role and witness of mission. A call to discipleship is at the same time a call to repentance²⁸ and prophecy, and it cannot be, and must not be, silenced. Since the sending of the first disciples, mission has had, and still has, a prophetic role as it reminds the whole world that not only mission and unity but also mission, unity, reconciliation, and justice belong together. Mission is done in prophecy, and missionary discipleship is prophetic in the sense that it calls people to change, conversion, and salvation. It has a salvific dimension. Prophecy is one of the key aspects of mission,²⁹ and its role has only increased in the 20th and 21st centuries, not least because of the role played by the IMC and the WCC’s Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. When saying that mission is prophetic, we talk about a qualitative aspect of mission.

27 World Evangelical Alliance, “WEA General Assembly 2019: Our Pledge—Holistic Disciple-making,” <https://disciplemaking.worldea.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/GA-Pledge.pdf>, accessed 18 December 2021. A personal and community-oriented dimensions are clearly articulated: “Being authentic followers of Jesus. An authentic follower of Jesus follows Him *personally and in community*. Every Christ-follower should be engaging with others and inviting them into a journey of Christ-likeness in every area of their lives. Authentic followers reflect the image of God in who they are and all they do, as the fruit of sanctification, for God’s glory.” (Italics mine).

28 See Jukko, *Call to Discipleship*, 52–54.

29 Indian missiologist Michael Amaladoss argues that “the term prophecy could be a useful shorthand to indicate this postmodern ecumenical paradigm, stressing especially the element of challenge to conversion and change. . . . this core meaning of mission could be well expressed by the term prophecy.” Michael Amaladoss, “Mission as Prophecy,” in *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization 2: Theological Foundations*, ed. James A. Scherer and Stephen B. Bevans (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1992), 64–72, at 65.

The true measure of mission is in depth, not in quantity. A missionary disciple of Jesus is not “someone who gives some thing that the other does not have, but some one who conveys a call from God and facilitates a response from the people, thus provoking [qualitative] growth in God-experience.”³⁰ Missionary discipleship means following the example of Jesus who was addressing people and challenging them to change (e.g., Mark 1:14b–15: “Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.’”). It is proclamation. It is also development and liberation, with the risk that mission could be reduced to human actions. It is countercultural in a secularized world, but it is not anticultural. Mission as prophecy is more urgent than ever because “the gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen. Consumerism has enslaved people. Ethnic and racial strife is on the increase.”³¹ Prophetic mission is carried out in prayer and in discipleship.

If missionary discipleship is more Christologically oriented within the trinitarian God, the prophetic role of the church and of its mission is more Spirit-oriented. In his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* (1975), Pope Paul VI famously said that “the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of evangelization: it is He [sic] who impels each individual to proclaim the Gospel, and it is He who in the depths of consciences causes the word of salvation to be accepted and understood.”³² It is the Holy Spirit that leads the church to move prophetically forward in the mission of God. “In a real way, the history of mission is the history of the Holy Spirit, the history of God ‘inside out’ in creation.”³³

TTL strongly highlights the pneumatological, and thus prophetic, dimension of mission. It clearly “highlights some key developments in understanding of the mission of the Holy Spirit within the mission of the Triune God (*missio Dei*) which have emerged through the work of CWME” (para. #11). Following this, it lays out the four chapter headings of the document: “Spirit of Mission: Breath of Life”; “Spirit of Liberation: Mission from the Margins”; “Spirit of Community: Church on the Move”; and “Spirit of Pentecost: Good

30 Ibid., 71.

31 Ibid. See also, for example, Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz, “Prophecy,” in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, 2nd ed., ed. Nicholas Lossky et al. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2002), 938–40.

32 Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi* (Vatican Press, 1975), 75, https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html, accessed 12 December 2021.

33 Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2011), 137.

News for All.”³⁴ The Arusha Call relates the work of the Holy Spirit with the search of justice and dignity: “We [as disciples of Jesus Christ] are called to joyfully engage in the ways of the Holy Spirit, who empowers people from the margins with agency, in the search for justice and dignity (Acts 1:8; 4:31).”³⁵ The search for justice and dignity is clearly part of the mission’s prophetic role in today’s world.

As a consequence, mission deals holistically with people and their struggles for reconciliation and justice, and it plays a key role connecting people and their contexts with the ecumenical movement, churches, and mission bodies. Mission enables the ecumenical movement, churches and mission bodies to see the reality of life as it is, including injustices.³⁶ It is evident that mission deals with questions such as racism and the rights of Indigenous peoples and those who are marginalized.³⁷ A good example from the evangelical side is the Micah Network (founded in 1999), a partner of the World Evangelical Alliance. It strives to build a bridge between a more individualistic type of concept of salvation and discipleship and a more community-oriented understanding of discipleship, that is, between “evangelicals” and “ecumenicals”:

If we ignore the world we betray the word of God, which sends us out to serve the Lord. If we ignore the word of God we have nothing to bring to the world. Justice and justification by faith, worship and political action, the spiritual and the material, personal change and structural change belong together. As in the life of Jesus, being, doing and saying are at the heart of our integral task.³⁸

The network calls this “integral mission.”

Being the sign and instrument of the kingdom of God, the church engages itself to God’s mission.³⁹ It has become common to call this witness prophetic in the sense that it challenges the status quo of the society around.

34 *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*, World Council of Churches, para. #11, https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/Document/Together_towards_Life.pdf, accessed 12 December 2021. In fact, the first subtitle in the chapter “Spirit of Mission: Breath of Life” is titled “The Mission of the Spirit.”

35 Jukko, *Call to Discipleship*, 13.

36 Ibid.

37 See in particular *Together towards Life*, paras #36–54 (“Spirit of Liberation: Mission from the Margins”).

38 Micah Network Declaration on Integral Mission, https://live-micah-global.pantheon.io/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/integral_mission_declaration_en.pdf, accessed 19 December 2021.

39 George R. Hunsberger, *Bearing the Witness of the Spirit: Lesslie Newbigin’s Theology of Cultural Plurality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 167.

The church and Christians speak out against forms of injustice in society, be they social, societal, political, or ecological. At the same time Christians are committed to one another and live out the “the only hermeneutic of the gospel,”⁴⁰ even if they sometimes forget, especially in the global North, that they “are sitting on a gold mine called the church, but unfortunately the very categories we have been taught as Western Christians make it difficult for us to notice that it is gold.”⁴¹ The kind of commitment to one another in a community, loving and serving others without counting cost, has been one of the secrets of the expansion of Christianity all through the centuries, starting from the first groups of Christians or churches in the first centuries: “See how they love one another” was the testimony recorded by the church Father Tertullian (c. 160–225).⁴² This is a testimony given of Christians, not by Christians themselves, but by those who were not (yet) members of Christian communities. Christians cared for one another and were called to be ready “to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and respect” (1 Pet. 3:15–16).

In addition to other Christians, they cared also for those whom the surrounding society did not care for but rather excluded, or cared only little for, such as women, orphans, slaves, sick and poor people, people with disabilities, and prisoners.⁴³ They made their community and the Christian faith attractive to others. Doing this, Christians followed “mission in Christ’s way.” Mission in Christ’s way also means taking risks. “To speak truth to power in this [prophetic] way is to risk a lot—the church’s position of respect in secular society, the continuation of the privileges it has had in many places since the time of Constantine, persecution in many contexts, even Christian one.”⁴⁴ And yet, the prophetic dimension of Christian mission includes speaking out for (and with) the “poor.”

At the beginning of the 2020s, mission has an important role in a world dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused deaths and tragedies

40 See footnote 9 above.

41 Stanley Hauerwas and Will Willimon, “Why *Resident Aliens* Struck a Chord,” *Missiology: An International Review* 19:4 (1991), 419–29, at 424.

42 Tertullian, *Apology (Apologeticus)*, Chapter 39: “But it is mainly the deeds of a love so noble that lead many to put a brand upon us. See, they say, *how they love one another*, for themselves are animated by mutual hatred; how they are ready even to die for one another, for they themselves will sooner put to death,” <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0301.htm>, accessed 12 December 2021.

43 See, e.g., Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

44 Bevans and Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue*, 48.

all over the world. The pandemic has limited our physical encounters with one another and forced us to meet virtually, online. At the same time, people have discovered their responsibility as human beings for one another in a new way. Political changes are quick and unpredictable, so wars and violent conflicts have not ceased. Uncertainty and fear have appeared and become routine in the world. In this context, the prophetic missionary discipleship of the church's mission is needed, not only to speak against injustices but also to speak forth, to witness to the gospel of hope. Creation care is a pertinent example of how prophetic mission is facing the burning issues in the today's world and speaking out for human life, and for the environment, God's creation, that is in danger.

Mission Cares for Creation

One of the most urgent and imposing themes for prophetic missionary discipleship in the 21st century is creation care. It has become clear that human beings have not been successful in tilling and keeping creation (Gen. 2:15; see also Gen. 1:28). Unfortunately, ecological questions related to mission, while not totally absent, have been somewhat disregarded in most missiological discussions—though not from the grassroots level. In ecumenical missiology, theology of creation has been always evident, maybe even so self-evident that missiology has only recently understood the scale of the threatening ecological disaster and the fact that the question of life in general depends on the actions of this generation. “Across academic disciplines and religions, we are slowly realising that the human-driven and induced ecological crisis, visibly manifested in global warming, ‘is a scientific reality, and its decisive mitigation is a moral and religious imperative for humanity.’”⁴⁵ Even if this seems evident from the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change,⁴⁶ it is only in the first decades of the 21st century that ecological concerns have become so urgent and critical that nobody can deny them. It has become clear that an ecological catastrophe is happening in both the global South and North. Practically everybody in the world is now experiencing consequences of the environmental degradation in one way or another. Mission from the global North cannot escape the fact that it has been part of Western societies and colonial economies that have ruthlessly exploited and extracted natural resources, in particular in the global South. Guilt is

45 Kapy J. Kaoma, “Introduction: Creation Care as Christian Mission,” in *Creation Care in Christian Mission*, ed. Kapy J. Kaoma (Oxford: Regnum, 2015), 1–12, at 1.

46 See a report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change published in August 2021: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/#FullReport>, accessed 12 December 2021.

there, and it cannot be denied.⁴⁷ And this is so even if it is “a complex picture in which missionaries have also become guardians of natural resources and prophets of sustainability.”⁴⁸ Ecological injustice (see Gen. 4:10–11) has led to the ecological crisis we are currently living in the middle of. As the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change affirms: “Many changes in the climate system become larger in direct relation to increasing global warming. They include increases in the frequency and intensity of hot extremes, marine heatwaves, and heavy precipitation, agricultural and ecological droughts in some regions, and proportion of intense tropical cyclones, as well as reductions in Arctic sea ice, snow cover and permafrost.”⁴⁹ Climate change brings poverty, even death, to many people in the world.

However, alarming voices have been raised in World Christianity, and ecological consciousness has grown. Since its assembly in Vancouver in 1983, the WCC has promoted justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. Ecological concerns and responsibility for the environment have been on the agenda of the WCC’s Commission on World Mission and Evangelism since the 1980s in the form of the project Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation. More recently, the WCC assembly in Busan in 2013 launched a call to a Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, inviting “Christians and people of good will everywhere to join.”⁵⁰ Justice and peace go hand-in-hand, and justice includes eco-justice, too.

Mission as prophetic discipleship can be seen as the Creator’s invitation to the church to participate in the *missio creatoris Dei*. The WCC mission affirmation *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*,

47 David J. Bosch has summarized this already in the 1990s: “first, it was the West, with its technology and mechanistic worldview, that led in the subjugation and exploitation of nature in the first place; second, it has become clear that the earth cannot survive if all were to live the way people in developed countries live; and third, the current exploitation of the environment in the Third World (for instance, the disappearance of the Brazilian rain forests and the damage to the ozone layer) is often directly linked to the global economic structure that is dictated by the West.” David J. Bosch, *Believing in the Future: Toward a Missiology of Western Culture* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1995), 55–56.

48 Dana L. Robert, “Historical Trends in Missions and Earth Care,” in *Creation Care*, 73–84, at 75. Robert mentions, for example, the first Shona dictionary compiled by Western missionaries in Rhodesia, containing an appendix with the names of all the indigenous trees and plants (75). A London Missionary Society missionary, John Croumbie Brown, named human sin as the reason for the destruction of the land in Southern Africa, in violation of God’s moral order (p. 77).

49 “Headline Statements from the Summary for Policymakers,” IPCC Sixth Assessment Report, Working Group I: The Physical Science Basis, IPCC, <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/#FullReport>, accessed 12 December 2021.

50 “An Invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace,” World Council of Churches, 8 July 2014, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/an-invitation-to-the-pilgrimage-of-justice-and-peace>. See also Douglas John Hall, “Creation,” in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, 2nd ed., ed. Nicholas Lossky et al. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2002), 271–75.

in its very first paragraph, talks about the triune God who “is the creator” and “created the whole *oikoumene* in God’s image” (para. #1). The act of creation was the beginning of God’s mission (para. #19). And the ecumenical affirmation affirms how all life is “interconnected in God’s web of life” (para. #4). The more recent Arusha Call challenges Christians: “We are called to care for God’s creation, and to be in solidarity with nations severely affected by climate change in the face of a ruthless human-centred exploitation of the environment for consumerism and greed.”⁵¹

The document “Common Call” issued by the 2010 Edinburgh Centenary Conference states,

Knowing the Holy Spirit who blows over the world at will, reconnecting creation and bringing authentic life, we are called to become communities of compassion and healing, where young people are actively participating in mission, and women and men share power and responsibilities fairly, where there is a new zeal for justice, peace and the protection of the environment, and renewed liturgy reflecting the beauties of the Creator and creation.⁵²

In the same year, 2010, the Evangelical Lausanne Movement had its own conference in Cape Town and released the “Cape Town Commitment,” which makes clear that our relationship to Christ is related to our relationship to the earth, as Jesus’s lordship (see 1 Cor. 12:3) is over all creation: “The earth is created, sustained and redeemed by Christ. We cannot claim to love God while abusing what belongs to Christ by right of creation, redemption and inheritance. We care for the earth and responsibly use its abundant resources, not according to the rationale of the secular world, but for the Lord’s sake.”⁵³

In 2015 Pope Francis published the encyclical letter *Laudato si’*, “On care for our common home,” in which he treats various aspects of environmental degradation. The pope establishes a clear relation between the worsening state of the earth and those who are poor and vulnerable: “The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human

51 Jukko, *Call to Discipleship*, 13.

52 Edinburgh 2010, “Common Call,” http://www.edinburgh2010.org/fileadmin/Edinburgh_2010_Common_Call_with_explanation.pdf, accessed 12 December 2021.

53 “The Cape Town Commitment”: “If Jesus is Lord of all the earth, we cannot separate our relationship to Christ from how we act in relation to the earth. For to proclaim the gospel that says ‘Jesus is Lord’ is to proclaim the gospel that includes the earth, since Christ’s Lordship is over all creation. Creation care is thus a gospel issue within the Lordship of Christ.” Part I, Chapter 7, “We love God’s world.”

and social degradation. In fact, the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet.”⁵⁴ Not only the head of the Roman Catholic Church, but also Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, the “Green Patriarch,” has paid attention to environmental degradations.⁵⁵

TTL affirms that mission has creation at its heart and that churches are involved in campaigns for eco-justice.⁵⁶ TTL also reminds us that God’s act of reconciliation includes not only people but also the whole of creation (see 2 Cor. 5:18-19). In this way, TTL makes clear that salvation cannot exist for humanity alone, as if the rest of the creation would perish. These prophetic words have not become obsolete in ten years: “Eco-justice cannot be separated from salvation, and salvation cannot come without a new humility that respects the needs of all life on earth” (para. #23). Justice, mission, and creation care are intertwined because “environmental action is a form of defending the weak against the strong, the defenceless against the powerful, the violated against the attacker, the voiceless against the stridency of the greedy”⁵⁷ (see Ps. 145:13-17). TTL points not only to eco-justice but also to God’s love and compassion, as God is the God of life who cares for God’s creation. “The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made” (Ps. 145:9). Theology of creation does not diminish the crucial role of Christology in the history of salvation. On the contrary, humanity was created from earth, and in the incarnation, God became flesh, that is, earth. Creation was made through the incarnate Word (John 1:3; see also Col. 1:16–17), so nothing exists without the incarnate Word.⁵⁸ The Arusha Call connects the good news of Jesus Christ with the world that suffers from sin and its consequences in various forms: “We are called to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ—the fullness of life, the repentance and forgiveness of sin, and the promise of eternal life—in word and deed, in a violent world where many are sacrificed to the idols of death (Jeremiah 32:35) and where

54 Pope Francis, *Encyclical Letter Laudato Si’ on Care for Our Common Home* (Vatican Press, 2015), https://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf.

55 See, e.g., Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, *On Earth as in Heaven: Ecological Vision and Initiatives of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011).

56 “Mission with creation at its heart is already a positive movement in our churches through campaigns for eco-justice and more sustainable lifestyles and the development of spiritualities that are respectful of the earth.” (TTL para. #20).

57 Christopher J. H. Wright, “The Care of Creation, the Gospel and Our Mission,” in Kaoma, *Creation Care*, 183–97, at 196.

58 Kapyia J. Kaoma, “The Earth in the Mission of the Incarnate God,” in Kaoma, *Creation Care*, 280–95, at 284.

many have not yet heard the gospel.”⁵⁹ Indeed, discipleship is missionary and prophetic, and it is the inner experience of Christ’s presence and love that moves prophetic missionary disciples to search for reconciliation and unity with other human beings as well as with creation (Eph. 3:16–19).

(Sort of) Conclusion

With World Christianity, world mission has become polyphonic. The concept used since the World Mission Conference in Willingen in 1952, *missio Dei*, refers to the fact that God and God’s mission are on the move in this world. As God’s mission is movement, it continuously builds bridges between life and death, between apathy and enthusiasm, between flexibility and institutional or structural necessities, between “ecumenical” and “evangelicals,” through the prophetic missionary discipleship of Christians. God’s mission means both deep theological reflection and holistic and practical action. Mission is practical because the triune God has become flesh in Jesus Christ, in the form of a servant—for the sake of our salvation.⁶⁰ The Arusha Call affirms, “We are called to live in the light of the resurrection, which offers hope-filled possibilities for transformation.”⁶¹

At the beginning of the 21st century, global problems like climate change have become so urgent that they necessitate common efforts not only by mission societies or churches or the CWME/WCC, but by all humans. It is important for Christians, as humans, to follow scientific argumentations and join global enterprises with other religious traditions and with all people with good will. However, for Christians, the starting point and finishing point in their mission is God and the mission of the triune God. That is why Christian theology and mission need to find a theological and biblical basis for reflection in addition to the practical solutions they may propose to global problems—for example, to creation care—as an integral and crucial part of mission and Christian faith. This task cannot be delegated to anybody else, as it is the task of Christian theologians and missiologists to do. It is the added value of the Christian Church and its prophetic mission. These reflections should include the relationship of human salvation and the salvation of the rest of God’s creation, the meaning of God’s reconciliation in Christ of the cosmos, and the meaning and purpose of “holistic (or “integral”) mission.” The first

59 Jukko, *Call to Discipleship*, 13.

60 In the Nicene Creed: “*qui propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem descendit de caelis*”; [for us and for our salvation he came down from heaven] (1975 Ecumenical version).

61 Jukko, ed., *Call to Discipleship*, 14.

WCC mission statement, *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation* (1982), rightly affirms that “Christians owe the message of God’s salvation in Jesus Christ to every person and to every people.”⁶²

Prophetic missionary disciples are those following “the Way”—that is, Jesus Christ. This happens through baptism into Christ in transforming discipleship, which means an ongoing transformation in their lives. It makes relationships and unity with other Christians possible. In this way, their hope will join the great vision given in the book of Revelation: “After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” (Rev. 7:9-10). Salvation and the future belong to God only, who calls all of us; and even if the future is unknown, the call to prophetic missionary discipleship will remain.

62 Matthey, *You Are the Light of the World*, 28.

This Jubilee Volume of the International Missionary Council, which was the historical predecessor of the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, is concerned firstly with the mission in the world in the 20th century of the Triune God and then also with the first two decades of the 21st century and, tentatively, with the future. With its wealth of references, the volume reveals the polyphonic character of world mission and evangelism and shows how present-day world mission is diverse, multifaceted and multi-layered in nature and ecumenical in its universality. World mission has been crucial in bringing about the global development of churches, now referred to as World Christianity. This is a volume that will provide an excellent source of information for scholars, ecumenical officers, mission administrators, missionaries and pastors. I would congratulate the authors and the editor and warmly recommend this book to all who are interested in world mission and evangelism in the past, in the present, and in the future.

Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca
Acting General Secretary, World Council of Churches



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