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A CENTURY OF ECUMENICAL MISIOLOGY

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Editorial

The *International Review of Mission* is a daughter of Edinburgh 1910. Some 15 months after the centennial celebration of the landmark missionary conference, the daughter also celebrates her hundred years of existence. The ad hoc editorial committee constituted for the preparation of this special issue felt inspired by some of the aims of the Edinburgh 2010 celebrations, and we offer this special gathering of articles assessing the journal, the field, and the context of mission.

One hundred years of history presents a *kairos* moment for looking back in gratitude for what God has made possible through the hearts, minds and actions of many people, leading to praise and a confession of faith. The retrospective also obliges us to acknowledge errors, failures, omissions and neglect, leading to repentance and a confession of sins. Missiology, however, although unfaithful if not building on past achievements and the wisdom gained through failures, aims also at discerning contemporary and future challenges. It looks for opportunities for witness to God, who loves humanity *and* creation as Father, Son and Holy Spirit and who in often unexpected ways and places is both mysteriously present and ultimately transcendent. This issue of *IRM* looks back in the first part to its own contribution to the development of mission thinking and practice. Then, in a second set of pieces, it addresses some milestones for the journey into the immediate future. Papers have been placed in the first or the second section following decisions by the editorial committee, whose members
remain aware that interpretation of history also results from contemporary choices in the same way that theological discernment of present priorities is based on experiences gained in the past. The classification we propose has its value but also its limitation, as is particularly evident for some of the papers that succeed in encompassing history, analysing the contemporary situation and offering visions for the future. This introductory editorial highlights the articles in a personal way so as to offer a first overview of the content.

Brian Stanley studies the origins of the journal and the principles that shaped its first years under the leadership of J. H. Oldham, with an emphasis on the scholarly study of missions and the coverage of comity agreements and cooperation meetings. At that early time, IRM reflected geographical and denominational limitations similar to those of the 1910 conference, even if the vision of its first editor was wider. It was a daughter of Edinburgh, indeed! Stanley Skreslet shows in detail how in the following decades the review slowly but steadily grew out of those first limitations. He distinguishes three major phases in the journal’s history, faithfully following and contributing to changes in missiology and reflecting changes in the constituency of the ecumenical and missionary movement. Andrew Walls reminds us how IRM had celebrated its 75th anniversary. This approach provides an additional perspective on the journal’s history and development, just as it also allows an approach to the way missiologists interpreted their own context in 1987 and how one could see it 25 years later. His reference to the wisdom coming from the Pacific people who say that “the future is behind us; we cannot see it; it is the past that is visible in front of us” is worth meditating on when reading a centenary issue. As part of wrestling with IRM’s history, the committee asked a former editor, Ana Langerak, to comment on papers that had particularly inspired her. She provides a very personal and fascinating selection that points to the way in which such a journal can empower mission-minded Christians to more faithful discipleship. What would be the justification for a missiological review if it did not motivate action and open new horizons? Athanasios Papathanasiou has carefully analysed when and how IRM opened its columns to Orthodox missiologists and theologians, slowly overcoming the original denominational limitations. His paper is not just a history of absence and presence of the “church of the East” (as Edinburgh would have said) in IRM. It also shows the invaluable contribution of Orthodox missiologists to an ecumenical approach to Christian theology and witness. With the exception of a few earlier individual contributions, it is only since the sixties that IRM opened its columns to Orthodoxy, enriching the missiological perspective on major issues such as salvation, ecclesiology, pneumatology and the relation to other religions, to mention but a few.

Several papers point to major changes that took place in the early sixties. One event
that shaped ecumenism and resulted in important debates among missiologists and mission practitioners was the integration of the International Missionary Council (IMC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1961. It seemed key to ask for a detailed analysis and presentation of IRM’s contribution and reaction to this event and the related developments in theology and mission. Mark Laing analyses personal and institutional influences with a particular emphasis on the role played by Lesslie Newbigin and the concerns raised by integration among evangelical circles. As do other papers, this one shows how decisions taken in the past still influence institutions and peoples’ memories, with effects on more cooperation or further divisions within Christianity. To conclude the first, more “historical” part, it also seemed essential to give space to a Latin American perspective, one of those that had been excluded from Edinburgh 1910 and from IRM for many years. Samuel Escobar takes a clear stand as to the serious mistake such exclusion was and legitimises with several examples the irreplaceable contribution of Latin American Christians and theologians to a contemporary reflection on mission. He particularly highlights how Latin American evangelicals enriched the 1974 Lausanne Covenant and shaped the discussion on evangelism and how their growth in the last decades in that region profoundly modified its religious landscape.

Papers placed in the second part of the centenary issue, although based on interpretation of developments in the last century, highlight challenges for contemporary and future missiologies. Some of these articles treat in more length points already mentioned by the authors writing in the first section. A “horizontal” reading of this centenary issue may thus bring additional advantage for a reflection on mission developments in the last hundred years. With few exceptions, authors have written their papers without knowledge of other inputs foreseen or received by the editorial committee. Kirsteen Kim provides an inclusive overall interpretation of the development of Christian landscapes since 1910, referring to globalization trends in society and specific changes in world Christianity. She highlights IRM’s reaction and contribution to these developments, and she ends with an outlook on potentialities for mission in future, emphasizing the need to articulate pneumatology with a dynamic ecclesiology. Damayanthi Niles shows the damaging effect of the tendency to narrow the original width of terms such as ecumenism, salvation history and missio Dei. She pleads for a radical change in approach and theological method, in openness to the mystery of God who embraces all reality, in search of a theology that gives equal weight to each person of

1 This bears some similarity with the matrix of the study process of Edinburgh 2010 with its “mission themes” and “transversals”. A “horizontal” reading of this IRM will allow, for example, for an approach to evangelism or gospel and cultures.
the Trinity, in creative interaction and relative independence. This is a prereq-
site for changing the perspective on those who in former time had been considered outside the edge of civilisation. It is time, following God, to live and dance with them. One of the heavy legacies from mission history, the conflictual relation between Christianity and Indigenous Peoples, is a case in point. Maria Chavez advocates for embracing plurality, opening doors and overcoming fears. She points to the way IRM has for decades considered Indigenous Peoples as objects of mission but also how important the publication by the review of the Barbados declarations in the early seventies was. Real consideration grew during the nineties, in parallel with the Gospel and Cultures study process of the WCC. The theological challenges have not yet been sufficiently addressed; but, as she writes, the time to present Indigenous Peoples’ theological richness to the Chris-
tian church has arrived. Mission in the third millennium must not be without Indigenous Peoples. Not without women either. Atola Longkumer offers special con-
sideration to the space IRM had given to contributions by or on women in mission. The result is quite ambiguous. Despite recent progress, there are many realms of theology and practice in which women are not yet equals. Longkumer sees a signifi-
cant role for IRM in emphasising their contribution to missiology but also to hermeneutics and biblical studies. Never again should the judgment on the journal’s treatment of women and mission fall in such terms as “too little too late”. Missiology underwent major changes in the middle of last century, as many papers published here attest: The scope was widened and God’s mission was increas-
ingly understood as marked by God’s trinitarian identity. It is, however, only since the late eighties that a further step was cautiously made: enlarging God’s mission to the whole of creation. Metropolitan Coorilos’s study highlights the fund-
damental implications for mission of the inclusion of creation in ecumenical theo-
logical discourse. This change of perspec-
tive will bear consequences on almost all aspects of Christian and church life. It must, however, be connected with a “kenotic anthropocentrism”, based on the model of Christ’s own dealing with power and dominion. Earthing humanity in this way will allow for combining the struggles for justice, peace, liberation and environ-
mental justice. It is in the same last decades of the 20th century that missiol-
yogy revisited the biblical approach to healing and reconciliation, relatively neglected in earlier periods. Paul Isaak points to the promising dynamics of renewal that such developments carry for mission and ecclesiology. They allow for a more encompassing horizon for personal and communal engagement, and they strengthen two classical ecu-
menical priorities in mission, the search for unity and for peace. In the cultural background of the author, the same vocabulary is used for peace and recon-
ciliation, conveying the sense that some-
thing that has been destroyed should be rebuilt.
Another major shift in mission thinking and practice resulting from the changing landscape of world Christianity has been repeatedly mentioned in this issue – the increasing role of Pentecostalism and charismatic movements and the related emphasis on pneumatology. The last two articles deal directly with this key development. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu understands the growth of Christianity in Africa as a way that God uses to preserve and re-launch faith after the decline of church life in the global North. A marginal continent at the 1910 conference, Africa has become a key player in the shaping of a new spirituality respectful of the Bible’s authority and of supernatural realities, as well as challenging moral relativism. Finally, Amos Yong draws the implications of a pneumatological foundation for Christian mission, thus highlighting the essential service Pentecostalism renders to Christianity today. Missio Dei must be sharpened by a reflection on missio Spiritus with its consequences for creation, redemption and the eschaton. Yong’s perspective covers all reality, from the most personal to the whole of creation. He proves that pneumatology will remain the most important building block for missiology in the coming years – a perspective shared by many men and women writing in this issue and also by the guest editor.

To provide additional insights into IRM’s history, some of the many editorials published in its first hundred years have been reproduced here. The selection is meant as encouragement to dig into past issues and discover in their own words how our predecessors analysed mission challenges and discerned God’s call to a faithful witness.

Before closing this introductory editorial, I wish to thank the members of the ad hoc editorial advisory committee: Meehyun Chung, Tito Paredes, Stanley H. Skreslet and Andrew Walls, as well as the WCC staff responsible for IRM: Jooseop Keum (editor), Marlise Freidig (editorial and administrative assistant), Paul Isaak (book review editor) and Michael West (WCC publisher). Preparing this centenary issue has occasioned extraordinary and wonderful team work. We shared many of the tasks related to the conception and preparation of such a special issue and experienced something of the community resulting from mission in unity.

Humility requires us to acknowledge the many limitations of this old, respectable ecumenical and missiological journal in general and of this centenary issue in particular. IRM has been and remains a human product, bearing and sharing our vulnerability. Out of this depth, we trust and hope that its authors, editors, editorial assistants and publishers have been and will be inspired by the Holy Breath, who gives life to all creation and leads humans to Christ, providing charisms in abundance for discerning God’s mission in history and cosmos and rejoicing in witness and solidarity. For that we thank God, for whom hundred years are like a day but for whom every second can bear
the promise of the fulfillment of God’s mission. God cares for the smallest of the birds and so, we hope, will also bless this limited human achievement of the last hundred years.

*Jacques MATTHEY*

Guest editor

**Editor’s Note**

Praise to God! As I said in my last editorial, I am thankful to God and former “clouds of witnesses”, who helped with and contributed to the continuous publication of *IRM* over the last one hundred years. I take this opportunity to express my special gratitude to the former editors who contributed to ecumenical missiology through their commitment to *IRM* on behalf of the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism.

My special thanks and recognition go to the Rev. Jacques Matthey, my predecessor, who kindly accepted my invitation to be the guest editor of this historic issue. I congratulate him on his remarkable leadership and contribution to this centenary issue. I follow Jacques in thanking the members of the special editorial committee of the centennial issue for their tireless work and joyful commitment. Among them, I would like to express my particular appreciation to Professor Andrew F. Walls for his forty years of faithful service to the *IRM* as the bibliography editor. Last but not least, my thanks go to Ms Marlise Freidig who, involved in *IRM* as administrative assistant since the 1980s, continues to serve *IRM* on a part-time basis after early retirement in June 2011.

*Jooseop KEUM*

Editor
Edinburgh 1910 and the Genesis of the IRM

Brian Stanley

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Abstract

The International Review of Missions broke new ground as a periodical designed for mission executives and missionaries throughout the English-speaking world. It was intended to be a means of international exchange of ideas and information within the new discipline of “missionary science.” This article assesses three aspects of its intended role during its first decade: its purpose to make the study of missions a scientific and experimental discipline, its limits related to Edinburgh 1910’s focus on Protestant work “among non-Christian peoples,” and its function of promoting a new ecumenical spirit among different missionaries and thinkers of different nations. The formation of the International Missionary Council (IMC) can be interpreted as a fruit of the IRM’s intent to create an ecumenical missionary outlook that was genuinely international in character.

The distinct purpose of the IRM

The primary function of missionary periodicals in the 18th and 19th centuries was to inform and rally support for missions. Most were associated with particular mission agencies and formed an essential part of the fund-raising strategy of those agencies. They were journals produced to inspire and instruct those who provided funds for mission efforts.

The International Review of Missions (IRM), when it was first published in 1912, broke new ground in the English-speaking world as a periodical designed primarily for the benefit and edification of the mission professionals themselves. However, it was not the first journal to provide a geographically comprehensive and intellectually responsible

1 The International Review of Missions changed its name to the International Review of Mission in April 1969, marking the transition from a Western-oriented toward a missio Dei understanding of Christian mission.
analysis of missionary problems. That honour belongs to the Allgemeine Missions-
zeitchrift, begun in 1874 by Gustav Warneck, the father of Protestant missiology. This
was followed in 1891 by the Danish Nordisk Missions-Tidsskrift, and in 1911 by the
Roman Catholic Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft. Among English-speaking Protestants,
however, there was no real equivalent to these early German and Danish ventures in the
emerging discipline of missiology. Since 1968 the Chinese Recorder had provided a
high-quality survey of the efforts of all Protestant agencies in China, and for India, The
Harvest Field, associated with the English Wesleyan Methodists, had fulfilled a somewhat
similar function. In the United States, A.T. Pierson’s Missionary Review of the World,
established in 1898, was the first Anglophone periodical that aimed to include all
Protestant missions. However, it was closer to the traditional supporter-oriented mis-
sionary magazines than to the German concept of being an organ of “missionary
science.”

It was this gap in the English-speaking Protestant religious market that the International
Review of Missions was designed to fill. British and North American agencies together
accounted for approximately 71 percent of all Protestant missionaries in 1910, but no
printed medium existed for their international exchange of serious reflection on the
goals and methods of Christian mission. The immediate stimulus for this was the
Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference, which was intended to be “a Grand
Council for the Advancement of Missionary Science.”

The vision of J. H. Oldham, the conference secretary, was that the eight published
volumes of reports, with their systematic analysis of the data painstakingly gathered by
questionnaire from missionaries serving throughout the world, would lay the founda-
tions for the construction of a mass of empirical knowledge that would form the basis
for a “science of missions.” Any science, however, is a living body of knowledge whose
organic evolution needed to be promoted and recorded by means of regular publication

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2 This estimate is based on the tables printed in World Missionary Conference, 1910, Statistical Atlas of Christian Missions, World
Missionary Conference, Edinburgh (1910), pp. 63, 65–76. Precision is impossible, for various reasons, notably, the figure for
those serving with the China Inland Mission (CIM) is not differentiated between countries of origin. My estimates include
the CIM, but exclude the Salvation Army and some other international missions where it is impossible to break down the
totals into country of origin. I have estimated that 20% of the total CIM force (including affiliated missions such as the
Scandinavian Alliance Mission) was drawn from the USA and Canada, following figures in A. Austin, “Blessed adversity:
and Foreign Missions, 1880–1980, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids (1990), p. 52n., which gives a percentage of 22% in 1900 and 19%
in 1921.

3 The phrase is taken from a description of the conference by the former English Methodist missionary in India, W.H. Findlay.

4 Stanley, p. 5.
and global academic interchange. The report of Commission VI of the Edinburgh conference identified the need for a scholarly review devoted to such a purpose.\(^5\)

In a November 1910 letter written to John R. Mott who chaired the conference, Oldham set out his four-fold case for the potential significance of such a journal. It would provide a means of communication between mission leaders in different countries; it would give “living and concrete expression to the theological principle of the essential unity of the task of proclaiming the one gospel of the one God who gave his Son to save the one human race and gather it into one holy fellowship and brotherhood;” it would help to impress on “the best and strongest minds of our generation the magnitude and dignity of the missionary enterprise;” and it would disseminate “some of the big thoughts which are in the minds of the most far-seeing among our missionary leaders and thinkers.”\(^6\)

When the continuation committee met in May 1911 at Auckland Castle in England, they resolved to establish an “International Missionary Review” which would “look steadily at the missionary work of the Church in its whole range and variety, with a view to penetrating to its deepest meaning.” The statement also explicitly referred to the promotion of unity in mission, which Oldham had urged to Mott, namely, that there was only one gospel for all humanity. The Review was not simply to “view the impact of Christianity on the non-Christian world as a whole,” but also to “develop a sense of the unity of the task of making the Christian gospel known to the whole human race, and thus create the temper which will make further advance in the direction of unity possible.”\(^7\) Oldham’s role as the principal advocate for establishing the journal was reflected in his being appointed as its editor, a daunting task that Oldham believed would “ultimately demand my entire strength.”\(^8\)

The inaugural issue of the International Review of Missions appeared in January 1912. The original editorial office was 100 Princes Street, Edinburgh, the headquarters of the World Missionary Conference and of its Continuation Committee, of which the Review was the official journal. It was judged by Oldham to be “an advance on anything we

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6 J. H. Oldham to J. R. Mott, 19 November 1910, Oldham Papers, 1/5/12, New College, University of Edinburgh.

7 Report “L” to Continuation Committee, meeting at Bishop Auckland, 16–19 May 1911, the Burke Library archives (Columbia University libraries) at Union Theological Seminary, New York [hereafter UTS], MRL 12, World Missionary Conference Papers, Series 2, Box 3, Folder 2.

8 J. H. Oldham to T. Tatlow, 22 May 1911, Oldham Papers, 1/6/1, New College, University of Edinburgh.
have at present,” but not yet of “the standard at which we ought to aim.”9 In a preface, the editor expounded his vision for the journal.10 The primary purpose was said to be “to further the serious study of the facts and problems of missionary work among non-Christian peoples, and to contribute to the building up of a science of missions.”11 The original draft, much more than the published version, makes plain the continuity with the spirit of the Edinburgh conference in the following respects:

**The IRM and mission studies**

The first aim of the journal was to make the study of missions into a scientific and experimental discipline, by distilling “large guiding principles” from “a thorough and fearless examination of the facts” and testing “all methods with a view to securing the highest efficiency.”12 Oldham’s original draft emphasized this even more strongly. “The tremendous task to which the Edinburgh Conference pointed,” he wrote, “cannot be accomplished without severe intellectual labour.” The IRM would bring Christian thinkers and scholars of Europe and North America into fruitful relationship.13 For this to happen, Oldham envisaged that articles written in languages other than English would be translated regularly.14 However, missionary problems were not to be studied “exclusively from a western point of view.” Prominence would be given to contributions from indigenous church leaders in the mission fields. Echoing a sentiment expressed at Edinburgh 1910 by Bishop Charles Gore of Birmingham, Oldham wrote that “Each nation has the capacity of apprehending more clearly than any other some particular element or aspect of the whole.” The IRM was to be a channel whereby the special gifts of each national church could be shared with the whole.15

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9 J. H. Oldham to J. R. Mott, 11 December 1911, Oldham Papers, 1/6/7, New College, University of Edinburgh.
10 A considerably longer first draft of this exists in the archives of the Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary in New York, with many markings by John Mott, to whom Oldham had sent the draft for comment on 31 August 1911. See “Editorial Introduction” in UTS, MRL 12, Series 2, Box 3, Folder 9; see J. H. Oldham to J. R. Mott, 31 August 1911, in same folder.
12 Ibid., p. 2; see also p. 71: the periodical “will be scientific in character.”
14 The published version anticipated occasional articles published in German or French, an expectation that was not realized; see *IRM* vol. 1 (1912), p. 2.
Indeed, there were regular articles in the early volumes of the IRM from Asian Protestant leaders, among them prominent speakers at the Edinburgh conference, such as Cheng Jingyi, the first (joint) secretary of the China Continuation Committee, and the Japanese Congregational minister, Dr Harada Tasuku. However, just as no indigenous African voices were heard at the Edinburgh conference, there were no articles in the first decade of the journal written by authors native to Africa. In Oldham’s mind, of equal importance to giving attention to Asian voices was making available to English readers “the scientific work and strenuous thought of Continental students of missions.” If the IRM could “accomplish for Anglo-Saxon Missions even a part of what the Allgemeine Missionszeitschrift has done for German Missions, its establishment will be abundantly justified.” In order to further this goal of enabling Anglo-American mission leaders (whom Oldham clearly regarded as somewhat limited intellectually) to benefit from “the special gifts” of intellect demonstrated by continental European mission thinkers, each quarterly issue of the IRM was to include an annotated bibliography of missionary books and pamphlets, published not only in English, but also in German, French, Dutch and Scandinavian languages. This bibliographical function of the Review was integral to its overall purpose.

It is noteworthy that the categorization of mission themes at Edinburgh 1910 was replicated in the selection, arrangement, and initial indexing of the articles in the IRM. In outlining for Mott his ideas for the content of the journal, Oldham referred to five areas needing further exploration: the church in the mission field, the Christian message in relation to non-Christian religions, the preparation of missionaries, the home base, and cooperation and promotion of unity. These five topics were largely reflected in the headings adopted in the index to the first volume, and in an ongoing way in the headings of the mission bibliography in each issue. The principles of classification for the new “science of missions” were basically those that had been used in planning the 1910 conference.

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17 An author named “Fulani bin Fulani, long a resident in East Africa,” contributed two articles in 1919 and 1920: IRM, vol. 8 (1919), pp. 155–72, and vol. 9, pp. 544–51, but this appears to be a pseudonym for a European author.
18 “Editorial Introduction” in UTS, pp. 4–5, 10.
20 IRM, vol. 1 (1912), pp. 761–4 for the index, and pp. 750–60 for the bibliography. From volume 2 a more comprehensive principle of indexing was adopted, but the divisions of the bibliography remained the same throughout the first decade of the IRM, with only one minor amendment made in January 1913, when “the wider relations of missions” was changed to “social and political relations of missions.”
The IRM and non-Christian peoples

A second respect in which the IRM stood in obvious continuity with Edinburgh 1910 was that the scope of the journal was to be expressly limited, as the agenda of the World Missionary Conference had been, to work “among non-Christian peoples.” At the conference this had meant the exclusion of Protestant missions to Latin America or to areas where Orthodox and Oriental Christians were in the majority. The IRM was also limited by its implicit concentration on the work of Protestant missions. There was a tension between Oldham’s theological perspective that Christian mission involves bringing the one gospel of the one God to the whole human race, and his pragmatic awareness that it made sense to confine the scope of the IRM to Protestant missions among those regarded as non-Christian. He was not wholly at ease with this limitation, which he wrestled with in the draft of his editorial.

Furthermore, Roman Catholic missionary efforts could not be ignored. But inevitably, the main focus of the IRM would be on those Christian bodies represented at Edinburgh 1910. In sending the draft to Mott, Oldham confessed that he had “found great difficulty with regard to the handling of the Roman Catholic question,” and stated that, while his preference would have been to say nothing about the issue, if something had to be said, it must be “frank and full.” This was severely curtailed in the published version, which made no explicit reference to Catholic missions, but merely alluded to those types of Christianity which “may appear very imperfect, whether by excess or by defect” but which could not be ignored, because the “non-Christian world” would include them in its view of Christianity.

Oldham also was sensitive to the controversial exclusion of Latin America. In the October 1912 issue he reviewed Speer’s South American Problems, written to justify the disputed right of Protestant mission work in Latin America. Oldham’s review indicated that he himself fully accepted this right, but felt obliged to defend the exclusion of the continent from the Edinburgh 1910 conference agenda as the product of a ‘convenient and natural’ practical distinction between work among professedly Christian and professedly non-Christian peoples. In response to Speer’s objection that any exclusion of Latin America from “the whole world task” of mission was theologically insupportable,

23 J. H. Oldham to J. R. Mott, 31 August 1911, UTS, Folder 9.
Oldham countered that the same was true of Europe: “Are all the countries of Europe to be counted as Christian? Can we regard even the most favoured nations as truly and completely evangelized?”

By January 1915, doubts about the validity of the distinction between professedly Christian and professedly non-Christian peoples had grown stronger in the face of the catastrophe of a world war initiated by the supposedly Christian nations of Europe. Although Oldham did his best to keep open communication with German mission leaders, the war created havoc for his hope of the *IRM* being a conduit for sharing missiological wisdom between Germans and Anglo-Americans. Articles by German authors had appeared regularly between 1912 and 1914, including one in late 1914 by Johannes Warneck, but thereafter there were no more articles by German authors until July 1920. What soon followed then was a survey of German Roman Catholic missionary literature. The war also seriously threatened the financial viability of the journal: in the first year of the war circulation fell by over 1,600, and in the second year by a further 572. The *IRM* survived only by the outstanding balance of £1,175 remaining from the Edinburgh conference being credited to its exhausted capital account.

The *IRM* and Christian unity

Edinburgh 1910 strictly precluded any discussion of “different schemes of union between different sections of the Church of Christ,” which was one of the preconditions for full Anglican (specifically, Anglo-Catholic) participation. Yet the conference was compelled to respond to the overwhelming sense that progress towards some form of visible Christian unity was necessary for the progress of the gospel in Asia.

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25 *IRM*, vol. 4 (1915), pp. 3, 60–61; Oldham first used the language of “catastrophe” in a reflection on “The war and missions” written on 8 September 1914 and published in *IRM*, vol. 3 (1914), p. 626.
28 *IRM*, vol. 9 (1920), pp. 399–410.
29 *IRM*, vol. 10 (1921), pp. 77–90.
In the journal, Oldham attempted to walk the same tightrope:

No attempt will be made to carry on propaganda in favour of particular schemes of union, nor will the Review take one side in matters regarding which Christians are divided. Nevertheless, the IRM was intended, not simply to preserve the point of view of the Edinburgh conference, but even to "enlarge" its "attainment." This would be achieved by "holding fast to the conviction that our Lord meant His followers to be one in visible fellowship" and seeking to promote "a new spirit and attitude" towards fellow-Christians. The Review would therefore aim to strengthen the links established at Edinburgh between workers of different nationalities and communions, and its articles would reveal, amidst diversity, "a real unity of conviction, aspiration, and purpose."

The January 1913 issue of the IRM began with "A Missionary Survey of the Year 1912", a feature which was replicated in subsequent years. Oldham attached great importance to the annual survey as a means of encouraging missionaries and mission leaders "to acquire the habit of thinking of their work in relation to the larger whole", for he believed that "It is this new habit of mind which will count for so much in securing co-operation."

The Review was thus intended to nurture an ecumenical mind-set based on what Oldham expected to find, namely, a common belief in Jesus Christ as the way, truth and life for all people; a new vision in the purpose of God for humanity; and a shared faith in "the power, goodness, and availability of God." In the original draft, Oldham's editorial concluded with a stirring exposition of the purpose of the Review, which he saw as continuous with the emphasis of the conference

- on the paramount necessity of a return to the supernatural and a recovery of a living faith in a living God. We should like the same thought to dominate the whole conduct of the present Review. The Review, if it is to serve any useful purpose, must be something more than a medium for the interchange of opinion regarding the affairs of the Kingdom. It must be an organ through which the living God can make known His mind and will.

Thus, the purpose of the IRM was to be more than a talking shop for the practitioners of the new missionary science. With its sights on what would become known as the missio Dei, it was to become an instrument of God’s salvific purpose to establish the

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32 IRM, vol 1 (1912), p. 5. The statement also appeared, with slightly different wording, in the draft of “Editorial Introduction” in UTS, p. 3.

33 IRM, vol 1 (1912), p. 5.

34 J. H. Oldham to J. R. Mott, 10 December 1912, Oldham Papers, 1/7/39, New College, University of Edinburgh.


36 Ibid., p. 12.
kingdom of God with power – as Randall Davidson, the Archbishop of Canterbury had so memorably reminded Edinburgh 1910.37

**Early content in pursuit of these purposes**

These three purposes of the *IRM* were to a large extent reflected in the early volumes. The first, to develop a scholarly science of missions, was pursued through the prominence given to continental European (especially German) mission thinkers, in contrast to their relative marginalization at Edinburgh 1910. The first two volumes had articles on the growth of the church in the mission field, and the Christian message in relation to non-Christian religions, including a series on Islam. Johannes Warneck’s series on the Batak people of Sumatra introduced English-speaking readers not only to a remarkable mass conversion, but also a distinctively Germanic version of the “three selves.”38 Substantial French and German books on Chinese religions, and a German New Testament monograph were reviewed, along with a Catholic article that had been published in the *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft*.39 Oldham’s bibliography of missionary literature first appeared in 1913, with the assistance of an international team of scholars.40 The *IRM* also published extended surveys by Oldham of noteworthy articles in recent periodicals, which included an international range of mission journals, as well as such titles as the *Journal of Race Development*, the *Revue du Monde Musulman*, and *Anthropos*.41

Secondly, the *IRM* initially kept to the original terms of exclusion from the Edinburgh conference. No article on Latin America appeared in any of the first ten volumes, except for some brief news in Oldham’s 1912 missionary survey.42 No Roman Catholic authors were invited to write for the first two volumes, though Catholic mission journals were included in the periodical surveys. But soon these exclusions came to an end. The July 1914 issue included the first article by a Roman Catholic, Frederich Schwager, on missionary methods from a Roman Catholic

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37 “Editorial Introduction” in UTS, p. 12; *IRM*, vol.1 (1912), p. 11. This section of the published editorial represents a substantial re-working of the passage in the draft about the purpose of God, cited above. For Davidson’s address see Stanley, pp. 1–2.

38 *IRM*, vol.1 (1912), pp. 35–6.


40 *IRM*, vol. 2 (1913), pp. 198, 403, 611, 814.

41 Ibid., pp. 356–72.

42 Ibid., pp. 62–3.
The third purpose of the IRM, to promote the visible fellowship and unity of the church in mission, was exemplified by covering the continuation committee meetings in Lake Mohonk (1912) and The Hague (1913), the Continuation Committee conferences held in India, China, and Japan in 1912–13, and the proceedings of newly formed “co-operative bodies”, such as the National Missionary Council of India (1912). Inevitably this aspect of the function of the Review became less prominent in the war years from 1914 to 1918, but by October 1920 the IRM was able to record a resumption of progress in missionary co-operation. The issue for that month contained Oldham’s account of the extraordinary meeting held in June at Crans on the shore of Lake Geneva which drafted the plan for the formation of what became the International Missionary Council. Although not formally a meeting of the Edinburgh Continuation Committee, the Crans conference was attended by Oldham and Georgina A. Gollock, his assistant editor since 1912, as representatives of both the IRM and the Continuation Committee, and by Protestant mission leaders from all nations, including four members of the Continuation Committee from Germany, who attended on an unofficial basis. The Crans conference formulated a provisional constitution for a permanent Protestant international missionary committee, a plan which matured at Lake Mohonk, New York State, in October 1921, when the International Missionary Council was formed. The sixty-one participants at Lake Mohonk included six from Asia and two who were regarded as “representing” Africa: Dr James Aggrey, a native of the Gold Coast serving on the faculty of Livingstone College in North Carolina, and Dr Robert R. Moton, the African American principal of the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. In a decisive departure from Edinburgh 1910, Latin America and the Middle East, along with black Africa, theoretically gained the right to be included in a pool of ten co-opted members of the new council, in addition to the seventy places allocated to member organizations from other parts of the globe.

43 IRM, vol. 3 (1914), pp. 488–505, 570.
45 See the index of articles under “Comity, Co-operation and Unity” in IRM, 10, 1921, p. 589.
For the first time, international Protestant missionary co-operation was beginning to mean significantly more than mere transatlantic missionary co-operation. It is difficult to determine the extent to which the IRM had prepared the soil for this, but it can reasonably be asserted that the Review had been largely responsible, in the words of the Bishop Auckland meeting in 1911, for developing “a sense of the unity of the task of making the Christian gospel known to the whole human race,” thus creating “the temper which will make further advance in the direction of unity possible.”

49 Report “L” to Continuation Committee, meeting at Bishop Auckland, 16–19 May 1911, UTS, MRL 12, World Missionary Conference Papers, Series 2, Box 3, Folder 2.
Missiology and the IRM over a Century

Stanley H. Skreslet

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Abstract

Since its founding a century ago, the IRM has sought to advance learning about mission strategy, methods of evangelization and mission theology. How the journal has affected the development of the field of missiology is the particular focus here, through a survey of exceptional articles. Three phases are identified: a first period when the journal closely reflected the outlook of the World Missionary Conference (Edinburgh 1910), but also began to innovate; a middle period of transitions; and the more recent period when issues of interfaith dialogue, religious pluralism, contextualization, and ecumenical relations have been prominent in the journal.

My intention in this article is to look back over the first one hundred years of the International Review of Mission and to consider how the journal has contributed to the development of missiology as a scholarly field of study. This is one way to celebrate the rich legacy of the IRM, which was founded in part to spur research on mission. Earlier, I wrote about the bibliography feature of the journal and its relationship to the conceptualization of missiology. Here I focus on exceptional articles and editorials that in retrospect seem to have shaped decisively how mission is viewed and the methods used to study mission.

To give some structure to this survey, I will recognize three distinctive but not entirely separate phases in the life of the IRM: its establishment under the direct guidance of

J. H. Oldham (1912–1928), the next forty-plus years that concluded with the editorship of Philip Potter (1967–1972), and then, various developments since the early 1970s.

The years 1912–1928

In a set of “editor’s notes” with which the first issue of the journal began, J. H. Oldham outlined the leading objectives of the IRM. “The primary purpose of the Review,” he wrote, “is to further the serious study of the facts and problems of missionary work among non-Christian peoples, and to contribute to the building up of a science of missions.”2 In the same essay, Oldham emphasized the analytical character of the creative enterprise he now headed: “the Review will be more than a collection of individual papers; it will be the organ of a comprehensive, systematic, and united effort to study missionary problems.”3 The collaborative aspect of the project Oldham described was repeatedly emphasized in his editorial comments. The journal’s writers and readers would be “learning from the past and from one another.”4 “It will be our aim to supplement, and in every possible way to co-operate with, all good work that is being carried on at present.”5 The review would seek to “promote Christian fellowship and foster the spirit of readiness to learn from one another.”6 This was not study for its own sake. Oldham recognized that the journal needed to serve the research needs of current and future missionaries, in order to be considered successful by its contemporary readership. Thus, he proposed further that the IRM would “study and sift the vast body of experience that has been accumulated in different mission fields, and make it available for the direction of present work; to aim at reaching large guiding principles, based on a thorough and fearless examination of the facts; and to test all methods with a view to securing the highest efficiency.”7

Brian Stanley’s article elsewhere in this issue explores the origins of the IRM and discusses several ways in which the concerns and outlook of Edinburgh 1910 shaped the journal in its early years. Stanley rightly calls attention to important articles in the first volume of the IRM from Tasuku Harada and Ch’eng Ching-yi, each of whom had spoken memorably at the conference. Subsequent issues would showcase the views of other emerging leaders of a worldwide Christian movement, including Chengting

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3 Ibid., p. 6.
5 Ibid., p. 3.
6 Ibid., p. 5.
7 Ibid., p. 2.
T. Wang (vol. 5) and Timothy Tingfang Lew (vol. 11). Lew’s article is a particularly fascinating study of missionary and indigenous worker psychology. His aim was to compare the expectations of foreign workers in China with the typical experience of native Christian evangelists, in order to understand the “psychological difference between the life of a missionary and the life of a Chinese worker, with him, or under him, in the same mission, engaging in the same tasks.”8 A sense of heroism was driving most foreign missionaries, Lew believed, and so provided a basis on which they could derive a sense of accomplishment and ownership over the professional work they were doing. In contrast, native workers usually had to be content with a subordinate status in the mission, which severely restricted their opportunities for personal initiative and provided few social rewards. In the main, theirs was a “faithful, dutiful, placid and routine type of mental life.”9

Lew’s article is not just an example of the IRM bringing non-Western voices into an increasingly global academic conversation about mission. It also shows Oldham the editor, in line with the conference he helped to organize, keen to inject into the discussion scientific insights pertaining to mission from a variety of disciplines outside of theology. Thus, in addition to Lew’s research into the psychology of mission, other analyses were undertaken from perspectives of sociology, anthropology, linguistics, history, and the history of religion. Several of these anticipated or perhaps even stimulated future developments in missiological research: Alice Werner on folklore (IRM, vol. 4) and the production of vernacular literature in African dialects (vol. 14), Henri Bois’ critique of Emile Durkheim and the sociology of religion (vol. 5), Edwin Smith on social anthropology (vol. 13), plus Oldham himself on William Hocking and some developments then taking place in modern philosophy (vol. 10).

In a remarkable article, Kenneth Scott Latourette previewed in the IRM the scholarly methodology he would apply to the history of mission when the first volume of his epic study appeared a dozen years later. Few could possibly have imagined the scale of what Latourette had in mind when in 1925 he demurely suggested that it might be possible for a single scholar to summarize what was already known about the processes by which Christianity had expanded worldwide over nineteen centuries. The intention was to “approach the task modestly, with frank recognition of the fact that all he can hope to do is to ask some intelligent questions, suggest possible answers and state such few

9 Ibid., p. 216.
conclusions as seem well established.” Latourette accurately predicted that “such a story, while necessarily imperfect and incomplete, would prove both inspiring and instructive, and if diligently read and pondered would be of incalculable benefit to the entire missionary enterprise.”

Oldham’s editorial stance also reflected the concerns of Edinburgh 1910 in other ways. Publishing two extended series of articles in the journal’s first decade on Islam and Buddhism, for example, signaled a continuing interest of the modern Protestant missionary movement to study other religious traditions, and not only for instrumental or strictly apologetic purposes. The IRM also became a dynamic space within which divergent views of non-Christian religions contended with each other, very much as they had within the Edinburgh 1910 meeting. In this regard, J. N. Farquhar and D. MacKichan had a particularly vivid exchange with respect to Farquhar’s fulfillment position in his influential 1913 study, The Crown of Hinduism. At the end of this dialogue, Farquhar forthrightly concluded: “The distance between Christianity and the different religions varies to an infinite extent; but the beginnings of the highest are visible in the lowest; and Christianity alone supplements, corrects, completes, and fulfills the far-away promise of each and every system.”

This sharp interest in the religions was part of a broader impulse at work in the IRM and at Edinburgh 1910 to understand the church’s context in the world as completely as possible. The journal reached for this objective most basically by providing a framework through which missionary “intelligence” gathered from different locations around the world could be shared efficiently with persons working virtually everywhere else. In support of this intent, a few early articles focused on how best to collect and present accurate information about mission, including W. H. Findley on statistical methods (vol. 6) and Charles Fahs (vol. 14) on the technical and organizational challenges faced in developing the 1925 World Missionary Atlas. Also, some extraordinary eyewitness accounts of what were contemporary events were tucked into the various reports and analyses, such as what was emerging then as a new “prophet movement” under the leadership of Simon Kimbangu. Readers of the IRM were similarly informed of Gandhi and India’s non-cooperation movement, thanks to the reporting of C. F. Andrews, among others.

As Brian Stanley has correctly noted, the IRM was slow to include articles from authors native to Africa, in keeping with the relatively low regard shown for the continent and its cultures at Edinburgh 1910. Although still quite modernist and evolutionist in outlook, articles reflecting increasing respect for the religions and social systems of Africa soon began to appear. Examples of this are the many anthropological studies focused on sub-Saharan Africa, including several by Henri Junod (vols. 3, 11, 15, 16), plus an essay by Edwin Smith (vol. 11) in which missionaries were strongly urged to build upon the best of what was deeply ingrained within Africa’s traditional societies. Donald Fraser wrote about the social function of children’s games, singing, dancing, recreational activities, and other forms of amusement often enjoyed in African village life, and invited readers to be open to “the positive gifts and graces” drawn from human culture that should accompany faith in all circumstances.14

As Diedrich Westermann pointed out later, such positive regard for African cultures ran counter to a more widespread assumption that Africans had “no religion, no language, no traditions, no institutions, no racial character of their own,” and so are “empty vessels” needing to be filled with European or American goods.15 In contrast, Westermann argued that the African’s past “will forever be the true basis on which his future should be built.”16 Therefore, “African community life is for us the mother soil into which the divine seed is to be sown and out of which a Christian society will grow.”17 The challenge then was for missionaries to find ways “to work together with the Africans for Africa.”18 It is significant that Westermann’s essay appeared in an unprecedented double issue of the IRM devoted to Africa, along with a number of other major papers about to be presented to the 1926 Le Zoute conference on “The Christian Mission in Africa.” Without question, the IRM had moved well beyond the minimal recognition given to Africa and its social structures at Edinburgh 1910.

Missiologically, under Oldham the IRM also broke with Edinburgh 1910 by broadening the scholarly community brought into conversation about mission. Most obviously, this change took place with respect to Roman Catholicism. Readers of the journal regularly received news about Catholic mission activities taking place around the world, reported in a matter-of-fact tone that was remarkable for its time. Notices of Catholic scholarship on mission likewise appeared with some frequency in the IRM, along with a few

14 Donald Fraser, “The Church and Games in Africa,” IRM 10/1 (1921), p. 110.
16 Ibid., p. 419.
17 Ibid., p. 431.
18 Ibid., p. 437.
articles written by Roman Catholic scholars. Good examples of the former are Martin Schlunk’s review of Roman Catholic missionary literature (vol. 10) and Otto Demp-wolff on Wilhelm Schmidt’s theory of culture groups (vol. 16). Friedrich Schwager’s article on “Missionary Methods from a Roman Catholic Standpoint” probably made many uncomfortable because he boldly challenged several “mistaken notions” concerning Catholic missions that he saw regularly repeated in Protestant missionary literature.19 Less controversially, Maternus Spitz recounted for a mostly under-informed Protestant audience the history of Roman Catholic missionary work in Africa (vol 13).

More subtly, Oldham used the IRM to expand the circle of academic missiological exchange by actively seeking to include contributions written by women. Women had participated in Edinburgh 1910, but in the IRM they were now writing on topics that no longer were strictly confined to “women’s work.” Outstanding among these were articles on missionary cooperation (vol. 3), fundraising (vols. 7, 15), and missionary preparation (vol. 13) by Oldham’s close colleague in the IRM office, Georgina Gollock, and also Ruth Rouse on the missionary vocation (vol. 6) and Pearl Buck on China (vol. 13).

The years 1928–1972

Before and after World War II, there were different leading concerns of the missionary movement, but the next phase of the IRM had an overarching theme to which many of the journal’s most influential articles in this period were connected. This was the growing sense that the previous mission era was very quickly passing away. It was increasingly common, even among the most ardent supporters of mission who were writing in the IRM, to speak of their historical location as occurring at “the end of an era.”20 For many who looked to the journal and the International Missionary Council (IMC) for strategic and conceptual guidance, this meant also that a new theological approach to mission had to be found, and soon.

One aspect was the church’s changing relationship to Western power. In the 1920s, under the notion of “trusteeship,” it had still been possible to think of Christian mission in terms of a useful partnership that bound colonial governments and missionary agencies together in working benevolently on behalf of underdeveloped

peoples and societies. Such had been the position of Oldham and many others at Le Zoute, but an alternative view eventually took hold within the pages of the *IRM*. C.F. Andrews, for example, sharply criticized 19th-century missions for “gradual intermingling . . . with that economic and political imperialism which more and more became a dominant characteristic of the white race.” Too many missionaries “have so fully taken their part side by side with the ruling race as to be identified with it in the eyes of their eastern fellow-Christians.” Far from strengthening the missionary movement, according to Andrews, cooperation with imperialism threatened to undermine all the good that had been accomplished: “since this form of territorial aggression in Africa and the East emanated from the same countries as the missionary enterprise, it became almost impossible for the peoples of Asia and Africa to dissociate the one movement from the other.”

The devastating implications of this critique by Andrews and others became impossible to ignore in the aftermath of the communist revolution in China. Writing anonymously in the *IRM*, David Paton drew the startling conclusion that the “débâcle” of Christian missions in China was a result of God’s judgment on a missionary era that had reached its useful end. Whatever their past accomplishments and early promise might have been, the missions in China had foundered theologically, Paton argued, either by presenting weak forms of liberalism to educated elites, who had to become Anglo-Saxons in their thinking to assume leadership roles in the Chinese church, or by resorting to simplistic notions of salvation that too easily appealed to superstitious villagers. In either case, the missions failed to confront the deep causes of misery in the countryside, a fatal omission that China’s Communist cadres had pledged to rectify. The church they had planted in Chinese soil was too Western to take root and prosper. The standard of living enjoyed by most missionaries separated them from the very people they hoped to evangelize. Those driven out of China had a responsibility to warn others to repent and change their ways, or they also would risk being driven out in the near future.

The post-colonial context was only part of the new day dawning in missions. Since the late 1920s, the *IRM* had also been grappling with the rise of secularism and its meaning for missionary agencies who had long assumed Christendom to be a permanent feature. William Paton (vol. 18), Hendrick Kraemer (vol. 19) and Emil Brunner (vol. 19) were

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21 The quotes in this paragraph are all drawn from C. F. Andrews, “Missions in India Today,” *IRM* 22/2 (1933), pp. 190–191.


among those *IRM* contributors who carefully examined the secular ideologies that were increasingly competing with Christianity on a global scale. Most starkly, F. Scott Thompson described the changed situation in 1933 this way: “A century ago the missionary often had to explain why he taught anything but religion in his schools. To-day many travelers ask why he teaches religion at all.”

Severe economic crises, the rise of totalitarian regimes, another world war, and the successes of communism pulled the attention of the church away from the problem of secularism for a time, but not for long. With remarkable prescience, W.J. Thompson outlined in 1945 what was likely to ensue in the post-war era. For him, the crux of the matter was that foreign missions now had to compete more directly with other agents of modernity. Multi-national corporations and secular philanthropic organizations (for example, the British Council) were rapidly expanding their reach. In more and more places, “the missionary finds himself far from being the only dispenser of western medicine or education.” Stimulated by these and other outside forces, national governments had begun “to realize their powers and exert themselves and develop the techniques of control” that Thompson thought would inevitably lead to restrictions on missionary activity around the world. Most of the major strategic changes Thompson suggested in response were adopted by major segments of the Protestant missionary movement over the next two decades. This included advocacy for religious freedom as one of several basic human rights, finding new ways to involve secular business people in the work of evangelism abroad, and the construction of mission partnerships with national churches.

In the middle of the 20th century the *IRM* served as a forum for technical debates over strategy and methods, in line with the approach of W. J. Thompson and many others. The journal also became a primary location where the foundational premises of modern missions could be challenged and new formulations attempted. An early example was by Constance Padwick, who pressed lyrically and with great erudition in a “North African Reverie” for the rejection of all crusading methods in mission. Especially, but not only in the Muslim world, Padwick believed the church had been given an opportunity to suffer on behalf of Christ. She recalled the examples of St Francis, Raymond Lull, Temple Gairdner, Lilias Trotter, and Charles Foucauld to illustrate what it might mean to “abandon all power but Spirit-power” in the cause of Christian mission. While each had experienced great disappointment according to the usual measures of missionary success, Padwick recommended their “school of faith and

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surrender” as the surest path to the deepest motive of Christian mission: “the surrender of love to God as revealed in Jesus Christ.”

Many others contributing to the IRM in the 1930s were eager to probe the vision for mission articulated in the Hocking report or to explore the generative capacity of dialectical theology. J.H. Oldham underlined the importance of the latter for mission theology in a series of four articles on Emil Brunner’s ethical teaching (vol. 22). No theologian before or since has received this kind of attention in the IRM. Karl Hartenstein presented a heartfelt synopsis of the Barthian position in an article that summed readers to embrace its uncompromising point of view. Hocking’s proposals were analysed in a pair of extended reviews by Kenneth Scott Latourette and John Mackay.

In the late 1930s, the ideas of Barth, Brunner, and Hocking were still very much on the minds of mission leaders around the world. Hendrik Kraemer, on behalf of the IMC, engaged them all and then attempted his own reformulation of mission theology, published in 1938 as The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World. Various reactions to Kraemer’s book and the results of the IMC meeting at Tambaram (for which his volume had been prepared) dominated much of the discussion that followed in the IRM. Oliver Quick clarified what may have appeared to be inconclusive and contradictory. He suggested that a large-scale shift in perspective was taking place throughout the missionary movement. Under the influence of Barth, theology in the 1930s was now leaning heavily toward a Hebraic metaphysic and away from the Hellenistic humanism that had undergirded 19th-century liberalism and most modernist missions. Building on Quick’s reading of the situation, it would appear that another decisive swing took place soon after World War II.

The IRM was right in the middle of what was becoming a thorough reappraisal of the missionary task. Two articles by Johannes Hoekendijk led the way and to a great

29 Oliver C. Quick, “The Present Situation in Christian Theology,” IRM 27/4 (1938), pp. 569–580. Acknowledging the limitations of 19th-century liberalism, due to the legacy of original sin, Quick nevertheless worried about the consequences of rejecting its intellectual heritage wholesale. If it is true that the world is entering a new dark age, he cautioned, “the Church is now, or soon will be, the only remaining trustee of all the treasures of Hellenism – its belief in reason, persuasion, beauty, justice, freedom and the moral consciousness of man” (p. 580). One day, he suggested, the Christian missionary would need these gifts from the past, in order to build for the future.
extent set the agenda for mission theology for several decades to come. In the first of these, Hoekendijk proposed a fresh set of terms for conceptualizing mission and evangelism.\textsuperscript{30} He argued that authentic evangelism cannot be an effort to shore up the church’s institutions, an exercise in propaganda, a project to restore Christendom or reassert Christian prerogatives in society. God’s call to the church rather is to proclaim the gospel message (\textit{kerygma}), to offer service in Christ’s name (\textit{diakonia}), and to build up gospel-centered communities (\textit{koinonia}). Encompassing all these activities is the biblical concept of \textit{shalom}, a messianic and therefore eschatological reference point that Hoekendijk defined as “peace, integrity, community, harmony and justice.”\textsuperscript{31} In a second seminal article, Hoekendijk laid the blame for shortsighted theologies of mission on too much “church-centric” thinking in missionary circles.\textsuperscript{32} It is better to conceive of the church as an apostolic community that forgets itself while participating fully in Christ’s radical ministry, than to see it as the beginning or endpoint of mission. If the world could be filled with more churches of this kind, according to Hoekendijk, the need for extra-ecclesial mission societies would soon wither away.\textsuperscript{33}

Hoekendijk’s influence grew to such an extent that Donald McGavran would complain in the mid-1960s that \textit{kerygma}, \textit{diakonia}, and \textit{koinonia} had become a “sacred triad” to which many in the missionary movement were subordinating the ultimate aims of mission and evangelism.\textsuperscript{34} McGavran’s protests were offered in the midst of a particularly intense ecumenical conversation about the post-colonial future of mission theology which was unfolding in the IRM. A few highlights may be recounted briefly.

Hans Margull indicated the standpoint that was eventually adopted in 1968 at Uppsala, with his early update on the progress of the study process on the missionary structure of the congregations that had been launched at the New Delhi assembly of the WCC.\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Missio Dei} language and the emerging sequence of “God – world – church” stand out in Margull’s account.

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., p. 168.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., p. 335.
\textsuperscript{34} Donald A. McGavran, “Wrong Strategy: The Real Crisis in Missions,” \textit{IRM} 54/4 (1965), p. 455.
In the following year, Kenneth Strachan promoted an approach to evangelism developed by some Protestants in Latin America, called “Evangelism in Depth.” Victor Hayward replied sharply in the same volume that whatever success evangelicals may have had in uniting churches and filling their pews through this approach, he would reject it as unbiblical “if those who are most unselfishly concerned for the well-being of their fellow men reject the faith as irrelevant in their revolutionary world, fit only to foster individual and self-regarding piety.”

The basic dispute then was reframed slightly in terms of proclamation versus service. Service, according to Günter Linnenbrink, has to be seen as an indispensable form of mission, equal to proclamation, with a capacity to become “transcendent” through “its humanity and solidarity with others.” For Linnenbrink, an intention to serve God is what differentiated Christian from more general humanitarian service. Harold Lindsell contested this, and insisted with McGavran and other traditionalists that service still had but two proper functions to play in mission: to open doors for proclamation or to follow conversion as a work of the Spirit. After Uppsala, M.M. Thomas and others carried forward the idea of humanization as salvation, much to the consternation of Peter Beyerhaus. Reflecting more specifically on the situation of the church in Latin America, Gonzalo Castillo-Cárdenas declared that the “true meaning” of the gospel is to be found in the “liberation of the oppressed.” This affirmation was fully consistent with Thomas Wieser’s suggestion that persons and groups could “experience liberation and social righteousness as salvation” in the “struggle for human liberation.”

Perhaps the most nuanced position presented in the IRM with respect to mission theology during these tumultuous years of transition was crafted by its editor at the time. Lesslie Newbigin agreed with Hoekendijk that church-centric thinking about mission was flawed and had become outmoded. He also acknowledged the passing

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of Christendom in the ecumenical acknowledgment that mission should come from all six continents. According to his autobiography, Newbigin had serious reservations at the time about the assumptions of church growth missiology. He also had been as responsible as anyone for the integration in 1961 of the IMC with the WCC, an action that many evangelicals considered a betrayal of the modern Protestant missions movement. Yet, there was something about Christian witness that left Newbigin unsatisfied with inter-church aid programmes, revolutionary protests, or cooperation with secular development initiatives. Without a forthright call to faith in Jesus Christ, efforts at outreach were bound to be truncated, in his view, since “missions are concerned with the radical conversion that leads men to explicit allegiance to Jesus Christ.” Persistently but without great success, Newbigin continued to advocate within the WCC for direct evangelism, arguing that it still mattered whether or not people came to faith in Jesus Christ. Because of this he still saw “a specific need for groups whose commitment is to create a Christian presence in situations where Jesus is not known and named as Saviour and Lord.” Deep down in Newbigin’s thought, something about Kraemer’s position as articulated at Tambaram still rang true, no matter how correct Hoekendijk and his most fervent followers may have been about so many things.

The decision in 1969 to drop the “s” from the title of the IRM marked the formal arrival of the new age in mission that had for so long been under discussion. Even so, it was still not entirely clear what might lie ahead. Some now argued with Emerito Nacpil, for example, that a singular mission undertaken at God’s initiative meant the end of a need for foreign missionaries altogether. Alternatively, David Barrett was predicting a surge in evangelization, led by non-Westerners, that was about to transform Africa into a demographically Christian continent, with huge implications for the study of world

45 In another article in this volume, Mark Laing examines the reasons for and the process by which the IMC was integrated into the WCC, and his assessment of the results.
46 Lesslie Newbigin, “From the Editor,” *IRM* 54/2 (1965), p. 149.
48 Ibid., p. 253.
Christianity and mission.52 Certainly something had changed with respect to the constituencies addressed most directly in the \textit{IRM}. First, many Orthodox churches had been integrated along with the IMC into the life of the WCC, so that from 1961 an Orthodox perspective is added to virtually every theme explored in the \textit{IRM}, as Athanasius Papathanasiou’s article in this volume details. Following Vatican II, the \textit{IRM} also became an increasingly vital medium of intellectual exchange through which progressive Roman Catholic missiologists could interact with ecumenical Protestant theologians of mission, to the benefit of both. Evangelical Protestants, however, were not as likely to publish in the \textit{IRM} as they had been prior to Uppsala.

The years 1973–2011

Another change was occurring in the 1970s that would also impact the character and reach of the \textit{IRM}. This was the founding of several other major journals in English concerned with the study of mission, including \textit{Missiology} (succeeding \textit{Practical Anthropology}), \textit{Missionalia}, the \textit{IAMS Newsletter} (later \textit{Mission Studies}), and the \textit{Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research} (later \textit{International Bulletin of Missionary Research}). Already established previously was the \textit{Evangelical Missions Quarterly}. Most of these journals were produced outside of Europe, which put their editorial staffs in quite different contexts than that of Geneva. None of them had the same relationship to the WCC, its member churches, or its institutional life as did the \textit{IRM}. The proliferation of venues available for the publication of missiological research in this period meant that each of these journals tended to focus on a select range of issues of particular interest to its primary readers, as the \textit{IRM} had done also. Not surprisingly, the practice of doing a comprehensive “world survey” of the mission fields (even when modified to include all six continents), as though one could view the whole from the centre of the missionary enterprise, did not survive into the 1970s.

The following are broad topic areas that encompassed many outstanding articles during this era of the \textit{IRM}:

Dialogue and religious pluralism

Stanley Samartha prepared the way for interfaith dialogue to emerge as a leading concern in the \textit{IRM} in the 1970s when he argued a few years earlier that discussions of

salvation ought to include the followers of many different traditions, because “religions offer answers to the basic questions about human nature and destiny.” In his appeal to missionaries and mission theologians to explore the meaning of salvation alongside adherents of other religious traditions, he stressed the importance of bringing living faith commitments into conversation with each other, instead of conducting academic interfaith conferences. The WCC sponsored or co-sponsored a number of important dialogue events in the 1970s, on the way towards developing an influential set of “Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies” (1979; rev. 1989).

Of the many reports and papers from these gatherings, perhaps none has had the long-lasting impact as has the 1976 Christian-Muslim meeting held at Chambésy, Switzerland. The Muslim and Christian co-conveners, Kurshid Ahmed and David Kerr, presented the results of this conference in a IRM volume they co-edited (the first to involve a non-Christian editor). Especially significant for missiology, this dialogue focused on the history, practice and aims of outreach in both traditions. By all accounts, these discussions were not easy; the history of Muslim-Christian encounter has itself been complex and often difficult. Isma’il al-Faruqi’s presentation on the Muslim call to faith and Lamin Sanneh’s on the Christian experience of Islamic Da’wa in Africa stand out.

The following year another participant, Kenneth Cragg, reflected on what had taken place at Chambésy, concluding that the human desire to possess religious truth, and a strong sense of “us and ours” on both sides cause much of the strife and dismay experienced in interreligious encounter. Cragg urged those in future dialogues to reach together for “a fuller alertness to the common humanity of which we are a part and especially to its perplexities and fears,” along with a willingness to “expose ourselves to the wistfulness of unbelief outside both, or all, our systems.” Some years later, David Kerr would return to the comparative topic of Christian mission and Islamic Da’wa, extensively reviewing what had been learned since Chambésy. Kerr’s paper concluded with ten theses for cooperation, for example, suggesting that Christians and Muslims

56 Ibid., p. 173.
ought to reflect mutually on the meaning of witness in their respective traditions, develop a common liberating praxis on behalf of the poor, and join together in the work of reconciliation.

Since the 1970s, many who had been writing about dialogue in the *IRM* and elsewhere also began to address the closely related topic of religious pluralism. Emilio Castro, reflecting on the religiously plural environment, posed anew the question of evangelism in these terms: “how do we carry out mission in this pluralistic world?” Aware that the history of mission includes many episodes of conflict and misguided attempts to dominate others, but still convinced that the impulse to share Christ with all humanity is constitutive of Christian identity and vocation, Castro concluded that effective evangelism in a pluralistic age requires a dialogical attitude. By this he meant “an attitude that corresponds to God’s own attitude toward humankind manifested in Jesus Christ: not imposing but offering; not crusading but self-surrendering.”

Anthony Gittins has since discussed interfaith relations and religious pluralism in connection with the concept of hospitality, arguing that fully developed theologies of relationship will spur missionaries not only to extend hospitality to strangers but also to receive the same from others. The key, according to Gittins, is to be able to see oneself and not only others as the “stranger.” Konrad Raiser has followed with an appeal to the ecumenical movement through mission and evangelism to “contribute to the building of an alternative culture of dialogue and solidarity” that responds to a global culture of competition and domination, which he sees increasingly stimulated by the factors of globalization and pluralism. Various articles in the *IRM* during this period have also taken up the subject of theology of religions. Particularly insightful are the remarks of Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, who has written from a Pentecostal perspective on pneumatology and the theology of religions. Lalsangkima Pachuau has emphasized the importance of such studies for contemporary efforts to understand mission in his suggestion that the theology of religions has become the central integrating principle or hub of missiology.

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Gospel and culture

Before the 1960s, gospel and culture questions tended to be posed in terms of how to apply a message normed in the North Atlantic region to new cultural settings. The danger to be avoided at all costs was syncretism, generally understood to be an operation of adaptation gone awry that somehow compromised the integrity of the essential message one had hoped to communicate. Since the 1960s, missiologists have begun to change how they study culture, affected in part by the collapse of the old colonial order, the hollowing-out of Christendom assumptions, and the rise of post-modern thinking.

Evidence of this shift in approach appeared in the IRM initially as research on the development of theologies for post-colonial settings. In agreement with Bengt Sundkler, Harry Sawyerr argued that “theology in Africa has to interpret . . . Christ in terms that are relevant and essential to African existence.”63 According to Sawyerr, a commitment to this stance would require a full treatment of the incarnation, engagement with African ideas about immortality, and a coherent account of God’s omnipotence. Another important article came from John Mbiti, who focused more particularly on African traditional religions. As he saw it, “Christianity has christianized Africa, but Africa has not yet africanized Christianity.”64 Kaj Baago, writing in the context of post-colonial India, boldly urged his fellow missionaries to “leave Christianity (the organized religion) and go inside Hinduism and Buddhism, accepting these religions as one’s own, in so far as they do not conflict with Christ, and regarding them as the presupposition, the background and the framework of the Christian gospel in Asia.”65 Only in this way could one hope to contribute to the creation of a genuine form of “Hindu Christianity” or “Buddhist Christianity.” In another Asian context, Kosuke Koyama reflected on the right place to begin doing theology in rural Thailand where he was serving, and concluded that he ought to be thinking more about the everyday life of farmers and water buffaloes and less about the abstract Western theologies of Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth.66

Many more expressions of contextual theology would be presented in the *IRM* over the decades that followed, some developed especially in light of other religious traditions and others responding more particularly to regional or national socio-political realities. The idea of contextualization (or inculturation) provided a useful conceptual framework within which to understand the social processes necessarily involved when Christian witness is shared cross-culturally. In a sophisticated analysis utilizing both theological and social scientific perspectives, Michael Amaladoss grappled with the complex reality of gospel-sharing in the context of a vibrantly multi-religious, post-colonial Indian context. Christian communities in that setting, he suggested, have to find ways to cultivate dialogue as they reach toward the goal of inculturation. Ideally in his view, inculturation as evangelization becomes an integral process in which elements of proclamation, dialogue and liberation each finds their place.67

Writing in the mid-1990s, Konrad Raiser provided a good sense of the direction taken in ecumenical discussions over several decades with respect to the gospel and human cultures. He highlights two insights in particular. The first has to do with the continuous nature of the interaction of gospel and culture. Initial missionary critiques of indigenous cultures are often followed by the cultural conversion of the evangelizers, which can lead to an ongoing series of gospel and culture encounters that never end, so long as there is a living Christian community alert to its surroundings. As a result, “cultural adaptation of missionary witness (inculturation or indigenization) is only the first phase in the interaction between gospel and culture that will ultimately lead to a transformation of both, the given culture and the forms of witness for the gospel.”68 Raiser also draws attention to two forms of missionary witness that can be identified near the end of the 20th century. First, in the case of “older” churches in situations of cultural captivity, mission requires believers to articulate the liberating opposition of the gospel over against the dominant religious-cultural synthesis. The primary missionary task of the “younger” churches, on the other hand, is still “to find ways of entering into and appropriating the indigenous culture.” That the task of contextualization is a continuous function of mission, which does not develop in the same way everywhere, is missiologically perceptive.

Lamin Sanneh further underscored the dynamic character of contextualization when he brought into this long conversation the principle of “translatability.” As Sanneh has observed more than once, the message of Jesus Christ carries with it two major consequences for the religious status of culture: “first, the relativization of all cultural


arrangements, and, second, the *de-stigmatization* of all Gentile or taboo cultures."\(^6^9\) By this reasoning, no particular culture can claim privilege with respect to the gospel. At the same time, none may be judged incapable of receiving it. Brian Stanley has since probed carefully into the problem of conversion, taking into account not only the theological arguments often made on behalf of the Spirit's agency at such times but also the social processes of inculturation that might be at work.\(^7^0\)

From another angle, Paul Hedges has written on matters of inculturation using data supplied by examples of mission architecture in India. He compares the style and decoration of buildings commissioned for the Victorian-era Cambridge Mission to Delhi with a contemporary set of buildings designed to inculturate the gospel in India, thus showing that (missionary) architecture is always an expression of theology.\(^7^1\)

Similarly nuanced and missiologically interesting are the more recent reflections by Jyoti Sahi at a WCC-sponsored consultation on inculturation.\(^7^2\) In light of an unprecedented surge in global mobility and the strong affinity that migrants of many kinds still hold for the cultures from which they come, Sahi considers the dilemmas of belonging in a post-modern age: Do we choose or inherit our identities? To what extent do personal and group choices shape our self-understandings? Is it possible to belong to multiple religious and cultural communities at the same time?

### Some specific issues in mission theology

Since the 1970s, several other topics of special interest to contemporary missiologists received attention in the *IRM*. In the political sphere, for example, the crisis of apartheid in South Africa, the *IRM* published an extraordinary 1979 letter from Allan Boesak to the South African Minister of Justice, in which Boesak closely examined the demands of mission theology and the responsibilities of Christian social witness in relation to that government’s official expectations for the church’s public behaviour.\(^7^3\) Cognizant of the highly charged political situation in which he was writing, K. H. Ting presented a kind of operational map for the future of the Protestant church in mainland China.

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\(^7^0\) Brian Stanley, “Conversion to Christianity: The Colonization of the Mind?” *IRM* 92/3 (2003), pp. 315–331.


that, to a large extent, was followed in the 1980s and beyond. Bishop Ting’s article appeared in a special issue devoted to China, the impact of which was magnified because so little news about the Chinese church had been made available through the *IRM* from inside China since the 1950s.

“Evangelical-ecumenical relations” was another topic on which many important and exceptional articles were published over the past four decades. Within the context of the *IRM*, the point of such research was not simply on how to improve such relationships or advance the cause of Christian unity for its own sake. The larger objective was to extend learning about mission, which is helped when the whole church participates. John Stott familiarized readers of the *IRM* with some of the new developments that were taking place in evangelical thinking about mission with an article on the significance of the 1974 Lausanne international congress on world evangelization. Some twenty years later, Alan Bailyes showed how “ecumenicals” and evangelicals had been mutually influencing each other’s development with respect to mission theology, despite all their disagreements and feelings of distrust. With an eye on mission structures, Bryant Myers reflected on what was being learned about the types of institutions most likely to be effective in the post-modern era. Quite deliberately, Myers drew on a wide range of organizational experience, rather than restricting his view to groups identified with only a small part of the theological spectrum. He is critical of large-scale solutions to global problems, arguing that we should no longer expect to find meta-answers, including in theology or missiology.

Before the 1980s, the *IRM* took almost no notice of Pentecostal missions, as Kirsteen Kim observes in her article in this volume. A decisive change in editorial policy was signaled, however, when the journal published a pair of issues in 1986 (vol. 75:1–2) focused on Pentecostalism and charismatic Christianity. In an opening guest editorial, Walter Hollenweger surveyed the previous twenty years of research on Pentecostalism. Subsequently, a number of articles on Pentecostal missions have appeared in the *IRM*. These largely have been concerned to rehearse the dramatic story of worldwide

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78 Ibid., p. 401.
Pentecostal growth, to assert the importance of pneumatology for Pentecostal theologies of mission, and to emphasize aspects of evangelistic practice (healing, for example) that have marked Pentecostal identity.

Somewhat more unusual are several articles that pushed into new research, such as Allan Anderson’s treatment of Pentecostalism and the Enlightenment cultures of Europe. In Anderson’s view, Pentecostalism in Europe is both a “distinct reaction to the rationalism of the Enlightenment” and a possible means to “help rescue the church from pending oblivion in this post-Christian continent.” Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, writing in the context of Ghana, likewise sees in African Pentecostalism a worldview that stands apart from European Enlightenment assumptions about how evil asserts itself in human history. As he observes, in concert with Kwame Bediako, Pentecostal “interventionist theologies” often receive warm welcomes in sub-Saharan Africa because they meet African hopes for ritual protection from malevolent spiritual forces. Thus, Asamoah-Gyadu concludes: “wherever Pentecostalism has emerged in Africa the ministries of exorcism, healing and deliverance have been its main means of evangelizing.” Samuel Escobar, on the other hand, suggests that less adversarial relationships to modernity might also obtain in certain circumstances with respect to Pentecostalism. In his analysis, the rapid spread of Pentecostalism in Latin America has been due in part to its social function as a modernizing force. Also stimulating is the suggestion of Amos Yong that Pentecostal research on pneumatology ought to be brought into deeper conversation with other work on the theology of religions, in order to enrich ecumenical theologies of mission that are concerned with religious pluralism.

Undoubtedly, M.L. Daneel broke new ground with his study of two AIC (African Independent Churches) Spirit-type churches in Zimbabwe and their activism since the 1980s on behalf of the environment, or “earthkeeping.” This was a somewhat unusual point of entry into a topic that had grown in significance in the WCC since the 1983 assembly in Vancouver. An entire issue of the IRM (v. 79/2) linked ecumenical thinking

82 Ibid., pp. 277, 281.
84 Ibid., p. 308.
about mission to a variety of ecological initiatives. Very recently, Mary Motte has written in engaging and imaginative ways about God’s intention to renew the creation, and our need for “ecological conversion” as a matter of Christian discipleship.88

Two additional contributions stand out because of their importance to the study of mission as an academic field. The first of these, on the “old age” of the missionary movement, is important in part because it represents a link to the accumulated research on mission produced over decades by Andrew Walls. Although Walls published almost all of his articles and reviews elsewhere, he has still been deeply involved with the IRM since the 1970s, especially through his editing of the journal’s mission bibliography section.89 Finally, I wish to take note of a brief but substantive essay by David Bosch, in which we find a preview of the approach he would take to the theology of mission in his justly famous textbook, Transforming Mission.90 Applying the methodology of Thomas Kuhn to the history of mission in the 20th century, Bosch argued that a fundamental “paradigm shift” in missionary thinking had taken place since the foundation of the IRM in 1912.91 In response, Bosch outlined six “priorities for the church-in-mission,” a programme of renewal that largely anticipated the much longer presentation he would make in Transforming Mission of an “emerging ecumenical missionary paradigm.”92 Just how many readers of the IRM at that time might have recognized the significance of Bosch’s conceptual approach is impossible to know. Much more certain is the judgment that this book has shaped the field of missiology to a greater degree than any other since the early 1970s.

Missions or Mission?  
The *IRM* after 75 Years  

*Andrew F. Walls*

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**Abstract**

In 1987, the 75th anniversary issue of *IRM* reviewed a large number of articles that had been published in the journal over the years. The overall development was a shift from “missions,” as the work of missionaries from the West to the rest of the world, to a focus on “mission,” as that to which all Christians throughout the world are called. The author here raises up emphases from other articles that also could have been included in the 1987 review, because of their implications for future developments. He also points to important trends that have become far more evident since then, such as the growth of churches in the global South and diaspora Christians from these countries who now reside in the North. These may frame the ecumenical challenge for this century.

“Celebrating 75 years” is the title of the 302nd issue of the *International Review of Mission*, which was published in April 1987. In this celebratory issue, there was one major article by Philip Potter, “From Missions to Mission,” who had been the *IRM* editor in 1969 when the scope of the journal changed. The change in the journal’s title, he declared, “was the logic of all that had happened since the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference in 1910 and of the high and honest thinking that had found expression in this Review.” To take the story back to Edinburgh 1910 implies that “from mission to missions” encapsulates the whole history of mission during the first 75 years of the *IRM*. Potter finds the germ of this development in the very first issue of *IRM*, where its first editor, J H Oldham, declares that the task of evangelising the non-Christian world

is intimately related to that of meeting the “unbelief and intellectual perplexity” so evident in what could then still be called the Christian world.\(^2\) Potter concludes:

> the story of [the] change from “missions,” the concept of organized missionary work from western Christendom to what were called the non-Christian countries, to “mission” as the inescapable task of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, through its members individually and corporately, wherever they may be located geographically, is the story of this first and now longest existing ecumenical journal.\(^3\)

The greater part of the issue is given to reviewing many articles or extracts of articles published in the *IRM* between 1912 and 1984. As to how these were selected, the editor Eugene Stockwell replies, “We suggest you not worry about that question, but instead sit back and enjoy the wisdom provided,” adding “perhaps with the question what these writings may teach us today.”\(^4\)

The third celebratory part of this issue is a set of photographs and biographical notes on the distinguished roster of editors and assistant editors, an eloquent photographic illustration of the meeting of the International Missionary Council at Crans in 1920, and reproductions of some of the advertisements from former issues. These range from pith helmets, tropical underwear, hospital beds, and marble memorial tablets, to a nine-month graded course in medicine and surgery. The issue also includes the usual documentation on consultations, book reviews and bibliography.

**What was and was not reviewed in 1987**

In this 1987 “review of the Review” what were seen as the most significant aspects of mission? The selection does not presume to cover all the years; there are several notable gaps, one of them for the eleven years between 1943 and 1954. From the beginning there are many prominent contributors, such as Oldham and Mott, William Paton and Roland Allen, Kenneth Scott Latourette and Pearl S Buck, Brunner and Kraemer. The first from outside Europe and North America is a brief Japanese meditation on the Christian message by D. Tagawa in 1928,\(^5\) and then an article by D. T. Niles on resurgent Buddhism in Ceylon in 1943\(^6\). The year 1969 brings a turning point with an article by

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\(^{3}\) Potter, p. 155.


\(^{5}\) *IRM* 75, p. 180f.

\(^{6}\) *IRM* 75, p. 195f.
Daisuke Kitagawa. From the next year onward there is a procession of articles by S.J. Samartha, Gabriel Setiloane, John Mbiti, Emerito Nacpil, M.M. Thomas, Mortimer Arias, Jose Míguez Bonino, C. S. Song and Emilio Castro. This signalled a new reality, even though no women are included in this list, and the only Orthodox contributors reviewed are Anastasios Yannoulatos and Ion Bria.

Because attention is given to 43 voices from past issues, the citations vary in length, and it appears the aim was not to provide an anthology of articles based on their outstanding quality or interest. If that had been the basis for selection, given the long history of the IRM as the leader in this field, many such articles could have been reviewed. As far back as the Liverpool Conference on Missions in 1860 (the actual parent of Edinburgh 1910), the need for a serious journal dealing with the issues raised by missions had been recognized. When the IRM was begun, it became the intellectual forum for the theory and practice of the mission branch of theology, and for a long time was the only such organ.

Examples of noteworthy contributions for the sake of knowledge and debate, and to introduce and illuminate new topics for study, include the following: A.G. Hogg’s powerful set of four articles, written during World War I, entitled “The God that must be Christ Jesus,” which was a monograph on Christian theology in an Indian setting by one of the most interesting theologians produced by the missionary movement, whose work was shaped in interaction with Indian thought. An unassuming article in 1937 by the Danish architect J. Prip-Møller focused on architecture as a servant of mission. Prip-Møller assisted Karl Ludvig Reichelt to develop a Christian ambiance for welcoming Chinese Buddhists, in an article canvassing the visual aspect of Christianity in China. Few human relations specialists could surpass the insights in Florence Allshorn’s article on “Corporate Life on a Mission Station.” These and other jewels from past issues were not featured in the 1987 review. Nor did it feature the kind of articles that were the main fare of the IRM in earlier years: studies of particular areas of the world and the issues arising from Christian activity there. Pearl Buck’s reflections on changes in the manufacture of Chinese rice bowls and teapots (1924) stands out for its local specificity. Equally unusual is a news item in a 1932 editorial note by William Paton, “Mr

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11 *IRM* 75, p. 179f.
Gandhi and Missions.” ¹¹² This records a meeting in London of representatives of missionary societies at which Gandhi made clear on the one hand that, despite reports to the contrary, he supported full freedom of religion, including the right to propagate and to change one’s faith, and on the other that, while he would not legislate against it, he believed that no such change of faith should take place.

In general, the 1987 review was more concerned with principles than events. The story of the movement from missions to mission is told by reflecting on what has evolved along lines of continuity with the past. The grand theme is the shift from the missionary movement coming from Europe and North America to the world church; from missions based in western Christendom and directed to a “non-Christian” world, to the mission of God into which the church is called on all six continents. Associated with this are other shifts such as moving from an emphasis on especially verbal proclamation of the Christian message to a recognition of wider human society as the theatre of God’s saving activity. More attention is given to the nature and characteristics of the church being called into the mission of God.

Despite frequent references to Edinburgh 1910, the story reviewed in 1987 does not closely follow the framework of major meetings and their proceedings. For instance, while the report of the 1928 Jerusalem meeting of the International Missionary Council is briefly quoted in a 1932 article,¹³ an assessment of its significance does not appear until 1968, when David Gill highlights how the conference introduced the discussion of secularization as a mission issue.¹⁴ Indeed, secularization was a major topic of debate in the 1960s, but even in the 1920s it was recognized that East and West shared some similar concerns. The 1938 Tambaram meeting receives even less notice,¹⁵ and Willingen seems to have escaped any mention. The establishment of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and especially the integration of the International Missionary Council with the WCC obviously had huge significance for the IRM itself, but had little impact on the 1987 review. The 1948 incorporation of the Faith and Order and the Life and Work movements into the WCC passes without note.

The effect of these developments becomes plain as the review proceeds. The journal was not re-named until eight years after the integration of the IMC with the WCC; the

¹² IRM 75, p. 182.
¹⁴ IRM 75, p.212ff.
¹⁵ William Paton, on the decline of missionary enthusiasm in the West, recalls the evangelistic zeal demonstrated by delegates of the “younger churches” at Tambaram, IRM 75, p.194.
editorial marking this, entitled “Dropping the S,”\textsuperscript{16} exudes a scarcely stifled “At last!” Hank Crane notes that changing the title brings the journal in line not only with the thinking of the WCC’s Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, but also with “the broad consensus of missionary thinking of most of the member churches of the World Council of Churches.”\textsuperscript{17} The former title was “uncomfortably reminiscent of an era in which [Africa, Asia and Latin America] were the only targets of the inexorable thrust of one-way missions from North to South,” and mission was seen as the arena of “professional, dedicated expatriate Christians from the north rather than the primary business of all Christians, in every country in every continent.”\textsuperscript{18} The reason for the change is clear: “missions” stands for outmoded concepts, paternal attitudes and Western dominance in the church. The argument of some that “missions” was a useful term to designate specific local representations of the one mission, irrespective of the ethnic origin or confessional affiliation of sponsors, was not even mentioned.

The underlying concern prior to 1987 was to complete the decolonization of the concept and practice of mission. This decolonization process had been transforming mission even before the 50th anniversary of \textit{IRM} in 1963, and it proceeded apace after then. India and Indonesia, facing new limits and restrictions on visas, had modified the concept of the long-term missionary. Mission societies underwent convulsive experiences such as the withdrawal of missionaries from China, and a short period in Congo evoked comparisons with the Boxer Rising. The winds of change in Africa, where there often were slow transitions from missionary to national church leadership, blew with a strength that became irresistible.

The period between the 50th and 75th anniversaries of the \textit{IRM} intensified these pressures. A waning of traditional support for missions provided another reason for rethinking. At the same time, there was increasing awareness of the depth of the spiritual poverty of the West, and a growing recognition of how much the West might gain from churches elsewhere in the world. Yet the main structures for communication with churches beyond the West were the mission societies, and they had been designed for traffic in the other direction. It is no wonder that a major preoccupation was with decolonizing these structures.

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{IRM} 75, p.214ff. Philip Potter explains that he asked Hank Crane to write the editorial since, as a second generation Western missionary, he embodied the older idea of “missions.” \textit{Ibid.}, p. 155.

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 214.

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 215.
Meanwhile, other branches of the ecumenical movement, who were concerned with doctrine, ecclesiology and the church in society, were developing new structures based on church-to-church relationships. The integration of the WCC and IMC brought mission into this discourse, and it was hoped would result in mission having a more central place in thinking about the church. Such concerns are evident in many of the IRM contributions reviewed in 1987. The word ecumenical was being adopted in contexts where earlier, mission or missionary would have been used. Thus, the IRM is referred to as “the oldest ecumenical journal in existence.” In enlarging the connotations of the word mission, the same was occurring for the word ecumenism. In many circles the latter term had been associated primarily with inter-confessional relations and church union schemes, but mission influences were drawing attention to the original meaning of oikoumene and the existence of the church in the whole inhabited world.

Some who saw themselves as fully in line with the traditions of Edinburgh 1910, were happy to belong to the International Missionary Council, but for a variety of reasons, were not ready or able to associate with the WCC. Gradually the signs of this division begin to appear, as noted in the 1987 review. As early as 1958 Norman Goodall was recognizing that some sincere and admirable evangelicals could not in conscience join in the sort of united witness for which the WCC stood. In 1970, Lesslie Newbigin sees the “great divide” between conservative evangelicals and others as “one of the major tragedies of our time.” Hans Hoekendijk, in a sparkling article the same year, argues that although the student movement watchword, “The Evangelization of the World in this Generation,” is no longer serviceable, it contained what was still an important aim: it is not solely an “evangelical wing” that can claim to be heir of this watchword and of Edinburgh 1910.

The relationship of those broadly aligned with the WCC and those evangelicals who remained outside is one of the unresolved ecumenical issues, which the review basically did not examine. Another unexamined issue was mentioned in a 1984 article, “After Vatican II,” which points to the minimal interaction of Catholic and Protestant missiological thinking at the time of Vatican II (1961–1963). The immensely important missiological developments of Vatican II are also not noted in the review. After Vatican

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19 Ibid., p. 214
20 Ibid., p. 198f
21 Ibid., p. 324
22 Ibid., p. 233ff
23 Ibid., p. 256f
II, the practice began of inviting Catholic observers to important WCC occasions, including promising joint activities of the CWME and the Vatican Secretariat for Unity.24

From 1987 into the future?

People in the Pacific Islands say the future is “behind us;” we cannot see it. It is the past that is visible in front of us. The 25 years since the 1987 review have put things in front of us that were not visible then. The review displayed a burning consciousness of the world church, but less awareness of how quickly this was becoming a non-Western church, with Africa becoming increasingly prominent. A contributor quoted in 196825 anticipated that by the end of the century Christians would be only eight percent of the world’s population, and concentrated in the world’s temperate zones.

Similarly, developments and conditions of the period leading up to the 75th anniversary concentrated on structures. Since then, there has been a rise of Christian movements that have defied the structures or replaced them. The Pentecostal movement appears only on the margins of what was reviewed in 1987, and charismatic movements hardly at all. Yet now in parts of the Christian world these constitute the majority, and historic Protestantism, unless it is able to accommodate them, is moving to the margins. A significant portion of Christians now live outside the structures that were known or envisaged in the period between the IRC’s 50th and 75th anniversaries. In the 21st century Christianity seems to have moved into resembling Christianity of the second century. It is multi-centric, and thus unpredictable. Mission initiatives can now arise in any part of the world, and be directed to any other part, which was impossible in the second century. The trajectory so dreaded in 1969, of mission moving from the West to the rest, is no longer the concern, nor is that of Christians becoming a tiny minority concentrated in temperate zones. Now Christianity is mainly concentrated and growing in non-Western parts of the world.

Those thinking and writing about Christian mission in 1987 were aware of another formative development, but not yet aware of its significance. This is the massive movement in recent decades of people from Africa, Asia and Latin America to Europe and North America, which is likely to continue. Africans and Asians have become a permanent part of Europe, and Africans, Asians and Latin Americans a permanent part...
of North America. This has also brought to Europe and North America a substantial Christian diaspora from the rest of the world.

The period examined in 1987 was deeply impressed by the idea of a world church and of a mission extending to all six continents. But here is another dimension of the world church, opening up new possibilities, with both potential and risk. Conditions now exist in London, Amsterdam, New York, Sydney, Auckland, Nairobi and Singapore for actually experiencing and sharing the life of a world church in mission, with its various elements as functioning organs in a body of which Christ is the head. The response to this may prove the great ecumenical test of the present century.

Over the past century, the church has been transformed demographically and culturally, and in its very centre of gravity, to a degree that perhaps is without parallel since the early centuries of the church. Many of the old landmarks have lost their significance; structures, groupings, centres of power that once seemed beyond question have faded or dissolved; powerful new realities have come into existence. It has been the task of the IRM – sometimes almost alone among the journals that can be classified as academic or scientific – to record, analyse and reflect on these processes and their implications. Inevitably its success has been partial: “We know in part, and we prophesy in part.” But as at its 75th anniversary, there is much to celebrate at its centenary. As it enters its second century its responsibilities remain. Developments of the past century are a reminder that the nature of its subject matter goes beyond that of the average academic journal: “You have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God.”

26 Hebrews 12:22
A Personal Tribute to the
International Review of Mission

Ana Langerak

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Abstract

On the basis of my own familiarity with the IRM as one of its former editors, I celebrate the journal’s importance to me personally and to mission studies in the ecumenical family by selecting a few significant contributions for comment: “The Kingdom of God as Strategy for Mission” by Raymond Fung; “The Liturgy after the Liturgy,” by Professor Ion Bria; “Gospel, Cultures and Filipina Migrant Workers,” by Jane Corpuz-Brock; “Section III: The Earth is the Lord’s,” from San Antonio; and “Towards a New Christian Sexual Ethics in the Light of HIV/AIDS”, by Armin Zimmermann.

In 1979 I was given my first personal copy of the International Review of Mission by Orlando Costas, Director of the Latin American Center for Pastoral Studies, based in San José. With my having collaborated with him on mission publications in Latin America, he thought I would find the journal’s global and ecumenical scope stimulating, and he could not have been more right. I remember vividly how I read that particular volume from cover to cover, completely drawn into the character and substance of its contents. Over the years, and especially during my short term as its editor, I have been impressed by the way in which the journal functions as a living library of the theology and practice of mission from a global and ecumenical perspective.

The kingdom of God as strategy for mission

At the beginning of the April, 1979 issue of the IRM, in his article, “The Kingdom of God as Strategy for Mission,” Raymond Fung’s unusual association of the notion of...
strategy with the Kingdom of God, and his clear personal opening words, beckoned me to read on:

It is ten years since I first began my involvement in urban industrial mission in Hong Kong . . . My colleagues and I have tried to share the Christian faith with factory workers in the context of participation in their struggles for dignity and justice. Most of us are well-educated and have middle-class backgrounds. We also have a personal commitment to Jesus Christ.2

Fung’s intent is to show that the kingdom of God suggests what mission looks like and how it works. He tells about a Bible study he led with factory workers on the miraculous catch of fish (Luke 5:1–11), and how the factory workers identified with Peter in his lament to Jesus, “We have worked hard all night and caught nothing.” In the course of their discussion, the workers suddenly discovered a connection between their own world of long, hard labour, without anything to show for it, and the world of Jesus. They saw that the world of Jesus was also made up of people who worked hard and suffered. But, how different were the values that operated in these two worlds.

In the world of modern industrial Hong Kong, the fact of people working their guts out and not making enough to live in decency is not an issue. Nobody gives a hoot. But in the world of Jesus, Simon Peter’s cry of anguish is listened to and responded to, his needs are met, and yet he is challenged to give up what he rightfully possesses.3

Fung describes the reality in which people encounter the world of Jesus in relation to their own existential reality, a point of contact or overlap. In this situation people are drawn into the world of Jesus and find a welcome there. They would still need to make a choice, but they would do so as invited guests, deciding whether or not to join the community in which God’s rule is recognised.

The kingdom of God, then, suggests that mission should take the form of building community, an environment in which God’s rule is recognised, and where the values of justice, peace and love operate.4 How mission works is through invitation into this Christian community that lives by a spirit of generosity and solidarity, and that with its roots embedded in people’s concrete life situations, confronts the principalities and powers of the world.

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2 Ibid., p. 102.
3 Ibid., pp. 103–104.
4 Ibid., p. 104.
Fung’s experience with workers in Hong Kong echoed with my own experience with women’s groups in marginal settings in San José. They too, worked long hours in menial, undervalued work. No one gave a hoot about that, nor about the discrimination they faced because of their gender and social status. Fung’s thoughts were inspiring because he cared deeply about sharing God’s good news with the poor, about mission in the light of God’s kingdom, and having personal faith in Christ.

There is much in “The Kingdom of God as Strategy for Mission” that foreshadows what was to become Fung’s critical contribution to the 1980 Melbourne mission conference. Both this article and his Melbourne presentation grappled with the call of the church to articulate its evangelizing mission from within its participation in the struggle of the poor for justice. The force of Fung’s message arises from his conviction that “identification with the people and maintaining Christian identity need not conflict, and that personal salvation and political involvement do not exclude each other.”

Perspectives like these, and Fung’s abiding concern for the credibility of the witness of Christians, resonated with members of the ecumenical church family, and inspired us in our witness to the good news in Latin American contexts. He would help shape ecumenical thinking about evangelism in an indelible way in the years after Melbourne.

**The liturgy after the liturgy**

The *IRM* has played a significant role in breaking new ground for the mission faithfulness of the churches, and expanding the awareness about traditions and situations of sister churches. Such is the case of an article by Romanian Orthodox theologian, Professor Ion Bria, “The Liturgy after the Liturgy.”

As is known, the relationship and involvement of the Orthodox churches in the ecumenical movement has been one of gradual growth, but with tensions and hesitancies. That today we cannot consider mission practice without taking into account the Orthodox tradition and witness can be attributed in part to a lengthy process of consultations and publications by the WCC, in which Orthodox members have had the opportunity to present themselves. Ion Bria’s article stands out as one of those that helped lay the groundwork for this ongoing process of mutual learning.

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5 Ibid., p. 102.

In his article, Bria fleshes out a report on a consultation on “Confessing Christ through the Liturgical Life of the Church.”7 The consultation focused on how Orthodox ecclesiology emphasizes the eucharistic understanding of the church, but was weak on the question of the continuation of the liturgy in life. He states that while the eucharistic communion is extremely important, it might easily lead to the conclusion that the Orthodox think of the church as an exclusive, self-centred worshipping community, which would be a distortion. He points out that in the liturgy there is a double movement:

On the one hand, the assembling of the people of God performs the memorial of the death and resurrection of our Lord. . . . [and on the other] it manifests and realizes the process by which the cosmos is becoming ecclesia. The mission of the Church rests upon the radiating and transforming power of the liturgy. From it, the faithful are sent out into the world to confess the Gospel.8

Bria goes on to say that the Christian community is called to be an icon of Christ, and that the equality and freedom that members experience in the eucharist, through the action of the Spirit, should be expressed in their home life, places of work, and social networks. He speaks of the effect of this as the creation of a new (sanctified) milieu, “To enlarge the space for witness by creating a new Christian milieu. . . . is not a simple matter of converting the non-Christians in the vicinity of the parishes, but also a concern for finding room where the Christians live and work and where they can publicly exercise their witness and worship.”9

Professor Bria’s concluding remarks go beyond the personal witness of individual believers who live out their faith in the context of the former socialist countries. He also applies the concept of “the liturgy after the liturgy” to the situation of the Orthodox church itself. The church needs to engage in the task of re-christianizing Christians, and to support its members who confess their hope in Christ in the face of opposition and oppression, as vital aspects of its evangelistic witness. “The church has to struggle for the fulfilment of that justice and freedom which was promised by God to all people and has constantly to give account of how the kingdom of heaven is or not within her. She has to ask herself if by the conservatism of its worship it may appear to support the violation of human rights inside or outside the Christian community.”10

7 Ibid., p. 86.
8 Ibid., p. 87.
9 Ibid., p. 89.
10 Ibid.
The impact of Orthodox ecclesiology on mission thinking

After many years of Orthodox involvement in ecumenical discussions on mission, notions rooted in Orthodox ecclesiology, such as “the liturgy after the liturgy,” have come into our bloodstream. The role of the IRM in the transmission of Orthodox mission thinking and practice, such as this early article by Professor Bria, helped set us on a path towards a more trinitarian and incarnational understanding of mission, and towards emphases such as keeping together the koinonia of the eucharistic community with the community’s participation in the Spirit’s activity in transforming the world.

Gospel, cultures and Filipina migrant workers

I celebrate that the IRM has published articles and documents that have helped to foster a more inclusive, participatory and inter-related vision of the church, the world and ecumenical mission, by featuring contributions by women, young adults, indigenous people, persons representing minorities and others whose voices have been historically marginalized. This brings us closer to embodying the goal of God’s mission as a reconciled community, a community of communities sustained by the Holy Spirit and sharing the loving presence of Christ in which all are affirmed as valuable, and where different groups can live in harmony.

In this regard, I lift up an insightful reflective article by Jane Corpuz–Brock, “Gospel, Cultures, and Filipina Migrant Workers.” She unveils some of the structural dimensions of culture, suggests ways in which the gospel empowers Christians to examine and change current power relationships. Central in her analysis is the impact of the ideology of patriarchy and gender-based notions and practices on the situation of Filipina migrant workers. In a wider sense, she shows how the gospel challenges and enables people to free themselves from violence, oppression, racism and xenophobia, wherever they might be.

Corpuz-Brock points out that the Philippines have a rich and hybrid culture, in which openness to outsiders and outward travel has played a defining role. As she reviews the colonial, Spanish and USA-dominated periods of history, she uncovers how patriarchal ideological assumptions emerged from this development, and how they came to influence and define roles and possibilities for Filipinas.

Whereas young girls in pre-Spanish society enjoyed educational opportunities and freedom of movement similar to that of young boys, the strongly patriarchal system of Spain dramatically curtailed their activities. They became sheltered and overprotected, and their education confined them to church, kitchen and children. “Patriarchal society succeeded in alienating (the Filipina) from public life, public decisions and public significance.”12 In the period of colonial dependency on the USA, women as teachers played a critical role in pacifying the archipelago. Universal public education in English became the tool to undermine nationalism, and ideas of white supremacy were elevated. “This period defined the role of women as home-maker, and dependent on the men around her.”13

Corpuz-Brock helps us see how market forces and the globalization of the economy gave rise to the recent exodus of people from the Philippines. She cites the worldwide economic slow-down of the late 1970s that generated the debt crisis of the Philippines and other countries of the South. To address the crisis, the Philippine government approved a loan from the World Bank and implemented the harsh policies of an accompanying structural adjustment agreement. The programme called for eliminating public services, led to higher prices of food and caused factories to shut down. This put an enormous burden on women: “... thousands fled overseas, even though they knew that doing so involved many risks ... [they] found it too difficult to linger on and remain inactive.”14

Corpuz-Brock indicates that the work that Filipina migrant women do is derived directly from their identity and role as women. Her case study on the working conditions of Filipina domestic workers in Hong Kong describes the working conditions of this significant migrant group, who work for very long hours, caring for children and elderly as part of their work load. They often experience contract violations, and abuse by their employers, such as excessive scolding, discriminatory remarks, stinginess with food, lack of privacy and other demeaning behaviours.15

She asks why Hong Kong authorities do not address the injustices and harsh treatment faced by Filipina domestic workers. Why does the Philippine government not complaint? How is it that Chinese women employers can be aggressive and even act violently towards their domestic helpers? Why do jobs overseas increasingly go to women? She

12 Ibid., p. 66.
13 Ibid., p. 67.
14 Ibid., p. 69.
15 Ibid., pp. 69, 70.
shows that what prevails at the base of each of these issues are male-dominated views, patriarchal social relationships, skewed conceptions of the value of work done by women, and unbalanced strategies of development.16

How the gospel challenges and empowers Christians to change the unjust power relationships at play is the focus of the rest of Corpuz-Brock’s article. Taking inspiration from the account of our Lord’s flight to Egypt as an infant, and highlighting some of the movements of God’s people in biblical times, she reminds us of the powerful image of the church as a pilgrim people:

The people of God [are] in constant movement, in search of God’s abundant blessings. . . . At the heart of the gospel is a longing for a “home”, a place and a space where justice is done and love binds together a community. The gospel, by proclaiming a pilgrim people, proclaims a unity and solidarity between the migrant and the community to which the migrant goes.17

There is a prophetic call to denounce injustices in the Philippines that drive Filipinas to perform degrading work outside their country. This same call leads us to denounce situations of injustice in which the Filipina migrant worker is placed when she arrives and works overseas. Finally, the call leads us to recognize the seeds of the same injustice in the lives of millions of women, migrant workers or not.18

She draws on the story of the Good Samaritan, the encounter between Jesus and a Syrophoenician woman, and the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman to underscore the positive potential of cross-cultural encounter to overcome antagonistic relations between peoples of different ethnic origins. She also raises up the vision of Mary’s song, the Magnificat, as a call to churches and Christians to make “a clear alignment with those who are victims of systems of power and wealth,”19 and concludes with examples and suggestions for church actions for and with migrant workers.

The gospel’s critique of unjust relationships

Corpuz-Brock’s article continues to be tremendously relevant for mission thinking in our time, in which the phenomenon of migrants, refugees and displaced persons has reached tragic dimensions. In my current ministry I have daily contact with Nicaraguan migrants whose situation in Costa Rica can be described very similarly. She helps us

16 Ibid., pp. 77, 78.
17 Ibid., p. 78.
18 Ibid., 80.
19 Ibid.
understand the structural dimensions of culture that call for critique in light of the gospel. This continues to be pertinent, since unjust relationships are shaped and legitimized in all cultures.

Above all, the value of her article lies in how she applies a feminist reading to the reality of women migrants. Not content to address only “women’s rights,” she provokes a new way of seeing the human being as both female and male. In this regard, she represents many whose experience and theological perspectives, once absent from the study of mission, are helping to shape a vision of mission that is much more participatory, democratic, and inclusive.

“The Earth Is the Lord’s”

I am also grateful for how the IRM has played an important role of marking the transitions in how mission is conceived and practised. Over the years, its publication of timely documents and articles arising from studies and dialogues on mission have made it a privileged instrument for marking such passages. Currently, for example, it deals with central themes such as salvation, theological approaches to cultures, reconciliation and healing, and the development of a theology of religious pluralism.

Here I cite the publication of a section report from the San Antonio conference on world mission,20 where one of the principal themes was the mission of the churches in relation to the creation. This was the first mission conference of the WCC to grapple with the theme of the creation and of humankind’s place and role within it, which was a very important shift. This section begins with a strong faith conviction:

We affirm that the whole creation belongs to the Triune God – every inhabited part of the earth (territory), and every piece of earth (land) is, and remains, God’s. God has given the earth to the whole human family “to till and keep it.”21 . . . [God] can liberate us from the captivity of accumulation of private property to the freedom of sharing, and challenge the presumption that humankind has the right to destroy the earth in the name of progress or national security. We are called to participate in God’s reconciling work “for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him” (Eph. 1:9b-10a.).22

This conference was held while the world was still dominated by two competing ideologies and economic systems. Much of the work was shaped by reports of team visits to a variety of regions and churches, where there was sharing of testimonies and

21 Ibid., p. 371.
22 Ibid.
reflections on “the state of the earth.” The emphasis on the Creator’s ownership of the whole of creation was therefore important for denouncing of how God’s role had been usurped by ideological systems and powers in all regions. Likewise, the emphasis on humankind “tending and keeping” the creation, led to the admission of how we have failed to safeguard its integrity.

The methodology of gathering first-hand reports on “the state of the earth” and their subsequent discussion by participants had the value of holding up a mirror and speaking the truth about the ecological crisis. This methodology is useful in various truth and reconciliation processes because of the persuasive power of moral authenticity. In the current global crisis, it continues to offer much potential for the common witness of our churches and partner agencies in the ecumenical movement at different levels, as they speak the truth to policy-makers. San Antonio’s report set us on a path to thinking in terms of planetary citizenship and the need for globalized responses to ecological crises.

Moving towards an eco-ecumenical theology

In light of subsequent scientific, theological and ethical discussions on creation, we might critique some of the limits of this report. There is little development of an incarnational view that would see the Triune God as suffering with, moving with and empowering the universe. Some very pertinent New Testament passages are missing. There still is a somewhat hierarchical and static view of God “above” and the earth as a finished creation. “Stewardship of the earth,” although important, tends to support a human-centred view of creation.

Where this report continues to speak with force is in challenging churches and Christians to continue unmasking the forces of greed, misuse of power and deceptions about the suffering of the planet, as an essential aspect of our faith. The need for churches and for people of all faiths to address prophetically the idols of globalization and their market-driven and exclusionary interests, is all the more urgent today, as climate change threatens the very survival of life on the planet as we know it.

The report traces the origin of threats to creation to “. . . a turning away from the living God, the free reign of human greed, the misuse of power, the presence of fear, ignorance, and deception, that hides the truth of creation’s suffering.” It added, “We discover our need for repentance. . . . [W]e all, individuals and churches, share in the abuse of God’s creation.”

23 Ibid., p. 373.
While this is still valid, it needs to be recognized that the global crisis has deepened since then, and is challenging us to raise new questions and move toward “other ways of seeing.” For example, Mary Motte, in a perceptive article in the November 2010 issue of *IRM*, states that,

the challenge is whether Christian discipleship can effectively embrace an ecological conversion, affecting attitudes and practices with regard to the Earth and the universe. Awareness of our complicity in the destruction process, of our carbon footprint, calls for a new way of seeing, new behaviours of reconciliation and solidarity. Discipleship marked by reconciliation and solidarity, must be rooted in ecological conversion, in our deep awareness of our relationship to the universe, to the Earth and to all creation.\(^{24}\)

The continuing significance of “The Earth Is the Lord’s” article is that it marked a shift in mission studies by expanding the scope of mission to include the whole of creation. It challenged the powers that usurp God’s place, and called churches and Christians to a mission of caring for the earth, in the way of Christ. As the following shows, it took a clear, very promising step toward what today is called an eco-ecumenical theology:

Mission in Christ’s way must extend to God’s creation. Because the earth is the Lord’s, the responsibility of the churches towards the earth is a crucial part of the church’s mission. This mission brings the gospel of hope to all creation – a hope rooted in the resurrection of Christ. We are reminded that the early and undivided church stressed the deep unity between humankind and the whole of creation. In our church today we should share in prayer for the anxieties of this time. Our celebration of the Lord’s Table should affirm God’s redeeming love for all creation, and the breaking of the bread together should empower us to share the gifts of the earth with one another. This requires a change of life style as part of mission in Christ’s way.”\(^{25}\)

**Towards a new Christian sexual ethics in the light of HIV/AIDS**

I have been appreciating how the *IRM* features themes and articles that present contextually rooted approaches to mission concerns, as a way of engaging us across similarities and differences and enabling us to discover fresh insights into how the churches express their mission locally and globally. No matter what the theme, such approaches help to inform, energize, and/or critique the mission thinking and practice in our own church community. Of course, the more personally or institutionally we are involved or affected by a theme, the more it will resonate with us.


\(^{25}\) “The Earth is the Lord’s,” p. 373.
Armin Zimmermann’s article, “Towards a New Christian Sexual Ethics in the Light of HIV/AIDS,”26 gives us new considerations and new elements for Christian sexual ethics in the context of the human suffering and destruction caused by HIV and AIDS. He insists that it is no longer adequate simply to repeat traditional Christian sexual ethics, both because it is out-of-step with the changed environment of the world of the 21st century, and also because HIV/AIDS confronts us with new challenges to which we have to find new responses. In his preparing to teach in Africa (Cameroon), he rightly observed, “The situation has changed so that our sexual behaviour is not only a matter of leading more or less good Christian lives but also becomes a question of life and death.”27

In my current ministry in the Costa Rican Lutheran Church, I am engaged in providing pastoral accompaniment to persons with HIV/AIDS. I have also been involved in a ministry of education within the church on the reality of HIV/AIDS, where we have used materials that articulate some basic theological perspectives and principles for addressing HIV/AIDS, tried to raise awareness about the factors and situations that increase the spread of HIV, and have addressed some of the fears and ignorance surrounding AIDS. My teammates and I promote HIV prevention and network with organizations and persons with HIV and AIDS.

During the past three years, with the full endorsement of the national church, the team carried out a series of educational workshops on HIV/AIDS in the local faith communities in both urban and rural settings, where the majority of the members are poor and affected by problems because of how they are socially disadvantaged. Most of the participants in the workshops were women and youth, and in terms of AIDS awareness, some real progress was made. Nevertheless, what the workshops underscored was the great need for church members to learn about and discuss human sexuality generally from a faith perspective. Since then, our team participates in internal discussion leading to the formulation of a curriculum for sexual education by the church. It is in the context of the realities of peoples’ sexual lives in the era of AIDS that we must provide sexual education informed by Christian ethics, as a necessary part of our mission. In this sense the text of Zimmermann featured by the IRM comes as a wonderful gift to enhance and energize our thinking.

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27 Ibid., p. 256.
Zimmermann sketches out a sexual ethics in terms of a series of guidelines or basic principles, which he develops by using an ethical approach shaped by general biblical values. Zimmermann steers away from establishing “the biblical basis” for his guidelines and opts instead for interpretations shaped by biblical-based values like life, love, freedom, equality, commitment, respect, care, etc. Thus, he says, “I am convinced that everything that enhances life, that promotes life and that enriches life is according to the will of God. Sexuality certainly belongs to this category. As a minimum rule for our sexual behaviour, I suggest that any sexual activity of any person should never hurt or endanger any person, in any possible way.”

While some of his guidelines have a familiar ring, they are interpreted and rooted in the contemporary African context and the lived realities of men and women there in the era of HIV/AIDS. On the theme of intimacy, for example, he brings to bear practices and norms such as the inequality between men and women in their sexual as in other relationships, the inheritance of widows, the institution of polygamy, and the reluctance of many church leaders to openly discuss condom use. Never absent from his considerations is a view of the risks involved to human life in the context of the AIDS epidemic.

Under his first guideline, that sexuality is part of God’s good creation, Zimmermann argues that the *imago Dei*, as presented by Genesis 1, is reflected in humanity being created as relational beings, but he also stresses the erotic, pleasurable, and satisfying aspects of sexuality as expressed by Song of Songs. This becomes a basis for critiquing culturally sanctioned male patterns of sexuality that are not satisfying and even oppressive of women.

Zimmermann’s second guideline is the full and equal dignity of women, or gender equality. He correctly observes that women often have no right over their own bodies. “It is men who determine where and when sexual intercourse takes place, and women have often no right or means to refuse it.” He goes on to say, “In the worst case, sexual relationships or encounters between men and women are characterized by coercion, and force, no matter if the people involved are married or not. There cannot be the slightest doubt that any sexual act which involves coercion and force is to be strongly rejected by any Christian sexual ethics.” In this section Zimmermann notes the direct connection between practices that oppress women and the spread of HIV/AIDS. Here he goes

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28 Ibid., p. 268.
29 Ibid., p. 257.
30 Ibid., p. 258.
beyond a traditional, more narrowly focused Christian sexual ethics to declare, “What therefore is needed . . . in this context of male oppression and exploitation of females are information and education, and the empowerment of women in the economic, social and political spheres.” Not surprisingly, this is very pertinent not only for our situation in Costa Rica, but for Christian sexual ethics globally.

In considering whether sexual intercourse should only occur within marriage, the author clearly supports and commends the official position of most churches. But he also argues that if one of the essential aspects of sex is its relational aspect, and should not just be casual, then we may at least conclude that sexual activities should take place in the context of permanent relationships. On the other hand, that would mean that such relationships do not necessarily have to exist exclusively within the context of marriage.

He acknowledges that “many people, including Christians, do not live up to the high expectations raised in this presentation.” This is why safer sex must be addressed, and specifically, the use of condoms. He is forthright in saying that our first message to people who engage in high-risk sexual behaviour and do not follow the principles of abstinence or fidelity, should be “that with immediate effect they should start to consistently and correctly use condoms. This is necessary because it is clear that these people are in acute danger of either contracting or spreading HIV, and are thus risking their own lives and those of others.” Thus, he emphasizes that if it is one of the highest duties of the church to preserve life, then promoting condom use is an ethical or moral obligation of the highest order. He adds that those Christians and church leaders who hide the facts about the effectiveness of condom use in the prevention of AIDS, or who preach against it, “become guilty of transgressing one of God’s greatest commandments, that is, to save life.”

“Towards a New Christian Sexual Ethics in the Light of HIV/AIDS” has given us some new ethical lenses and new means by which to respond faithfully in mission in the context of the spread of HIV/AIDS.

31 Ibid.
32 Ibid., p. 265.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., p. 266.
35 Ibid.
A concluding word of gratitude: I have come full circle in my personal tribute to the *International Review of Mission* on the occasion of its centenary. I have raised up the above articles not necessarily because they were the best written or most academic, but because they are examples of those that have been significant to me, and perhaps to the wider readership of the *IRM*. In reading through many articles, I have seen how, through them, the Spirit of God uplifted God’s people in different eras and different places to seek to call people into communion with God, with one another and with creation. As members of the ecumenical family, we have much to be thankful for as we celebrate the journal’s significance for the study of mission.
Tradition as Impulse for Renewal and Witness: Introducing Orthodox Missiology in the IRM

Athanasios N. Papathanasiou

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Abstract

At the dawn of the 20th century the Orthodox churches found themselves in a strange, even contradictory situation. On the one hand, they had a rich missionary past (the Byzantine and the Russian missions) and a dynamic theology which accepted local cultures and stressed the importance of trinitarianism and pneumatology. Yet on the other hand, the Orthodox churches had turned inwards, locked in with the national identities of the traditionally Orthodox countries. Thus Orthodox theology was almost completely absent during the first two decades of the International Review of Missions. Then some Orthodox voices began to appear. The most important Orthodox contributions to the IRM have been the holistic understanding of mission as martyria and diakonia, an inclusive approach to Christ’s cosmic work, and the understanding of the church as the foretaste of the kingdom and the servant of the missionary God.

The process of introducing Orthodox missiology in the IRM

A beginning with an absence

The very first words of the International Review of Mission pointed to the desire for inter-Christian cooperation: “The study of missionary problems will be undertaken in international co-operation […]. We stand unreservedly for the principle of inter-denominational co-operation as distinct from undenominational or extra-denominational action.”

1 “The Editor’s Note,” IRM 1 (1912), pp. 2–3.
Indeed, this first issue had an inter-denominational character, but there were no references to the Orthodox churches, nor any articles by Orthodox theologians. The Orthodox churches had not yet taken their historic decisions which led to the formation of the ecumenical movement. The famous encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, calling upon the Orthodox churches to carefully examine the issue of inter-Christian communication and co-operation, was published in 1920, almost eight years after the launch of the *IRM*.

In Protestant circles which had played a leading role in Edinburgh in 1910, Orthodoxy was not unknown. Nikolai Kasatkin, the Russian clergyman who was working as a missionary in Japan, had been invited but had not responded. Kasatkin died in 1912, shortly after the *IRM* came into being. Shortly afterwards, an article was published by Charles F. Sweet, an Anglican vicar who had personally known Kasatkin. Sweet recounted Kasatkin’s story and highlighted his missionary principles: the acceptance of indigenous culture, his extensive translation work, and the formation of a local church. He noted that “no mission is so copiously supplied with publications for every sort of learner as the Orthodox Mission; it has been said that it might well be called the Church of the Translations.”

Sweet’s essay was the first and, for a long time, the only article which spoke about the basic principles of Orthodox missiology. Over the next twenty years (1913–1938), only one article in the field was published, a purely historical one dealing with the evangelism of Russia in the 10th century. Obviously the Orthodox churches were considered to be non-missionary, and limited by their various national identities.

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2. W. A. Visser ’t Hooft, *The Genesis and Formation of the World Council of Churches*, WCC, Geneva (1982), pp.1–6. The cited encyclical is thought to have contributed greatly to the creation of the WCC, of which the Orthodox Church was a founding member.


4. Charles F. Sweet, “Archbishop Nikolai and the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission to Japan,” *IRM* 2 (1913), pp. 126–147. Elsewhere Sweet provided the information that “in early Spring of 1909 an effort was made in Tokyo towards bringing about open communion between the Nippon Sei Ko Kwai (that is, the Japanese Church in communion with the Anglican Church) and the Haristos Sei Kyo Kwai (or the Japanese Church founded by Abp Nicolai of the Russian Church).” See Charles Filkins Sweet, “An Attempt at Unity in Japan. Anglican and Eastern Orthodox Churches,” Tokyo (1912), http://anglicanhistory.org/orthodoxy/sweet_attempt. However, the Orthodox did not participate in the move towards unity made by the Protestant Churches of Japan in 1911. See G. W. Fulton, “The Distribution of Christian Forces in Japan,” *IRM* 4 (1915), pp. 109–119.


Three new bricks in the wall

This image of Orthodox inertia changed decisively during the 1960s. Yet before then, from the 1930s through 1950s, something significant took place. Soon after the Bolshevik revolution in Russia (1917), many Russian intellectuals and theologians began emigrating to Western Europe, with the result that many Western Christians became acquainted, often profoundly so, with Orthodoxy. During these decades, three very important articles written by Orthodox theologians appeared in the IRM. These articles could be described as precursors of what was to emerge later.

The first of the three articles in 1934, by the Russian lay theologian Nicolas Zernov (1898–1980), gave a systematic introduction to Eastern Christianity. Features of the Orthodox tradition that were highlighted included the emphasis on the resurrection, the cosmic understanding of salvation, the focus on the Holy Spirit (in contrast to Western christocentrism), the epicletic character of liturgy (that at every Divine Liturgy the Holy Spirit is called to act anew), and many other aspects. At the same time, Zernov sought to deepen Western and Eastern Christians’ acquaintance with each other’s traditions.7

The next published text, in 1942 by Lev Gillet (1893–1980), a French convert to Orthodoxy, was truly pioneering. Taking as his starting point two articles that had been published in IRM on the mission to the Jews, Gillet proposed a new understanding of mission as dialogue, and not simply as a one-sided movement towards the other.

Gillet realized that only a very few people shared this understanding, even though it was rooted in the ancient Christian tradition and had been expressed typically in the 2nd century work of the Martyr Justin, Dialogue with the Jew Trypho.8 After Gillett’s article, three decades passed before mission as dialogue came to the forefront of the

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8 Lev Gillet, “Dialogue with Trypho,” IRM 31 (1942), pp. 172–179, esp. p. 172. Gillet characteristically wrote: “May an ‘outsider’ who, without having ever taken part in any missionary work concerning the Jews, has none the less been in close contact with them not only through literature, but through many personal friendships, present here some views about the Christian approach to Israel? None of these views is really new. But the main idea–the idea, that is, of a ‘dialogue’ (of which the Dialogos pros Tryphon of Justin Martyr was the first and irenic model) substituted for the idea of a one-sided ‘mission’ to the Jews – has never yet obtained a wide hearing among the Christian public. It is this idea, nowadays the idea of a small minority, which the following lines will try to express.”
ecumenical movement through the WCC sub-unit on dialogue,\(^9\) which developed a very interesting bibliography but seems to have ignored Gillet’s prophetic voice.\(^{10}\)

The third article appeared in 1954, again by Nicolas Zernov. With exceptional vividness, Zernov used his experiences from teaching in the Oriental Orthodox Church in India, to point out the danger faced by Eastern churches being locked into a national and cultural collectivism:

> Each nation has its own gifts and its own temptations. The family is the gift and the stumbling block for the Indian people. For the sake of the family they are ready to bear great sacrifices, their attachment to their relatives is deep and lasting, but it is also on account of their family allegiances that they often refuse to serve still greater causes and to be followers of Christ. [...] Instead of serving others they have subordinated their religion to their family interests. [...] This withdrawal from missionary responsibilities must not, however, obscure the fact that the Eastern Church of Travancore has great spiritual achievements on its credit side. It has preserved the Orthodox faith in its integrity, it enjoys a rich and uninterrupted sacramental life and it has succeeded in blending many Indian customs and traditions with Christian faith in one true Redeemer of the world.\(^{11}\)

Apart from these three articles, until the 1960s only a very few other articles dealt with Orthodox perspectives.\(^{12}\) Most spoke of the history of the Eastern churches or the current situation in the Soviet Union.\(^{13}\)

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9 See, for example, Michael Amaladoss, “Dialogue and Mission: Conflict or Convergence?” _IRM_ 75 (1986), pp. 222–241, who considers dialogue as a paradigm shift. In the inter-Christian field the understanding of other faiths as partners in dialogue can first be seen at the end of the 1930s (at the 3rd Missionary Conference at Tambaram, India, in 1938). However, the related discussion became much more prominent in the 1970s.


11 Nicolas Zernov, “Christianity in India and the Eastern Orthodox Church,” _IRM_ 43 (1954), p. 394. As in his previous article, Zernov again stressed the need for co-operation: “The Orthodox Church of India must be brought into this picture, but it can be an effective co-worker only in conjunction with other eastern churches. The majority of the problems of today have become worldwide, and such, it seems to me, is also the problem of the Church in India. It cannot be solved by the western Christians alone. Only the East and the West together can find the real solution.” (p. 396).


13 One exception to this is the article by S. Bolshakoff on the missionary history of the Russian Orthodox Church (in Siberia, America, China and Japan), as well as the endeavour to continue missionary work in the USSR and among the Russian diaspora. At the same time, Bolshakoff underlined fundamental Orthodox missiological principles: the acceptance of the vernacular, avoiding the imposition of Russian customs, and the ordination of indigenous clergy. See S. Bolshakoff, “Orthodox Missions To-day,” _IRM_ 42 (1953), pp. 275–284.
The great turning point

In 1961, “Syndesmos, The World Fellowship of Orthodox Youth” established a pan-Orthodox missionary centre, called Porefthentes, or “Go Ye.” This centre was a catalyst for awakening missionary consciousness in the Orthodox churches, for producing missiological theory and for participating ecumenically. The same year, the Russian Orthodox Church became a member of the WCC (the Greek Orthodox Churches had been there at its founding). This enhanced Orthodox presence was noted in the IRM:

Eastern Orthodoxy is once again asserting its former interest in missionary activity. This will come as a surprise to the majority of Protestants and Roman Catholics. It has long been assumed and accepted that Orthodox churches are nationalist churches and therefore lack the missionary concern necessary for them to break out from these self-imposed boundaries [...]. There are some noteworthy signs of revival for us to examine. First and foremost is the establishment, in 1961, of an Inter-Orthodox Missionary Centre under the name “Porefthentes,” in Athens.

Published the same year was an article by Anastasios Yannoulatos, the first director of Porefthentes, who became a well-known (Greek) Orthodox missiologist. He based missionary activity on the liturgical experience, and showed how worship in and of itself bears within it the concern for the world outside the worshipping community. Yannoulatos had been inspired by his first ecumenical experience at the 1963 missionary conference of the CWME, and he called upon other Orthodox to realize the missionary nature of their church and to reflect upon the wealth of its missionary heritage.

The increased Orthodox presence was also stressed in 1965 by the IRM editor, Lesslie Newbigin, when in referring to the merging of the IMC with the WCC, he highlighted valuable criteria of the Orthodox tradition:

When the proposal to put the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches together was being hotly debated, no point glowed hotter than the question, “Can the Orthodox churches really be part of a missionary council?” There were those on both sides who said no [...]. More successfully than any other missions, Orthodox missions seem to have grasped the fact that mission is not the same as church extension, that it involves the birth of a new church – the church

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of a nation baptized (with its language and its culture and all its common life) into Christ. It has not been characteristic of Orthodox missions in their greatest days to use the old shell for self-protection against the new culture.18

Important articles by Orthodox writers were published in 1965. Yannoulatos stressed the cosmic character of salvation, the eschatological nature of mission and the duty to incarnate the gospel in every culture.19 Elias Voulgarakis, a lay theologian and later missiology professor at the University of Athens, defined love as the motive for mission. He disagreed with the competition between Christian denominations and contrasted proselytism with free conversion.20 The Russian theologian Nikita Struve studied the work of the 19th century Siberian missionary Macaire Goukharev and his methodology (emphasizing catechesis, acceptance of local languages, avoiding mass baptism, and so on), and made the following observation:

At the present time, there no longer exists any organized missionary work. The contributions in this issue by Archimandrite Yannoulatos and by Elias Voulgarakis speak of missionary renewal in the Greek Orthodox Church; but at present more has been accomplished in the realm of theory than in practice.21

Struve was correct. Mission is about action, crossing boundaries – not as an extension of Christendom, but as witness to the gospel in every human context.

A new impetus

Shortly before the 1970s, the debate over the nature of salvation started to shake the foundations of the ecumenical movement: does salvation concern only the individual, is it social in scope, or both? In this discussion, the contribution of the Orthodox was considered particularly useful. As the Romanian Orthodox priest Ion Bria (1929–2002) explained:

At the beginning of the 1970s, when critical dissonances in the missiological debate were becoming sharper and the urgency of a holistic articulation of mission was increasingly evident, the WCC encouraged the Orthodox churches to become more active in this discussion and to articulate their position in an ecumenical framework. Consequently, since the WCC’s world mission conference on “Salvation Today” (Bangkok 1972–73), Orthodox theologians from both Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches have met on several occasions to reflect on the elements of a missiological

18 “From the Editor,” IRM 54 (1965), pp. 273, 277–278.
typology of the Orthodox churches. The typology proposed corresponds to the history of their own mission and especially to the constant tradition in which worship and liturgy are an essential factor of proclaiming and confessing Christ. We call this typology the “liturgy after the Liturgy.”22

This was revelatory for at least one Western Christian:

Can we speak of a specific Orthodox understanding of the word “mission”? Western churches have been very much preoccupied with this concept for many decades. But Orthodox voices were absent in past missionary conferences. In Bangkok we discussed these questions on an equal footing for the first time, only to discover that we spoke different languages. The Orthodox thinking on this crucial subject in Etchmiadzin has clarified the issues. For me, this was a new approach, a discovery, because categories which I tended to accept without questioning were deeply challenged.23

The “liturgy after the Liturgy” was a new perspective, although rooted in the heart of tradition. The meaning of this outlook is that the vision of the kingdom, which is revealed in the Divine Liturgy, concerns the whole world, and that it has to be diffused as witness and service to the whole of society. The witness that is given after the Liturgy is an organic part of it, not something added on and therefore of secondary importance. The formula “liturgy after the Liturgy” was first articulated by Anastasios Yannoulatos in 1975 in Etchmiadzin, Armenia, and since then, along with the valuable contribution of Ion Bria, has become an established phrase that is used often in the IRM.24 How this phrase has contributed to a more holistic approach is evident in these words of Yannoulatos:

Worship and service are two aspects of one breathing rhythm: inspiration and expiration. For there cannot be a dynamic expiration, in service, without a dynamic inspiration, in worship, and vice versa. One cannot have the illusion of living “in him”, who was “the one who serves” (Luke 22: 27), who “went about doing good” (Acts 10: 38), unless one’s life is a dynamic expression of this transfiguring act, an act of resistance against demonic powers that corrupt human existence through injustice, greediness, distortion of the thought and meaning of life exerting a continuous pollution of man’s imagination. One cannot remain indifferent to the unjust domination over people just because they are poor, to unjust discriminations because of race, sex or age, or to the many forms of human egocentricity that are the ultimate sin and rebellion against the love of the Triune God.25

From this point onwards there was a more regular Orthodox presence in the *IRM*, with the help of theologians such as the Greek professor Petros Vassiliadis, the Romanian Fr Ioan Sauca, and others. Yet to give an account of the course of the Orthodox contribution to the journal over the following decades is beyond the constraints of this article.

**Main features of Orthodox missiology**

Orthodox writers characteristically attempt to show the dynamics of their tradition. The essence of this is found in the osmosis of christology, pneumatology, and trinitarianism, and all these within the horizon of the coming kingdom.\(^2^6\) This eschatological outlook is the yardstick for every ecclesiastical institution, tradition and mindset.

Perhaps the only recent Orthodox practical example of inculturation in missionary work is found in an article by Metropolitan Geevarghese Mar Ostathios of the (Oriental) Malankara Orthodox Indian Church, who examined the concept of love in Hinduism and Buddhism.\(^2^7\) However, the Orthodox make an important contribution on the theoretical and theological level.\(^2^8\) Especially important are articles that stress not only respect for the existing cultures, but also cultural creativity, that is, when the gospel not only meets cultures but also contributes to the formation of new

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cultures. Exceptional in this regard is a paper by the Romanian Viorel Ionita, who speaks not only of inculturation, but also of interculturation. Whereas inculturation can slip into an essentialistic understanding of cultures (as if static and unchanging), interculturation emphasizes that cultures are in a state of flux, and that a process of osmosis always occurs between them.

“The Orthodox cannot separate the gospel values from the Christian community, which carries these values.” The kingdom concerns the whole world, and God unceasingly works for the transfiguration of the whole creation into God’s kingdom. The church as a new reality reveals and serves the vision of the kingdom, through its witness but also through how it lives. “The church [. . .] exists as ‘leaven,’ ‘sign’ and ‘sacrament’ of the kingdom that has come and is coming. What the church has, it has to radiate and offer for the sake of all the world.”

Mission points to the event of communion which God offers to the world as the Body of Christ, the Church, that is, a community in history which reflects the life of God as communion. Mission cannot be exercised without reference to the Church. [. . .] A confessing Church today can only proclaim the Gospel if it is a living and transparent icon of Christ, both as suffering servant and the Lord of the world.

If Christ’s Mission brings about essentially nothing less than the self-giving of God’s trinitarian life to the world, it follows that mission is ultimately possible only in and through an event of communion which reflects in history the trinitarian existence of God himself. The church is meant precisely to be that. Therefore, mission suffers and is seriously distorted or disappears whenever it is not possible to point to a community in history which reflects this trinitarian existence of communion. This happens whenever the church is so distorted or divided that it is no longer possible to recognize it as such a communion, or whenever Mission is exercised without reference to the Church, but with reference simply to the individuals or the social realities of history. Ecclesiological heresy, therefore, renders Mission impossible or distorted.

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This Orthodox affirmation that mission is of the very essence of the church and not only the work of individuals, provided new inspiration for some Protestant partners in the ecumenical movement. 

It is likely that Orthodox writings such as the above were a response to pluralist theologies emerging since the 1970s, which seemed to question the role of the institutional church and the finality of Christ. At a 1974 consultation of the Eastern and Oriental churches, the Romanian theologian Fr Dimitru Staniloae emphasized not only the centrality and finality of Christ, but also his presence throughout all creation and in the honourable works of every person. This view allowed for a rejection of christomonism and aggressive mission proselytism, and for the development of christology in synthesis with pneumatology and trinitarianism, so that the universal and free action of God can be acknowledged everywhere. But this should not be understood as a position opposed to conversion. In any case, there is always the need for conversion to God’s kingdom.

As argued earlier, dialogue as rooted in the very being of the church, has appeared since the 1970s as a new paradigm in the ecumenical movement. Within this framework, Petros Vassiliadis makes some crucial clarifications:

Dialogue is the new term that now runs parallel to, and in some cases in place of, the old missiological terminology. This development, of course, does not by any means imply that there has been a shift

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39 “The wrongdoings of missionaries in the history of Western mission [. . .] brought about in the West a tremendous sentiment of guilt and opened the way for expressing remorse, repentance and apologies for the past. Unfortunately, the very notion and content of mission itself were also greatly affected. In some contexts the very word ‘mission’ got a very bad connotation and there have been voices clearly speaking against it. Within some academic frameworks, due to a certain extent also to the process of restructuring, among the first chairs to have been eliminated were the chairs on missiology,” Ioan Sauca, “Reaffirming Mission at the Centre of the Ecumenical Movement,” IRM 88 (1999), p. 51. Also Anastasios, “Address by the Moderator,” p. 327: “It is another thing the imposition by force, that is unacceptable and has always been anti-Christian, and a quite different thing a withholding or diminution that leads to a double betrayal, both of our own faith and of other’s right to know the whole truth.”

in Christian soteriology from the slogan “No salvation but through Christ” – overcoming the classical Catholic view “extra ecclesiam salus non est,” first expressed by Cyprian of Carthage and later misinterpreted to mean exclusively the “institutional” (Catholic?) Church—to a novel one: “No salvation but through God.” Rather it is a radical reinterpretation of Christology through pneumatology, through the rediscovery of the forgotten Trinitarian theology of the undivided church.41

One aspect of ecclesiology is especially important. The church does not exist in some automatic way, but has to prove itself faithful to its Lord in order to be truly the church. This protects ecclesiology from sliding into institutionalism and ritualism, and in this way, the renewal of the church is a missionary act. Renewal is the movement which enables the church to address itself to the present, to enter into dialogue with it and not remain locked in the past. This is not a denial of its tradition, but—on the contrary—what its tradition demands. It is a duty that stems from the very nature of the church:

Orthodoxy insists and has always insisted that the Church will remain the Church only if it mediates the communion of man with God, but that any one-dimensional interpretation of that communion will fail to encompass the totality of the act of salvation. Therefore, not only theosis—deification—but freedom, liberation, justice: all are part of the total reality of salvation.42

The mission of the Church and the institutional church itself can hide Christ if they are a mere expression of historical continuity. Where there is a renewal of the Church, there is a mission. This mission does not necessarily require anyone to “go out” anywhere.43

Despite their slight differences, Orthodox texts usually maintain an inclusivist position. That is, they express the conviction that God acts everywhere, within and outside the church, and that God meets all persons, all peoples, all traditions and all historical epochs. In this sense, the church is not the owner of salvation but the one who serves at the side of God who saves, and witnesses to the dignity of the human person, that is, to the promise that every person will be resurrected.44

At an inter-Orthodox consultation in the early 1970s, this discussion took place:

We encountered more difference of opinion among ourselves when we began looking for God’s saving work outside the church, not only in secular movements of liberation but also in the reality of religions in the lives and traditions of people who follow them. [...] It is possible for Christians

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44 Anastasios, “Address by the Moderator,” p. 322.

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to regard the traditions, scriptures and practices of other religions in a very positive light as reflecting the widespread human search for and response to the Spirit of God. A second method of approach would be to see them, from a Christian interpretation, as containing a preparation for the Gospel and many hidden and unrecognized expressions of the one truth which is Christ. It was, thirdly, felt necessary to point out that religions and philosophies have also been regarded as putting barriers in the way of the coming of men to Christ. In any case we feel convinced that if God’s love is both the source and the expression of salvation, then Christian love demands a relationship characterized by more respect for and interest in the faith and the aspirations of adherents of other religions.45

Almost two decades later, Anastasios Yannoulatos’s position was more decisive, grounded as it is in the tradition of the ancient church:

Those outside the Christian faith who still have no knowledge of the will of God in its fullness, do not cease to move in the mystical radiance of his glory. God’s will is diffused throughout the whole of history and throughout the whole world. Consequently it influences their own life, concerns them and embraces them. It is expressed in many ways—as divine providence, inspiration, guidance etc.46

In the same spirit, the Arab bishop Georges Khodr maintained that there are small groups of semi-evangelical souls and people who follow to some extent the ethical patterns of the Sermon on the Mount. They form a kind of church extra muros outside the established historical Church [. . .]. The imago dei can work very dynamically in a non-Christian. The cosmic Christ, in whom man can partake without naming him, is very real.47

Metropolitan Ostathios linked this traditional inclusivism with the “anonymous Christians” theology:

My evangelistic brothers are in the habit of numbering the lost and those who have never heard the Gospel. I feel that this is a very wrong approach biblically, theologically, psychologically and factually. [. . .] We must find a new motivation for mission and evangelism other than this “lostness” of the so-called “lost.”[. . .] Mission must become the spontaneous expression of the joy of Christian discipleship. [. . .] Evangelism is the sharing of a joy freely given to us by Christ.48

The fundamentalist missiologists, whose emphasis seems to be on the two billion people who are perishing without knowing or naming the name of Christ, are requested to increase the emphasis on the love of Christ. . . . One who is baptized and made a Christian without the inwardness of the

45 “Salvation in Orthodox Theology,” (an aide-memoire drawn up and agreed upon at the end of a consultation of Orthodox theologians on “Salvation Today,” organized by the CWME), IRM 61 (1972), pp. 405–406.
gospel is not a Christian. The mark of a Christian is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, the indwelling of Christ, the manifestation of the sharing love of God. Those outside the visible church with the indwelling of the Logos are also the saved ones and are Christians “inwardly”. Yet mission is indispensible to make them realize that their life in Logos will become abundant life when they know that Christ is the Logos. In other words, there is an element of truth in the theory of latent church or the scattered seeds that are hidden that theologians like Karl Rahner and Paul Tillich have developed in their inimitable ways. The Holy Bible is not the book of one party or one denomination or one single theology. It is too big to be limited to one point of view.49

The Russian Vitaly Borovoy maintained an interesting, rather idiosyncratic kind of universalism, but which seems to move outside the bounds of official Orthodox teaching:

Only the Kingdom of God will last without end. A last judgment, “eternal punishment,” torments will not be without end. From this situation there will be for everybody a transition through gradual apokatastasis. The transition will be multiform and realized in several stages. The process will not start within the historical space-time of biblical salvation, but it will be outside of biblical “eternity,” in the post-eschatological ages to come, with “new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3, 13; cf. Rev. 21, 1).50

Finally, I refer to Fr Michael Oleksa, a spokesman of the Orthodox Alaskan missionary legacy, who aptly described the double task of the church: on the one hand it has to acknowledge the freedom of the Spirit to act wherever it pleases, on the other it has to discern the demonic forces which constantly strive to enslave humans in this fallen world, where reality is always mixed.51 I dare say that every time missiology contributes toward the accomplishment of this task, the church may be truly experienced as the deacon of the resurrection promised by the One who renews all creation.

The Church Is the Mission: Integrating the IMC with the WCC

Mark Laing

Mark Laing taught missiology at Union Biblical Seminary, Pune, for several years. This article is based on his doctoral thesis, a revised form of which is being published as From Crisis to Creation: Lesslie Newbigin and the Reinvention of Christian Mission, by Wipf & Stock.

Abstract

This article discusses the reasons for the integration of the International Missionary Council with the World Council of Churches and evaluates the outcome of integration and the role of the International Review of Mission/s in this process. It focuses particularly on the role played by a key figure in this process, Lesslie Newbigin, the last general secretary of the IMC and the first director of world mission and evangelism in the WCC.

At the third assembly (1961) of the WCC in New Delhi, the International Missionary Council (IMC) was integrated with the World Council of Churches (WCC), which was not only an event but also a process. From the inception of the WCC there were forces within both councils which drew them from being only associated to being more closely related. Uniting a council that was focused on mission with one focused on the church was the fitting organisational embodiment of more fundamental theological convictions.\(^1\) Here we present the reasons for integration and evaluate the outcome and the role the International Review of Mission/s (IRM) in this process.

By the middle of the 20th century, the Protestant missionary movement viewed changing world events as a tide turning against Christian mission. However, the hostility against the Protestant missionary movement, and the resultant introspection, led to a more adequate definition and foundation of mission.

Protestant missions, which had emerged from the West, were losing confidence not only in their own validity, but more fundamentally in the enduring validity of the gospel. The

\(^1\) This of course is a caricature, as both councils had overlapping concerns.
turmoil in the supposed “Christian West” undermined confidence in Christianity and their authority to propagate it. Mission organisations felt this most critically in terms of dwindling finances and declining numbers of missionaries. Missions had grown complacent from the benevolence furnished by colonialism. But now, especially in the showcase mission field of China, hostile forces were thwarting the advance of traditional missions. These factors led mission leaders to seek stronger theological foundations for mission. They did so, acknowledging the increasing overlap and growing relationship between the IMC and the WCC. Organisational and theological factors demanded that this relationship be clarified.

Factors affecting integration

The possibility of a conservative schism

During the 1950s and 1960s some evangelicals, who “constitute a large part of the membership of WCC churches,” were constructively involved with the ecumenical movement. Evangelical resistance to integration was mainly concentrated in North America and Scandinavia. Because of their sheer numbers, the role of conservative evangelicals in the USA was of particular concern. They were described as holding a conservative theology, a concern for purity in the church, a vivid missionary interest and a profound distrust of and refusal to join ecumenical organizations at any level. Lesslie Newbigin feared that integration could precipitate an evangelical schism – a view shared by others such as Max Warren and Stephen Neill. Discernible trends in the two decades prior to integration suggested that this fear might be realised. Norman Goodall estimated that in 1957, 70 percent of all foreign missionaries were from the USA, a number that had more than doubled since the 1930s. Of those, only 42 percent were related to the National Christian Council of Churches (NCCC-USA); the other 58 percent were with agencies not cooperating with either the IMC or the WCC. While the

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6 Goodall estimated there to be 35,000 non-Roman Catholic missionaries, of which nearly 24,000 are from the USA and 6,500 (16%) are British. Goodall, “Evangelicals,” p. 214. C.f. Smith, “Conservative Evangelicals,” p. 182.
total number of missionaries from the USA was growing, the proportion of those cooperating with the WCC was dwindling dramatically.7

Already perceiving the WCC to be compromised theologically, American conservative evangelicals eschewed ongoing association with the IMC as it moved toward integration with the WCC. Their growing numbers and revenue were interpreted as divine sanction for them to continue with business as usual. This led to a polarization, leaving little room for more moderate evangelicals to maintain the middle ground. The loose, broad-based association the IMC had maintained for decades was fractured, and the relationship between evangelicals and “ecumenicals” became increasingly polarized and antagonistic.

The relationship between the WCC and the IMC

The IMC had associated with the WCC since its inception, as evident in shared leadership and an increasing overlap of operations. At the 1938 conference in Tambaram, the IMC had to face the question of how it would deal with what was emerging as the WCC. While supporting this development, the IMC sought to maintain its separate identity, but shortly after Tambaram, the IMC proposed the formation of a joint committee of the two councils.8 For the next decade, the relationship between the two councils grew closer. Joint work in study, international affairs and the work of the East Asia Secretariat,9 “have since become so deeply interwoven as to go beyond what was described in 1948 as the ‘inter-relatedness of two autonomous councils.’”10

The repeated crossing of cultural barriers, as Newbigin attended central committee meetings, highlighted to him the very different worlds that existed between Geneva and his local parish in south India.

I have felt acutely conscious of it, every time I have come from India to attend Central Committee meetings. . . . One feels that one has moved into a completely different world, and that it is very hard

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7 Primarily as a reflection of the general malaise and decline in the Western church, but also due to the belief that indigenous local churches should be free to run their own affairs. Decline continued such that by 1969 only 28% of American Protestant missionaries were related to the NCCC-USA, further dropping to only 14% by 1975. R.D. Winter, “Ghana: Preparation for Marriage,” IRM 67, no. 267 (1978), p. 349.


9 The East Asia Christian Conference (EACC) first met in Bangkok in 1949 and was constituted in Kuala Lumpur in 1959.

10 Visser ’t Hooft, WCC Central Committee Minutes (hereafter, CCM), 1956, p. 110.
to relate the thinking going on in ‘ecumenical circles’ to the ordinary problems of parish . . . that one left behind.\footnote{Newbigin to Visser ‘t Hooft, 29/11/1958, School of Oriental and African Studies Archives (hereafter as SOAS): IMC, 26-11-25/2.}

This made Newbigin aware of the problems inherent in integrating the IMC, which was regionally based and had strong representation from the “younger churches” in contrast to the centralised and Western dominated WCC. There were disparities in theological understanding between the WCC and ordinary church members. The WCC centred in Geneva had a Western agenda at heart, and its historical legacy in the Faith and Order movement was biased towards Western ecclesiological concerns. Theological work was done in the context of the West, and tended to be dominated by this agenda.\footnote{For example, despite the international impact of the formation of the Church of South India discussion on united churches, this was kept off the agenda of the 1952 Faith and Order conference in Lund. JEL Newbigin, Unfinished Agenda: An Autobiography. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids (1985), p. 139.} Despite these disparities, there was a desire on both sides to move from relationships of paternalism and dependency to true partnership. To guard against Western domination and reflect a model for the global church, Newbigin proposed that what was created in Geneva would serve as an ecumenical model for other such study centres in Asia and Africa: “I think it is quite vital that we should take seriously the necessity for more decentralisation in the structure of the integrated Council”.\footnote{Ibid.}

**The problem of inter-church aid**

The need to clarify the relationship between these two councils became even more pressing with the change in mandate of the division of inter-church aid (DICA) that the WCC had created to respond to the need for post-war reconstruction in continental Europe. Its mandate was to provide temporary emergency aid, although in 1954 the WCC expanded its mandate beyond Europe. This was clarified in 1955, giving the DICA a worldwide and permanent mandate.\footnote{CCM, 1955, 31, 33. For an introduction to the history of the DICA see: G Murray, “Joint Service as an Instrument of Renewal,” in *The Ecumenical Advance*, Vol. 2, 1948–1968, ed. Harold E. Fey, WCC, Geneva (1986).} Thus, at the time when Western mission boards were withdrawing from relationships with and rescinding their support of “younger churches,” powerful service agencies were replacing mission boards’ involvement with these churches.\footnote{However, at least initially, service agencies were not replicating past paternalistic relationships. The withdrawal of Western mission agencies was to honour the requests of post-colonial “younger churches”, and in part due to financial duress.}
New initiatives and resources from the DICA, for the sake of “younger churches,” were perceived as a threat by mission boards, and called for the relationship between the DICA and the IMC to be clarified. How were mission agencies to relate to service agencies? What was the best way to express the relationship between the two councils? The impetus for integration was an attempt to resolve this critical issue.

The IMC’s solution was encapsulated in Newbigin’s 1958 manifesto for integration, “One Body, One Gospel, One World.” Regarding organization, his position was that DICA and the IMC should be united into one division of mission within an integrated council. This was supported by the IMC leadership, but overwhelmingly rejected by the central committee of the WCC. The joint committee recommended that Newbigin’s paper be published in *International Review of Mission* and *Ecumenical Review*, as a personal statement to promote wider discussion. However, his concluding argument, on how DICA should relate to DWME (the Division of World Mission and Evangelism) in an integrated council was entirely omitted from publication. In this published paper, Newbigin was required to be much more circumspect than before.

At the time of integration, the organisational decision was made to keep the DICA and the DWME as separate divisions within the integrated council, which failed to deal with the fundamental problem of the relationship between the DICA and the IMC. The central committee of the WCC adopted a more cautious path towards integration, resulting in the WCC incorporating the IMC into its existing structure, but without any substantial transformation of the WCC. Just as missions were going through a major post-colonial re-evaluation, Newbigin argued that the WCC, as the international organ of the church, also needed to be restructured more fully to incorporate mission and wholeheartedly reflect that the church is God’s mission to the world. Visser ’t Hooft, general secretary of the WCC, argued that similar self-scrutiny “was no less imperative for the WCC”, and should begin with the central committee. But Newbigin’s proposal

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16 Significant for the outcome of the discussion at the joint committee was a volte-face by Leslie Cooke, the director of the DICA, who, in 1956 had backed the idea of a single division. Cooke “Reflections concerning the relationship between ICA and Mission and their organisational expression in the integrated council of the WCC after 1961,” 13/8/1958, Birmingham University Library Archives (hereafter as BUL): DA29/2/9/31, p. 4.


19 Visser ’t Hooft understood integration as a process in three stages: first, bringing the ecumenical movements of churches and missions together under one roof; second, laying the foundation for common strategic thinking on mission; and third, coordinating and unifying the work of missions with that of inter-church aid. Stage one would be achieved by integration in 1961. Only after that could there then be progression to the subsequent stages. Visser ’t Hooft to Newbigin, 22/7/1958, World Council of Churches Archives (hereafter as WCC): 27.0015.

20 CCM, 1958, p. 17.
was defeated. He viewed the alternative that was accepted as being “in danger of failing altogether to evoke the response which we desire.”

After integration, Newbigin persistently reminded the central committee of the need to overhaul the provisional nature of the WCC to “make the whole world council an organ of solidarity between the churches in mission and service.” However this did not take place, nor did Newbigin’s other request, that the former IMC national councils become formally related to the whole WCC and not merely through the channel of the DWME. The WCC remained a council of churches, marginalising the national councils bequeathed by the IMC. Procrastination over this central issue led to the dissipation of resolve, the inability to effect change, and contributed to the decline of mission concern within the WCC. This was exacerbated by the mushrooming of numerous programmes within the WCC, thus diluting the influence of the DWME, which became one of many departments. From the IMC perspective, leaving the WCC unchanged at the time of integration gave the impression that it was also unchallenged, that the IMC was being absorbed into the WCC.

In retrospect, while serving as first director of the DWME and editor of the IRM, Newbigin expressed how pressing this issue had been: “No other issue loomed as large as this in the discussions leading to the integration of the two councils. It was always apparent that one test of the effectiveness of the integration would be at this point.” But in the heat of debate on how to structure an integrated council, both the IRM and Ecumenical Review had stifled debate by not going public on these matters; only the leadership of the councils was privy to the severity of the debate.

**Changes in mission theology**

With Indian independence in 1947 and other countries demanding decolonization, because of their association with domineering cultural and political Western powers, missions were being discredited and needed to be rehabilitated. The church “faces a radically new situation, and nothing will suffice save radical rethinking of the nature of her mission.” Besides the scourge of colonialism, other forces were also recognized, such as the resurgence of world religions.

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22 Newbigin to Visser ’t Hooft, 11/10/1963, WCC: 421.050.


The post-colonial quest to reorganise and restructure missions led to more fundamental questioning of how mission should be redefined. Critical to Newbigin’s thinking to avert disaster and steer towards a successful integration was the need to shift discussion from the organisational level to fundamental theological issues. Integration raised questions about the very nature of the church: if the church is the mission, how is that to be expressed, and what changes were needed within the WCC to embody mission?

The Rolle statement from the 1951 meeting of the central committee and the consensus it built, became the theological foundation for progress toward integration. Newbigin’s draft, “The Calling of the Church to Mission and to Unity,” proposed that the theological premise for the church’s call to mission and to unity was grounded in the redemptive work of Christ:

> the Church’s unity and apostolicity rest upon the whole redeeming work of Christ – past, present and future. . . . [Therefore] the obligation to take the Gospel to the whole world, and the obligation to draw all Christ’s people together both rest upon Christ’s whole work, and are indissolubly connected.26

The statement was accepted by the central committee, and the following year at Willingen by the IMC. The basic position was that the church’s calling to mission and unity is based on Christ’s work, and thus mission and unity are “indissolubly connected.”27 Newbigin recorded that “many of [the statement’s] ideas . . . helped to create the theological climate for the later integration of the IMC and the WCC.”28

Although consensus had now been achieved through this statement, strident voices now challenged the church-centric model of mission. The Willingen conference was polarized between the voices of Hans Hoekendijk and Paul Lehmann on the one hand, who sought a shift from a church-centric model of mission “to speak more of God’s work in the secular world, in the political, cultural and scientific movements of the time,” and on the other hand, the majority of delegates who still adhered to the model established at Tambaram.29

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28 Newbigin, Unfinished Agenda, p. 133.
29 Ibid., p. 138.
The _IRM_ was a crucial vehicle for disseminating Hoekendijk’s view that the church was “an illegitimate centre” for mission, which thus was “bound to go astray.”\(^{30}\) Hoekendijk understood the church as a happening or event. “The nature of the Church can be sufficiently [and entirely] defined by its function, i.e. its participation in Christ’s apostolic ministry.”\(^{31}\) As apostolic event, the church functioned to establish _shalom_ in the world.\(^{32}\) The distinction between church and world was blurred; the church was envisaged as “the laboratory, the diakonia of a little group, living in a concrete situation, and serving each other and their environment by reforming the structure of a segment of society.”\(^{33}\)

The ensuing debate between those who held to this model and those who rejected it led to fruitful enquiry on the relationship between the church and the world, and the relationship between salvation and secular history. The process of integration enabled a shift, from reflecting on the reorganisation and rehabilitation of missions, to more fundamental issues of how mission should be redefined. The acceptance of the _missio Dei_ concept, which acknowledged that the church is missionary in its nature, led to exploring how this should be embodied in structures, ranging from the local congregation to the relationship between the IMC and the WCC. Their international union was understood symbolically as saying that “the church is the mission.”

The _missio Dei_ concept shifted understandings of the origin and source of mission from human to divine agency. It was therefore more correct to speak of _mission_, in the singular, reflecting divine agency than in the plural, reflecting human agency. This change was debated in the contents of the _IRM_, but not reflected in its title. While Newbigin was editor the _IRM_ resisted changing its name, only “dropping the s,” to become the _International Review of Mission_ after Newbigin had departed. The change brought the _IRM_ into line with the designation of the division (world mission and evangelism) and with the consensus that mission was to all continents, not just three, moving the concept of mission away from its historical “directedness” from the north to the south.\(^{34}\)


\(^{31}\) _Ibid._, p. 334.


\(^{33}\) Hoekendijk, _The Church Inside Out_, p. 29.

Potential outcomes of integration

In planning for integration Newbigin accepted Walter Freytag’s analysis of the potential outcome for missions. First, missions would “peter out through lack of conviction.” The danger here was to abandon mission, as inextricably bound up with and tainted by colonialism, to proclaim that the age of missions was dead, and to turn instead to inter-church aid. The second outcome was that, rather than redefining mission, old paternalistic patterns would be perpetuated in “backward” regions. This could result in an evangelical schism from the IMC, and leave an enfeebled IMC to integrate with the WCC. The third potential outcome was creative re-thinking and re-statement of what mission means in the new context of the world and the church.

Newbigin interpreted the possibility of the first and second outcome occurring together: “an enfeebled missionary movement tacked on to the WCC as an appendage and a reactionary fundamentalist ‘IMC Continuing’ trying to enlist the support of the western churches.” He was aware that the cohesiveness of the IMC constituency was fragile and would be tested by the process of integration, and the “very real danger that the IMC, in the process of trying to integrate with the WCC, will itself disintegrate.”

At the time of integration the WCC was rapidly changing both internally and in response to external geo-political forces. It was moving from becoming predominantly (but not exclusively) Protestant: for example, at its third assembly (1961) a large number of Orthodox Churches joined. This New Delhi assembly also signalled the passing of the old generation and the initiation of a new generation of leaders. Other important factors were the rise of secularism, theological tensions within the life of the WCC, and East-West political polarization. For those at the heart of the ecumenical movement this raised the question as to whether the WCC could maintain its cohesion and integrity in spite of these threats. Yet integration imbued the

36 At the first assembly (1948) various Orthodox Churches joined, including the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the autonomous churches of Finland, Cyprus, Greece, and the Oriental Orthodox of Ethiopia and South India. More joined at the second assembly (1954). Martin Conway to Laing, email, 06/09/2008.
37 WA Visser ‘t Hooft, Memoirs, SCM, London (1973), pp. 309–310. This was Visser ‘t Hooft’s last assembly as general secretary.
38 This of course became internalised within the WCC. E.g. the nomination of a candidate to a particular committee by the Russian Orthodox Church was apparently influenced by Russia’s political interests in the Middle East. Newbigin, Unfinished Agenda, p. 192.
39 Visser ‘t Hooft, Memoirs, p. 309.
WCC with the resolve to make theological progress on the missionary nature of the church.

**Redefining mission: from structure to substance**

Integration helped facilitate reflection on the theology of mission. By the middle of the 20th century, key leaders in Protestant missions recognised that the missionary movement was in crisis. Their quest to reorganise and restructure missions focused on how the IMC and WCC should relate, as international symbols of the relationship between mission and church. Throughout this process, the temptation was to become consumed in organisational debate. But the desire to rehabilitate missions led to the more fundamental question of how mission should be redefined.

This theological quest was explored both institutionally and personally. As a consequence of integration, Newbigin made significant advances in his own theology of mission, particularly in the development of his trinitarian mission theology. He considered integration to be not only a reorganisation of mission, but more fundamentally, as requiring a redefinition of mission. He moved from analysing the structure to the substance of mission, which needed to be trinitarian. He realised that there were considerable problems with the church-centric model of mission which had come to the fore at Tambaram. His study papers written in light of the integration were initially critical of the inadequacies of this church-centric model, but limited in what they offered instead. Subsequently he developed a more adequate trinitarian foundation for mission. Not until nearly twenty years later, in his book *The Open Secret*, did Newbigin reach a trinitarian formulation with which he was content.40

**Expressing mission ecclesiology**

Integration of the IMC with WCC was always understood to mean more than an administrative union, but also as a sign that the church *is* the mission. Recovering this relationship between mission and the church implied that the prior ecclesiology was defective, incomplete or distorted. This theological breakthrough coincided with the time when the process of secularization was reaching its zenith. “The collapse of

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colonialism, global westernization, resurgent secularism, and a revolutionary optimism provided a volatile mix that made . . . [the 1960s] ‘volcanic.’

Issues raised by secularization affected the outcome of integration and raised key questions. One projected outcome of secularization was the formation of a unified world civilization. As a fitting response to this, integration sought to establish a “worldwide Christian fellowship committed to the task of mission to the whole world.” Traditionally missions had come from the West, but in recovering missionary ecclesiology it was recognized that “the home base is everywhere.” Wherever the church is, it is in the “mission field,” and must therefore be oriented towards the world.

These concerns were explicitly addressed at the first DWME conference (1963), under the theme, “mission in six continents.” With this, the West as a neglected mission field came into focus, and not only the three other continents. With it also came the admission that the church had to move from redundant structures inherited from Christendom which did not express the missionary nature of the church. Issues of secularism dominated the proceedings. To this end, a WCC study on the missionary structure of the congregation dealt with secularization and proposed more appropriate church structures. A central concern for Newbigin, then director of the DWME, was how each church was to be God’s agent for mission and to change accordingly: “every congregation is itself an agent of mission.”

The united council was an inspirational sign to the worldwide church, prompting ongoing reflection on how adequately to embody this theological conviction. This led to a call for “bold experiments,” especially at local and regional levels, to overcome the past institutional polarization and dichotomy that had existed between mission and church.

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43 Newbigin, One Body, pp. 25, 27.


46 Emphasis added, Newbigin to Wieser, 18/12/1975, WCC: 421, 301.
The CWME within the WCC

As early as 1963, Newbigin was assured that administratively the integration of the two councils had been successful. The IMC had responded to criticism from “younger church” leaders to move beyond colonial models of mission. Yet the West continued to dominate WCC offices, funding and agenda. With its critics less prevalent or vocal, Western church life continued largely unscathed and unreformed. The need to restructure mission was not initially matched with a corresponding recognition that the church itself needed to change. The integration of the IMC was accepted without an analogous reformation of the structure of the WCC, thus perpetuating the dichotomy between how theology is conceived and embodied.

The pressure to make such changes were absent because the regionalised ethos of the IMC limited its ability to impact what were the centralised tendency of the WCC. This was compounded by Newbigin’s own admission:

I have to confess that my own leadership as the first director of the new Division was defective. I was concerned about maintaining the continuity of relationships centred in the London and New York office of the IMC. Consequently for several years the staff of the new Division was divided and the presence in Geneva was not strong enough to make the needed impact there.

With the expanding ecclesiastical membership of the WCC, one consequence of integration was to broaden the number and variety of churches involved in the missiological discussion. The IMC had been confined to Protestants, but now the Orthodox churches were included, as well as various independent churches. Also, after Vatican II the Roman Catholic Church became more involved in these discussions. During the tenure of subsequent CWME directors, it was taken for granted that theological understandings of mission and unity belonged together. The question of integration was never re-opened, but instead attention was focused on how the WCC could be mobilised in the direction of mission in the world.

After the 1970s the tide turned and the global significance of the WCC began to recede. Factors accounting for this include the mushrooming of many NGOs concerned with

48 Hoekendijk’s early pleas (from 1952) were being heeded however by the Uppsala assembly (1968).
51 Castro, interview with Laing, 10/9/2008.
development and human rights, the growth of global church fellowships which could bypass the WCC, and the dramatically declining funding of the WCC. The impact of the CWME as a division of the WCC was also diluted by the emergence of numerous small units within the WCC, each with a commission and budget, and each appealing directly to the churches, such as the programme to combat racism. The size of the WCC shrank, but so too did the CWME. “[T]here has been a certain diminishing influence [of mission] from 1961 [un]til now”. The CWME “has been constantly reduced in its importance in the WCC due to financial and restructuring factors.” This was the result of a change in ethos which understood “traditional items like mission and Faith & Order as belonging to the old past.”

**Evangelical / ecumenical schism and theological polarization**

The integration of mission and unity in 1961 inaugurated many other ecumenical developments, but the 1960s “ended up in a most violent polarization.” Conservative evangelicals started a world missionary movement with a polemical relationship with the WCC. Ironically, although *evangel* and *oikoumene* are inextricably linked together, those working for mission became estranged from those pursuing unity. In 1950 the central committee clearly understood the terms to be inseparable: “[ecumenical] is properly used to describe everything that relates to the whole task of the whole Church to bring the Gospel to the whole world”. Therefore no person or group could properly claim to be ecumenical without being evangelical, or vice-versa.

The 1968 assembly of the WCC at Uppsala led to further polarization. The contentious report on the study of the missionary structure of the congregation provoked the most heated debate of the entire assembly. Although many across a wide spectrum of

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52 Martin Conway estimated that, before the change in tax legislation introduced by Chancellor Kohl, as much as 80% of total WCC funding was coming from the German churches. This source of funding decreased dramatically with changes to German tax law. Conway, interview, 17/8/2008.

53 Castro recalled that sixteen or seventeen units emerged. Castro, interview, 10/9/2008.


55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.


Christian belief expressed their disapproval, the report was adopted by the assembly.60 Bosch notes that this missiology then became the “received view” in WCC circles, in which the “distinction between church and world has, for all intents and purposes, been dropped completely.”61

By the time of Lausanne (1974), despite its more conciliatory nature, John Stott was still aware of “the wide gap of confidence and credibility which exists today between ecumenical leaders and evangelicals, between Geneva and Lausanne.”62 This was exemplified in the numerous studies published around this time, contrasting the two streams of mission theology. Most, written by evangelicals, were critical of perceived erroneous tendencies within the WCC.63 Further evidence of continued polarization was the hosting of separate mission conferences, giving the impression of ongoing competitiveness and unresolved differences. Thus in 1980, CWME (Melbourne) and Lausanne (Pattaya) held conferences within five weeks of each other. The Roman Catholic missiologist Thomas Stransky saw this schism as “the most ominous and depressing negative sign on the mission horizon of the next decade,” which would institutionalise differences and force many to “take artificial sides.”64

At least within Western churches, this polarization led to an ongoing schism between evangelical and ecumenical Christians that dominated the latter part of the 20th century.65 The theological impetus for integration was the belief that the church is called both to mission and unity. But the outcome of integration was an ecumenical/evangelical polarization in which the call to mission has been heard “on both sides – as a call not to unity but to separation.”66 Integration sought to solve the theological

61 DJ Bosch, Transforming Mission, p. 383.
problem of relating mission to the church. But what evolved was bitter and protracted missiological confrontation between Geneva and Lausanne – much of it published in the IRM.67

Yet changes were afoot. At Lausanne, Latin American leaders such as Rene Padilla and Samuel Escobar brought a much needed social correction to an evangelicalism overly distorted by Western assumptions.68 And in spite of the institutionalization of missiological differences, efforts at reconciliation were evident. Notable leaders, such as Newbigin, Stott, David Bosch, Emilio Castro and Bishop Mortimer Arias were able to bridge the gap between the two sides. Castro69 held together an insistence on mission as proclamation with his Latin American concerns for social justice.70 Arias, in his address to the WCC meeting at Nairobi (1975) demonstrated a desire for reconciliation by drawing “equally on the Lausanne Congress and the Roman Catholic Synod of Bishops.”71 He stressed that evangelism was an “essential, primary, normal, permanent and costly” task of the churches, which was warmly welcomed by evangelicals such as Stott.72

A further significant step in helping to heal the rift was the publication of the ecumenical affirmation on mission and evangelism,73 which became a kind of catechism that many churches adopted as their own position.74 One consequence was the collaboration between the CWME and Lausanne on evangelism, producing a common text, the Stuttgart Declaration (1987).75

Jacques Matthey reflects that after a period of pronounced polarization, the WCC and the Lausanne movement both are now more moderate.76 His personal efforts, as a secretary of the CWME, have also helped to build bridges with evangelicals in the Lausanne movement and the World Evangelical Alliance.

68 For a study on this theme see J Thomas, From Lausanne to Manila: Evangelical Social Thought, ISPCK, New Delhi (2003).
71 Ibid.
74 Castro interview, 10/9/2008.
75 Ibid.
The ongoing relevance of integration for today

Fifty years after integrating the two world councils, the organisational problems have passed, but the underlying impetus to develop an adequate theological relationship between mission and the church remains. Newbigin called for bold experimenting in how missionary ecclesiology should be expressed, but became silent on how the missional church should be structured. For example, this was not addressed in his manifesto which gave birth to the gospel and culture movement. It focused instead on how, intellectually, to engage with a syncretised, “pagan” culture. The question of how this was to be structurally embodied has only recently again come to the fore, and has been taken up most clearly in the “missional church” conversation, which acknowledges its theological indebtedness to Newbigin. Perhaps this is the most enduring legacy of integration, the theological conviction that mission and unity belong together, and the continual quest for how to embody that adequately.

The Missiological Significance of Latin American Protestantism

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Abstract

Latin American Protestants were totally absent at Edinburgh 1910. This article explores different interpretations of why they were excluded, especially because Latin America was seen as a “Christian land” already, thus off limits for missionaries. The author discusses what has happened in the aftermath of this exclusion, and how and why evangelical Protestantism has grown significantly since then. Different, sometimes conflicting, interpretations are considered, and attention is given to how the relationship with Catholicism has evolved, and also the emergence of post-denominational Christianity.

Moving beyond exclusion

Latin Americans had been overlooked and totally excluded from Edinburgh 1910. Now the centennial celebrations of Edinburgh 1910 have brought new readings of the significance of the event and its missiological challenges.

Soon after the 1910 Edinburgh conference, American Protestant missionary enthusiasts formed a committee of cooperation in Latin America and sponsored the first continental gathering of Latin American Protestants in 1916, known as the Panama Congress on Christian Work. With a programme patterned after the model of Edinburgh 1910, this congress became a milestone for Protestantism in Latin America.

The Panama congress was preceded by a careful study of the advance of Protestantism in Latin America, based on reports sent by correspondents throughout the continent. The three volumes that sum up the studies of the congress provide a clear sense of the
scope of Protestant missions there and their results in the second decade of the 20th century. The congress also reflected the self-critical attitude of those who recognized the flaws in their work and were looking for new forms of cooperation and coordination.1

The legitimacy of Protestant missionary presence in Latin America was acknowledged at the 1928 meeting of the International Missionary Council in Jerusalem. The Brazilian Erasmo Braga, one of the pioneers of ecumenism in Latin America, wrote, “It is no easy task to pass on to a community scattered over an area larger than that of the United States the message from the Jerusalem meeting. A safe estimate of the number of persons who constitute the Protestant Christian community in Brazil is about one million including children and adherents.”2 He went on to add: “the inclusion of Latin America in the International Missionary Council has given us the sense of being no longer isolated, small organizations engaged in a local or regional struggle, but a part of the great Christian world movement.”3

A more polemical interpretation of the exclusion of Latin American Protestants from Edinburgh 1910 came some years later from Gonzalo Báez-Camargo, a respected Mexican ecumenist, journalist and Bible scholar, who interpreted this exclusion as a sign of the prevailing mind-set among European Protestants, which in 1910 was still shaped by Victorian-era complacency and paternalism.4 They divided the human race into a “Christian world” that included Europe and the Americas and a “non-Christian world” of Asia, Africa, and the Pacific islands. On the one side were civilized Christian “sending” countries, and on the other, uncivilized non-Christian “receiving” mission fields.5 Báez-Camargo believed that this global classification was too naive and had paved the way for blatant inconsistencies, such as placing Latin America in the first bloc and excluding from Edinburgh Protestant missionaries who had been working there for over a half century.

Briefly, Latin America was then regarded by influential Protestant leaders of both sides of the Atlantic (especially in Europe) as the exclusive private hunting-ground of the historic Church that has been predominant to the south of Rio Grande for over four hundred years. Thus, recognition was denied to the struggling and growing Protestant minority in that part of the world.

1 This was noted particularly by the Catholic historian, Prudencio Damboriena, S.J., El Protestantismo en América Latina. vol. 1; FERES, Bogotá-Friburgo (1962), p. 23.
3 Ibid., p. 262.
For a moment it seemed as if the Evangelical Christians in Latin America, then already numbering about a million, would become permanent outcasts from the ecumenical movement.6

In the intense missiological debates around this issue, some Protestant missionary statesmen from Great Britain and North America described the spiritual condition of Latin America in sombre tones. The appeal to send Protestant missionaries was accompanied by a description of social, moral and spiritual conditions that were considered a call to action. Thus, the well-known American Presbyterian mission statesman, Robert Speer, wrote in 1913:

The first test of religious conditions is to be found in the facts of social life. No land can be conceded to have a satisfactory religion where the moral conditions are as they have been shown to be in South America. If it can be proved that the conditions of any European or North American land are as they are in South America, then it will be proved also that that land needs a religious reformation.7

Speer’s observation reflected an evangelical conviction about the relationship between faith and ethics, between religion and morality, which is also found in other missionary literature of that time. “Christianity is not opinion or ritual. It is life and that life must utter itself in moral purity and strength. No amount of theological statement or devout worship can avail to take the place of ethical fruitage in social purity and victory over sin.”8 According to Speer, this was a matter of concern not only to Protestants but also to Catholics in North America.

A similar approach was taken by the Scottish Presbyterian, John A. Mackay, who served as a missionary in Latin America and later as president of Princeton Theological Seminary. His book, The Other Spanish Christ (1932), is still considered a classic.9 Mackay’s conviction was that most of the liberal and socialist Latin American leaders he had come to know had rejected the Catholic faith for reasons related to social justice.10 He made very clear the legitimacy of a Protestant missionary presence in Latin America.

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8 Ibid.
Sometimes those who are interested in Christian service in South America are apt to be regarded as religious buccaneers devoting their lives to ecclesiastical piracy, but that is far from being the case. The great majority of men to whom we go will have nothing to do with religion. They took up this attitude because religion and morality had been divorced throughout the whole history of religious life in South America.\textsuperscript{11}

Báez-Camargo holds that the meeting in Jerusalem represented a significant change of mind-set: “Jerusalem gave recognition to . . . the emergence of indigenous churches out of the pioneer ‘mission stations’ and their growing acting role in the evangelization of mankind.” He adds, “This time Latin America was given free access and the validity of Protestant missions in that vast area was quietly accepted.”\textsuperscript{12} He also notes that people had become aware that it was impossible to speak of Christian mission without taking into account the social context. “So the assembly launched itself into an earnest study of social and economic questions as they affect missionary work. It also aimed at awakening and strengthening of the sense of the Christian’s responsibility for social justice.”\textsuperscript{13} A wave of secularism had invaded the countries of both sending and receiving missionaries, and according to Báez-Camargo, acknowledging this had major consequences for both missiology and theology:

This proved to be a revolutionary admission, for it meant that, after all, the formerly self-designated “Christian world” was also a mission field itself. It meant again—and this was still more important—that the Kingdom of God cannot be defined in terms of mere territorial accretion, but that the whole of life everywhere must be brought under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{14}

Thus, from convictions established by Protestant missionary practice in Latin America, serious questions were raised about the christianizing process that had accompanied the 16th-century conquests. As José Míguez Bonino, the only Latin American Protestant observer at Vatican II, notes,

Latin America was never “Christian” in the sense that Europe or even North America can be said to be so. What took place here was a colossal transplantation—the basic ecclesiastical structures, disciplines, and ministries were brought wholesale from Spain, and were expected to function as a Christian order: a tremendous form without substance.\textsuperscript{15}


\textsuperscript{12} Báez-Camargo, “Mexico . . .”, p. 268.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, p. 267.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, p. 268.

Jacques Matthey, former secretary of the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, reflects on the debate that ensued as to what parts of the non-Christian world should be included in an atlas on world missions:

For evangelical missions, regions with huge numbers of nominal Christians could not really be considered Christian. . . . Leaders of the High Church branch of the Church of England strongly opposed that point of view, and made it an issue that would decide their participation in the conference. It was out of order, they said, to include in the concept of world mission any form of evangelism addressing members of existing churches. It required all the diplomatic talents of the organizers to reach a compromise. The debate on the distinction between authentic evangelism and unacceptable proselytism was to become one of the major contentious points in ecumenism during the whole century. In that sense, one can consider Edinburgh’s decision, taken under pressure of the Anglicans, as a landmark one, pointing into the right direction.16

As a Latin American evangelical Protestant I find it difficult to accept that the decision to exclude Latin American Protestants pointed “into the right direction.”

Rose Mary Dowsett, former evangelical missionary in Asia, viewed this differently. Her evangelical perspective considers missiological and ecclesiological aspects of the decision to exclude Latin America:

The Anglo-Catholics were happy to endorse mission among “the heathen” but fiercely opposed to it in traditional parts of Christendom such as Latin America or Europe; their highly sacramentalist view of baptism (also linked to a highly sacramentalist view of the Episcopacy), whether Roman Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant, meant that in countries where a high rate of infant baptism still prevailed, conversionist mission was deeply offensive and must at all costs be condemned. Proselytism is understandably a very sensitive subject and raises profound questions as to our beliefs about what makes a person truly a Christian.17

For Dowsett, Edinburgh 1910 “led to a far more significant parting of ways in global mission. . . . it reinforced the concept of Christendom in a way that has proved deeply damaging – see, for example, the huge losses from the churches in Europe since 1910.”18

A changed reality for Latin American missiology

In the aftermath, for Protestant missionaries and missiologists, it became possible to speak of the mission field of Latin America as a fertile ground for the growth of

18 Ibid. p. 255.
evangelical Protestantism. The 160,000 Protestants there in 1916 had grown to around 60,000,000 in 2010. In 1989 a Catholic observed that if current growth rates would continue, Latin America would have an evangelical majority early in the 21st century. In terms of church participation, “practising” evangelicals may already outnumber “observant” Catholics. The continuous numerical growth of Protestants led other Catholic observers, such as Bishop Bonaventura Kloppenburg, to refer back to the 16th century Protestant Reformation: in the 20th century, more Catholics in Latin America became Protestants than in the age of Luther and Calvin.

During the second half of the 20th century some Roman Catholic missiologists changed their perspective about Latin American Protestantism. While many Catholic bishops continue to have a “police” approach – how can we stop the Protestants? – these missiologists have a more pastoral approach – what can we learn from them? As the Jesuit historian Jeffrey Klaiber wrote in 1970:

> It may be one of the ironies of history that the final contribution of Latin American Protestantism will have been to awaken and revitalize a dormant Catholic Church. If indeed it does awake and come to life, it will not be because the Church rose from slumber to fight a hostile force, as in the days of the Reformation, but because that new force taught the Church urgently needed lessons about what its own prime task in the future must be.

**Evangelism re-appraised**

Latin American Protestants inherited from the evangelical and pietistic roots of missionaries a conviction that evangelism is a basic activity of the church. When the historic denominations lost some of their evangelistic zeal, the rapid growth of popular Protestantism (i.e., Pentecostalism) kept the evangelistic thrust in Protestantism. In recent years, as Latin American Protestants have come to Spain with the waves of immigrants, one of their contributions is their evangelistic zeal.

Initiated by the then editor, Lesslie Newbigin, an illuminating debate about evangelism took place in several issues of the *IRM* during 1964 and 1965. Kenneth Strachan, an Argentinean mission leader, wrote on “Evangelism in Depth,” a movement that found

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20 See “Popular Protestantism and Catholic Missiology” chapter 8 in my book *Changing Tides*.
22 My book *Changing Tides* is an effort to interpret popular Protestantism from a missiological perspective.
wide acceptance among Protestants in and beyond Latin America. In several countries it was the first time that the different sectors of Protestantism came together for a special missionary and evangelistic effort. Roman Catholic officials had made a concerted effort to portray Protestants as obscure sectarians, but in several countries Evangelism in Depth changed the public perception of the Protestant minority. The celebrative style of the movement also expressed a contextual approach.

Kenneth Strachan’s article “Called to Witness” in the April 1964 issue of IRM was followed by a response from Victor E. W. Hayward, a Baptist ecumenist, and then a rejoinder by Strachan. Strachan’s initial article is written using a narrative style and a straightforward account of how the leadership of the Latin America Mission sought to identify the dominant trends in the Protestant churches, other religious movements, and the points of connection with Latin American culture, with the conclusion that “the expansion of any movement is in direct proportion to its success in mobilizing its total membership in continuous propagation of its beliefs.” He described at length the stages this would involve, in training people for participation in a nationwide movement of evangelisation. “In the final analysis, the success of the entire movement would have to be measured not by the attendance at the crusades or the numbers of decisions, but by the continued dynamic witness of Christians and churches.”

In his critical response, Victor E.W. Hayward asked, “Call to witness – but what kind of witness?”

I am wholly with Dr. Strachan in his call to a united and total witness of the Christian community in every place. Where then do we differ? The fundamental issue is this: Is the correlate of the Gospel the world or the church? . . . Is the primary movement of evangelism the winning of people into the Church, or the taking of the Gospel into the world? Of course the result of conversion will be the adding of members to the Church. But is that a by-product or the fundamental end in view?

Hayward posed questions about the nature of Christian witness, its content, motivation and objective. He asked: “Is Christ the Saviour of the world or Saviour only of the Church? Is He the Saviour only ‘of them that believe,’ the Lord only of the Church? Or is He . . . Lord of the world as well as of the Church?”


24 Ibid., p. 194.

25 Ibid., p. 197.


27 Ibid., p. 203.
“Is our witness made to individuals or to the world?” Hayward criticized the call to individual conversion, leaving aside “whole sections of biblical doctrine.” “The error behind our church-centred instead of world-centred thinking repeats the same terrible mistake made by the Jews as God’s chosen people, when they mistook election for witness, service and suffering as being election for self-centred privilege.” He referred critically to the social turmoil among youth in Latin America, the fact that youth were attracted by communism, and the lack of reference in Strachan to the challenge of social responsibility.

In his rejoinder Strachan acknowledged emphases in conservative-evangelical circles that contribute to an ultra-individualistic, falsely pietistic, church-centred way of thought and life, which he viewed his programme as an effort to correct. But he also felt Hayward was creating a false dichotomy between the world and the church. The church “must break through and be involved in the world – but in complete faithfulness to the terms of the Gospel and her essential mission.” This led to a consideration about the nature of the gospel and the mission of the church in articles by Markus Barth, Martin Conway and Emilio Castro, published in IRM October 1964.

In a subsequent article on industrial missions, Newbigin stressed the importance of “presence” in some missionary situations where church extension is not likely. With reference to the Strachan – Hayward debate, Newbigin states,

> On the one hand, a widely held view can be stated as follows: When the Church treats its own numerical growth as the supreme goal, it becomes simply an instrument of spiritual imperialism. It ceases to be interested in each person as a human person, and comes to regard him simply as a potential member. . . . On the other hand . . . the reality of any belief is tested by the extent to which the believer seeks to persuade others of its truth. It cannot be denied that Jesus called for radical repentance, conversion, the forsaking of all in order to follow Him. A movement which lacks these elements has no right to His name. Whether men hear or refuse to hear is not ours to decide. But we have the clear duty to bring to every man this call for radical decision. . . .

28 Ibid., p. 204.
29 Ibid., p. 206.
30 Ibid., p. 205.
32 Ibid., p. 215.
33 Ibid., pp. 148–149.
Lausanne and the contextualisation of mission

In 1974, ten years after the above debate, the international congress on world evangelization was held in Lausanne. A remarkable missiological document from that congress is the Lausanne Covenant to which the Latin American contribution was decisive. In our papers, René Padilla and I presented at the congress, we stated our commitment to evangelization, of which we as well as most of the attendants were practitioners. And we reflected on the critical debates that had been taking place around the world, regarding the gospel, the nature of mission, and responding to contextual challenges. Orlando Costas provided examples of how the Evangelism in Depth programme had learned from its critics and was being applied not only in Latin America, but also in the Cameroon, South Vietnam and North America. Lausanne 1974 became a global dialogue. It sought a renewed awareness of the social dimensions of the gospel, the development of contextual ways of expressing the faith in order to communicate it in different cultures, and critically assessed missionary methodologies that contradicted what Jesus himself modelled. Latin Americans contributed to the Lausanne Covenant theological convictions they had been developing during the previous decade. The many writers in the subsequent book, The New Face of Evangelicalism, expressed well the renewing movement that was afoot among evangelicals.

Jacques Matthey interprets the rise of the Lausanne movement as an effort of evangelicals to disassociate themselves from the ecumenical movement, to “flag up their opposition to ecumenical developments.” However, he also points out that by the mid-1970s there was some convergence among Catholics, evangelicals and the WCC about mission, a dialogue that continued in the IRM. As an active participant in Lausanne 1974, I can say that some evangelicals wanted to oppose developments in the emerging ecumenical thinking about mission. But the Covenant also reveals an evangelicalism open to changing its mission theology and practice, in light of historical awareness and the word of God. This and the numerical growth of popular Protes-

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34 René Padilla, “Evangelism and the world” in J.D. Douglas (ed.), Let the Earth Hear His Voice, World Wide Publications, Minneapolis (1975), pp. 116–146. The text may also be found with other papers that Padilla contributed to the Lausanne movement in his book Mission Between the Times, Langham Monographs, Carlisle, UK (2010).
38 Jacques Matthey, “Milestones in Ecumenical Missionary Theology from the 1970s to the 1990s,” IRM (1999); p. 293.
tantism in Latin America leads me to believe that Edinburgh 1910 made a serious mistake in excluding Latin American Protestants.

How Latin American Protestantism has affected Catholicism

In recent decades, Protestantism in Latin America has continued to grow and serve as a catalyst for change in the Roman Catholic Church. As the century was ending, three hundred bishops and cardinals from the Americas met and emphasized a new evangelization. They acknowledged that the “preferential option for the poor” promoted by liberation theology had not been effective; the poor were opting instead for Pentecostal churches. Greater efforts needed to be made to reach Latinos, who were becoming Protestants at a rate that concerned Catholics.39

The Vatican’s *Ecclesia in America*, (1999) does not adequately distinguish between Protestant churches who are ecumenically involved, and the more dynamic, evangelizing evangelical and Pentecostal churches, who are referred to as “sects.” It states: “The proselytizing activity of the sects and new religious groups in many parts of America is a grave hindrance to the work of evangelization.” Though Catholics were encouraged to have ecumenical attitudes, “these attitudes, however, must not be such that they weaken the firm conviction that only in the Catholic Church is found the fullness of the means of salvation established by Jesus Christ.”40 The document calls for attention to why many Catholics are leaving the church, and for offering more personalized pastoral care and evangelizing possibilities. Contra liberation theology, *Ecclesia in America* states “it is necessary to ask whether a pastoral strategy directed almost exclusively to meeting people’s material needs has not in the end left their hunger for God unsatisfied, making them vulnerable to anything which claims to be of spiritual benefit.”41

From 1995 to 2004, the percentage of Catholics in Latin America declined from 80% to 71% of the population, while evangelicals grew from 5% to 14%.42 In their 2007 meeting, the Latin American Bishops (CELAM) analysed why so many Catholics continue to convert to different forms of Protestantism. It points to the pastoral failure of the Roman Catholic Church and proposes a strategy for the Church to strengthen

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41 *Ecclesia in America*, par. 73.

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religious experience, a sense of community, biblical and doctrinal formation and missionary commitment.43

Post-denominational Christianity?

Evangelical numerical growth includes large numbers of people who are part of independent mega-churches, a new emerging para-evangelical religious force. The origins are among charismatic Catholics disaffected with Rome, independent missions from some mega-churches in the USA, and groups that have split from other evangelical churches. Some of these are connected to the Neo-Apostolic movement led by Peter Wagner and others. Initially they seek legitimization by connecting to evangelicalism. However, their numerical growth, disregard for theology, and adaptations to post-modern culture, may turn them into a new religious force distinct from both evangelicals and Roman Catholics.

There are signs of a post-denominational situation in Latin America, in which all kinds of ecclesiastical barriers are crossed, not due to intentional ecumenical efforts but to fluid loyalties. In some of these mega-churches, sacred objects such as blessed water and oil are sold, “apostles” are appointed with unlimited authority, and fund-raising pursued through methods that promise people tangible blessings for what they give to the church. Some practices are much closer to those of traditional popular Catholicism than to Reformation churches. Could this be the Latin American equivalent of what Donald E. Miller has called “reinventing American Protestantism”?44 In any case, this reinvention of Protestantism denies some key tenets of the Reformation and its renewal of Christianity in 16th century Europe and 20th century Latin America.

Due to a strong individualism and a low ecclesiology in mission movements, institutional weakness is characteristic of evangelical life. While some of the older denominations have an institutional structure that has provided for leadership continuity and generational change, some of the new denominations now confront crises in this regard. The charismatic mega-churches propose an authoritarian pastoral model that seems to be contextual and connects well with deep-lying patterns of clerical authoritarianism. Institutional weakness also affects structures of interdenominational cooperation, such as the conservative CONELA45 alliance related to the World Evangelical

43 Documento Final Aparecida, sections 5.4 and 5.5.
44 Donald E. Miller Reinventing American Protestantism, University of California, Berkeley (1997).
45 Confraternidad Evangélica Latinoamericana, Evangelical Alliance of Latin America.
Fellowship. The ecumenical alliance of CLAI\textsuperscript{46} has maintained a stronger institutional presence, especially through its media services.

On the other hand, at the grassroots level there are an increasing number of projects in which Catholic and evangelical Christians cooperate without giving up their identities, such as in Bible translation and distribution, pastoral work in prisons, disaster relief, work with street children, and defence of human rights.

Finally, evangelical Protestantism in Latin America is actively participating in missionary movement to other parts of the world. In 2006, there were 641 missionary agencies sending out 9,625 missionaries, one-third of them to Africa, the Middle East and Europe.\textsuperscript{47} The Latin American evangelical diaspora of migrants in Europe and North America is also playing an active role in the revitalization of Protestant churches and their engagement in mission.\textsuperscript{48} Some, such as Bertil Ekstrom and Antonia Van der Meer, have trained and sent Latin American evangelical missionaries to Europe, Asia and Africa.

There were many reasons for celebration in connection with the centennial of the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh. As a missiologist from Latin America, I celebrated the fact that during the course of that century, Latin American Protestants had become active participants in the world missionary movement. Of the three hundred participants at Edinburgh 2010, 16 Latin American men and women participated (all of them Protestants), and eight were presenters.\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{46} Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias, Latin American Council of Churches.

\textsuperscript{47} Statistics from www.comibam.org

\textsuperscript{48} An analysis of a case study in Miguel Angel Palomino, “Latino immigration in Europe: Challenge and Opportunity for Mission,” International Bulletin of Missionary Research, 28:2 (April 2004), pp. 53–58. From 1995 to 2004, the percentage of Catholics in Latin America declined from 80% to 71% of the population, while evangelicals grew from 5% to 14% (p. 58).

Mission’s Changing Landscape: Global Flows and Christian Movements

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Abstract

Since Christianity is a world religion, changes in worldwide Christianity both reflect and affect global affairs and transnational issues. From its inception the IRM has demonstrated this in its holistic approach and global scope. In its pages are developments in the global landscape over the last one hundred years, although with significant shifts in the contributors. These developments include the breakdown of imperial Christendom and the rise of the present world order, how the people of the world are described and relate to one another, and the configuration of religions. Three trends in world Christianity impinge on contemporary mission: the rise of independent Christian movements and the migration of Christians result in an ever-increasing plurality of Christian expression. In view of this, this article argues that mission should be contextual, mission theology expressed in pneumatological terms, and the church understood as a dynamic movement.

Christianity is and always has been a world religion – globally widespread, locally rooted and interconnected. Changes in worldwide Christianity, therefore, are often closely related to global affairs and transnational issues. The Christian movement sometimes follows and sometimes leads world developments but it is never separable from them. The IRM, by its nature as a world missionary journal, represents the interrelation of the Christian movement with global affairs. Preceding Edinburgh 1910 was a thorough research project, based on reports from all over the world, which described missionary activity and responses to it. It considered not only the numbers converting to

Christianity and church life but also wider social changes and political trends. Over the last one hundred years the IRM has continued this holistic approach and global scope.

**Global developments 1910–2010**

Around the centenary of the World Missionary Conference, the *IRM* carried preparatory articles related to a new study process, Edinburgh 2010, which produced a great deal of material relating to Christian mission around the world. It is helpful to compare and contrast these two moments, 1910 and 2010, in order to highlight three changes in the landscape. We then will examine some contemporary trends in world Christianity, and consider their interrelationship with Christian mission.

An important shift to notice is in those describing the landscape and recording their thinking. Edinburgh 1910 was overwhelmingly a gathering of Western missionaries, who looked at the world as divided into Christendom and the non-Western world. However, a few representative “natives from mission lands” were also invited and given a platform. Although these made up less than two percent of the delegates, they made a significant impact on the conference. Their inclusion signalled a trend toward recognition of the autonomy – and eventually equality – of the so-called “younger churches” and the breakdown of the Christendom paradigm. The Edinburgh 2010 project aimed to hear the voices of Christians from all over the world. The conference brought together representatives of 75 nations from all the continents of the world, and the study process was even more diverse.

The *IRM* has evolved in a similar way to be inclusive of people from all regions of the world. What was once largely the mouthpiece of Western missionaries, expressing their perspectives on the rest of the world, has now become an organ of global Christian perspectives. Contributors from around the world are free to comment, not only on their own context but on any other part of the globe. As a journal of the World Council

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3 The subtitle was “To consider Missionary Problems in relation to the Non-Christian World.”


of Churches (WCC), since the integration in 1961 of the International Missionary Council (IMC) and the WCC, the IRM has become more diverse in other ways, too. For example, contributors previously were mostly, although never exclusively, representatives of mission organisations, but now they are more likely to identify themselves as members of churches: Orthodox, Catholic and Pentecostal (see below) as well as Protestant and Evangelical.

**Different globalizations**

In view of this shift in the contributors over the past century, when examining the changing landscape of Christian mission in the IRM, bear in mind that this landscape not only changes objectively but also appears differently according to where we stand. Furthermore, where we stand depends on the global politics of the time. The first global development to note is the breakdown of imperial Christendom and the rise of the present world order.

Edinburgh 1910 and the first IRM were shaped to a great extent by their imperial context and the belief that they represented Christian nations or Christendom. So James Bryce, British Ambassador to the USA, contributed the first article in the newly founded IRM; he wrote about his travels among people he described as “uncivilised, non-Christian races” in a way that would be regarded as objectionable today. The IRM has its headquarters in Europe, which until that point was at the centre of global political and economic power. But Europe’s political position has changed significantly, and since the mid-20th century the centre of power has shifted across the Atlantic to the United States. Although it is still regarded as part of the dominant West, Europe no longer has the global supremacy it once enjoyed, and this has contributed to the breakdown of the Christendom paradigm. In 1951, the renowned US scholar of the expansion of Christianity, Kenneth Scott Latourette, forcefully reminded IRM readers that, whatever its achievements, Christendom had also been the source of the modern world’s evils of warfare, weapons and destructive ideologies. The IRM has included

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6 The first article I could find by an Orthodox was written by Eighmanos I. Luka (Coptic), “Christian Reunion,” in IRM 27/3 (1938), pp. 491–96.


some criticism of colonial mission from post-colonial perspectives, including by those whose cultures were previously denigrated.\textsuperscript{10}

The world of 1910–1912 was highly globalised, inter-connected by trade and communications and in which the British Empire was dominant. This facilitated the outgoing missionary movements of the era, and made it possible for delegates at Edinburgh 1910 to contemplate “the evangelisation of the world in this generation.” The continuation committee reiterated the unity of purpose of the conference around this vision of the expansion of the kingdom of Christ – or Christendom – from the West.\textsuperscript{11} That plan was severely hampered by two world wars and then the cold war. However, since the fall of the communist world around 1990, we have been experiencing again a single world bound together by trade – but now driven by the United States.

The way in which the USA exercises global power differs from the British. Other people are not in a formal political relationship of dependence, as under colonialism, but they are bound even more tightly by economic links to the world’s largest economies through neo-colonialism. Furthermore, weapons of mass destruction, voyages into space, and ecological crises caused by exploitation of resources have created greater awareness of our interdependency on planet earth. Because the nature of global capitalism is to require economic growth, it is necessary for economic powers to have others as trading partners. For this reason, since World War II the US has pursued a policy of development. This began with the reconstruction of Europe and continued by getting developing countries to follow a similar economic trajectory.

**Global divisions and local identities**

The way in which the people of the world are described and relate to one another is a second significant change since 1910. Race has been, at least formally, rejected as a category of differentiation, especially since the US Civil Rights movement in the 1960s. However, as Brian Stanley has pointed out, culture tends to be used instead – and in much the same way as race was in 1910 – to divide up peoples and global regions.\textsuperscript{12} In the 1980s and 90s, Samuel P. Huntington influenced US foreign policy with his “clash of civilisations” theory, describing the world as divided into religio-cultural


\textsuperscript{11} John R. Mott, “The Continuation Committee,” IRM 1/1 (1912), pp. 62–78.

blocs – Western, Chinese, Indian and Islamic – with irreconcilable differences.\textsuperscript{13} Huntington’s view is undermined by the fact that world Christianity crosses these divides – except perhaps that between the West and Islamic countries.

Somewhat contrary to the cultural division, what Michael Polanyi described as “the great transformation” in society brought about by industrial revolution has also spread to more and more of the world. In this process of social change, in which goods become commoditized as money, people as labour, and nature as land, and social relations such as gender, urban/rural differences and nationality become embedded in economic relations.\textsuperscript{14} Thus, by means of wealth it is possible to transcend racial, cultural, gender and other social disadvantages. Conversely, poverty severely restricts one’s life-chances. The great divide in the world today is not between Christendom and the non-Christian world as perceived in 1910 but between North and South as global economic categories of national wealth and poverty. These correspond only roughly to geography, but do carry racial and cultural connotations.

The colonial belief that Europeans would always lead global development was challenged in the early 20th century by the military rise of Japan, and again after World War II by its economic miracle. The paradigm of global North-South, as it corresponded to colonising and formerly colonised nations, is also breaking down. First, the Gulf States gained economic and political power due to their oil reserves. Then the “tiger economies” of East Asia (Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan) broke away from the mould, and now the economies of China and India and several other populous formerly colonised nations (including Brazil and Nigeria) are growing rapidly. The growth of China and India especially has led to the relative decline of West and the widespread expectation that the era of global domination by the West may be coming to an end. However, this does not necessarily mean the end of the global influence of Christianity because of how it is growing in other continents and regions.

The fact that Christians outside the West outnumber those in the old Christendom, and that we are in an era of world Christianity was first brought to the attention of mission studies by Andrew F. Walls. For many years in the IRM, he documented the growing number of publications from Africa, Asia, Latin America and other regions outside the West. Walls also explored the missiological implications of Christian history, and


\textsuperscript{14} Michael Polanyi, \textit{The Great Transformation}, Farrar & Rinehart, New York (1944).
showed that the recent Western overseas missionary movement was merely an episode in a much longer story of Christianity in Africa and Asia, as well as in Europe.\textsuperscript{15}

Changes in international relations have also come about due to population growth and movement. A century ago, international migration was primarily the movement of Europeans from their homelands to less densely populated land in other regions. Today people still move from densely populated to less populated areas, but since the 1960s, the direction of migration has been from the non-Western world to the West, and also to other economically powerful nations in West and East Asia.\textsuperscript{16} Although these countries depend on migration to sustain their economic growth, the arrival of substantial populations of people with cultural and religious backgrounds differing from the existing population, has posed challenges. This raises acute questions of national identity and results in differing policies of multiculturalism and integration. A particularly difficult question is how and to what extent to accommodate differing religious identities.

\section*{World religions and indigenous spiritualities}

The third change in the global landscape is in the configuration of religions. The early 20th century saw a decline in the power of religions worldwide. In part this was due to the continued rise of the public discourse of science and of secular ideologies, as recognised in the \textit{IRM} in 1929–1930.\textsuperscript{17} Awareness of this led the 1932 Laymen’s Enquiry to suggest that Christians ought to see other religions as allies against “the spread of the secular spirit.”\textsuperscript{18} Religions had also declined because their political and social power was eroded by colonial structures. Asian nations, the home of all the main world religions, were reeling in 1910 under the impact of modernity and Western power. In particular, Islam was weakened politically by the break-up of the Ottoman Empire. As the century wore on, in Eastern Europe and in most of North and East Asia, religion was suppressed by communist governments.

\textsuperscript{15} Andrew F. Walls, “The Old Age of the Missionary Movement”, \textit{IRM} 76/301 (Jan, 1987), pp. 26–32.

\textsuperscript{16} Jehu J. Hanciles, \textit{Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration, and the Transformation of the West}, Orbis, Maryknoll (2008), p. 172. It should also be noted that during the imperial period many non-Western peoples were forcibly relocated – even across continents – by Britain and other powers, and that large numbers of migrants are internally displaced.


In 1910, delegates in Edinburgh regarded Christianity as *the* world religion, or the universal religion to which the whole world was turning, and that fulfilled all other religions.\(^{19}\) In 1949 Laurence E. Browne, professor of theology at the University of Leeds, UK was still confidently predicting in the *IRM* that other religions were not sustainable and that in AD 3000 the religion of the world would be Christianity.\(^{20}\) However, as the century wore on, large scale conversion from other world religions to Christianity seemed less and less evident.

Ethically, conversion to Christianity from other religions, at one time the *sine qua non* of missions, was questioned especially in the Indian context where Indian Christians were facing strong pressure from Hindus.\(^{21}\) It was in India that the theology of inter-religious dialogue was first developed\(^{22}\) and this subcontinent prompted a rethinking of the meaning of conversion and its relationship to mission.\(^{23}\) So strong was the post-colonial reversal that the Danish missionary in India, Kaj Baago, expressed the controversial view that “The Christian religion [is] to a large extent a product of the West [and] cannot and shall not become the religion of all nations and races.”\(^{24}\)

In the late 20th century there was what was described as a resurgence of religions\(^{25}\) which came to the attention of the West primarily because of the 1979 Iranian Revolution and the subsequent rise of extremist and violent forms of Islam. Nationalist forms of Hinduism emerged with Indian independence movement, came to power in state governments, and eventually in 1997 in the national government. Buddhism gradually gained influence with the rise of Japanese power in the early 20th century, and again since the 1960s. It has grown in the West also by its association with peace movements led by figures such as the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh. Chinese religions such as Confucianism and Taoism, long suppressed under communism, are also being renewed now that there are increased civil liberties in China. The resurgence


\(^{23}\) A whole issue of the *IRM* was devoted to the topic of conversion: *IRM* 72/287 (July 1983).


of religion also includes Christianity, especially forms of Pentecostalism in the global South. Many of those who espoused the secularisation theory and the decline of religion with the rise of modernity have had to revise their work from the 1960s.\textsuperscript{26} It seems as though religion in many different forms is here to stay.

So today when the term \textit{world religion} is applied to Christianity, the intention is the opposite of what it was in 1910. Rather than being absolutised, Christianity is relativised as \textit{a} world religion, that is, one of a group of religions, all of which may be so designated.\textsuperscript{27} The difference was summed up by Dana Robert in her keynote address to the Edinburgh 2010 conference: “A century ago the participants at Edinburgh 1910 complained that only one-third of the world was Christian. Today we rejoice that one-third of the world are followers of Christ.”\textsuperscript{28}

In the 21st century what is recognised as \textit{religion} has also changed. Most of those who have become Christians more recently have come from indigenous religions or spiritualities. In 1910 these were referred to as “animism” or more commonly as “heathenism,” as primitive superstitious forms of religion. In the first issue of the \textit{IRM}, Johannes Warneck, son of the German Protestant founder of mission studies, described I.L. Nommensen’s struggle in Sumatra against the “obstinate . . . stubborn . . . animistic heathenism” of the Batak.\textsuperscript{29} In 1915, Nathan Söderblom wrote in the \textit{IRM} that the gulf between “primitive heathenism” and “the more purer and elevated form of religion” represented by Christianity was very great indeed.\textsuperscript{30} During the 20th century, these terms with their imperialist tone were gradually dropped in the \textit{IRM}; by 1958, \textit{heathenism} was equally applied to the West.\textsuperscript{31}

Various forms of “primal religions” were studied during the 20th century and invested with a certain integrity by \textit{IRM} contributors such as G.F.A. Baer, J.W.C. Dougall, Henri Junod, Geoffrey Parrinder and Alberto Rembao, and later by John Mbiti and Harold Turner. However, the number of articles was small until the emergence in the 1990s of

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{27} Tomoko Masuzawa, \textit{The Invention of World Religions, Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism}, University of Chicago (2005), pp. 3–4, 23, 29.
  \item \textsuperscript{28} Dana L. Robert, “Mission in Long Perspective,” in Kim & Anderson, pp. 55–68.
  \item \textsuperscript{29} Johannes Warneck, “The Growth of the Church in the Mission Field: I Among the Bataks,” \textit{IRM} 1/1, pp. 20–43.
\end{itemize}
more sympathetic interest in indigenous religions. This began with the 1991 assembly in Canberra, which realised the relevance of indigenous spiritualities in considering the integrity of creation.\textsuperscript{32} The 500th anniversary of the conquest of the Americas was also an occasion for reappraising indigenous beliefs and for acts of contrition for the Western desecration of the heritage of the pre-Columbian peoples.\textsuperscript{33}

**Contemporary trends in world Christianity**

We have already noted that Christianity is increasingly widespread globally, and that churches in the West exist increasingly in a context of religious plurality. Alongside this are contemporary trends within Christianity itself. Three trends impinge particularly on mission.

**Independent Christian movements**

As in 1910, Christians still constitute about one third of the world’s population, of whom roughly half are Roman Catholic and 20–25\% are Protestants and Anglicans.\textsuperscript{34} These proportions have changed little over the last century, although these Christians are increasingly located in the South. The relative number of Orthodox has declined significantly under the pressures of Islamic and also communist rule (see below). Another significant trend has been the appearance and growth of churches that are independent of any of these global confessions, historic denominations or ancient churches.\textsuperscript{35} These now make up about a sixth of all Christians. Many, but not all of these, are part of the movement of Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity that began in the early 20th century.

About one quarter of all Christians today are classified as Pentecostal or charismatic, and share the expectation of direct personal intervention of the Spirit of God in worship.\textsuperscript{36} Charismatic Christians share this Pentecostal experience but also are found across all the other strands of world Christianity. Pentecostalism also exists as a separate

\textsuperscript{32} *IRM* 79/314 (Apr. 1990); *IRM* 79/315 (July 1990); *IRM* 79/316 (Oct. 1990); *IRM* 80/317 (Jan 1991); *IRM* 80/319–320 (July–Oct. 1991). The phenomena that the Canberra assembly referred to as “indigenous spiritualities” are considered in academic religious studies as “indigenous religions.” See James L. Cox, From Primitive to Indigenous: The Academic Study of Indigenous Religions, Ashgate, Aldershot/ Hants (2007).

\textsuperscript{33} See *IRM* 81/324 (Oct. 1992); *IRM* 82/325 (Jan. 1993).

\textsuperscript{34} Todd M. Johnson & Kenneth R. Ross (eds), Atlas of Global Christianity, University of Edinburgh (2009).


\textsuperscript{36} Allan H. Anderson, An Introduction to Pentecostalism (Cambridge: CUP, 2004).
Christian family, including classical Pentecostal churches from the early 20th century and more recent neo-Pentecostal churches. The latter often are single mega-churches rather than structured into denominations. Partly because they have viewed these rapidly growing movements and churches as threats, mainline churches were slow to recognise them. The first WCC study of Pentecostalism appeared in 1980.37 But as far back as 1958, the IRM included an article by a Pentecostal, David du Plessis from South Africa,38 and an article in 1962 about a Pentecostal church. The latter was by a Lutheran, Augusto E. Fernández Arlt, who commented very positively on Latin American Pentecostalism on the occasion of the admission of a Pentecostal church – the Chilean Pentecostal Church – to the WCC.39

According to the definition of the Atlas of Global Christianity, independent churches predominate in parts of Africa, in China and in India, but many would not want to be classified as Pentecostal or charismatic. The independent churches in Africa include the prophet movements begun early in the 20th century, when they asserted their distinction from the mission-founded churches, and some neo-Pentecostal churches from the 1970s onwards. Because they expressed their faith in a characteristically African way, many viewed them as separatist. Because some of their practices resembled the reviled indigenous religious traditions, they were accused of syncretism. The Swedish missiologist Bengt Sundkler initially described one group as “a syncretistic sect” which “becomes the bridge over which Africans are brought back to heathenism.”40 This condemnation was quoted several times in the IRM – mainly to dispute it and in defence of indigenous forms of church.41

Chinese independent churches include indigenous movements which first arose in the 1920s, and also the “underground” or “house” churches of the communist era. They were cut off from the rest of the world Christian community. Since the 1980s, many new indigenous movements have emerged in China, some of whom have grown rapidly. In

India the census figures count mainly Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Christians but the *Atlas* reckons there are at least as many Christians in indigenous churches and Pentecostal movements, plus an estimated three million who worship Christ while remaining Hindus.\textsuperscript{42} Independent churches also are the majority form of church in parts of the US heartland of conservative evangelicalism, especially in the US South, where the Southern Baptist Convention is the largest. These have strong traditions of independence, so that the term *church* applies only to the “autonomous local congregation of baptised believers.”\textsuperscript{43}

The growth of independent churches means that world Christianity – at least the half which is not part of the Catholic Church – is increasingly fragmented. The World Council of Churches is made up mainly of historic Protestant and Orthodox churches. The independent churches by their nature are not inclined to join, so that constant efforts need to be made to remember that these are the most rapidly growing churches in the world; perhaps 37 percent of Christians in Asia, 31 percent in North America and 19 percent in Africa belong to them.\textsuperscript{44} The *IRM* includes recent articles about African independent churches and Indian Pentecostalism but very little about Chinese churches and nothing recently about the Southern Baptists.

**Christian migration**

The second notable contemporary trend in world Christianity is that millions of those moving across regions and continents are Christians. The majority move for economic reasons, and predominantly from parts of the global South to the North. Influxes of Christians from the global South into traditionally Christian countries, such as the USA, are changing the complexion of Christianity in those countries. These new arrivals partly offset the decline in Christian practice by those of European descent, leading to a “browning” or “de-Europeanization” of Christianity in the West.\textsuperscript{45} Denominational balances are also changing as a result of migration. For example, since 1900 most migration into the USA has been from Latin America, which is predominantly Catholic;

\textsuperscript{42} *Atlas*, p. 144. According to the *Atlas*, 4.8% of the population of India are Christian, compared with a 2001 census figure of 2.3%.

\textsuperscript{43} See the website of the Southern Baptist Convention, “Basic Beliefs,” at http://www.sbc.net/aboutus/basicbeliefs.asp (accessed 14 April 2011).

\textsuperscript{44} *Atlas*, p. 71.

this has led to a large recent increase in the proportion of US Christians who are Catholic.\textsuperscript{46}

Among those who migrate due to political pressures are Christians living under Islamic regimes. Over the 20th century, due to factors such as Western policies, internal injustices, and Islamic extremism, suppression of Christians under Islamic regimes intensified, leading to great suffering and increased Christian migration, particularly out of the Middle East or West Asia. The proportion of Christians in West Asia was 23 percent in 1910 but is now down to less than six percent.\textsuperscript{47} The migration of Christians from West Asia has led to a new situation of Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Christianity becoming widely spread around the world. This brings new challenges for them\textsuperscript{48} but also increases their interaction with other churches.

Pressures of climate change and depletion of resources are also a reason for migration. The mainly Christian islanders of the Pacific are among the first and the most seriously affected by rising sea levels.\textsuperscript{49} Drought in East Africa, hurricanes in the Caribbean and floods in South East Asia are also forcing Christians to relocate. Hearing the mission priorities of indigenous peoples has resulted in the inclusion of the natural world in the concerns of mission. This was first discussed in the \textit{IRM} around the assembly in Canberra in 1991,\textsuperscript{50} and it became a major concern of the 2011 international ecumenical peace convocation in Jamaica.\textsuperscript{51}

Overseas or cross-cultural missionary work is also a form of migration. Indeed, contemporary theological reflection on migration suggests that, being in mission, all Christians are migrants and in some sense aliens and exiles from their true home.\textsuperscript{52} Several changes have taken place over the last century in the origin and direction of mission movements. In 1910, North American missionaries represented about a third of those

\textsuperscript{46} Jenkins, p. 101.


\textsuperscript{48} Emmanuel Clapis, \textit{The Orthodox Churches in a Pluralistic World: An Ecumenical Conversation}, WCC, Geneva (2004).


sent out internationally, which is still the case, but over that period the type of churches they come from has changed. By 1968, the numbers of unaffiliated and evangelical missionaries from the USA had “surpassed those of the mainline churches that had led the Protestant movement since the 1800s.” In other words, US missionaries are increasingly part of independent Christian movements. Their destinations have also changed. Post-War Europe, once the heart of Christendom, soon became regarded by US Americans as a mission field not only for reconstruction but also for evangelism, as the crusades conducted by US evangelist Billy Graham in Europe from the 1950s show. Eighteen percent of US missionaries are now working in Europe.

Another noticeable change has been the shift of Western missionary attention from Asia to Africa. Edinburgh 1910 was preoccupied with developments in Asia and most of the discussion was in terms of West and East. At that time more than half of all European missionaries worked in Asia, and China was the largest single mission field. But although Asia has 60 percent of the world’s population, less than eight percent of Western missionaries go to Asia today, while nearly 30 percent go to Africa. Thus, it is not surprising that Western missionary discussion today tends to be in terms of North-South rather than East-West relations. Europe’s share of international missionary sending has dropped from two-thirds in 1910 to one-third today, more than 40 percent of whom go to other parts of Europe. The other third of cross-cultural missionaries now is made up of new mission movements from South Korea, Brazil, Nigeria, India, the Philippines and other major centres of Christian population.

The rise of missionary movements from the non-Western world was predicted by Walls in the IRM already in 1987, but this took many of the former colonial mission agencies by surprise. They were already engaged in restructuring their agencies on the basis that “the Church today is present in all parts of the world,” necessitating “the assumption of responsibility by Christian communities throughout the world for mission in their own societies.” As Emilio Castro saw it, such a situation presents only two possibilities for the missionary task: “either support for the local witness of Christian communities, or

53 Atlas, p. 263.
55 Atlas, p. 263.
57 Atlas, 262–63.
competition with them.” With the former option in mind, some in the early 1970s expressed the view that the best way Western mission agencies could support their local witness was by a moratorium on missionary sending from the West in order to allow them to develop themselves. Some mission agencies saw this not as a temporary but a permanent measure and dissolved themselves to create instead inter-church structures. In 1977 the London Missionary Society (Congregational) set a precedent by forming a council for world mission at which all the churches founded by the society were equally represented together with the founding body (now the United Reformed Church), and the funds of the society were managed by all. In contrast, evangelical mission agencies, for example at the first Lausanne congress in 1974, either saw no problem with competition between churches or argued for the continued existence of “unreached” peoples for whom new mission initiatives were needed. Others were unconscious of such debates but simply followed what they read in the New Testament about spreading the gospel to the whole world. Much mission activity – especially stemming from revival movements like Pentecostalism – is motivated by gratitude for salvation and desire to share the good news and the gifts God has given with others. Thus, if they find that other Christians are there already, rather than joining with them, they may wonder why these Christians do not join with their initiative.

**Christian plurality**

The emergence of independent movements combined with the migration of existing Christian churches results in an ever-increasing plurality of Christian expression. The traditional European pattern of one church for each sovereign territory, which was replicated in many parts of the world by practices of colonial mission societies, is eroding. Churches with national structures are not always known as the church of a particular territory but often as churches in that territory, suggesting they do not have a

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monopoly there.\textsuperscript{64} The denominational pluralism which this suggests is usually said to have originated in the USA. In situations where denominations are not identified ethnically, this leads to competition between churches to attract members. Some argue that denominational structures are a God-given expression of human creativity and diversity, but others see them as detrimental to ecumenical cooperation and contrary to the apostolic tradition.\textsuperscript{65}

Not only is Christian plurality encouraged in many societies and in some churches, but it is also an inevitable result of migration movements. Christianity exists in diaspora communities around the world. Especially in multi-cultural megacities, different Christian communities rub up against one another while practising their faith in very different ways, even if formally they are part of the same family of churches. Music styles may differ greatly, along with ways of praying, prohibitions regarding use of alcohol and sexual practices. In the early 1970s, John Mbiti called Christians to “know one another theologically”\textsuperscript{66} but this is far from being realised. The present situation in many cities is like of second century Rome, when migrants from around the Roman Empire were practicing their different patterns of worship and offending one another: some were feasting and others fasting. Imposing uniformity, as did St Victor, the bishop of Rome, is not an option today. However, local ecumenical bodies have an important role in reaching out to all the different Christian communities, including the independent ones.\textsuperscript{67}

Increasing Christian plurality means that the reservoir of what Christians have in common is getting smaller. The pattern and significance of worship and sacraments varies widely, as does church polity, and the spiritualities of different churches are often foreign to one another. In the current context of world Christianity, the Bible is assuming greater importance as the only source of authority which Christians share, although methods of interpretation can vary greatly. Even the magisterium of the Catholic Church, which has centuries of teachings upon which to draw, cites the Bible when it wants to communicate or work with other Christians. Apart from designated ecumenical and interdenominational activity, much of it in the context of mission and development movements, churches are also connected at the level of popular culture

\textsuperscript{64} E.g. The Church in Wales (Anglican), which was disestablished in 1920.


through worship music and resources, popular Christian literature, and international personalities. These are important vehicles for bringing unity today.

**Changing mission**

Global developments and contemporary trends in world Christianity lead to changes in how Christian mission is understood. Here we consider three important ones.

**Mission as contextual**

Fundamental to other changes in understanding mission is the perception that it is contextual: that is, mission is understood and practised according to local conditions. Those at Edinburgh in 1910 presumed that Christianity was being spread by top-down activity of European missionaries – educated elites like themselves, often with close relationships to colonial governments, who were “carrying the gospel to all the non-Christian world” in a one-way direction from what was seen as the centre to the periphery. There were exceptions who foresaw a reciprocal influence that Asia, Africa, and Oceania would have on the Western church, but most expected that mission would result in other people being conformed to Western standards of civilization. This perception was challenged during the post-war period by the emergence of the *missio Dei* paradigm of mission – a process charted magnificently by David J. Bosch.

*Missio Dei* begins from the realisation that mission belongs to God and is first and foremost God’s initiative, in which the churches participate. As early as 1928, at its meeting in Jerusalem, the IMC declared that the “older” and “younger” churches were in partnership with one another, which became practically necessary in the post-war era. The Christendom model was breaking down. But not until the 1952 IMC meeting at Willingen was this mission partnership of churches given the theological foundation of *missio Dei*: “The missionary movement of which we are a part has its source in the Triune God Himself . . . ‘As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you.’ ” As one

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observer there commented, there was “something emerging beyond partnership – oneness in the work.”\textsuperscript{73} This was particularly significant in the new European situation where Christians were now separated by the Iron Curtain that would severely inhibit missionary sending activity.

Because of \textit{missio Dei} thinking, the title of the \textit{IRM} was altered in 1969, by changing \textit{missions} to \textit{mission} (from \textit{International Review of Missions} to \textit{International Review of Mission}). This was very significant in stating that the journal’s concern was not primarily with the activities of missionary societies but with “the whole task of the whole church to bring the whole gospel to the whole world.”\textsuperscript{74} In other words, mission is not only studied as practice and strategy but also as theology. Missions are not judged by whether the results are successful nor by conformity to a standard pattern, but by their obedience to the will of God. Since mission is from above, there is no earthly centre from which the gospel is universalised; it is polycentric. “Every group of Christians is sent as God’s ambassadors to the people in its immediate neighbourhood . . . [and also] to the uttermost parts of the earth.”\textsuperscript{75}

As a result of this new paradigm, mission practice is quite varied, reflecting the diversity of gifts and situations of churches around the world. \textit{Missio Dei} gave the freedom to local churches to develop their own interpretation of the will of God and to determine the mission priorities for their context. The result is a variety of models of mission depending on the context, such as mission as liberation, as mediating salvation, as evangelism, and so on.

Recognizing the contextual nature of mission has several important consequences. For mission history, it places the emphasis not on how the church got to a particular place but on the local reception of the message. Mission history is no longer just the history of the Western missionary movement but includes the appropriation of the gospel by local Christians, through catechists, Bible women, lay evangelists, translators and interpreters, \textit{colporteurs}, and so on.\textsuperscript{76} The second consequence is for mission


\textsuperscript{75} “Quarterly Notes, No. 16,” p. iii.

\textsuperscript{76} For an example of this, see Paul Jenkins, “The Scandal of Continuing Intercultural Blindness in Mission Historiography: The Case of Andreas Riis in Akwapim,” \textit{IRM} 87/344 (Jan. 1998), pp. 67–76.
theology. Contextual theologies start from the assumption that God was already at work in some way before the gospel message was known and continuity is sought between local traditions and the Christian faith.77 This enriches mission theology with insight from different cultures.78 The third consequence has been that mission studies have become less preoccupied with grand strategies and links with government, and more interested in grassroots missionary engagement.79 In this sense, bottom-up Pentecostalism has become the primary vehicle of evangelization since 1910. Mission appears now to be coming from the periphery to the centre.80 A fourth consequence is the inclusion of a social and advocacy agenda. Liberation theologians have called attention to the fact that Christians today are either themselves poor or have a responsibility toward the poor. As a result, mission theology in the IRM has developed a more critical relationship to power.81 Mission theology pursued by and with the poor and marginalised is necessarily and rightly concerned with liberation, with hope for material blessing and well-being.

The pneumatological paradigm

Recently, mission theology has increasingly considered pneumatology. This could be attributed to a number of factors. One internal factor resulted from the integration in 1961 of the IMC and the WCC: ecumenical discussions about mission now included the Orthodox churches. Already the IMC mission theologians had moved some way toward the concerns of Orthodox theologians by developing a trinitarian missio Dei paradigm, and the link between mission and unity. The Orthodox, helped especially by the Romanian Ion Bria, then worked to articulate their mission theology in a way that Western Christians could understand.82 As a result, in 1982 the central committee of the WCC was able to adopt the statement “Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical

77 See Stephen B. Bevans, Models of Contextual Theology, Orbis, Maryknoll (2002 rev.ed.).
78 See the issues of the IRM on the 1996 conference on world mission and evangelism at Salvador Bahia, which focused on gospel and cultures, especially 84/332–333 (Apr. 1995); 84/334 (July 1995); 84/335 (Oct. 1995); 85/336 (Jan. 1996); 85/337 (Apr. 1996).
Affirmation.” Orthodox influence in this document can be seen particularly in the emphasis on mission as witness and the recognition of the local church’s eucharistic celebration as the locus and source of mission. Also, the Orthodox understanding of how the Holy Spirit sanctifies the whole creation emerged in the rich discussions around the Canberra assembly of the WCC and the 2005 conference on world mission and evangelism, both of which had pneumatological themes.

The rise of Pentecostal-charismatic forms of Christianity was also a factor that raised interest in theology of the Holy Spirit. The first contributor to the IRM to draw attention to the significance for mission of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was Roland Allen, whose work was influential on later charismatic and Pentecostal leaders. His challenge to other mission theologians to develop a pneumatology that embraces the world seems to have fallen on deaf ears until after World War II. In 1958, David du Plessis marked the 50th anniversaries of some Pentecostal movements and pointed to their significance for mission both theologically and practically. In 1968, Melvin L. Hodges, an Assemblies of God missionary, was the first to explain a Pentecostal missiology to the readers of the IRM. Since then many Pentecostal and charismatic theologians have contributed, among them: Walter Hollenweger, Michael Cassidy, Norberto Saracco, Michael Harper, Juan Sepúlveda, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, Hong Yong-Gi and Amos Yong. Since the 1990s all sorts of other contributors have begun to use the same pneumatological language.

Another strand of pneumatological thinking was among theologians who believed that the coming of the Holy Spirit had implications for the transformation of society. John Baillie pointed this out in the IRM in 1952. The New Delhi conference frequently mentioned the power of the Holy Spirit to bring about God’s purposes in Christ. Also, liberation theology presupposed the transforming power of the Spirit in liberation and justice. Similarly, feminist theology attention to pneumatology has affected mission

90 See especially IRM 79/315 (July 1990).
theology, especially since the early 1990s. Women’s reflections emphasized the motives and spirituality of mission over against a goal-oriented approach which they saw as having oppressive tendencies. They insisted instead that mission must always be life-giving and life-affirming.91

The first time pneumatological theme for a WCC assembly was in 1991 at Canberra: “Come, Holy Spirit, Renew the Whole Creation!” Here ecological concerns were emphasized, as well as learning from the land and nature spiritualities of indigenous people throughout the world. In the IRM, the themes of Canberra were discussed thoroughly in relation to those of the 1989 San Antonio mission conference. The first round of discussion centred on the wide scope of the Spirit’s work and the justification it gives to extending mission activity to caring for the creation, as well as how the Spirit overcomes dualisms of body-spirit, male-female, heaven and earth and leads to a holistic understanding of mission.92 The second round focused on the Spirit’s subversive activity in human society and role in bringing liberation.93 The third connected the Spirit with unity and reconciliation,94 and the fourth, the Spirit’s role in renewal, holy living and mission spirituality.95 It was clear that a coherent mission pneumatology was yet to emerge and that key issues needed to be resolved around the relationship of the work of the Holy Spirit and proclamation of Jesus Christ in mission. More work was also needed on the relationship of the Holy Spirit to human cultures and other religions.96

Over the next few years, considerable progress was made. The theology of missio Dei was redefined along the lines that mission is “finding out where the Holy Spirit is at work and joining in.”97 In this way mission is understood to be as holistic, life-giving and liberating as the movement of the Spirit, and also affirming of the work of the Spirit in other communities, cultures and even religions.

However, not everything is mission. By the definition above, the first act of mission is discerning the work of the Holy Spirit among the many other spirits of this world. Here,
the criterion for Christians must be Christ or Christ-likeness.\textsuperscript{98} The pneumatological paradigm necessitates interaction with grassroots activity and the recognition of movements from below. It can be seen as a theological consequence of the recognition of mission as contextual. Mission as joining in with the Spirit also shifts mission from the category of activism to that of spirituality. Mission is being truly alive to the work of God in the world by the grace of Jesus Christ, and being empowered and gifted to participate in it. It is invigorating and renewing because the Holy Spirit is “the Lord, the Giver of Life” (Nicene Creed) and compassionate because the Spirit is Love.

The external change that has made pneumatology a particularly appropriate language to express mission theology is the shift in models and theories of globalisation. Whereas Edinburgh 2010 could comfortably describe mission as “joining in with the Spirit,” such language was foreign to Edinburgh 1910, which definitely preferred “advancing the kingdom of Christ” (or Christendom). Whereas \textit{kingdom} was an appropriate (although easily corrupted) metaphor in that imperial age, in the US-led globalisation of the 21st century, referring to the Spirit is more in keeping with the talk of global flows, interconnecting webs and cultural hegemony.\textsuperscript{99} While there is much to be gained from the contemporary pneumatological paradigm of mission, its parallels with the contemporary language of globalization also stand as a warning that mission today is just as easily co-opted by global powers as it was in the age of kingdoms.

\textbf{The church as dynamic}

The changing landscape of world Christianity, especially as Christians migrate and Christianity becomes increasingly diverse, suggests that the church needs to be understood in a more dynamic way. In the colonial period churches were the home base of missions or “mission fields” were the foundation for mission in a given region. Churches themselves did not move, but were “planted” in a particular location. Besides their buildings, many churches were and are rooted in particular landscapes by a parish system through which they minister to people in that locality, and are structured territorially. This expression of contextuality is appropriate, but there also is the need today to recognize that churches are also moving around the world in migration and in mission.

Accompanying – or as Bosch suggests – “driving” the realisation that mission is God’s initiative was a rethinking of the nature of the church. First, since the church is


constituted to participate in the *missio Dei*, the church is missionary by its very nature. It is a sign, sacrament and instrument of mission.\(^{100}\) If the church is missionary, and if mission leads to the growth of the church, then separation of church and mission structures does not make sense theologically and practically.\(^{101}\) Besides this, in the post-war period the IMC appeared as a colonial structure perpetuating mission from the West to the rest.\(^{102}\) For these and other reasons, following a decision made at the IMC meeting in 1957–1958, the two bodies were integrated at the 1961 New Delhi assembly of the WCC. However, not everyone was convinced that mission should lose its separate structural identity. Evangelical mission leaders argued that there were biblical precedents for mission agencies, that the new structures were not inclusive of new independent mission movements, that the WCC was withdrawing its interest in increasing the numbers of Christians, and even that the whole *missio Dei* paradigm watered down mission by equating it with church.\(^{103}\) At least one WCC representative saw other matters of church politics at play and rather disregarded the genuine questions.\(^{104}\)

Whatever the arguments, the reality is that mission agencies continue to be founded, often today in the global South. Many of these new organisations are not part of the discussions within the WCC but do join mission forums such as the Lausanne movement. The Willingen statement recognised that local churches have a responsibility to “the uttermost parts of the earth” as well as to their immediate neighbour, whereas the *missio Dei* paradigm has tended to be interpreted in a way that discourages churches from crossing geographical boundaries, or to have a moratorium on mission “sending.”

Secondly, rethinking church was with the conviction that the authentic church is “the church-with-others.” In the 1960s, J.C. Hans Hoekendijk was an outspoken critic of the church’s self-centredness and refusal to see mission is its goal. The church, he argued, stands neither at the beginning nor the end of mission. It is the church only in so far as it participates in God’s mission to the world.\(^{105}\) A purely functional view of the church was understandable rejected. However, Hoekendijk’s insistence that mission is for the

\(^{100}\) Bosch, pp. 374–76.
sake of the world, not the church, was a version of what came to be generally recognised in the post-war period: the church is the servant of the kingdom, following the example of Christ. This view was most fully expressed around the Melbourne mission conference. The church therefore exists for others, or with them. In all this there is an implicit pneumatological recognition that the church does not contain or circumscribe the work of the Holy Spirit; the Spirit authenticates the church, and not the other way around.

In the Roman Catholic Church’s discussions around Vatican II, the understanding of the church as “the people of God” came to the fore as a third aspect of rethinking church. As the people of God, the church is a community of disciples following the way of Christ, or a party of pilgrims recapitulating the life of Christ. This vision of the church on the way or road suggests that the church is a movement, a migration, which is particularly fitting for the church in mission. These three aspects present a more dynamic understanding of church, in keeping with current awareness of global mobility, migration and diaspora and, I suggest, biblical images of the church.

**Christian influence and the global future**

In conclusion, we see that mission changes within the landscape of global flows. Setting the changes in mission in the context of global changes is not intended to suggest that the church always follows global developments. On the contrary, the Christian church, representing about a third of the world’s population, is a major global player, innovator and agent of change. The church has a global agenda, and Christian mission is an important means by which this is pursued. Missions have changed the world, not only through the number of Christians but also by the way they have impacted society. Examples of this include the role of Bible women in the development of women’s education, for instance in Korea; the effect of knowledge of the life and work of Jesus Christ on the Indian renaissance, as shown by the

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108 Bosch, pp. 373–74.


Indian theologian and WCC moderator, Dr M.M. Thomas;\textsuperscript{113} and the contribution of Catholic solidarity in bringing about democracy and human rights in many global contexts such as Poland, South Korea and much of Latin America.\textsuperscript{114} Although the churches worldwide may not be as close to the centres of political power as they were in 1910, as these examples show, this is not necessarily a barrier to influencing events.

We can only see the world from our own particular vantage point, and we may not rightly interpret the world or the will of God. Many of the predictions made in 1910 for the future of world Christianity were mistaken, for example, in the area of church growth. Conference reports expected that Japan and India would soon be Christian nations in the sense of mass conversions to Christian faith.\textsuperscript{115} In fact, the percentage of Christians in those nations has hardly changed in a century. The greatest growth in East Asia has occurred in Korea, whose annexation by the Japanese was condoned at Edinburgh 1910.\textsuperscript{116} The greatest church growth of all has been in what the leaders of 1910 regarded as the “darkest” and most heathen continent: sub-Saharan Africa received hardly any attention then.\textsuperscript{117} In 1910 the Pentecostal-charismatic movement was new and not represented at Edinburgh, but has been the fastest growing movement since then, transforming the worship life of many churches. Due to our limited understanding of the way in which the Holy Spirit is moving, we may invest our efforts in the wrong place or in the wrong way. Robert points out the irony that, despite all the endeavours of the colonial missionary movement, churches in the former mission fields grew more rapidly after independence than they had done before.\textsuperscript{118}

We can only contribute significantly to the new creation by seeking to live in and by the Spirit – that is by conforming our mission to Christ’s. As Christians we have an obligation to the whole world, but in a changing landscape that mission can only be fulfilled, whether globally or locally, in so far as we are joining in with the Spirit.


Abstract

How can we live today between what is unknown (the dragon) and what is known or familiar, between comprehension and mystery? Three concepts that have figured prominently in the IRM are critically examined here – “ecumenical,” “salvation history” and missio Dei. Originally richly open terms pointing to God and God’s whole world, through the years they have been domesticated in order to fit with what is known, thereby reducing their fullness and mystery. They need to be creatively and dialogically expanded amid the plurality in which we live today.

Living with dragons

The term Hic Sunt Dracones (Here be dragons) is printed on the edges of the Borgia map, making the boundary of the world that we may have heard about but not really known – the place where both wild beasts and “unknown” peoples live. For people in the West, the two became merged. One response was to ignore, perhaps even fear these unknown edges. The other was to attempt to order what was unknown in terms of what is known, with categories devised in the West. Edward Said has referred to this as “Orientalism.”

In our post-colonial situation today, people from former colonies have migrated to the West. The unknown live side by side with the known. Those who have migrated have brought their own religions and cultures and demand to be accepted and treated on their own terms. In addition to this new multicultural proximity, advances in technology, travel to and communication with distant lands have become common place. What was foreign is now encountered immediately. We are in situations demanding “dialogical existence”:

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1 This was shown to me by my colleague at Eden Theological Seminary, Dr Mai Anh Le Tran.

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There has always been a plurality of religions and cultures in the world. In the past religions and cultures have lived largely in isolation from one another. What is new today is that they have moved from their separate, isolated existence to what may be called a dialogical existence... In short, the forces of modernity have destroyed the isolation in which religions and cultures have been living traditionally. They are compelling us to live together in the world as one community. It is the awareness of this compulsion that raises religious, cultural and ideological pluralism as a problem in the global village.3

In brief, the dragons that used to live on the edges of our maps not only live and breathe among us, but we walk among them as well, thus pressing upon us the demand for dialogical existence. If dialogical existence is to be theologically credible and religiously acceptable as a style of life, we need to revisit some of the concepts that were originally rich in meaning but have gradually been reduced to what for us is manageable and comfortable.

“Ecumenical,” “salvation history” and missio Dei4 are three concepts crucial for missional thinking – all of which have figured prominently in articles in the IRM. The mystery inherent in these concepts, which is important for dialogical existence, has gradually eroded. To better understand what has happened and how to move forward, it is important to look at how this has occurred, and try to find ways to open ourselves to that mystery again so that we live and move in the creative tension between the known and the unknown, between comprehension and mystery.

The domestication of mystery

Originally, the concept of “ecumenism” indicated the entire cosmos, but over time has come to refer to the church. One of the fathers of ecumenism, W.A. Visser ‘t Hooft, traces how the word has been understood and interpreted throughout history.5 He notes how the Greek oikoumene was originally used to describe the whole cosmos. In the Septuagint the word is used frequently, such as in Psalms 24:1, to refer to the cosmos. Herodotus, Demosthenes and Aristotle used the word in the 5th century BCE to describe the whole inhabited world.

Visser ‘t Hooft goes on to show that the word narrowed in meaning with the Romans, who used the world to refer to the world that they knew and understood: the civilized,
Hellenistic world. The New Testament picked up on this narrower sense of *oikoumene* and declared that God ruled over a different *oikoumene*, the true *oikoumene* that was yet to come. In the Patristic period, how the word was used shifted again. The early church saw the *ekklesia* as the embodiment of God’s *oikoumene*; thus, the *ekklesia* became the mediator between the civil *oikoumene* and the divine *oikoumene*.

In the post-Constantine period, the *ekklesia* was no longer the mediator between the two *oikoumene*; but because the two have merged, the *ekklesia* became the embodiment of this union. This became quite apparent in the conflicts between Constantinople and Rome.⁶ “Ecumenical” is used as an honorific title for several patriarchs, and during the time of Patriarch John the Faster, became a title specifically attached to Constantinople. Pope Gregory of Rome protested this move. However, from Constantinople’s perspective, it made sense that their patriarch should receive the title *oikoumenikos* because he was the Patriarch of the New Rome, standing in a special relationship to the emperor of the civil *oikoumene*.⁷

After that, “ecumenical” was largely connected to the Eastern church until the 16th century, when Protestants brought it back into use, to mean universal Christian validity. For example, in Lutheran churches the three most widely used creeds – Apostles’, Nicene and Athanasian – were called ecumenical because they were accepted by the church worldwide. Nikolous Selnecker was the first to use the term in his lectures on Luther in 1575.⁸

In the 17th century, ecumenical was used in relation to the historical councils and creeds, as well as the Patriarch of Constantinople. The word “catholic” was preferred when speaking of church unity, until the word became suspect in the 18th century. The German pietist Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf⁹ started to use the word *oikoumene* in relation to the worldwide Christian church. In the 19th century, the Evangelical Alliance, influenced by the work of Dean Kniewel, put “ecumenical” back into usage. The 1846 Evangelical Alliance Conference was held with the intention of creating a British alliance with sister branches in other countries. However, at the meeting itself, figures such as S. H. Cox and Samuel Schmucker called for the formation of a worldwide organisation. “Ecumenical” was used to describe this Christian unity that transcended

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⁶ Ibid., p. 15.
⁷ Ibid., p. 17.
⁸ Ibid., p. 17.
national divisions. The organisation did not come to fruition at that time, but the word and its connection to Christian unity became part of Protestant thought.

In the 20th century, Bishop Nathan Söderblom of Uppsala blended three ideas into the use of ecumenism. First was the idea of worldwide representation, and second was the fellowship of the different Christian confessions and the desire for the unity of the church. The third was the common task of the church in the world to spread the gospel, which was the purpose of this unity in the first place. All these are part of how the word is used today.

It is interesting to note how domesticated the term “ecumenism” has become. It originally referred to the whole inhabited earth, and in some cases in the Septuagint, the physical world. By the time of Roman rule, its scope was narrowed to mean the world that was known, and with that narrowing came a homogenisation and a power to shape a vision of empire that still holds sway over the word today.

Another expansive concept that has been reduced to fit our comprehension is “salvation history.” Salvation history is about God’s salvific activity of reconciling the whole of creation to Godself. As Asian scholars have argued, salvation history needs to be read in relation to creation theology rather than over against it. C.S. Song states it most sharply when he writes,

> When salvation gets divorced from the creation, it is bound to lose its universal dimension and significance. This inevitably leads to the impoverishment of Christian understanding of history and culture as has proved to be detrimental to the wholesome appreciation of Asian history and culture in God’s revelation.11

Unfortunately, Christianity has a tendency to read salvation history from the point where we most clearly see God at work in the person of Jesus Christ. As a result, we tend to reduce and read all of God’s activity through the activity we best understand, the redemptive activity of Christ. As Wesley Ariarajah contends,

> In much of Protestant theology creation just sets the stage or becomes no more than a prelude to the “fall” and the consequent unfolding of a drama of salvation. An underdeveloped theology of creation lies at the heart of the Protestant inability to deal with plurality. Today there is a new interest in creation, but it is more in relation to the natural environment than about the peoples who fill the earth.12

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10 Psalm 17.16 “the foundations of the oikoumene were laid bare,” as quoted by W.A. Visser ‘t Hooft, p. 8.
This homogenising tendency to interpret all of salvation activity through the lens of Christian redemptive history creates all kinds of problems. D. Preman Niles explores these dangers by highlighting the work of Oscar Cullmann.\textsuperscript{13} Cullmann describes God’s salvific activity in the Bible as a narrowing from universal to the particular and then expanding out again. In this version of salvation history, God’s story begins with creation and then, with Noah, begins to narrow, losing all other living human beings. It narrows further with Abraham, losing Lot and his descendents. It narrows again with Isaac, losing Ishmael, the father of Islam. It narrows with the loss of the northern kingdom to the Assyrians (from whence the Samaritans arise), with those taken into exile, losing those who were left in Jerusalem, and then with those who return from exile, losing those left behind in Babylon. The story finally narrows to one redeemer, Jesus Christ. Cullmann argues that salvation then broadens out again through those who believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, to the whole world through the missional work of the church, and in particular the church based in Rome, Western Europe and the United States. The movement of salvation history from the many to the one and then back to the many – with the pivotal role played by Christ – gives the West control, gives preference to the church, and dismisses other understandings of history both within and outside of the church. It enables the church in the West to decide who are the participants and shapers of this history.

Niles challenges this framework by asking what happens to the people who drop out as the salvation history narrows – figures like Hagar and Ishmael (through whom Muslims are linked to Abraham), or even the Jews as descendants of Abraham and Sarah who are cut off as salvation history narrows to Jesus Christ, and who stand outside of the history of the church. Further, the myriad histories of the people of Asia and Africa are never even considered as part of God’s salvation history. When the history opens out again, it moves in a certain direction through Rome into Europe and then to the Americas. The rest of the world is added into this salvation history through the missionary and colonial efforts of Europe and America. It is not surprising, therefore, that the churches outside Europe and America are understood as the younger churches, the daughter churches or – worst of all – the mission fields, extraneous, later additions, afterthoughts of God’s salvation history. Accordingly, they are expected to look to the older churches as the source of truth and meaning, consequently, their own cultures are outside of Christian salvation history, and are devalued. Finally, their spiritualities and theologies are discounted as inferior to those of Europeans and Americans.

A third example of a theological concept that has become restricted is the theme of *missio Dei*, which has been given much importance in the *IRM* over the years. David Bosch notes that Karl Barth14 emphasized that the work to bring about the kingdom of God is God’s work rather than the work of the church. Johannes Aagaard noted that the credit for coining the term was given to Karl Hartenstein, director of the Basel Mission and a significant figure at the International Missionary Conference (IMC) at Tambaram 1938.15 The idea then blossomed at the 1952 IMC gathering at Willingen. That same year, J. C. Hoekendijk, who was concerned about missions’ overemphasis on church growth, argued that mission focused on the church stands in juxtaposition to mission focused on the kingdom of God. This emphasis on *missio Dei* was an important step in moving the work of God’s kingdom from the control of the church back into the hands of God.

The assumption was that the work (mission) of God arises out of the nature of God. Willingen’s understanding of God’s nature was trinitarian. As Wilhelm Anderson wrote,

> If we wish to sum up, with systematic precision Willingen’s approach to a theology of missionary enterprise, we must say that it is Trinitarian in character. In the Willingen statements, the triune God Himself is declared to be the sole source of every missionary enterprise.”16

Aagaard seems to concur with Anderson’s assessment of Willingen and underlines the crucial nature of this theological shift, as does David Bosch in his book *Transforming Mission*. The shift to the idea of *missio Dei* rooted in the triune nature of God is indeed seminal. However, Willingen and the neo-orthodox theologians from whom this idea grew were too christocentric to have a fully embodied trinitarian theology. An overemphasis on christology does not leave room for a fully developed concept of God the Creator or of the Holy Spirit. What those early proponents of *missio Dei* gave with one hand, they took back with the other.

Barth, Brunner, Kraemer, or even M.M. Thomas with his concept of Christ-centred syncretism,17 all place Christ as the only hermeneutical key for understanding the divine and divine activity. The first and third persons of the Trinity are subsumed under Christ

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and overly defined by him. The idea that our understanding of God the Creator and the Holy Spirit could define, correct, enrich or even confuse our understanding of Christ is not entertained. The way these thinkers articulate the Trinity is processional at best. This can be seen in Bosch’s description of the classical doctrine of the *missio Dei*:

God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Holy Spirit, was expanded to include yet another “movement”: Father, Son and Spirit sending the church into the world.\(^{18}\)

In this theology, the first person of the Trinity is given primacy only in being wholly other and unknown. Moreover, the first person can only be known through Christ, the second person in the Trinity. In turn, these two determine the activity of the third person, the Holy Spirit. The idea that each person of the Trinity has equal weight and value and can work independently from each other, although consistent with each other, is missing from this understanding of the Trinity. The idea that each illuminates and is illuminated by the others is also missing. It is the society of the three persons together that gives access to the nature of God and in turn to the nature of God’s activity.

Ecumenism, salvation history and *missio Dei* are all theological ideas that in their conception were open, rich terms intended to point us outward to God and God’s world. In our very human need to understand these rich ideas we have allowed the means of making sense of them to take dominance over the actual meaning and purpose of the idea. It is time to open ourselves to the mystery and majesty of God and God’s creation, and allow these to transform us, if dialogical existence is to make sense and be an existential possibility.

**Re-entering mystery**

Sri Lankan theologian and churchman, Bishop Lakshman Wickremesinghe, draws on Hindu imagery to show the need to live between the creative tension of comprehension and mystery, but using a story from the Matsya Puranas.\(^{19}\) In this story the great sage Markandeya, in the interval between the universe being dissolved and recreated, enters the body of the god Vishnu as Vishnu sleeps and, while reclining on the primordial sea of chaos, dreams of what the re-created universe should be. By accident, the sage falls

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\(^{18}\) Bosch, p. 390.

into the sea and begins to drown. He panics and pulls himself out, onto the body of Vishnu who is dreaming the vision of order. Markandeya is wet with the moisture of the sea. As he sits there in the clear order of the vision, he dries out and becomes brittle. He yearns for the moistness of the sea and tips himself back into it. This time he can enjoy the moist, overwhelming reality of the sea, but he still cannot breathe. So he pulls himself back onto Vishnu’s body to get air and perspective. Back and forth he goes between the two realities.

Human beings are like that. We come out of and are part of the moist chaos of plurality, but we need the dry air of comprehension to negotiate it and find our place in it. If we spend too much time in the moist chaotic mystery, we drown. If we spend too much time in the clear air of order, we become dry and brittle. We need to negotiate the space between comprehension and mystery.

In our present age, what happens in one part of the world we come to know about only moments later. It is common to spend a week in another country halfway around the globe. Communication from one place to another happens in seconds rather than weeks. The spread of cultures, languages, cuisines and ideas from one part of the world to another is fast and frequent. Not only is our world smaller but our immediate neighbourhoods are larger, and the people within them no longer look or think as we do. We no longer have the innocence or luxury to hold on to either the primacy of our perspectives or our power to chart maps accordingly. As our maps change, so too must our theologies.

What do these changes mean for how we attend to theology today? The new map of our world requires a more rounded understanding of the Godhead. This wider conception requires us to remember that the God of the church is also the creator of the whole cosmos.

We also need to remember that the God of creation is mysterious and ultimately unknowable. As Lakshman Wickremesinghe explains, there is much that we know about God that is central and normative for us. However, because God is ultimately beyond our knowing, our knowledge is never complete and total.20 While intellectually we acknowledge this mysterious God – a God beyond our knowing – who has the autonomy to do as God pleases, particularly in the missio Dei, it is difficult if not impossible for us to imagine a God who functions outside the boundaries of how we have understood the divine through the special revelation given through Jesus Christ. We claim to have the knowledge given to us through Christ to make sense out of

mystery, but we are unable to allow the otherness of God to make a mystery out of our
sense. There are dragons out there. But God knows those dragons and works among
them. The whole cosmos is the arena of God’s activity. It cannot be limited to the world
as we know it, or as we try to make sense of it. God works where God chooses, as God
chooses.

Second, we need to revisit how we think about christology. Of all the Christian
doctrines, this is the one that is most shaped by immanence, as known in the incarn-
ation. Yet we tend to focus on the transcendent Christ, overshadowing the historical and
cultural particularity of Jesus. Christology at its best pays attention to a specific histori-
cal particularity as the way through which God deals with humanity, as the moment in
which God becomes enfleshed in a given context. We see what God is like in that time
and place. In Jesus, God manifests Godself among the people of first-century Palestine.
The face of God, the face of Jesus, takes on the nuances of the people and culture in
which that occurs. Insights gained from this interaction help us to understand how
Christ interacts with other cultures. Christ shapes the way we see all the cultures in
creation, and in turn, those cultures shape the way we see Christ. From this perspective,
the emphasis is placed not only on the proclamation, but also on what happens in the
interaction of the Christ who is proclaimed and the particularities of the place where
that proclamation occurs.

A helpful way to take seriously the particularity of Christ in different cultures and places
is to consider how Christ is manifested in various contexts, how Christ transforms these
contexts, and how each informs the other. Latin American Christians have drawn our
attention to the communities of the poor as places where Christ is manifest. Asian
Christians call our attention to the richness and diversity out of which Christ can be
known, and show us that collapsing this into homogeneity means losing the various
possibilities of knowing Christ. African Christians bring to our awareness the theme
and experience of community as a key to encountering Christ. African American
churches emphasize the importance of race for a fuller understanding of Christ. The
loss of any of these perspectives impoverishes our understanding of Christ. A method
that pays attention to this plurality in experiencing Christ moves us away from attempts
to construct an overarching christology. Rather, these voices call us into an ongoing
conversation among many christologies, each bringing its own gifts to an intra-Christian
dialogue. Bishop V.S. Azariah put this eloquently in his speech to the 1910 World
Mission Conference in Edinburgh:

The exceeding riches of the glory of Christ can be fully realised not by the Englishman,
the American and the Continental alone, nor by the Japanese, the Chinese and the Indian by
themselves – but by working together worshipping together, and learning together the Perfect Image of our Lord and Christ. It is only “with all the Saints” that we can “comprehend the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we might be filled with all the fullness of God.” This will be possible only from spiritual friendships between two races. We ought to be willing to learn from one another and to help one another.21

This kind of intra-Christian conversation not only deepens our own understanding of Christ, but allows us to participate in wider inter-faith conversations. Many other faiths have interpreted and appropriated Christ and Christian ideas in their own way. Understanding how they have done so gives us a path into how they understand themselves, God and the world. It also provides a unique opportunity to see Christ anew through their eyes and enrich our thinking about Christ even further.

We see this interfaith conversation being pursued by M.M. Thomas in his book, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance.*22 Here Thomas looks at the understanding of Christ by some key Hindu thinkers during the period of India’s struggle for independence, and how they explicitly stated their understanding of who Christ is with reference to their own philosophies and nation-building praxis. By examining this process, Thomas not only positions his own thinking and praxis, but also enriches his own theology. This recasting of Christ allows Christians to recognize the unpredictable and mysterious God at work in creation, without colonising God or God’s work or the world.

Finally, we need a much more full-bodied understanding of the Holy Spirit. If there is any aspect of the Trinity that can help us negotiate plurality without domesticking mystery it is the Holy Spirit. Not only is the Holy Spirit the person of the Trinity who meets people where they are, but the Holy Spirit leads people into God’s wider reality. In the Pentecost story the Holy Spirit addresses persons from each nation in their own language (Acts 2:6). At the same time, the Spirit allows all to communicate in their own language and yet be understood by others in their native tongue. This is a negotiation of plurality without abrogating it. It is the formation of lines of communication and connection through difference, enabling one another to be enriched through a receptive plurality.

The concept of the Holy Spirit is elusive to our logic. It is unpredictability, dynamic, surprising, even out of bounds. Perhaps that is why there is an impulse to control it by

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placing the Spirit under the control of the church, Christ and even the Creator. If we allow the Spirit to be as it will, it will both introduce us and guide us into mystery, showing us what we never thought we would encounter, while making it comprehensible to us and us to it. We thus gain a deeper, richer understanding of ourselves, of others and even of God, Christ and the church.

**Expanding ecumenism, salvation history, and missio Dei**

The methods required for this kind of theological work need to be more diverse and dialogical than those employed in the past. We need a greater understanding of religions and cultures. Disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, linguistics and even economic, historical and post-colonial analysis need to be brought to bear so that we might better read the signs of our time and discern where God is at work. Additionally, contextual articulations of God and God’s activity must be brought into the conversation. It is through this dialogical imagination\(^\text{23}\) that we come to a better understanding of God and God’s world. Such dialogue creates space where what has been taken for granted can be questioned and made less familiar. What we thought of as strange and “other” can become comprehensible.

With this wider understanding of theology and method, we discover that our domesticated definition of ecumenism and missio Dei is too narrow and our understanding of salvation history is limiting at best and colonial at worst. So how do we re-expand these terms?

Salvation history as the church has understood it becomes only one theme in a larger divine narrative of God’s salvific activity in the world. There are many more perspectives of history both within and outside the biblical texts. We have already noted how the dominant scriptural story dropped whole groups of people from its narrative. But even within the biblical narrative, there is acknowledgment of other means through which God’s purposes are worked out. D. Preman Niles points out that there is a fluid and changing relationship between the people of God (laos) and the nations (ethne). There are moments when the laos work for or judge the ethne and other times when the ethne work for or judge the laos. At key moments, scripture views the ethne as part of God’s plan while having their own integrity and importance.\(^\text{24}\)

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We must also attend to other histories outside of the biblical texts. Expressions of God’s salvific activity throughout the world, not only in our history and the history of the church, but in other parts of the globe and outside of Christian history must be taken seriously. Only then will we better understand God’s work in the world. Rather than a single history of God’s activity there are multiple histories. When talking about the importance of studying Asian church history, John England writes:

The diverse nature of the evidence, and the cultural context within which it [Asian church history] was shaped, will yield their secrets only to approaches which are fully cross-cultural and interdisciplinary. It is therefore not too much to claim that serious study and reflection on the history of the Church in Asia prior to the sixteenth century will present challenges to a range of disciplines and to our understanding of theology, human community and historical process.¹²

This surely holds true for all histories. To take God and God’s mission seriously is to take seriously the histories in which God acts. Suddenly, the work of historians of religion, cultural historians and historians in general take on greater weight and importance in our theological work.

Our wider understanding of theology and method will also transform the way we do our ecumenical work. We need to return “ecumenism” to its original meaning as the whole cosmos. If our ecumenical councils and gatherings are recast to understand themselves as addressing and attending to issues of the whole world, our very way of doing ecumenism will change. Matters such as the ordering of the church and doctrine will no longer be of primary importance in our conversations, for they only apply to one aspect of the oikoumene. Participation in ecumenical conversation will expand not only to include heads or representatives of world churches, but will also include people of other faiths, ideologies, philosophies and worldviews. Some of the important questions that will shape the conversation are: What does the world look like? How does God relate to it? What is our function in it? How do each of us play our part in God’s work in the world? With this new conversation, the word “ecumenical” will take on new meaning: the church will find itself to be only a part, albeit a significant part, of the oikoumene.

In his article “The Dragon, the Deluge and Creation Theology,”²⁶ Archie Lee shows how the Chinese dragon myth interprets and reshapes the concept of the dragon-serpent in the Bible. In Genesis, the dragon-serpent is the chaos monster standing in

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opposition to the creative God. Lee juxtaposes this image of the dragon with the positive symbol of the Chinese dragon who brings rain, and with the assistance of Yu the Great, orders chaos, all the while with an aura of mystery and inscrutability. This symbol, which was negated and rejected by the West as chaos, and therefore bad, is re-examined as the articulation of another people’s symbol. As a result, a symbol silenced as otherness is re-valued and given a new voice and a new ability to affect the meaning of the biblical texts, with a sense of ordering chaos while holding fast to mystery and inscrutability in a richer and deeper way than before.

Dragons can help us rediscover our place in the world. Rather than reacting with suspicion or trying to control the diversity around us, we need to respond to it as gift and blessing. It is a fruit of the God that always remains beyond our knowing. It is as we learn to live dialogically with that diversity that we are able to allow other people’s ways of understanding the world to deepen, enrich, and even further explain our own worldview, as we in turn enrich theirs. Like the sage Markandeya, we then can thrive between the moistness of mystery and the dry breath of comprehension.

It is time to dance with the dragons that have been relegated to the edges of our world maps as dangerous, chaotic otherness. It is only then that our flat maps may take their true shape in a round globe and our single story will take its place among the many stories of God and God’s people.
For the Sun Heats Up Again

Maria Chavez Quispe

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Abstract

Motivated by the centenary of the IRM, this article is a reflection from an indigenous perspective. Indigenous Peoples’ experience with mission movements is vast, complex and varied, depending on the context. The mission of God has always been in relation to the original peoples of the land, who have been part of the church even when these relations have been neither fair nor harmonious. Indigenous Peoples have been persecuted, demonized and excluded, as well as assimilated and westernized in order to survive, but now they are not only arising again as peoples but raising up the importance of indigenous spiritual perspectives and theological reflection. Dialogue with indigenous wisdom and theologies was mandated by the 2006 assembly of the WCC, but that necessitates recognizing and welcoming “otherness” and revisiting syncretism.

From Abya Yala

Human history is a vast storehouse of multiple relationships. The history of Gods reflects the history of the relationships among human populations, social sectors and their life projects. The following excerpt from a pre-Columbian Mesoamerican and Mexican myth presents the relation of the two gods represented respectively by Sun and Dog.

The Sun said: ‘free the dog (Xolotl) who does not want to die.
There is reason if he is happy and makes other happy.
I do not want more sacrifices!
I will eat stars instead.
My heat will be to caress
People, animals and plants

According to Eleazar Lopez, the Sun represents the god of the great *Aztec* urban empire while the Dog is the god of the *Huasteca* agricultural people living under the rule of Aztecas. *Xolotl*, the Dog is close to the life of people and makes them happy. Their happiness makes the Sun want the blood of *Xolotl* as a sacrifice. *Xolotl* escapes from the violence of the priests of the Sun and is able to change the Sun’s intent to sacrifice *Xolotl*. The Sun promises its heat will be a caress, rather than burning or hurting other Gods, peoples, animals or nature. The Sun changes, and so also can Gods and their priests. This strengthens believers, especially the humble, the poor and nature.

In Abya Yala, the “mature land, fertile and abundant,” there has been a long experience of Christian missions, both Catholic and Protestant. Our continent is Christian but it is also Amerindia, an Indian/indigenous continent. It is also the place where peoples came from elsewhere, voluntarily or involuntarily, and settled permanently. It is *IndoAfroMestizaAméricaLatina*, which testifies to its ability to generate life amidst suffering, exploitation and marginalization. New paradigms of civilization arise from these lands, many of them arising from the cultural matrix of the descendants of the first nations of Abya Yala.

Abya Yala was conquered by violent military forces, which were legitimized theologically. Social and religious relations between the original inhabitants of Abya Yala and the descendants of the conquistadores are very complex, but usually only analyzed from non-indigenous perspectives. Elites of the Christian churches have not made efforts to understand this reality from indigenous perspectives but instead have been allies of the continued domination of indigenous and impoverished populations. Despite a history of pain and subjugation, Abya Yala is also a continent where the grace of God can be perceived in very creative ways. The daily life of simple people, especially their ability to resist and withstand multiple conflicts and aggressions, witnesses to the wonderful strength and faith of the peoples as well as their amazing capacity to recreate their culture and religion.

The arrival of the Christian God was welcomed 520 years ago, as well as today, insofar as the gospel values inclusiveness, which is characteristic of indigenous cultures and worldviews. But this has never been reciprocal. Indigenous Gods were sentenced to death and their believers accused of idolatry. They were persecuted, murdered, discriminated against, and their labour, natural resources and economy exploited.

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2 Abya Yala is the indigenous name for Latin America and the Caribbean. Although each indigenous group uses a different name according to their languages, the name Abya Yala, of Kuna origin, became very popular after 1992, the 500 years commemoration of the arrival of Spaniard conquistadores. On the one hand, the name is used mostly in political demands for self-determination, but on the other hand, it helps to re-affirm the cultural identity of the new indigenous generations.
Latin America has experienced colonization and christianization far longer than the history of the *International Review of Mission (IRM)*. This history remains in the indigenous collective memory of Abya Yala, with a clear political dimension. From the past and the present we affirm that our cultures are committed to the search for an abundant life. We also want to examine our collective memory self-critically, knowing that idealizing cultures does not strengthen what we propose.

As Indigenous Peoples we suffer because European racism made us into “Indians” 520 years ago, and with this came impoverishment, lack of basic resources for survival, social evils expressed in violence, alcoholism, division etc. Despite this, we also celebrate the memory/history of resistance of our peoples against the conquest, colonization, and current kinds of colonialism. This inspires us to continue anticipating another possible world where many worlds have a place, and where the earth/nature/creation/cosmos is again what it has always been for us, the Mother of life.

We cannot here reflect more on the history of the relationship between Christianity and Abya Yala peoples, but this is the basis from out of which we celebrate, assess and raise perspectives for missiology. There is much richness and many contradictions in that history; but at the risk of making some generalizations, we will attempt to draw some implications of the emerging Indigenous theologies for ecumenical missiology.

The *IRM* is a history of relationships

Over the past 100 years, the *IRM* has well reflected the history of relations between different peoples, cultures and religions, in all its complexity and contradictions. It has testified to the passionate love of those who felt the call to evangelize and christianize the world and other peoples who, without knowing the gospel, lived their deep faith in their own way. Different people came together, violated, withstood, loved, danced and transgressed the limits of their own cultures and religions. Amid setbacks, they redirected their work again and again, opening and closing doors to new ways of understanding, affirming and reaffirming their witness to Christ in every generation.

The relation between Indigenous Peoples and mission can be reflected upon at two levels: The first is by considering how Indigenous Peoples have been a part of the church and have participated in the ecumenical movement. The second is the

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theological articulation rooted in indigenous cultures and spiritualities today. Indigenous theologies have much to offer to missiological reflection in the church, as they offer different civilizational paradigms for a world in political and financial crisis.

The beginning of mission and Indigenous Peoples

The primary purpose of the Review is to further the serious study of the facts and problems of missionary work among non-Christian peoples, and to contribute to the building up of a science of missions.4

Looking at that original goal of the IRM through indigenous eyes, we find two foci of what then were Protestant missions. One focus is on the “non-Christian peoples” or the original inhabitants of the land where Christian missionaries went. Secondly, the people there are the destination of the mission, or the “object” of the missionary task.

The active subject in this relation is the north-Atlantic missionary, mostly from Europe, England and the United States. In the local context, the missionaries5 and their families embodied a society which felt superior and in possession of the truth which was to spread to the rest of the world, with and for God’s blessing. Edinburgh 1910 presented these subjects as being in “zeal for mission” and ready to expand the Christian gospel.

The “other” in this relationship was considered non-Christian, and thus inferior, backward and of a “weaker race.” These objects of mission were stripped of the otherness of their culture, language, economics, politics and religion, in short, of what had made them subjects, had given them life and a way of being in the world. Evident in the general approach of the first decades of IRM were racist6 considerations of the “other,” the indigenous, and discourses that justified the colonial system.7

5 It is estimated that 55 percent of the missionaries at that stage (1910) were women. It seems that no change in the patriarchal perspective of mission happened despite that significant presence. See Dhamaraj, Glory. Lay Women, Mission Practices and Theological Thought, Queen’s Foundation, England (2009).
6 Note that the category “race” comes from very one sided racist anthropological studies. It is no longer used in the fields of anthropology and theology. The category ethnic expresses better and more respectfully refers to the diversities that make the human species.
7 “No traveler of an observant eye and impartial mind, who passes among those uncivilized, non-Christian races in which missionaries are now at work, can fail to be struck by the immense improvement which they have wrought in the condition of the people, and which often is quite irrespective of the number of actual converts who have been formed into Christian congregations. . . . They did wish to spread the faith. They overthrew the idols, and stopped or tried to stop human sacrifices and many other horrors. . . . Everywhere the native has suffered; everywhere the white adventurer or trader has attempted to treat him as if he had no rights, or has him as a mere instrument by the use of which he can profit. To some extent it is
The relation established with original peoples was not one of equals; the exercise of power was unidirectional. Their cultural values were considered uncivilized. The result of this was that Indigenous Peoples were undervalued and north-Atlantic missionary work was exalted, despite the recognized suffering caused by colonization. Missionaries even dared to claim the victory of their civilization and the total assimilation of Original peoples into it. At the same time, there also was a genuine concern to fill the “moral emptiness” and life principles of the evangelized peoples, but these were filled with moral values and life principles of Western culture and Christianity.¹ Most Indigenous Peoples were converted to Protestant Christianity through such cultural assimilation.

There is also some evidence of awareness of the sufferings inflicted on Indigenous Peoples, but despite this sensitivity, Christian mission during this period did not oppose colonization and exploitation by north-Atlantic countries. Instead, it became an ally of colonial expansion and domination that involved exploiting the local workforce and its natural resources. At the risk of oversimplifying, we can say that the missionaries during this early period of the IRM were more concerned with saving indigenous souls from cultural and religious degradation. They lacked a serious critical analysis of the structural causes that produced this “backwardness” and suffering.

In almost all the cases, their missionary strategy was to approach local elites and/or ethnic majorities in Africa, Asia and the Pacific and the criollo and mestizos in Latin America. Thus, in Africa or Asia, ethnic majorities were converted to Christianity, while the so-called “minorities” or “tribes” were relegated and subordinated not only to their nascent states but also to the dominant ethnic groups who had been christianized already.⁹

Nevertheless, we must also acknowledge that in a context of colonial exploitation, the missionaries’ faith led them to defend the human rights of these “backward”

inevitable that the weaker race should suffer by this contact, but there has also been much willful and needless wrong-doing on the part of the white men who have gone among the aborigines”. Bryce, James, “The impressions of a traveler among non-Christian races,” *IRM* 1 (1912), pp. 16–17.

¹ “In another fifty years that which we call our civilization will have overspread the earth and extinguished the native customs and organizations of the savage and semi-civilized peoples… Unless the backward races receive some new moral bases of life, some beliefs and precepts by which they can live, something to control their bad impulses and help them to form worthy conceptions of life and work, their last state will be worse than the first.” Bryce, pp. 18–19.

⁹ According to conversions of indigenous Batwa, Ogoni and Masai, this experience is general in Africa, adding the expropriation of their lands by missionary denominations who focused on larger ethnic groups. Those groups considered as “minorities” today claim to be considered “Indigenous Peoples” or “First Nations.” Churches in Africa hardly recognize the presence of Indigenous Peoples. The same is the case in much of the Pacific.
Indigenous Peoples, even at the risk of opposing their compatriots. Educational programmes and health care projects were initiated and gradually transferred to indigenous leadership. Protestant mission consequently has been identified with the establishment of schools, hospitals, legal services and protection of human rights. Latin American mission schools normally taught in the colonial and missionaries’ languages. It necessarily implied the loss of the local indigenous languages and therefore a loss of identity in future generations of Indigenous Peoples, but it also allowed participation in the mainstream local society and its decision-making processes.

During the first decades of the IRM, there are only a few references to missionary work in Latin America. The continent was considered the monopoly of the Catholic church, which had been present there for 400 years. Early in the 19th century, Protestant missionaries tried to enter Latin American societies by invitation of liberal governments who wanted to break the conservative political and economic power of the criollo elites associated with the hierarchy of the Catholic church. Since then, the Protestant and evangelical identity in Abya Yala has been built in opposition to popular Catholic faith. Yet this popular Catholicism is where indigenous spirituality has been more able to survive.

Although their first aim was to evangelize Indigenous Peoples, missionaries soon realized and learned about the extreme poverty and neglect of the people. Besides the projects in education and health, the Protestant missions helped some indigenous languages to survive by translating the first Bibles, as the Protestant foundation, into the local languages. This translation work was controversial because of the danger of oversimplifying native languages, insensitivity toward the worldviews and spirituality

10 Among many examples, one can quote the experience in Java, where the educational process was initiated by a local woman Raden Adjen Kartini with the help of missionaries. This was in 1917 and in Dutch: “. . . through the education already received the desire for development has spread, first among single individuals whose eyes have been opened to the backward condition of their nation which contrasts so painfully with the welfare and riches of strangers.” Adriani, N., “Spiritual Currents among the Javanese,” IRM 6:21 (Jan. 1917), pp. 112–125. In Africa, the major concern was for the health situation which was not improving with education and was overseen by the local government. See J.H. Oldham, “The Christian Mission in Africa. As seen at the International Conference at Le Zoute,” IRM 16 (1927), pp. 24–35. There is also much interest in the mission experiences in China, Japan and Asia, generally due the relation of Christianity and the major monotheistic religions of Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism.

11 In Bolivia, the Methodist American School used to teach in English while the population increasingly spoke Spanish.


13 This is the case for Miskito peoples in Nicaragua, who, thanks to the support of Moravian missionaries, were able to keep their language despite the assimilation efforts of their government.
carried by the languages, or the political interests these translations would serve.\textsuperscript{14} Protestant missionaries operated with racial assumptions, differentiating indigenous from mestizo and criollo peoples. This helped to deepen the fractures among different sectors of the society, and legitimized the discrimination and devaluation of Indigenous Peoples. Ironically, churches still experienced major growth among the indigenous.\textsuperscript{15}

**Indigenous churches**

The *IRM* also supported the aim of creating and strengthening indigenous churches\textsuperscript{16} with an increasingly local leadership. It is fascinating to read of how this was occurring. Each local indigenous church took the colours of the local culture, the worship incorporated not only the local language but also cultural symbols, rites of passage, as well as local holidays.

It is also the case that this local empowerment occurred through the assertion of Western culture and the loss of original cultures. Many indigenous people stopped considering themselves as indigenous and embraced the new Western Christian identity. They no longer related to their cultural and spiritual roots but ignored them, even fought them as anti-Christian idolatry, in order to be part of the official Christian church. In taking up a Christian identity, they left their cultural and spiritual inheritance, considering such to be the cause, for instance, of alcoholism, superstition and poverty. In order to be part of the Christian church, indigenous churches repeated traditional Western theology, rather than developing creative new theologies\textsuperscript{17} or different biblical hermeneutics from their members’ symbiotic experiences of faith. Incorporating ecclesial hierarchical symbolism tended to break the communitarian dynamics of indigenous understandings of authority. Internal patriarchal mechanisms were now legitimized with

\textsuperscript{14} In the book he edited, Guillermo Cook reflects more in the role of the evangelical Sumer Institute of Linguistics, which translated the Bible and helped put the oral indigenous languages into writing. However, they were accused many times of cooperating with the assimilationist policy of local, national governments in alliance with the USA.

\textsuperscript{15} In Bolivia, during the first half of the 19th century, Methodist missionary efforts were directed to the mestizo population and to political elites. To their surprise, the Methodist church was growing more, and almost autonomously, among the indigenous communities in the Altiplano.


\textsuperscript{17} A significant analysis of the development of theological studies was submitted by the Ecumenical Theological Education, WCC to the Edinburgh Study Process, in “Study Paper on Theme 6: Challenges and Opportunities in Theological Education in the 21st Century: Pointers for a New International Debate on Theological Education,” *IRM* 99:1:390 (Apr. 2010), pp. 124–150. See specially point I.1.c. Training of indigenous leaders, goal aimed by Edinburgh 1910 but not achieved by the later ecumenical movement due to the changes in the landscape of the international missionary work.
the Bible and God. Community projects were financially dependent on the “mother
curch” and on uncritical defence of the capitalist model of development. Alien
understandings of time, space, moral values and logic were incorporated. In many cases,
indigenous churches became sad imitations of north-Atlantic missionary churches.

Indigenous cultures and their peoples were targeted as “wrong.” Some sociological
interpretations of traditional festive practices were exaggerated in order to legitimize
the mainstream society and maintain the social and political isolation of indigenous
populations. For instance, they were accused of being alcoholic and abusive.\footnote{This is the case of the intervention in the Northern territories of Australia where aboriginals are accused of being alcoholics
and abusers of children. The final goal of that policy was to take the aboriginal land. See the WCC’s Statement regarding
www.overcomingviolence.org/?id=8006.} Indigenous converts to evangelical Christianity rejected the use of alcohol, which can be seen
as a way of denouncing the stereotypes still prevailing in mainstream society in order to
pursue a new life. This is the experience of the indigenous Pentecostal communities
which has not been analysed sufficiently. Not all traditional ways are bad, nor are foreign
ways good \textit{per se}. A total break with the past is not the way to generate life in the full
sense, but this typically is associated with conversion in official church discourses. In
most cases, Indigenous Peoples live out the Christian faith in creative, symbiotic ways;
they synthesize or syncretize the different faiths together, for the sake of living well and
\textit{Well-being} in their communities.

Colonialism and christianization were two sides of the same coin. Both brought dis-
continuity with cultures and reinforced situations of hopelessness for indigenous com-
munities. This also was compounded by capitalism, economic domination and a
spiritual disconnection with the Earth. These all come together when analysing
the situation of Indigenous Peoples. Undervaluing indigenous culture is connected with the
violence that they, especially women and children, experience every day. Even dramatic
ecological suffering of the Earth can be explained by people being deeply disconnected
with their fundamental cultural values. Despite this cultural discontinuity, we can also
witness a historical continuity with the traditional indigenous wisdom and spirituality.
The ceremonies are still performed, and the rites and the oral tradition still reinforce the
strength of the communities. This is the richness that indigenous faith experiences can
bring to theological reflection.

Despite the danger of self-denial, Protestant Christianity also meant good news for
Indigenous Peoples, who discovered in the gospel liberation from internal and external
systems of domination. It enriched their vision of life, providing them tools for internal
critique of their own cultures, defence of their human rights, empowerment – especially among women\textsuperscript{19}, capacity building, etc. This is some of what Indigenous Peoples gained, with the support of the Protestant churches and inspired by the biblical prophetic witness. Hearing the injustices suffered by Indigenous people began in the world ecumenical forum, even before it did in NGOs and the UN system. International ecumenical forums were able to create solidarity and awareness, to build capacities for action and to promote change at the local level, in both the global North and South. The local churches were and are the vehicles making this possible.

Throughout missionary history, the objects of mission became subjects of mission. They are present in the ecumenical movement, and the majority of the churches today are under their leadership. Churches became autochthonous and local, with both positive and negative nuances. Christianity is growing and dynamic in the global South, radically changing the scenario for theological and missiological reflection. Those previously “non-Christian” are now part of the church, as Christians. A history of encounter, painful yet full of grace, has borne fruit in indigenous Christianity, whose resources and reflections could contribute much to the ecumenical movement’s reflections on theology and missiology. Indigenous Christianity is another locus theologicus, visible yet not recognized.

Within the WCC, the IRM and CWME have the task of enriching the church through the different theological reflections and cultural realities of Indigenous Peoples. Practically, formal representation at the level of leadership limits the possibility of indigenous theological reflection making an impact. Nevertheless, one of the major achievements was the “Gospel and Cultures” project, whose climax was the 1996 mission conference in Salvador Bahia, Brazil. Also, after the assembly in Canberra,\textsuperscript{20} with its polemical attitude regarding the “scandal and fear of syncretism,”\textsuperscript{21} the IRM has been open to different approaches and indigenous contributions and how these can be bridged.

\textsuperscript{19} In Nagaland, India, tribal women use the Bible and Christianity as means for women’s liberation. See Atola Longkumer, “Not All is Well in My Ancestor’s Home: An Indigenous Theology of Internal Critique” in The Ecumenical Review 62/4 (Dec. 2010), pp. 399–410.

\textsuperscript{20} Mission Impulses from Canberra, IRM 80:319/320 (July/Oct.1991). See specially the controversy on the presentation of Dr Prof. Chung Hyun Kyung and the strong presence of Aboriginal peoples from Australia with their traditions and spiritualities.

The emergence of indigenousness

During the last forty years, Indigenous Peoples (particularly from the Americas) have emerged internationally, on both the political and religious scene. The major change is the new sense of identity, understood through the concept of indigenousness, with clear goals set before nation states and churches. This rise of Indigenous Peoples has important implications for theology, and for new paradigms of life.

In the 1970s the crucial situation facing Indigenous Peoples was heard internationally, and brought a critical view of evangelization, especially through the two Barbados consultations. As stated in the IRM:

> The Barbados report is very realistic when it associates, finally, the liberation of the Indian with the liberation of the nation and the Latin American continent. There is only one human movement towards full humanity, towards liberation, towards redemption. The movement for Indian liberation in the jungle is a part of the movement across the continent for the liberation of the proletariat of the urban areas who seek better living conditions, a greater degree of personal participation in society and more human dignity.

Although Barbados I was a conversation among indigenist anthropologists, Barbados II included and heard the voice of Indigenous Peoples. From then on, we have continued expressing our protests and proposals in ecumenical fora. We have protested the injustices, the continued attempts at genocide and cultural assimilation, the dispossession of lands and territories, rivers, mountains, sacred sites, natural resources etc. These protests rely on the creative use of different political and religious languages. It also

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22 The Barbados I Declaration signed by indigenist anthropologists, states: “Evangelization, the work of the religious missions in Latin America, also reflects and complements the reigning colonial situation with the values of which it is imbued. The missionary presence has always implied the imposition of criteria and patterns of thought and behavior alien to the colonized Indian societies. A religious pretext has too often justified the economic and human exploitation of the aboriginal population. The inherent ethnocentric aspect of the evangelization process is also a component of the colonialist ideology and is based on the following characteristics . . .” and also asks to help indigenous through a moratorium of evangelization so the indigenous can self-organize and recover their culture; give back what the missionaries took out from the indigenous lands; stop removing indigenous children from their families in order to educate them; stop the division and competition of Christian confessions “for indigenous souls”, and “end the criminal practice of serving as intermediaries for the exploitation of Indian labor” . . . “That Indians organize and lead their own liberation movement is essential, or it ceases to be liberating . . . we can perceive the beginnings of a pan-Latin American movement and some cases too, of explicit solidarity with still other oppressed social groups,” IRM 62:247 (July 1973), pp. 268–274, particularly 270–273.


24 Indigenist perspective refers to the work and perspective of non-indigenous persons about the indigenous reality. Indigenous perspective refers to the position of indigenous persons when talking about their reality.
implies that indigenous spiritual and theological perspectives are directed to the church, which subsequently means the affirmation of indigenous identity and different ways of being Christian. There are proposals to enrich the world and the church with traditional ancestral wisdom, values related to close relationship with Earth, and to dialogue with other Christian theologies as equals.²⁵

Currently, the word *Indigenous* identifies those oppressed by colonialism and capitalism, who recognize themselves as inheritors and successors of the great civilizations prior to the north-Atlantic colonization and christianization, and who join with other oppressed and excluded groups in search of liberation. It is a universalized identity that looks forward to the encounter with other identities, and that “has gathered our peoples in pain, resistance and in theological reflection.”²⁶ This process of going back to the origins takes place not only in Abya Yala but also in North America, Asia, the Pacific, Africa and Europe. It is a return to the roots of the original processes of humanizing and making each people aware, in order to find again the resources and criteria for building a future that respects creation/nature/Mother Earth.

The plural word *peoples* refers to their amazing diversity, and especially Latin American struggles where huge social transformations have been initiated and carried out by those bound together by land, culture, worldviews, origins and destiny, such as the Originarian Peoples in the Andes or the Peoples of Chiapas in Mexico. Usually this includes complex life experiences and collective claims and practices, “a community of life and therefore of destiny, among a stable conglomerate of men and women geographically established.”²⁷ The experience of community and collective economic system is fundamental to express the way of being peoples and also in doing theology. The use of the word *people* in singular is diffuse and ambiguous since it refers to an abstract construct for the inhabitants of a given nation state.

²⁵ See the Reports of the theological events held by the WCC in the last years: Baguio Consultation on *The Social and Ecclesial Visions of Indigenous Peoples* in http://www.oikoumene.org/?id=6893; Geneva Consultation on *The Sources and Resources of Indigenous Theologies* in http://www.oikoumene.org/?id=8109; La Paz Consultation on Affirming *Spiritualities of Life: Theological Conversation with Faith and Order and CWME representatives in http://www.oikoumene.org/?id=8506; http://www.oikoumene.org/?id=8507; http://www.oikoumene.org/?id=8508


²⁷ Aguilar Gutiérrez and Raquel Bolivia, “Reflexiones sobre, para y desde el porvenir. 21.10.2005,” in http://www.lahaine.org/index.php?p=10314&more=1&page=1 [Accessed 9.04.2009] She states: “From this perspective, a nation can be seen as an articulation, more or less stable, of multiple ‘peoples’”. A similar statement can be made for the church: a church can be seen as an articulation of multiple and different churches, one in and from a diversity of experiences.
Overcoming fear of otherness and embracing pluralism

Although always present in the history of Christian mission, indigenous otherness still needs to be welcomed and embraced in ecclesial spaces so as to become real and be lived out in just relations among human beings, worldviews, cultures, religions and ways of life in relation to nature, in order to create a new possible world and strengthen the possibilities of life for all.

Some possible paths have already been identified by the IRM, and among them the most urgent, especially in official theological and ecumenical work, is to revisit syncretism. Fearing and refusing to re-evaluate syncretism reveals how different experiences within Christianity continue to be devalued. We cannot live out the love of God in its fullness if we fear and devalue otherness. It is not possible to continue maintaining ideas about the purity of the Christian faith. Daily life of peoples shows the creative inter-transcultural processes through which faith and life are actualized.

The starting point of theological and missiological reflection should be a broad understanding of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The fact that God became human in a given culture, gender and time shows God is willing to be present in all cultures, genres and times through the freedom of the Holy Spirit. The encounter between the gospel and cultures creates new symbiotic religious experiences where the God of Jesus Christ is present. This has happened throughout history and is especially evident in the encounter between the gospel and Greco-Roman culture, highly marked by the Neoplatonic philosophy. It has been a valuable and creative encounter that cannot be taken as norm for other symbiotic encounters provoked by the continuous incarnation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Syncretism, understood as a permanent symbiotic actualization of faith, will lead us to be faithful to the origins of Christianity, to the witnesses, martyrs, fathers and mothers of the church and to the faith of today’s peoples who live in a world undergoing continuous transformation, multiple crises and processes of destruction.

Accepting religious and theological synthesis would have several implications for mission and evangelism. For instance, it would mean stopping proselytizing and starting to recognize the presence of God and Jesus in the different indigenous communities.

28 The “term ‘inter-transcultural’ intends to resume not only the relation (synchronic) among different cultures but also the historic dynamism (diachronic) in the process of intercultural reinterpretation”. Josef Estermann, “Religión como chakana: El inclusivismo religioso andino,” in Chakana 1 (2003), pp. 69–83.

29 From the Greek σύν ‘with’ and ζωή ‘living’. See Estermann, ibid.

Then we can initiate dialogue of worldviews in a pluralistic religious context. We also will need to develop hermeneutical criteria for the dialogue. Indigenous theologies are engaged in deconstructing a Christianity based on the Neoplatonic Hellenic philosophy, and in building new ways of incarnating and living out faith in Jesus Christ. By Hellenic Christianity and theology we refer to the fruit of the first inculturation of the gospel into the Greco-Roman culture and worldview. Concepts such as person, transcendence, essence, nature, creation ex nihilo were shaped by platonic Hellenism and thereafter monopolized theological reflection and comprehensions of reality and God. Something similar occurred later with Aristotelian concepts in the European Middle Ages.

This first inculturation allowed Christian communities to recreate their faith in new cultural contexts. The problem is not in the process of encountering cultures but in considering inculturation as the rule for further theological reflection. After the inter transcultural process occurred in the Greco-Roman cultural context, no other process of new inculturation or contextualization was recognized. Other understandings of human beings, divine reality, nature etc. were considered pagan, and therefore were excluded from the official hegemonic theology and church.

The first challenge of Indigenous theology is to overcome the dualistic logic of exclusion which identified us as “uncivilized,” “indios,” “weak,” “animists,” and endorsed the oppression of our peoples and the exploitation of the Mother Earth, as well as condemning our cultural, religious interpretations and questioning how we express the Christian faith. This needs to be the self-critical task of all theologies.

We can also find creative points of encounter between indigenous and other theologies. For instance, reflection on the names of God interacts with the plural names for God in the Bible and in church history. The continual references to the ancestors in indigenous theologies relates to the communion of the saints. Indigenous wisdom and our inter-relation with nature correspond to the wisdom tradition in the Bible where God is present in the creation. The protests of Indigenous Peoples are rooted not only in the ancestral vindications but also in the prophetic biblical tradition. The collective indigenous model resonates with the perichoretic (mutually co-inhering) relation of the Trinity. Considering the other as sent by God is a call to understand missio Dei as a relation among those who are different.


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Opening some doors

Indigenous Peoples call for the unity of all the communities of life in order to save the planet and to rebuild human relations. The planet is not considered as an object but as living, as Mother Earth, origin of life.\textsuperscript{33} Since unity and mission are at the heart of the church, this unity and mission should be seen in relation to the salvation of creation. Theology of mission and theology in general must overcome its anthropocentric paradigm and creation should no longer be understood as an object to be exploited. The goal of mission is the renewal of the creation/earth and its salvation.

Salvation of the planet can be understood as healing\textsuperscript{34} humankind. Salvation as healing is very close to Indigenous Peoples, and invites dialogue with other humanizing traditions as world religions are. Indigenous spirituality is rooted in healing, understood as the restoration of health, a re-balance in the relation of human beings with themselves and with the creation. Humanity is deeply infected with consumerism and in need of rebalancing its system of relationships.

Linked to salvation is contestation as it is witnessed by the protest and claims of Indigenous Peoples. Mission needs also to be understood as contestation of the powers which take out the dignity of life. \textit{IRM} is witness and companion to the prophetic processes which seek justice and rights. Although there is the necessity to select and prioritize those which are more urgent\textsuperscript{35}, the criteria must not reflect the play of interests, language hegemony or economic influences. The perspectives from below and the excluded are not always present. Indeed, that perspective needs to be ensured so the subaltern voices can be heard and redirect the global thinking and action.

Other dimensions that Indigenous theologies can bring include a panentheistic view of God\textsuperscript{36} that is more consistent with the Bible and the worldview of indigenous cultures.

\textsuperscript{33} Although important, we are not here entering the discussion regarding the implications for Christian theology of the concept of Mother Earth or the Pachamama of the Andean cultures.

\textsuperscript{34} Metropolitan Coorilos, Geevarghese, in \textit{IRM} 99:390 (Apr. 2010). He presents and examines the three major foci of CWME: Ecclesiology and Mission, Mission as Healing and Mission as Contestation.

\textsuperscript{35} For instance, the celebration of the centenary anniversary of the first Missionary Conference in Edinburgh 1910 and its study process focused on the case of the First Nations in Canada. Theme Four focused on Mission and Power and brought in the situation of the 150.000 indigenous children at Residential Schools and its consequences for indigenous identity and life, as ‘Canadian contribution to Edinburgh 2010’. Twelve answers were given to the key study but not all of them from indigenous persons and even less from organizations of Indigenous Peoples. Balia, Daryl and Kirsteen Kim, \textit{Edinburgh 2010, Volume II, Witnessing to Christ Today}. Oxford, Regnum, 2010. pp. 86–115.

For instance, Andean cultures do not consider God as absolute and transcendent but as part of the cosmos, as the system of relations itself. Creation is understood as a web of life in a delicate balance, not hierarchically ordered with human beings at the apex. God cares for and guarantees the balance of life. For mission, this means strengthening reflections on creation in view of the ecological crisis. Also, mission can move from proselytizing to recognizing and celebrating God as experienced by indigenous Christians.37

Another aspect would be the need to deepen the ecumenical character of mission. Indigenous theology understands itself as one, but it is nurtured by a diversity of indigenous theologies. It necessarily is ecumenical and interreligious because its starting point is the concern for the oikoumene, as the cosmos, planet, the common house of humanity. Thus, we call for an ecumenical mission in practice, rather than denominationally based missions that have brought so much damage to indigenous communities.

The oral character of Indigenous Peoples must be reaffirmed. This is intended to privilege another way of perceiving the divine mystery, through symbolic language, rituals and ceremonies, in the silence, in the songs and in the rhythms of nature, as ways of expressing faith in God and for formulating an Indigenous Christian “theosymbology.” Although we have embraced the written word of God in the Bible, God also speaks beyond the Bible, through the creation and daily life.

Finally, it is important to recover the sexual, independent and complementary character of all dimensions of life. Patriarchal hierarchy and its correlated a-sexual assumptions permeated much Christian theology,38 even indigenous theology, and is one of the origins of violence. In the Andean worldview and its theology, the emphasis is on the complementary character of everything what exists in the cosmos. In the cosmos, each sexual polarity finds its complement. For mission, this implies contesting and deconstructing patriarchy inside the church and in its many local manifestations, such as the predominance of men in ecumenical gatherings, and referring to God only in male language. This is a scandal that indigenous theologies can help re-balance.

37 The relation between indigenous cultures and the gospel cannot be understood in terms of purity. Neither indigenous nor gospel are free of cultural interpretation and mutual influences. Both are part of the inter-transcultural processes where the encounters between and among different realities happen. Mutual challenges of indigenous religions and Christian religion lead to creative ways of living out an Indigenous Christianity which is as valid as all the former contextualizations of Christian faith.

For Xolotl need not escape

From a sentence of death, Indigenous Peoples are arising with specific political and theological proposals. Although there is scepticism from both churches and indigenous theologians, we believe that the time has come to present our theological richness to the church. It is the time for indigenous theologians to share with each other and articulate a common theological voice. For the next 100 years, we would hope that the *IRM* and CWME will continue to be the space where this can occur in coordinated, creative and effective ways.

The God brought by the Catholic and Protestant missionaries to Abya Yala, who also brought violence, injustices, imbalances, and racism, has changed for us. The Christian God has taken our face and shows her/his solidarity throughout our survival. It is no longer necessary to escape but we can rely on God, as Mother and Father, and begin speaking aloud our theological reflections. We seek the christianizing Sun who does not burn anymore but tenderly heats us so that we can enjoy life in abundance. It is an abundant life that our ancestors dreamt for us, and that is offered also by Jesus, the Christ of God and of the peoples.
Not without Women: Mission in the Third Millennium

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Abstract

This article pleads for greater attention to the fuller and more equal inclusion of women in the mission of the church and cites examples of where the IRM has helped and where it has fallen short in meeting this challenge. Bold statements of Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza serve as a preface to this article:

Several women-in-mission are confronted with structures ecclesial and societal that scream for transformation if not outright demolition.¹

Christian identity that is shaped by the Bible must in ever new readings be deconstructed and reconstructed in terms of a global praxis for the liberation of all wo/men.²

Preliminary remarks

One of the significant changes since Edinburgh 1910 has been in the role, status and participation of women in both the church and the larger society. To overlook this is to miss the signs of the times and the opportunity to develop relevant mission visions and articulations.

Unlike Edinburgh 1910, where women were merely gallery spectators, at Edinburgh 2010 women were active participants, including as convenors and moderators. The coordinator of the study process was a woman (Kirsteen Kim). The topic of women and mission could have been one of the study themes of the conference; nonetheless, women’s analysis of mission was articulated,³ and a global book project on woman and

mission was given attention. The consistent, passionate, and tenacious efforts of pioneers who have led the journey thus far needs to be recognised with gratitude, such as Madeleine Barot, Sarah Chacko, Brigalia Bam, Pauline Webb, Barbara von Wartenberg-Potter, Letty Russell, Mercy Oduyoye, Musa Dube, Kwok Pui Lan, Aruna Gnanadason and Musimbi Kanyoro.

The World Council of Churches and the *International Review of Mission (IRM)* have provided to some extent recognition, space, articulations and resources toward the theme of women and mission. While the *IRM* has published critically relevant reflections on mission from women’s perspective from varied aspects, this was too little at too late a stage of the current women’s movement: only three issues in the last part of the 20th century were dedicated to the concerns of women. By then, the women’s movement had grown extensively, leaving no area of church and society unchallenged. In the *IRM* there was no mention or critical reflection on the 1974 WCC consultation on sexism in Berlin, with its many recommendations for the fuller inclusion of women. The *IRM* also could have lifted up women pioneers in the modern ecumenical movement, such as Ruth Rouse and Sarah Chacko. From the beginning, articles on and by women have been published, typically in tandem with other themes, but not those proposing significant changes in women’s roles in church and society. Hardly any article addressed the theological education and ordination of women as objectives in mission.

My approach here involves broad brush strokes in critically evaluating the attention given to the women in the *IRM*, in terms of its larger themes: inter-religious conversation, ecumenical networks/fellowship, Indigenous Peoples’ concerns, social justice, study of world Christianity, and power and women.

**Mission and women**

How *mission* is understood has undergone several changes, from being understood as expansion, with goals such as “to evangelise the world in this generation,” to dialogue

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4 This author is one of the editors who represented the group: for the presentation, see, http://www.edinburgh2010.org.


and being present in various human situations. Women have been active participants both as subjects and agents, as missionaries across cultures and centuries, and in empowering and liberating women from social and cultural constraints. Many articles published in the *IRM* have described women as foreign missionaries and the roles they have played, as indicated in some of the titles: “Missionary Wife,” “A Tour of Enquiry into the Education of Women and Girls in India,” “The Christian Opportunity in Regard to the Women of China,” “Women’s Work for Missions: Three Home Base Studies.”

The mission historian Dana L. Robert writes how Christianity benefitted from the role of women missionaries, who played a crucial role in making Christianity a world religion. Partnership between Western women missionaries and indigenous “Bible women” was significant in cross-cultural transmission of the gospel. These Bible women provided what can be considered the first independent role for Christian women in Asia and Africa. “The history of Christian mission must focus on women, for the majority of Christians in the world are women. If judged by members, Christianity is predominantly a women’s movement. Missionary women have typically placed the cross-cultural transmission of the gospel within a framework of service, healing, teaching, and hospitality.” In the history of mission, women shared significantly in the task of evangelising, albeit recognised only much later.

According to this reading of mission history, where women played a significant role in Christian mission, this ushered in social and cultural freedom for women, providing them agency in cultures that oppressed and excluded them. In this sense, Christian mission can be described as a catalyst for Christian feminism. Despite the number of women involved, the continuing discrimination and exclusion of women should call Christian mission to be an instrument for the liberation of women from oppressive patriarchal structures and de-humanising cultures. This was highlighted by Eugene L. Stockwell, in one of the first *IRM* articles to discuss women’s liberation from patriarchal structures as a mission issue. In the same vein, Letty Russell critiqued the modern missionary movement as having often had its objectives blurred with imperialism and racism, and envisioned mission in the 21st century that crosses not only geographical boundaries but also social, economic and gender boundaries.

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10 The relationship between mission and imperialism is more complex than the simplistic reading of being “collaborators.” Among others, see the series in *Studies in the History of Christian Missions*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids; and Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Mission and British Imperialism in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Inter-Varsity, Nottingham (1990).
Mission as witness to the gospel of Jesus challenges and transforms oppressive cultural practices and directs towards a greater justice for women in both society and the church. Mission challenges existing conditions of life that are not congruent with the way of life inaugurated by Jesus of Nazareth. Boundaries and practices that exclude must be transformed. As K.C. Abraham writes, mission is “a commitment to values and structures that enhances life, a critical rejection of forces and practices that destroy life, even if they are legitimised by religions.” Namsoon Kang writes, “Jesus is liberator who calls for a renunciation, a dissolution of the web of hierarchical patriarchal relationships. Missio Dei is to transform this world of domination/exploitation from patriarchy into the new reality that never existed before.” Mission understood as life-giving, boundary crossing, witnessing to justice is grounded in the life and death of Jesus Christ. This has been crucial in a mission that recognises and includes women.

Mercy Amba Oduyoye notes that women in mission are re-defining a “fresh profile” to mission, characterised by inter-dependence, mutual edification and shared responsibility that spells justice for women. Similar understandings are shared by Aruna Gnanadason, who also laments that some issues related to women “continue to remain unresolved.”

The WCC has made space for women’s voice and role from its beginning, for instance, when at its very first assembly Sarah Chacko’s report on “the life and work of women in the church” was received. In addition to the earlier mentioned consultation on sexism in 1974, another milestone was the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988–1998). Mercy Oduyoye’s book *Who Will Roll the Stone Away?* describes the history, visions and the programmes of this Decade. These programmes organised by WCC provided the churches the opportunity to study, critically reflect upon and review their structures and teachings to ensure the full participation of women. These efforts, to some extent, have had an impact on women’s full and equal participation.

Women now are included, seen and heard more in most of the church’s life and work, but the fact remains that today there still are limitations, inadequacies and incidents that indicate there has been stagnation, tokenism or backlash against women’s full partici-
pation. The refusal of some denominations to ordain women, the rejection of the episcopacy of women, patterns of discrimination and violence, and limiting resources available to women are but a few examples of what still needs to change.

To be sure, while denying their full participation and excluding women from ecclesial authority cannot be ignored, the ways in which the modern missionary movements have empowered women must also be recognized.\textsuperscript{17} Despite good intention, admirable efforts and achievements, mission must be scrutinized through the lens of women’s situation. This reveals much acquiescence with oppressive structures, unchallenged practices, and oblivious lacunae. Challenging Christian mission to empower women and include their voice and visions still remains as important as in the heyday of the missionary movement. Christian mission will be found wanting without women’s equal participation in, among others, the six areas of mission: inter-religious conversation, ecumenical partnership/network, indigenous concerns, social justice, the study of world Christianity, and power and women. These larger themes are addressed in the IRM, and I hope will be addressed in the future from women’s location and experience as well.

**Inter-religious conversation**

Inter-religious conversation has been at the heart of mission. The relationship between Christianity and other religions has varied from contestation to dialogue, with concepts such as fulfilment, continuity, pluralism, mutual actions for a better world.\textsuperscript{18} The articles and reviews published in the *IRM* bear witness to the centrality of inter-religious encounters and dialogue. However, the agents in the conversation as well as the issues have been predominantly male-centric. Ursula King writes, “most dialogue practitioners are unaware of the fact that interfaith dialogue still remains strongly embedded in the patriarchal structures of existing religions and includes many exclusive sexist practices and deeply androcentric, male-centred ways of thinking.”\textsuperscript{19}

In recent years, however, women’s perspectives and role in inter-religious conversion are coming to the fore, for instance, in the book Maura O’Neill, *Mending a Torn World:*
Women in Interreligious Dialogue.20 O’Neill candidly states that existing dialogue and efforts towards mutual understanding and peace among religions “fail because dialogues are not inclusive enough.” Generally, women are not represented adequately nor are issues that pertain to women’s experience of religious listed as topics of conversation, to the detriment of inter-religious dialogue.

Lived and experienced religion is influenced by gender realities, which affect mutual understanding in the midst of contestation, violence and arrogance. Across different religions and social contexts, women do share common negative experiences in their religious experience. Women mystics and their experiences reveal the restriction imposed by male-centric traditions; and a commonality in their experience of the divine.21 Additionally, in the context of religious conversion, fundamentalism and violence, more often than not, it is women and children who bear the brunt of religious contestations and the ensuing violence, such as in certain regions of India.22

The critique that inter-religious dialogues remains a male dominant conversation and analysis is also the case for what has appeared in the IRM, where hardly any women theologians have been featured on this topic. Michael Amaladoss writes that the basis for inter-religious dialogue remains the reality of individual freedom and plurality of free persons, which calls for mutual sharing of experiences and mutual growth. This recognition of individual freedom and mutuality is crucial to the inclusion of women as equal members. Christian mission has to include women in the conversation between religions and in articulating a common vision of a healed and restored community.

Ecumenical networks and partnership

As Timothy Yates observed, mission has become pluriform and there is much that is “inter-territorial,” crossing different boundaries,23 presenting opportunities for cooperation and mutual enrichment in common witness. Along with the objective of


21 A comparative reading of Hildegard of Bingen and Mirabai of Bhakti Hindu Tradition has provided helpful directions towards a commonality of women’s experience of male-dominated religion. See, Atola Longkumer, “Hildegard of Bingen and Mirabai: A Comparative Reading of Women Mystics”, a paper presented at the Staff Study Circle, forthcoming in Sanskrit, LTC, Jabalpur.


common witness to Christ, these networks and partnerships also bring differences to the common table, presenting the opportunity to learn from one another and speak the truth in love. The conversation and agenda seem to be set by the male leaders and there is a dismal invisibility of women, as noted by Moyo who writes of the “exclusion of women at different levels of leadership and decision-making processes.”

Discussion and mutual actions toward accepting women into the ordained ministry, access to theological education, leadership in the church, and equal participation of women need to continue figuring in ecumenical collaborations.

In the context of the changes in Eastern Europe after the Cold War and the introduction of liberal capitalism, Ion Bria points out the need to “recover women’s apostolic vocation” despite the “conservative positions taken by the church authorities” in the Orthodox churches. It is important that ecumenical partnerships foster forums to address such concerns, through exchanges of experiences and processes to bring about reforms that will enable women to have ecclesial space to carry out their apostolic vocations. If mission is about empowerment, coupled with naming the powers that oppress and negate, ecumenical fellowships and partnership in mission should pose uncomfortable yet prophetic questions and “address [them] willingly and in complete honesty.” This critical, candid questioning arises out of mutual trust and willingness to engage in common witness to Christ. If women make up half of the population and even more than half of the church, their participation at the tables of decision-making and in presiding at the table of the eucharist should be encouraged and ensured. In partnership and dialogue across different traditions, women related matters are often ignored. For example, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen discusses the unexpected yet potential dialogue between Roman Catholics and Pentecostals. Proselytism is the central issue discussed in this conversation. Women leadership within these two traditions could also form a lively and mutually enriching issue of dialogue, given the complexity and wide range of women’s role in these two traditions.

**Indigenous Peoples’ concerns**

Christian mission and Indigenous Peoples’ concerns have figured significant in *IRM* articles on issues such as destruction of indigenous cultures, identity, modernization,

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sacredness of land, conversion, indigenous religiosity and its continuity with Christian-
ity, violence, bias perceptions etc. Yet these have been particularly from male perspec-
tives, as if they themselves are representative of the community. For instance, in the
October 1992 issue, primarily devoted to Indigenous Peoples in Latin America, apart
from a poignant personal story from a mestiza woman, the articles lack awareness of the
restrictions that occur through differences of gender without what is assumed to be a
monolithic community.

Among the multiple areas of interaction between Indigenous Peoples and Christian
mission, two vital questions are how Christian mission has affected Indigenous Peoples,
and what Indigenous Peoples’ way of life can offer to Christian mission. In investigating
these, the experience and voice of women can help navigate between the Scylla of
demonization and the Charybdis of romanticization. That is, Christian mission has
undoubtedly been liberative for women, yet the patriarchal culture in indigenous com-
unities cannot be ignored. Hence, it is important that mission perspectives be critical
of the “internal restrictions” of male hierarchy and the exclusion of women.28 Uncriti-
cal appropriation of Indigenous Peoples’ wisdom would be tantamount to the approval
of oppressive structures.29 Christian mission should ensure that indigenous women are
protected, accepted and nurtured as equal partners and citizens in the church as well as
modern society.

Social justice

Almost 70 percent of the world’s poor are women and children dependent upon
women; they lack equal access to opportunity, provision for meeting basic needs, and
full access to education, job, political freedom and agency.30 In the paradox that is
globalization, it is women who are most disadvantaged, still earning only two-thirds of
what men in similar situations earn; the majority of those living in poverty are women;
vioence against women increases, as does sex trafficking etc. – which together means

28 Reflections on gospel and culture interaction are often carried out in grand descriptions, consequently missing the nuances of
gender experiences and voices; see, for instance, Dalila Nayap-Pot, “A Maya Woman Reflection upon Gospel and Culture” in

29 Drawing from a context of Naga people of Northeast India, I have developed the need for internal critique of indigenous
cultures; see, Atola Longkumer, “Not All Is Well in My Ancestors’ Home: An Indigenous Theology of Internal Critique” in The

brings together analyses of feminist economists, feminist ethicists and feminist liberation theologians to expose the economic
discrimination especially borne by women across different economies.
increased exploitation of women. 31 Women continue to bear the brunt of poverty in poorer countries, and in situations of conflict, basic medical needs of women and children are sacrificed for armaments and weapons. Sarah Namusoke writes passionately on “African Women’s Participation in God’s Mission for Justice and Dignity” and asserts that

the majority of women in Africa are indeed dehumanized by absolute poverty. Governments in Africa spend huge amounts of money on armaments, paid for by the women’s hard work. . . . The money borrowed benefits women the least, if at all, because debt-servicing means reduced expenditure on health services and education. This dehumanizes women still further.”32

In the context of India, within the whole matrix of the vicious caste hierarchy and the victimization of the lower caste, Dalit women experience double victimization. Yet the Dalit situation is articulated mostly from a presumed monolithic perspective.33 Due to the multi-layered hierarchy of the caste structure, Dalit women are often described as “the dalits of the Dalit.” The marginalization, exclusion and violence borne by Dalit women need to find more space and voice. In seeking social justice, it is imperative that Christian mission deliberately addresses the particular discrimination, dehumanizing poverty and exploitation that women bear.

The study of world Christianity

Dale Irwin has defined the study of world Christianity as

an emerging field that investigates and seeks to understand Christian communities, faith, and practices as they are found on six continents, expressed in diverse ecclesial traditions, and informed by the multitude of historical and cultural experiences in a world that for good or ill is rapidly globalizing. It is concerned with both the diversity of local or indigenous expressions of Christian life and faith throughout the world, and the variety of ways these interact with one another critically and constructively across time and space . . . and the experiences of women [emphasis mine] throughout the world.34


It is heartening that women’s experiences are included here, lest the study of world Christianity falls into the androcentric fallacy in which males represent all human experiences, viewpoints and ideas. In an otherwise well-documented statistical article in the *IRM* on global Christianity, the authors leave out any discussion on indicators of women’s roles, situations and contributions in global Christianity.\(^{35}\) The claim that Christianity is thriving in the global South can betray a triumphalistic tendency if it does not consider how this has impacted women’s situation, as well as the role they have played in this growth. Perhaps a whole issue of *IRM* could be devoted to women’s perspectives in this emerging field.

**Power and women**

The understanding, possession and function of power are crucial to women both in society and church. To put it bluntly, it is power that negates, excludes and discriminates against women. Culturally sanctioned patriarchy has privileged males and given them dominance, including in church and mission work. This patriarchy has been the underpinning of the organisation, theology and mission of the church, giving men the overall authority and assigning women the subordinate tasks. Fortunately, what now has been laid bare is how this distorts creation and contradicts the liberating heart of the gospel. The various efforts of the WCC in this regard are to be lauded. Churches have been called to recognise women as equal and capable members, and encouraged to work towards freeing themselves from sinful divisions and from all that discriminates against women, including with new ways of understanding and exercising power, in order to realize the new community of equals.\(^{36}\)

**Toward a new community of equals**

Mission in the third millennium will need to include women, deliberately, radically and conscientiously; otherwise, it will be incomplete and not in service of Jesus’ life and ministry. Women need to be included both as agents and subjects of mission, as equal to men in the tasks of mission, including in the decision-making bodies. As we become more aware of the conditions of women as persistently marginalised, victimised and


exploited, it is imperative to bring to fore “gender justice as a primary mission of the
curch.”37

The source for the radical inclusion and recognition of women is the Bible. The
retrieval of the vision of an inclusive community from within the Bible itself has
occurred through work of feminist biblical scholars, such as Elisabeth Schüssler
Fiorenza. Her central argument is that, behind the apparent oppressive texts of the New
Testament there lies a suppressed memory of an early Christianity in which women
played a significant role as leaders and participants. The suppression that occurred
through a dominant patriarchal/kyriarchal38 culture reduced women to a subordinate
position as second-class citizens, with no rights apart from their being related to men as
mothers, sisters, wives and daughters. Related to this was also systemic silencing of
women, who for long were prohibited to speak in public.

Thus, the task of feminist biblical interpretation is to sift through the patriarchal texts
in order to discover the lost voice or lost memory of women’s experience. Schüssler
Fiorenza both reconstructs early Christianity and re-interprets the texts with an eman-
cipatory vision. She calls for a paradigm shift that articulates biblical studies as public
discourse, not only investigating literary, historical and contextual aspects of a text,
but also “to critically reflect on what kind of role the Bible plays today in the social
construction of reality and in the discursive formations that determine individuals and
religious communities and society on the whole.”39 In other words, reading and inter-
preting biblical texts becomes a critical inquiry to produce knowledge for the interest of
women’s liberation. An emancipatory paradigm of biblical interpretation investigates in
order to understand the meaning of the texts in their original contexts, and their power
of persuasion that can impact and transform contemporary society to become free
from patriarchal/kyriarchal domination.40

According to Schüssler Fiorenza, reconstructing the Jesus movement reveals its eman-
cipatory nature – proclaiming the “goodness of God who wills the well-being of

38 The term kyriarchal is an analytical category coined by Schüssler Fiorenza, to articulate in a more comprehensive way the
systemic oppression of women, and the complex web of domination beyond the conventional term, patriarchy. Kyriarchy locates
sexism and misogyny in a wider spectrum of oppression, as she writes, “The neologism Kyriarchy-kyriocentrism (from the Greek
word ‘kyrios’ meaning lord, master, father, husband) seeks to express the inter structuring of domination and to replace the
commonly used term patriarchy which is often understood in terms of binary gender dualism.” See, Schüssler Fiorenza, Rhetoric
and Ethic, p. 5.
39 Ibid., p. 11.
40 Schüssler Fiorenza, The Power of the Word, p. 46; see also Schüssler Fiorenza, Rhetoric and Ethic, p. 47.
everyone without exception,” and including women, the poor, the rich, the excluded and the derided.41 James Dunn also attests to the inclusive ethos of Jesus’ mission objectives, which included the poor, the sinners, the Gentiles and women. In other words, Jesus radically crossed boundaries, despite restrictive cultural rules established by the prevailing social mores. Despite the implicit patriarchalism in the text, Dunn contends, the fact that women are given prominence in the tradition speaks to how women were accepted, despite the social and cultures ways of the time.42

Man-made hierarchy resulted in exclusion, discrimination and negation of women in the life and work of the church from the beginning. Christine Lienemann-Perrin reconstructs the period of early Christianity and points out the gender-inclusive ethics embedded within texts such as Galatians 3:28, where a re-ordering of gender relationships is suggested. Situating women and mission within such a reconstruction of early Christianity, Lienemann-Perrin points out that “even in the ancient world there were women and also men who employed a liberation theology hermeneutics in reading the scriptures.”43 Further, these reconstructions uncover the reality that despite the “church fathers reviling women who baptized, administered the eucharist, taught, wrote and worked as missionaries,” there were women who served these roles in the Christian community.44

Creative, critical and contextually located reading of the Bible provides the hermeneutical key to resist the discrimination and exclusion of women in the mission of the church. Thus, if mission is to be inclusive of women, the significance of contextual Bible studies45 that incorporate a reconstructed Jesus movement and early Christianity, with implications for today, cannot be over-emphasised.

In conclusion, gradually through the years, the IRM has given attention to women, but there still remains much to be done. Articles on women’s concerns have mostly been

41 Schüssler Fiorenza, Sharing Her Word, p. 114.
43 Ibid.
written by women, but it is also important that men, especially those in positions of authority, articulate these concerns in writing.

Theology needs to be translated into practical reality, and pronouncements on justice and the well-being of the whole creation translated into living action. Radically re-reading the Bible entails taking the risk to confront ecclesial structures and societal domination and to cross boundaries to build the community of Christ of inclusivity and equality.

If the hallmarks of the gospel are well-being and inclusiveness, it is imperative that the church envision, articulate and translate into lived reality a mission that includes women as equal citizens and pilgrims. To this end, **IRM** has the prophetic opportunity to continue to create space to provide an avenue through which critical theological articulations and practical guidelines can be exchanged and disseminated.

Andrew Walls suggests that the future calls for much theological creativity as Christianity continues to grow beyond the West and intermingle with diverse cultures. One hopes that this theological creativity will be radically inclusive, where women will be at the eucharist table breaking the bread, where women will lead and be accepted as equal members of the community, and where this will lead not to tensions and fissures but rather to God’s household, the *ekklesia*.

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46 There are some reviews of books related to women and a few articles by male scholars, see for instance, John S. Mbiti “Conversion to Greater Freedom: Women, Church and Social Change in Northern-Tanzania under Colonial Rule,” in *IRM* 82:327 (July–Oct. 1993), pp.418–419.

Toward a Missiology That Begins with Creation

Metropolitan Geevarghese Mor Coorilos

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Abstract

In the face of the environmental crises that threaten all of life, I first review how the WCC focus on creation emerged. I then explore what it would mean for mission theology to turn to God in creation, moving from a dominating to a kenotic “down to earth” missiology that is rooted in the earthliness of creation, there finding God’s grace and healing. This is especially poignant for Dalit and Indigenous People in India who are considered of the earth (mud), and for the tilling and keeping of creation that is our biblical mandate.1

In 1982, Alice Walker sounded an alarm in a significant speech she delivered in San Francisco:

Over the pandemic condition of human greed and wanton consumption hangs a curse, the curse of total annihilation, a curse we set in motion when we exploit and destroy instead of help and heal. . . . But if by some miracle, and all our struggle, the earth is spared, only justice to every living thing (and everything is alive) will save humanity. And we are not saved yet. Only justice can stop a curse.2

The enormous environmental predicament that humanity faces today is cogently reflected in these words. Climate change, global warming, deforestation, desertification, destruction of land, water and biodiversity, pollution and so on, pose grave threats to the survival of all forms of life. Humanity is on the brink of an abyss. Mission theology cannot ignore these concerns because missio Dei encompasses the entire creation of God.

1 The title of this article is a paraphrased version of the appeal of the Granvollen conference (Norway, 1988) of the World Council of Churches: “for the sake of all creation, theology must begin with creation.”
Of all the doctrines that have been drawn upon to develop missiological paradigms, seldom has it been the doctrine of creation. Here I will consider the doctrine of creation, as recorded in the biblical creation accounts, and its implications for an environmentally relevant missiology.

**Creation in ecumenical (WCC) theological discourse**

The global ecumenical movement did not at first recognize the importance of ecological issues, along with social and economic justice issues. In this regard, the launching of the World Council of Churches’ (WCC) programme “Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation” (JPIC) marked a seismological shift in ecumenical thinking. “Integrity of creation” provided a fresh way of bridging the issues of justice, peace and ecology. In a sense, these concerns were already aired at the WCC Vancouver Assembly (1983), through the German expression *Bewahrung der Schöpfung* (preservation of creation). That assembly urged the WCC to “engage the member churches in a conciliar process of mutual commitment (covenant) to Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation.” The central committee that immediately followed the assembly officially launched the JPIC programme in 1985. Initially, though, it was deemed a mere appendage, an add-on to the existing concerns of justice and peace. For some within the ecumenical movement, the new discourse smacked of a “new age” kind of creation spirituality. For others in the global South, it was construed as a strategy on the part of the Western environmental lobby to weaken the focus on social and economic justice concerns. However, a series of theological consultations on the theme helped to bring more clarity to this new emphasis on creation.

An important conference was held in Granvollen, Norway (1988), which provided windows into indigenous peoples’ understanding of creation, with many moving stories of land alienation, pollution of water, lethal effects of militarism and war and so on. The cry at Granvollen was that creation is broken and for the sake of all creation, theology must begin with creation.

Integrity of creation gave new prominence to the doctrine of creation, which hitherto had been disregarded by traditional and contextual theologies, including liberation theology. Notable exceptions were patristic theology and process theology. Liberation theology, for instance, only realized more recently the folly of overlooking the creation

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theme and environmental issues. The 1990 WCC convocation on “Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation,” held in Seoul, Korea, was a watershed event in that it provoked profound theological deliberations on the interrelationship between social and environmental concerns. In the convocation’s ten affirmations, creation was given due consideration theologically. The subsequent Canberra Assembly (1991) gave particular focus to these concerns. In the section, “Giver of Life: Sustain Your Creation,” the major focus was on developing a new theology of creation. Anthropocentrism was taken to task, and sustainability was an emphasis that continually was being raised up. As stated in the final report of this section:

The understanding of creation theology and an ethic of economy and ecology should be reflected in the life and work of the church. . . . The church should act together in the defense of life, campaign for protection of human life and for the preservation of the environment and for the abolition of the institution of war.5

The new emphasis on creation theology and its missiological implications are clearly spelt out here. The WCC Harare assembly (1998) also kept this momentum going by launching a project on “Theology of Life.” This study project focused on case studies from various parts of the world, using the ten affirmations of the Seoul convocation as its theological basis. Also, at the WCC Porto Alegre assembly (2006) creation issues figured substantially in the theological debates. Yet creation theology has still not really penetrated into mission theology, much of which still remains predominantly anthropocentric. It is time to paraphrase the appeal of Granvollen: for the sake of all creation, mission must begin with creation.

In the following section we attempt to flesh out certain missiological ramifications of creation theology, by focusing on the creation narratives in the Bible.

**Creation and history: mission implications**

In a ground-breaking essay entitled “The Religious Roots of the Environmental Crisis,” Lynn White made a scathing attack on the Judeo-Christian concept of creation which, in his view, has been instrumental in causing today’s environmental crisis. The human-centrism embedded in the creation narrative, he argued, when combined with the logic of Western scientific rationalism, has resulted in ecological catastrophe. The White thesis has generated intense debate within both secular and theological arenas.

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4 The seventh affirmation of the Seoul convocation declared, “We affirm the creation as the beloved of God”. For a detailed discussion on the Seoul Convocation, see Preman Niles (ed.), Between the Flood and the Rainbow, WCC, Geneva (1992).

5 Roger Williamson, “What God has joined together, Let No One Put Asunder” in Preman Niles, p. 86.
However, instead of being a cause of environmental problems, the Hebrew creation accounts (in Gen.) can provide theological foundations for an environmentally relevant missiology and ethic. Contrary to what White contends, I submit that reclaiming the creation tradition of the Bible, and returning to the doctrine of creation as expounded in the biblical narratives, will help Christian theology and missiology to be liberated from the captivity of anthropocentrism, which contributes to thinking and projects insensitive to the environment.

Liberation and other progressive theologies often ignore creation as a theological theme, and give prominence to history over and against nature or creation. The God of history almost subsumes the God of creation in liberation theologies. In a sense, this was in line with the biblical pattern itself, where the concept of “Creator God” came much later to the people of Israel; the “God of history” came first. As von Rad put it: “... Israel’s faith from the very first was primarily concerned with historical redemption and creation as an independent doctrine came into Israelite tradition relatively late through the influence of the wisdom movement.”6 In the Hebrew Bible, creation is offered as an introduction, a prologue to the narratives of God’s interventions in history. Creation only sets the stage for this unfolding drama.

However, a close reading of the Genesis creation accounts reveals that history and creation are closely interrelated in the creation logic of the Bible, signifying God’s unconditional commitment to both history and nature, to both humanity and the rest of the earth. For instance, the first creation account in the Bible (Gen. 1:1–2:4a)7 does not stand in isolation, but rather prepares the way for a series of historical covenants: the ecological covenant with Noah (Gen. 9), the land covenant with Abraham (Gen. 17), and the climatic revelation of God on Mount Sinai (Ex. 6). “Just as the creation points forward to the Exodus and the making of the covenant with Sinai, so the covenant faith reaches backward and includes the creation.”8

There is constant movement, both backwards and forward, between the two poles of creation and history. Creation and history are therefore inseparably intertwined. Creation is the foundation for history, the setting in which God’s historical interventions on behalf of the poor and oppressed are tangibly manifest. Theology needs to unearth and give missiological expression to this intrinsic interconnectedness between creation and history.

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7 Ibid.
Creation and post-colonial understandings of mission

The authors of the biblical creation accounts were aware of and influenced by creation myths prevalent among neighbouring faiths and cultures. One such influential myth was that of the Babylonians, according to which the creation of the universe was a result of a fierce conflict between two gods. According to this story, Marduk, the male God split the body of the female god, Tiamat, lifted up one half of her body, divided the waters above and set stars and planets underneath. In a similar Canaanite story of creation, creation came into being out of a clash between Baal, the god of storm and fertility and Yaam (Sea), the god of chaos.

The ancient myths of creation surrounding the people of Israel were primarily stories of primordial battles between rival gods. Creation was the outcome of their violent encounters. Unlike these aggressive and destructive modes of creation, the Hebrew creation stories present peaceful and harmonious accounts of creation with no bloodshed and conquest. In other words, in the Hebrew creation stories, there is no theogony tracing the creation to fierce feuds between gods.

Both the Priestly (hereafter “P”) and the Yahwist (hereafter “J”) sources of Genesis creation narratives chose to distance themselves from the militant, violent, patriarchal and imperial models of creation. This has radical implications for missiology. Unlike Marduk, the god who destroys life, in the Genesis stories, God creates and preserves life. Marduk is a conquering god, while the biblical Creator is a befriending God.

Much mission history, as we know, has been a colonial and imperial project, involving violence, conquest of peoples, their land and cultures. As M.P. Joseph reminds us:

> The history of colonialism, particularly its practice of looting the natives of their resources, left a deep stain on the legitimacy of mission movements that took refuge under colonial administrators. To the colonized masses the gospel appeared to be cultural expressions of the masters. In the combined operation of colonial economic projects and cultural mission people in colonized lands lost their sovereignty over property economy and politics and were forcefully delinked from their cultural pasts, which were considered theologically unusable.9

In the colonial models of mission, the missionized were colonized as well as evangelized. As an African delegate at the WCC Nairobi assembly (1975) said: “When missionaries came to us, we had our land in our hands and they had their Bibles in theirs.

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but by the time they left us, we had their Bibles in our hands and they had our land in theirs.” The colonial mission reflects a mission praxis that is “Mardukian” – oriented towards conquering others through violent means. In the creation model of the Hebrew Bible, there is no room for brutality and conquest. A missiology grounded in biblical creation theology, with creation as a harmonious act of God who brings about life in abundance and preserves it, will be a missiology that is life affirming.

From dominion over creation toward a kenotic missiology

What about the human dominion that appears to be innate in the P account of creation in Genesis 1:28? “Dominion” has been misunderstood and misinterpreted as a licence for humanity to exploit nature at will. For example, Lynn White critiques the Hebrew concept of creation for what he sees as its utterly anthropocentric and therefore anti-ecological human dominion. To counter this critique, many theologians have interpreted this passage vis-à-vis the notion of stewardship.

Orthodox theology, on the other hand, affirms human dominion in a qualified manner and interprets dominion in a kenotic sense. I call this “kenotic anthropocentrism.” According to Gregory of Nyssa, dominion is to be exercised in love and justice. As K.M. George argues, the perfect exercise of dominion has been exemplified in Jesus Christ who despite having equality and authority (dominion), chose to empty himself of all this dominion and became a servant who sacrificed himself for the world. This is anthropocentrism with a difference, “a voluntary self-divestiture,” as Andrew Ross terms it. Andrew Linzey calls it “suffering-servant humanism.” K. M. George further argues that such an incarnational anthropology helps us eschew the un-Christian extremes of anthropocentrism and “anthropofugalism” and interpret anew God’s image in humanity in response to the ecological challenges that we face today. In fact, the word dominion is the root term used to refer to the lordship of Christ who demonstrated his lordship and dominion in service and not in mastery over others. It is this sense of service-mindedness and overcoming mastery that humanity is called to exercise in the dominion granted by God in creation. As K.M. George puts it, “The paradox

10 “And God blessed them and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth’ ” (Gen 1:28, emphases mine).

11 For a detailed discussion on “kenotic anthropocentrism,” see my Green Liberation, ISPCK, New Delhi (2000).


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of Christ making the whole creation his body by the Kenotic act of dispossessing the self, sets the paradigm for a Christian approach to creation.”

Mar Gregorios affirms the same point when he introduces the dialectical tension between “mastery” and “mystery.” While humanity has been accorded mastery over creation, humanity would do well to remember that creation is also a mystery. Hence, mastery ought to be exercised in much the same way as we exercise mastery over our bodies. Kenotic anthropocentrism challenges us to empty ourselves and serve creation for the sake of the environment. A missiology based on kenotic anthropocentrism is one where humanity is called to exercise its God-given dominion in a kenotic manner, by emptying and by being tillers and keepers of creation.

Creation through the word of God: mission as proclamation

The fact that the Bible provides us with two different accounts of creation indicates God’s affirmation of a plurality of expressions. According to the P version of the creation account, the universe and all life forms were created through the utterance of God’s creative word (davar). The word of God here becomes an agent or subject in the divine act of creation. In the J account of creation, God creates by acting, through deeds.

This emphasis on the word of God in the act of creation has immense missiological implications. God’s creation comes about through proclamation. “And God said . . .” “And it was so.” We see similar passages in the Bible where the creative power of the word of God is at work, such as Psalm 33:9; Psalm 148:5; Isaiah 45:12; Ecclesiastes 42:15; Hebrews 11:3; and 2 Peter 3:5. We also encounter similar stories in the theology of ancient Memphis where the god Ptah conceives of the elements of the universe with his heart (mind) and brings them forth into existence with his tongue.

All of this suggests that the dynamic word of God is creative and has the power to bring about life. The word of God through which the whole world was created was also the word (Logos) that assumed flesh in Jesus Christ. Word of God becomes a person, an act and an event.

In missiological terms, creation through the word of God also underlines the importance of mission as proclamation of the word of God. Over the years, a false

14 Ibid.
16 Bernhard W. Anderson in Cry of the Environment, p. 29.
dichotomy has been developed to compartmentalize the proclamation aspects (mission through words) and the praxis aspects (mission through deeds). The Creator God of the Bible has created life, both human and non-human, through both word (Gen. 1) and deed (Gen. 2), through proclamation of the word and through praxis.

While mission as proclamation is an important dimension of mission, a missiology based on the doctrine of creation can also correct some of the distortions associated with certain contemporary practices of mission through proclamation (kerygma). First and foremost, the P account of creation makes it clear that the word of God was proclaimed in order to announce life, not death, to preserve life, not annihilate life. This is in sharp contrast to some contemporary preachers and evangelists who proclaim doom, destruction and an apocalyptic end of the world. The words of Jesus, “You do not know what kind of spirit you are of, for the Son of Man came not to destroy the lives of human beings but to save them” (Luke 9:55–56n) are a strong rejoinder to such doom-oriented approaches. “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10) is the message of the gospel of creation. All of created life is to be preserved and sustained. A creation missiology, therefore, re-orientates mission so as to affirm life.

Secondly, the word of God created all forms of life, not only humanity. The proclamation of the creative word of God is meant for all life forms, for the entire creation. Put differently, mission as proclamation that is grounded in creation theology is cosmic in its reach and relevance. This challenges us to be organic and down to earth in our proclamation. Jesus Christ exemplified this when he conversed with the birds and the flowers, when he stilled the storm, and when he turned water into wine. St Francis of Assisi shared the word of God with non-human life, with sun, moon, stars, birds, plants and animals, whom he considered his kith and kin. Tagore also shared this organic vision when he wrote the following:

I asked the plant
To talk to me about God
And it blossomed.

In the Indian epic, Shakuntalam, Kalidasa narrates the moving story of Shakuntala, who had to leave the ashram (monastery) of Kanva Muni. When she bids adieu to the ashram community, the entire environment of plants, creepers, birds and beasts mourn her departure. This is the eco-mind that missiology needs to incorporate into its thought and practice. If the divine purpose of creation is meant for human and
non-human species, then, the ambit of God’s salvific purpose also extends to the whole of creation (Rom. 8). God’s mission is for all life, for the whole of cosmos. As A.P. Nirmal describes it, the telos of missio Dei is “God’s Commonwealth of Ecosystems.” Mission as proclamation, therefore, ought to be creative, affirming life, and encompassing the entire creation. In such a cosmic mission, there is mutual indwelling of all forms of life. It is a mission grounded in trinitarian perichoresis. The Holy Trinity instructs us to behold and encounter God in creation. The eschatological community that a creation missiology envisages is a peaceable kingdom, as envisioned by prophet Isaiah: “The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid. . . . For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Is. 11; 6,9).

Mission as turning to God in creation

A creation missiology celebrates life in all its diversity as God’s gift. The Creator God, who is also a missionary God, celebrates creation. Celebration of life, thus, is a mission act of God. Creation is the way God is present with us. God is present in the water, in the majesty of trees, in the beauty of meadows, in the sweetness of fruits, in the vigorous winds, and so on. The word earth occurs fifteen times in the Genesis account of creation. Earth enjoys a unique place in the divine purpose and will. As Samuel Rayan says, the earth is God’s daughter, and the creation accounts evoke in us the spirit of a birthday celebration. Earth is the medium through which the divinity addresses us. God, through the act of creation, affirms the intrinsic worth and purposefulness of all creation. God rejoices in the company of creation by pronouncing the verdict “good” after each act of creation. This categorical affirmation of the integrity of creation is a direct challenge to all dichotomous worldviews where spirit and matter, humanity and nature, male and female are located as binary opposites and organized hierarchically. In a missiological sense, this framework should also challenge the history-creation binary and integrate the concerns of both these realms, of history and nature, of the poor and earth (“the new poor”) into an interwoven framework of creation missiology.

The creation account in Genesis 1 presents a God who is encountered in creation, a panenetheistic God. “The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” (Gen. 1:1 [NIV]). God is not identified ontologically with the creation (pantheism), but is beheld and experienced in creation. According to Irenaeus, God includes the fullness (pleroma)
of all things. Nothing exists that is unrelated to God. The fathers have categorically affirmed that God, in order to save the creation, assumed human nature with its material matrix. All of this challenges the gnostic idea that matter is essentially evil and that the material world is only a shadow of the divine light. Matter and nature are fundamentally good and consecrated by God. Creation reflects the splendour, harmony and perfection that belong to God.

A panentheistic concept of God leads us to a missiology that is “turning to God in creation.” Our endeavours to preserve life, our struggles for the rights to clean air, water and biodiversity, and for climate justice are our responsibility and missionary task to turn to a God who manifests herself in and through creation. While being present in creation, God also uses creation as her channel of grace and blessing. Water, which the Spirit of God was brooding over at the time of creation, is also sent as God’s grace to people. In Ezekiel 47, during the Babylonian exile, God’s grace and blessing flow as water into the temple of God. What begins as a small stream of water eventually becomes a huge ocean, a great sea. On the banks of this sea, trees for food and healing grow (Ezek. 47:12). This is a beautiful account where water becomes a channel of God’s abundant grace and healing.

Humanity today finds itself in an environmental exile where rivers are being reduced to small streams, and where forests that include precious trees of healing are being converted into deserts. In this contemporary exile of environmental catastrophe, mission is about channeling God’s grace and healing through creation. It is about turning streams into seas and deserts into forests again. This ecological mission is crucial when creation is in turmoil: our seas and oceans are being claimed and privatized by multi-national firms, and our forests are being cleared on a massive scale, to make way for development of the elite and the rich. What is happening today is quite the opposite of what Ezekiel had envisioned. Our mission is to reverse this destructive mode of development. This is also the eschatological vision found in the book of Revelation: “Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God. . . . On either side of the river, is the tree of life, with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations” (Rev. 22:1–2).

**Mission as the “earthing” of humanity**

The J account of creation (Gen. 2: 4b–25) is full of profound ecological insights for a mission theology. Here, God creates humanity (*adam*) out of clay (*adamah*) (Gen. 2:7), signifying an original organic bond between humanity and earth. This narrative affirms
the earthliness of humanity, which human beings have lost through their alienation from nature.

There are similar stories of creation among indigenous people, especially among tribal and Adivasi communities. Jyoti Sahi narrates one such creation myth that is prevalent among the Uraon tribe in Chota Nagpur in India.20 In this story, the god Dharmis created the first human beings, both male and female, out of mud. Earth came out of a primordial earthworm. After forming the first human beings out of clay, Dharmis placed them under the sun to dry. But a horse appeared, ran over and ruined the first human beings. Thus, Dharmis had to create them again, but this time, Dharmis also created two dogs, to watch over and keep the horse from running over humanity.

According to Sahi, the horse is alien to the indigenous worldview and here represents the militant colonial forces. The horse represents the Aryans who came from outside and conquered the indigenous people and their cultures. The horse figured prominently in colonial mission approaches that enslaved Adivasi and tribal people and destroyed their cultures. This story not only refers to the essential bond between humanity and earth but also cautions us about the colonial forces, “the horse power” that still is at work. Hence, we need to have “watchdogs” to protect creation from being trampled upon by the aggressive forces of neo-imperialism and neo-colonialism. In this sense, mission is about being alert to the destructive, colonial forces and protecting life from the forces of death. To use the biblical creation language, mission is about tilling and keeping creation.

The J account of creation underscores the reality that humanity is an earthling. By exercising uncontrolled mastery over earth, humanity has alienated itself and thus lost its organic bond with earth. This is the root cause of ecological crisis today. Jesus Christ reminds us of this loss of earthliness in humanity and the need to regain it, when he heals the blind man by applying mud onto his eyes (John 9).21 This could be understood as God in Jesus Christ recreating humanity as an earthling as he was at the time of creation, being brought back to being one with nature, the state of original blessing.

This also speaks meaningfully to the current context where indigenous people of the soil are being alienated from their organic bond with nature through forceful displacement from their homelands in the name of “development.” A creation missiology in

this context offers a vision of mission as the quest for eco-justice. The social dimension of creation of humanity out of mud is also significant. Casteism as an institution in India thrives on the principle of pollution which is caused, among other factors, by human interaction with organic life. Contact with soil is deemed to be polluting in the caste framework. Dalits, most of whom are agricultural labourers, are constantly in touch with soil and mud and therefore considered a polluting class. The Creator God of the Bible, by creating humanity with her own hands, using mud, challenges the ideology of purity and pollution, itself associated with humans interacting with organic life, with mud and soil. The Creator God identifies with the Dalits and indigenous people who continue to suffer untouchability on account of their organic interaction with nature. A creation missiology in this sense is one which affirms the organic, ecological and earthly essence of humanity and affirms solidarity with the Dalits and indigenous people who are being discriminated against and alienated from their land and cultures. The J account of creation thus offers a mission paradigm where mission can be perceived as the “earthing” of humanity.

In sum, the creation-oriented missiology articulated here is meant to complement other missiologies, such as liberation missiology. It offers a wider framework that can combine concerns of justice and peace (liberation) with environmental justice (integrity of creation). It integrates the cry of the poor and the groaning of creation as part of the same struggle and thus presents mission as a quest for eco-justice. Creation missiology has the innate potential to challenge the colonial and expansionist models of mission. It also expands the mission horizon to embrace the entire creation. It makes missiology a “down to earth” affair, rooted in the earthliness of all creation, including humanity. It overcomes the artificial dichotomy between words and deeds, between proclamation and praxis. It corrects the dominant anthropocentric perspectives in mission thinking and praxis and instead provides a re-orientation towards fullness of life. It enables us to behold and experience the missionary God in the Creator God who is encountered in creation. Mission, then, is to turn to God in creation.
God’s Mission as Praxis for Healing and Reconciliation

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Abstract

In the first part I address the missional church and its praxis: what God in Jesus Christ together with the Holy Spirit is doing in the world to bring about healing, reconciliation, wholeness, liberation and salvation. In the second section I address the issue of healing from contextual and holistic perspectives. The third part is on reconciling mission and mission as reconciliation. Mission as reconciliation should continually seek to correspond to the specifics of a given context. In short, God’s mission as praxis for healing and reconciliation means serving, healing, and reconciling a wounded and broken humanity.

Mission is God’s job description, capturing both who God is and what God does. Perhaps the understanding of missio Dei was best expressed by an African American ex-slave, Sojourner Truth, who said, “Oh, God, I did not know you were so big.”¹ This earth-shaking fact of God’s big heartedness is the heart of the beginning of Jesus’ mission and ministry, transcending religion, economic status, gender, ethnicity, race, and class. This is in line with the model of God’s mission as praxis for healing and reconciliation today, namely “to bring the good news to the oppressed...to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, and let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour” (Isaiah 61 and Luke 4).

The original theological basis for Christian mission is based on the doctrine of the Trinity. The Triune God is a missionary God. According to Bosch,

Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world; the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission. To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of God’s love toward people. Mission has its origin in the heart of God. God is a fountain of sending love. This is the deepest source of mission. It is impossible to penetrate deeper still; there is mission because God loves people.2

On the basis of such a trinitarian understanding of mission, the church can never remain static or satisfied with the status quo. Martin Luther once called the church the “mouth house” of God, that is, the concrete way that God’s word is spoken in the world.3 The message of the Bible is something to be proclaimed: the joyous news of salvation and liberation that requires the viva vox of the church as a Mundhaus (mouth house). In other words, the church is the place of the mouth where the gospel is shouted by the preacher in the prophetic tradition. It is not merely a Tintenpalast (Ink Palace), a domain of politicians, theologians and institutions of higher theological learning (universities and seminaries). The church remains both a place of studying and pursuing theology, mission, ministry and diaconal service (diakonia). It is a place of continual accompaniment or mission that reflects the interaction between context, theology and practice, while proclaiming, announcing, serving and teaching the good news to the oikoumene, the whole inhabited earth.4

Therefore, I will first address what it means for the church today to participate in God’s mission. According to Darrell Guder, one has to speak of God as a missionary God and to learn “to understand the Church as a ‘sent people.’”5 My reflection is on the missional church6 and its missionary praxis,7 or what God in Jesus Christ together with the Holy Spirit is doing in the world to bring about healing, reconciliation, wholeness, liberation and salvation. I maintain that innovative, creative, and more effective forms of evangelism

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6 Ibid. Our use of the term, the missional church, is greatly influenced by the book Missional Church. Darrell L Guder (ed.). According to Guder, missional emphasizes “the essential nature and vocation of the Church as God’s called and sent people” (p. 11). The concept “missional” church is further developed in The Missional Church and Leadership Formation: Helping Congregations Develop Leadership Capacity, Craig Van Gelder (ed.), Eerdmans, Grand Rapids (2009). According to this book, the use of the term missional is “embedded . . . into the very nature or essence of what it means to be the Church, and how the being of the Church provides the basis for the doing of the Church” (pp. vii–viii).
7 The term used here to denote mission pertains to the being of the church, while “missionary” is reserved to describe the mission as the praxis of the church. Thus, in this essay the missional church is called into the missionary praxis of healing and reconciliation.
and dialogue, diapraxis and diakonia must be explored. Christians do this, however, not as “judges or lawyers, but as witnesses; not as soldiers, but as envoys of peace; not as high-pressure sales persons, but as ambassadors of the Servant Lord.”

Second, I will explore what it means to be healing communities today. At the onset, I state that a Christian’s zeal for mission, unity, justice, peace, and healing must show itself in corresponding actions that are directed towards the neighbour. Such an understanding of Christian mission and ministry means that God breaks into the world and invites people to be involved in the creative and liberating dynamics of God’s love in history, and in God’s mission as praxis for healing. Moreover, while human efforts cannot remove sin from the world, God’s creativity involves them in these dynamics, so that they engage in seeking partial, provisional and relative victories today, by establishing healing communities as signs of God’s reign here on earth.

Third, Christians today are witnessing an emerging paradigm of reconciling mission and mission as reconciliation. Through this focus, I want to re-discover that mission as reconciliation should appropriately match the specifics of a certain context. In particular, I will address the Namibian situation since 1990. Reconciliation also is vitally important because “[The] possibility of reconciliation is one of, if not the most compelling way of expressing the meaning of the gospel today.”

The missional church and its missionary praxis

The shift of Christianity’s centre of gravity to the global South will accelerate the process under way in the Pacific, Latin America, Caribbean, Asian, and African churches to clarify how far these churches have been, and still are, dependent on Western interpretations of Christianity. This includes interpretations of mission, theological education and formation, contextualization (gospel and cultures), mission and development in post-colonial era (the use of power in mission), Christian witness and dialogue in a religiously plural world, and healing and reconciliation. It is through missionary praxis that the missional church will rid itself of unnecessary excess Western baggage. At the same time, churches from both the global South and North should

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8 David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 489.
search together for genuinely fresh apostolic understandings that are applicable in every local context of our globalised world. This will be instrumental in bringing new life to suffering people today.  

This application and contextualisation of the gospel tells Christians that the poor are “proxies for Christ.” To put it differently, loving God and loving our neighbour is a single, not a sequential act. What was new about Jesus is that he put the two commandments in Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18 in the same breath and gave them equal weight. Jesus thereby makes the two commandments virtually one. There is no sense in which we can love God at the expense of our neighbour, or vice versa.

What then are the practical implications of such a missionary theology? Word empowered and Spirit led, the church knows that mission flows from its nature as a witnessing, reconciling and healing community. The Triune God creates the church and sustains it, by the power of Spirit, through the gifts of word and sacrament. The “being-ness” (missional) and “sent-ness” (missionary praxis) of the church are inextricably linked. Thus, the Christian community is an expression of God’s intention to bring reconciliation and healing to everyone, everywhere. Attempts to separate faith and works must be avoided; there is no gap between orthodoxy and orthopraxis.

A missional church understands its participation in missio Dei as contextual, addressing faithfully the challenges of ever changing and complex contexts, and thus, in comprehensive and holistic ways. Mission is contextual with regard to its aim, practice, and location. Its aim encompasses the whole of creation ( ecological concerns), the whole of life (spiritual, social, political, economic, and cultural), and the whole human being (soul and body). Its practice calls for the participation of the whole church, women and men, young and old. Being contextual, the church seeks and works for reconciliation and healing. That is the being-ness and the sent-ness of the church.

The missional church should engage in prophetic practice in faith, courage, bold humility, and prophetic dialogue and proclamation. Such mission as action is based on

13 LWF, Mission in Context, p. 36
Micah 6.8, “He [God] has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and walk humbly with your God?” These words are echoed in James 2:14–17: “What good it is, my brothers and sisters, if you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,’ and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.” This is the biblical and prophetic mission that the church ought to follow in faith and works.

In a synergia between God and humans, God has chosen to work through people. However, this synergia is more than a matter of allowing the surging waters of praxis to gush over the thirsty land. Karl Barth declares that “from the belief in God’s righteousness there follows logically a very definite political problem and task.”14 Barth is highly specific on the nature and theological orientation of such a task, when he states that “God always takes His stand unconditionally and passionately on this side and this side alone: against the lofty and on behalf of the lowly.”15

To rephrase Karl Barth, I propose that Jesus Christ is the saviour, victor and liberator, and people are minor liberators engaged in securing provisional and relative, yet joyful victories of establishing healing and reconciling communities that reflect God’s reign here on earth. There is a concrete political tendency in the biblical message. It cannot be heard and believed without awakening a sense of social and spiritual responsibility to follow this tendency. Structures and processes must be provided so that fractured societies can be reconstructed as truthful and just, shattered lives rebuilt, and so that “kindred live together in unity” (Ps. 133:1–2), that is, in healing and reconciling communities.

**God’s mission as praxis of healing**

The WCC understands health as a dynamic state of well-being of the individual and society, of physical, mental, spiritual, economic, political, and social well-being – of being in harmony with each other, with the entire created world and with God. Such a holistic view underlines that health is not a static concept in which distinct lines are drawn between those who are healthy and those who are not. Every human being is


constantly moving between staying healthy and struggling with infections and diseases.\textsuperscript{16} Such a holistic view has also consequences for understanding the church’s mission.

The Christian ministry of healing includes the practice of medicine (for both physical and mental health) as well as caring and counselling disciplines and spiritual practices. Repentance, prayer and/or laying on of hands, divine healing, rituals involving touch and tenderness, forgiveness, and the sharing of the eucharist can have important, even dramatic effects on the physical health of human beings.\textsuperscript{17}

The healing of persons has long been considered part of the church’s pastoral and diaconal calling. For Christians, this ministry of healing is grounded in the word, sacraments and prayer. Some churches have focused on healing through prayer and laying on of hands, whereas others view these practices with suspicion. However, most churches are involved in healing through various diaconal ministries.

As the past millennium came to an end, some promising signs of healing were cited, such as efforts to heal diseases, to improve the health of communities, to liberate those who were oppressed under colonialism and apartheid, to reconcile those of different ideologies, races, and nationalities, such as after the fall of Berlin (1989) and the end of apartheid in Namibia (1990) and South Africa (1994). Many looked forward to a new millennium with the hope of peace.

However, as old divisions were healed, new ones arose. In the face of an unrelenting military siege, and seeing no hope for their own lives, more young Palestinians are willing to die, and take Israelis with them. For many, the choice is stark, death or the end of the occupation. “Each Israeli crackdown, each missile struck, each brutal retaliation serves only to turn more people into human bombs.”\textsuperscript{18} Furthermore, in the USA, one of the most dramatic examples of recent times was the way in which well-known symbols of human know-how, achievement and strength were pierced and destroyed by speeding airplanes that suddenly became weapons of mass destruction, as they crashed into fortresses of human might and security. This became a potent mixture of technological triumph, financial strength, military might, resentment, anger, hatred, mourning,

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
fear, and the start of the so-called “war on terrorism.” These two examples demonstrate that our world is indeed in need of healing.

Thus far we pointed out the necessity of the ministry of healing for today. Now, I shall briefly focus on the ministry of healing as a heritage from an African perspective. As argued above, Christians need to be biblical and contextual in their approach to healing ministries. A missional church’s praxis of healing needs a homeward focus, such as considering what this means from an African perspective. John Mbiti tells of the return of an African theology graduate to Africa after many years of study in Europe:

He learned German, Greek, French, Latin, and Hebrew, in addition to English, as one part of the requirements for his degree. The other part, the dissertation, he wrote on some obscure theologian of the Middle Ages. Finally, he got what he wanted, A Doctorate in Theology. He was anxious to reach home as soon as possible, so he flew, and he was glad to pay excess baggage, which, after all, consisted only of the Bible in the various languages he had learned, plus Bultmann, Barth, Bonhoeffe, Brunner, Buber, Cone, Küng, Moltmann, Niebuhr, and Tillich.

At home, relatives, neighbours, old friends, dancers, musicians, drums, dogs, cats, all gather to welcome him back. People bear with him patiently as he struggles to speak his own language, as occasionally he seeks the help of an interpreter from English.

Suddenly there is a shriek. Someone has fallen to the ground. It is his older sister. He rushes to her. People make room for him, and watch him. “Let’s take her to a hospital,” he calls urgently. They are stunned. . . . Finally a schoolboy says: ‘Doctor, the nearest hospital is 100 kilometres away and there are few buses that go there.’ Someone else says, ‘She is possessed. Hospitals will not cure her!’ The chief says to him, ‘You have been studying theology overseas for ten years. Now help your sister. She is troubled by the spirit of her aunt.’

Slowly he goes to get Bultmann and reads again about spirit possession in New Testament. Of course he gets his answer: Bultmann has demythologised it. . . . He insists that his sister is not possessed. The people shout, ‘Help your sister; she is possessed!’ He shouts back, ‘But Bultmann has demythologised demon possession’ (it does not exist).19

It is crucial to note that the basic stance of the author in this story was the praxis of the African church, African theology, African Christian counselling, African priests, pastors, and laity. In other words, on a topic such as healing I must speak from the inside, appealing to the outside, and hold up before the eyes of all what it means to be biblical and contextual in their own situations. If a person wants to talk about healing ministries, he or she has to do so in ways appropriate to her or his own context. For example in the story, the African student’s books are nearly all by white male European theologians.

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The punch line in the story challenges the methods applied in Christian healing minis-
tries. The sister of the African theologian is struck down by a spirit – the spirit of her
dead aunt. How can he be of help to her? How can he be an effective pastor to her?
How can he carry out his pastoral counselling ministry? In order to answer these
questions he goes to Bultmann and is informed how to cast out demons! But he fails to
think contextually. For example, when spirits of the dead visit the living they are not
meant to be cast out, but to be spoken with, to be reasoned with and to be bargained
with. The theology of Bultmann has neither vocabulary nor grammar for this. Even
more seriously, the African theologian’s knowledge of Bultmann denies him his African
reality, which is staring him in the face. This is classic denial.

Today, Christians need a paradigm shift in the pastoral ministries of the church. They
have to learn the art of hearing the questions being asked on the ground. For example,
during my theological studies, I was taught that proper pastoral counselling takes place
in an office, to guarantee privacy, quietness and a suitable atmosphere. We were even
advised by our professor that there should be a table and at least two chairs.

But when I started my pastoral duties in Bethanie in the Karas region of Namibia, I
experienced that many people talked to me about their burdens in public places or in
the streets. Mindful of my pastoral counselling education, I was always telling the
congregation to go to my office for pastoral counselling sessions. Later I discovered
that the majority of the members did not come. They were consulting me on their
problems and burdens wherever we met, whether in an office, on a street, at a foot-
ball stadium, or in the church. The point is that healing and diaconal ministries of the
church are provided in any place and are not reserved for a specific venue or suitable
safe space.

What also comes up in discussing health matters in Africa is the search for a cause. It is
not enough to limit treatment to the manifest symptoms of illness and disease, without
asking why this happened. Bishop Peter Sarpong writes thatGhanaians know very well
that there are natural causes and events, and rules of cause and effect. The particular
conditions in a chain of causation relate an individual to natural happenings. These, it
is felt, require different explanation. Bishop Sarpong illustrates this:

One may explain scientifically to a mother that her child died of a sickness caused by a hepatitis virus,
which he got from someone carrying the virus. The mother has no problem with this explanation.
She accepts it. But her question remained unanswered. Why did the infection enter the body of her
child? Many people went near that sick person, why did they not get jaundiced, too? The doctor who
explains her child’s death to her has handled many such patients. And why do others who get
jaundice recover? For the woman, the scientific explanation has only succeeded in revealing that witches really exist and are indeed powerful. In order to fight against such powerful spirit, she has to contact the traditional healer to explain to her why her child is dead. 20

From such a holistic understanding, let us focus on the healing ministry of Jesus as a model for the church today. From the beginning, the ministry of the church has been understood as an extension of the healing ministry of Jesus. This is illustrated by the parable in Luke 8:43–48, which presents a woman with chronic bleeding who has been ill throughout her life. She has numerous physical problems – irregular bleeding for twelve years, anaemia, weakness, and infertility. Her social problems were even worse, because she was considered unclean (Lev. 15:19–30). She was probably unemployed, divorced, abandoned by her family, and without friends. Grief, depression, and anger at society – and probably at God – filled her mind. Spiritually, she was cut off from God because no unclean person could go to the temple to worship or ask for healing. 21

When she heard about Jesus, she was determined to go to him – even though she would make him unclean. But Jesus said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace” (Luke 8.48). In brief, with her ears the woman heard Jesus call her his daughter. With her heart, she heard him say, Come into my family. You are clean and whole. That is what Luther calls simul iustus et peccator (being sinner but declared a saint at the same time). That is the model of healing: being touched by human suffering and extending this healing in word and deed. Healing is possible. This is the news that is almost too good to be true, but it can become credible through the Christian communities that are committed to the ministries and mission of reconciliation and healing.

This is an example showing that healing includes transformation of life locally and contextually, as well as by crossing cultural and religious boundaries. 22 In this connection it becomes important for the church to realise that its calling is a response to the charismatic gifts of healing which equip it and enable it to fulfil that role. 23 In summary, Jesus’ healing is a model for the church today. Jesus entrusts the apostles with preaching and healing the sick. According to Jesus’ instructions, the gospel cannot stand without the concrete salvation illustrated by healing, and the healing loses its meaning if it is not seen within the framework of the gospel of God’s reign.

Reconciling mission and mission as reconciliation

Next to the healing theme, missiological studies at the start of the 21st century have increasingly focused on reconciliation. As an emerging ecumenical paradigm of mission, reconciliation has come to the fore in many different contexts and caught the imagination of people inside and outside the church. Also, 2009 was proclaimed as the International Year of Reconciliation (UN). But how do mission and reconciliation relate to each other? Is mission capable of talking about reconciliation, especially if “mission” is associated with “colonialism”? Is mission part of the problem, the solution or both?

The term mission was originally “used exclusively with reference to the doctrine of the Trinity...the sending of the Son by the Father and of the Holy Spirit by the Father and the Son.” Today, the Christian understanding of mission usually is not only far removed from this, but it has been harshly criticized (e.g., for being too closely aligned with colonialism), and is seen as being in a state of crisis. Bosch identifies three possible reactions to this crisis. The first is to become burdened by guilt and simply withdraw from mission altogether. The second is to ignore the criticism, dismiss the crisis, and continue mission the same as before. The third is to construct a “different kind of involvement” by calling for “a new paradigm for mission.” My interest is in this third response that confronts the past in order to create a new model of mission, one focused on reconciling mission and the model of mission as reconciliation.

A leading proponent of this is Robert Schreiter. He acknowledges that there is no single understanding of reconciliation among people but that every culture and language has concepts of who needs to be involved in reconciliation, how it should be accomplished, what constitutes justice in the new situation and what marks the end of the reconciliation process. Moreover, there is no single Christian understanding of reconciliation, as the concept has developed various nuances depending on the context and

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24 The author gratefully acknowledges the input by one of his missiology students, Rebekah Cypert Krevens, especially on our discussions on the theme of reconciling mission and mission as reconciliation during the Autumn Semester of 2010–2011 at the Ecumenical Institute Bossey, Switzerland.


26 David Bosch, Transforming Mission, p. 1.


28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.
circumstances. Schreiter therefore contends that the best approach is to merely outline elements that must be considered in any process of reconciliation.\textsuperscript{31} He writes:

Victims of violence and suffering must tell their story over and over again in order to escape the narrative of the lie. As they recount their own narrative, little by little they begin to construct a new narrative of truth that can include the experiences of suffering and violence without allowing those experiences to overwhelm it. This includes, in the first stage, establishing a kind of geography of violence and suffering; that is, bounding it so as to tame its savage power. The more that the violence is so bounded, the less formidable it becomes. Without such boundedness, it roams at will in the life of the victim devouring, like the roaming lion in 1 Peter 5:8, whomever it will. The ministry of reconciliation at this stage is the ministry of listening.\textsuperscript{32}

The activity of reconciliation is an ongoing process that combines, for example, witnessing and telling the truth, exposing the lie, healing memories, justice and forgiveness.\textsuperscript{33} Without these components, reconciliation is incomplete. For example, one difficult issue is what to do with violators of human rights after liberation and independence have been achieved. Should they be given amnesty or immunity from prosecution, allowed to hold positions in the police or military or even become members of the parliament? Does it mean wiping the slate clean, with a fresh start for the sake of national reconciliation, as happened with Namibian independence on 21 March 1990?

According to Gerhard Tötemeyer, the church in Namibia followed the same path as the government, namely, blanket amnesty for the wrongdoing in the past. Such a policy, built on the UN Security Council Resolution 435 which led to the independence of Namibia, avoids the process of reconciliation through truth telling, confession and forgiveness, or through compensation, restoration, restitution, and healing of memories. All these aspects were absent in the case of Namibia. Consequently, the indecisiveness of the Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN) on reconciliation remains misunderstood. Churches need to explore reconciliation in more depth. The church has “the responsibility to make its voice known when human dignity and human rights are tampered with or declined and wounds have not healed. It is about the restoration of


peace between wounded human beings and their perpetrators.” As the newspaper, *The Namibian*, stated:

Reconciliation was implemented without any stocktaking exercise, namely, an attempt to come to terms with the past. In this sense, Namibia would have been better off if we had had some kind of truth commission, where all ugliness of our past could have been revealed by perpetrators on whatever side of the political fence. Namibians needed a process of catharsis and this was denied them through the policy of reconciliation. We are all aware the new government did not want political instability after independence, and saw reconciliation as the only way to avoid it.

However, such argumentations are rejected by the ruling party of Namibia, SWAPO. According to the Dr Albert Kawana, minister for presidential affairs, opening the old wounds is not helpful. “Our people need bread on their tables not wounds. They need employment, better education, better health care, rural development, better housing, potable water and other infrastructure – this is the second struggle, the struggle for economic empowerment, especially among the youth and women.”

In the case of Namibia reconciliation occurred without justice, and without the other components discussed above. According to Tötemeyer,

Not admitting that injustices have taken place, and arguing that for the sake of peace and the reconstruction of society a public debate on past wrongdoings should not take place, as it could inflict new wounds or reopen old ones, is wrong in approach. It contradicts moral standards and escapes the past. To avoid truth prevents reconciliation. It encapsulates the perpetrator. Twenty years after independence in Namibia, the time is ripe for publicly attending to truth finding and a reconciliation process.

A place to begin is to discern what reconciliation means in Namibian languages. In Khoekhoegowab, the root words for peace and reconciliation are the same, namely *khî* (peace) and *//kawa-ê khib-bagus* (to re-establish peace or reconciliation). All the Khoekhoegowab words convey the sense that something that has been destroyed should be rebuilt. In other words, peace that has been destroyed should be re-established, or a relationship should be renewed. Here the focus falls on the prefix

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//kawa-, which means “again”. For example, two of these words are //kawa-/haos (to be reunified) or //kawa-/biu (to be one again). The underlying notion is that of beginning anew, unconditionally.

In Oshiwambo, three words deal with the concept of reconciliation, namely edimina-fanepo (you forgive someone and he/she in turn forgives you), ebanganifo (someone takes the hand of one person, and then takes the hand of another person, thus bringing them together in friendship); and etambulafano (two people accept one another following a quarrel; acceptance takes place on an equal footing).

In Afrikaans, the word for reconciliation is versoening. The verb is versoen, from which comes both the verb and the noun seen (“to kiss” and “kiss”). Those who have a relationship close enough for them to be kissing are assumed to have been reconciled. Thus I like the European cheek kissing that is especially common in France and Switzerland. It is a ritual or social gesture to indicate friendship, to greet, to congratulate, to comfort someone, to show respect, or to indicate sexual or romantic interest.

From a biblical perspective, reconciliation is primarily and fundamentally the work of the triune God bringing fulfilment to God’s eternal purposes of creation and salvation through Jesus Christ: “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross . . . For in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” (Col. 1:19–20). In the person of Jesus Christ the divine nature and the human nature were reconciled, united forever. This is the starting point for human reconciliation with God. Through God’s grace and our efforts, Christians are to realize what they already have in Christ, through the Holy Spirit.

The Bible has narratives of reconciliation from which Christians can draw. The Hebrew Scripture addresses again and again the estrangement between God and God’s people, and that God desires and urges reconciliation and restoration of what has been broken through human pride and rebellion against God. Similarly, throughout the New Testament, the idea of reconciliation is prevalent. Paul is greatly concerned that those whom Christ has reconciled in his body should not be divided; community life should be the first expression of God’s plan to reconcile all things. He envisages the unity of not only Jew and Gentile but also of slave and free, male and female in Christ (Gal. 3:28).

Apart from Matthew 5:24, where the reference is to the reconciliation of individuals, the Greek words katallage and katallassein, translated as “reconciliation,” are only found in the letters of Paul (2 Cor. 5:17–20; Rom. 5:10–11; 11:15; 1 Cor. 7:11, Eph. 2:16 and Col.
1:20–22). However, the writer of these letters expresses the theme so forcefully that it emerges as a key notion in Christian identity as a whole. Paul uses the term reconciliation in exploring the nature of God, to illumine the content of the gospel as good news, and to explain the ministry and mission of the apostle and the church in the world. It becomes an almost all-embracing term to articulate what is at the heart of the Christian faith.38

Consequently, the ministry of unity is a ministry of conciliation (Latin conciliare, to bring together), which refers more generally to the process of bringing different parties into relationships of mutual benefit and enrichment, in order to live in a model of unity in diversity. Reconciliation refers more specifically to the healing of broken relationships, the resolving of conflicts and wrongs of the past in order to re-establish restored relationships, in both cases promoting peace, justice and solidarity.39 In other words, reconciliation is a spiritual affair that includes theological, cultural, moral or ethical, social, political and economic matters, a transformation of the entire human situation. The hungry are fed, the sick are healed, and justice is given to the poor.

In sum, reconciliation is one of if not the most compelling way of expressing the meaning of the gospel today. In the midst of violence, pain and indelible scars on people’s memory, the church as God’s minister of reconciliation proclaims that in Jesus Christ and in his community, healing is possible.40 To put it differently, the church must be in the thick of the process of reconciliation. Thereby, the danger of false reconciliation will be avoided as well as the politics of “forgive and forget,” “just move on,” “get on with life,” or avoiding public debate on past wrongdoings for the sake of economic and political stability.

Truth telling is medicine that has healing power. It creates safe and sacred spaces where people can gather to remember while grieving. It does so with the grace of a wholeness, with divine and human action that embraces the whole world, changing the relationship between God and people, and making them new creatures. It also involves understanding reconciliation as a programme where God is reconciled with people, and as a social and economic project where the ownership and use of God’s creation is intended for the benefit and well-being of all, especially those most in need of empowerment.

In conclusion, mission as healing and reconciliation has become the emerging new paradigm that defines the mission of the missional church today. Diverse church families from all over the world are increasingly willing to speak about genuine reconciliation from theological, biblical, cultural, linguistic, and socio-political and economic perspectives.

Today, a spirituality of reconciliation and healing is called for in order to face the challenges brought about by damaging effects of sexism, racism, cultural and religious clashes, and economic and political boundaries. Particularly significant has been the 2005 conference on world mission and evangelism (CWME) in Athens, Greece, The resulting report identifies truth, memory, justice and forgiveness as four essential aspects for reconciliation and healing both within the church and in society at large.  

Healing and reconciliation, as the restoration of right relations with God, is the source of healing and reconciliation with oneself, with people of our own and of other faiths, and with the whole creation. Therefore, according to the theme of the world mission conference in Athens, May 2005, “Come, Holy Spirit, Heal and Reconcile” and transform into healing and reconciled communities all people on earth who harbour pain, who nurse hurt, and whose memories keep them bound. In short, God’s mission as praxis for healing and reconciliation means serving, healing, and reconciling a wounded and broken humanity and world. It is my hope that these neglected aspects of our Christian tradition will gain more prominence as the church reconstructs a missionary theology of healing and reconciliation suitable for the 21st century.

"Get Up . . . Take the Child . . . and Escape to Egypt": Transforming Christianity into a Non-Western Religion in Africa

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Abstract

This article examines some of the changes that have taken place within world Christianity in the last century, particularly in Africa, and as reflected in various articles of the International Review of Mission (IRM) over the past 100 years. These changes include a shift in the demographic centre of Christianity from the North to the South, and the rise and development of Pentecostalism. This relates to Africans becoming disenchanted with aspects of mission Christianity that were unable to work with indigenous enchanted worldviews.

In Africa, pneumatic forms of Christian expression like Pentecostalism and the various African Independent/Initiated Churches (AICs) have been enjoying considerable appeal, with their emphases on the reality of supernatural evil and the power of the Holy Spirit. This has been evident not only in the rise of independent churches outside the control of mission societies but also the formation of African immigrant churches in former heartlands of Christianity in the West.

For African Christianity, the past century has been one of religious innovations. Mission endeavours that translated the Bible into various vernacular languages helped to facilitate the process of the expansion, leading to what some have called “Africa’s Christian century.” These developments, it is important to say, did not escape the editors and contributors to the IRM. For interpreting Christianity in Africa from the viewpoint of mission, the IRM remains unparalleled. The journal used a combination of African and non-African voices in the discussion. Additionally, IRM has given space for both
academics and practitioners in interpreting Christianity and mission in Africa. There have been articles on the encounter between Western mission Christianity and African culture, African initiated Christianity, translations of the Bible and its import for Christian mission, and more recently, important articles on Pentecostalism (1986) and on African immigrant Christianity in the West (2000).

**Africa in world Christianity today**

The articles that have appeared in *IRM* over the last century are best appreciated with the context of developments in world Christianity. In his book, *The Next Christendom*, Philip Jenkins makes it clear that we are currently living through one of the most transforming moments of religion worldwide:

> Whatever Europeans or North Americans may believe, Christianity is doing very well indeed in the global south—not just surviving but expanding. . . . The era of Western Christianity has passed within our lifetimes, and the day of Southern Christianity is dawning.1

The recession of Christianity in the global North, as Jenkins notes here, has coincided with its accession in the global South, with Africa emerging as one of its major heartlands. This 20th-century development defied the fears of Edinburgh 1910 that Africa was going to turn Islamic by the end of that century. That the continent emerged instead as a major Christian stronghold makes it important, as Kwame Bediako argues, that “one should seek to understand what this might mean for Africa and the world.”2 To this end Bediako very aptly titled one of his works, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*.3 He did with the understanding that the prospects for Christian expansion and innovation in Africa were going to continue on a high note through the 21st century. In his book he goes on to identify some of the challenges a post-missionary Christian Africa may need to face, as “an important flag-bearer of Christianity in the new century.”4

At the dawn of the 21st century, we could say that although Africa remains a religiously pluralistic continent, indeed, it has emerged as a major Christian heartland. This is at a time when the faith is clearly under siege, and in some cases, even being deliberately

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4 Ibid., p. ix.
hounded out of public life in parts of the West. The decline of Christian presence in the former heartlands of the faith is a process that has been underway since the era of the Enlightenment, when rationality and science emerged as dominant, leading to a deliberate courting of secularism and the creation of a morally permissive society.

The process of secularization does not necessarily mean that religion ceased to matter for everybody. Western democracies and the liberalization of public and social institutions led to expanded meanings of human rights. There were calls for the separation of church and state, the promotion of alternative sexual lifestyles. Now it is impossible to talk about the life of the church in the West without theological debates on same-sex relationships. These developments, coupled with the pressure on the church to tolerate human activities that they previously considered to be at variance with evangelical Christian values, means Christianity is now a private matter and the church has all but lost its prophetic voice in public affairs. In the process of secularization, Christianity which was the bedrock of Western values and development has been put under siege. The rise in the numbers of alternative religions and religious values and the dwindling of the prophetic voice of the church in the state made it difficult for the church to function within what has become a very hostile environment for most missionary religions, and Christianity in particular.

Africa’s place as “an important flag-bearer of Christianity, “as Bediako describes it, therefore, brings to mind the historical biblical development in which the life of Jesus, due to Herod’s threats, had to be preserved in Egypt. Herod’s attitude and that of parts of the world today mirror the following verdict from John’s gospel:

He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave them the right to become children of God (John 1:10–12).

From this passage it would seem that the God of mission who revealed himself in Christ gravitates towards those who are open to his presence, a presence that is experienced in the activities of the Holy Spirit. The denunciation of Christianity in the secularizing West has brought the world to a point where the faith has ceased to be coterminous with the religious persuasion of these countries. By no means is secularization limited to the West, but developments there are important because the history of Christianity in the non-Western world is interwoven with that of 19th-century missionary enterprise. What is happening within the worldwide Anglican Communion, for example, is only symptomatic of current developments in world Christianity. Not only
has the strength of that Communion shifted to the non-Western world, but the gap between Canterbury and African Anglicans, for example, keeps widening on account of the perceived moral permissiveness into which Western kinds of Anglicanism have fallen.

The development of Christianity as an African religion

The transformation process of Christianity from a Western to a non-Western religion has been gradual but certain. By confining the kingdom of God within what is conscious and rational, as John V. Taylor points out in *The Primal Vision*, this left untouched “the great deep of the subliminal, and unredeemed the glories of the elemental energies of man.” Enlightenment Christianity left out what is incalculable out of the faith and played down the supernatural, leaving non-Westerners with a religion that was too cerebral to touch people at deeper levels of spirituality.5 During the 20th century, African Christians had to take their spiritual destiny into their own hands; historic mission Christianity came under indigenous leadership. Vernacular translations of the Bible enabled people to understand and spread the message in local idioms. Lamin Sanneh notes how the process of translating scripture bypassed Europe’s Enlightenment prerequisites and connected with what he refers to as “the preindustrial sensibilities of hinterland populations . . . thereby allowing the Bible to speak with authority in its own original voice.”6

During this time African initiated churches, including new forms of Pentecostalism, have burgeoned quickly, leading to a situation where it has become impossible to talk about Africa without Christianity or Christianity without Africa. *The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*, the subtitle of Kwame Bediako’s book, was inspired by an article written for the *IRM* in 1970 by David B. Barrett. Barrett argued that, given its phenomenal growth, “African Christians might well tip the balance and transform Christianity permanently into a primarily non-Western religion.”7 During the 20th century, he surmised, the goal of world evangelization that Western churches had long espoused, receded from their grasp. In attempting to come to terms with this situation he notes how some Western theologians were developing a theology of secularization in which evangelism and conversion assumed lesser roles than they had previously.8 It is against

8 Ibid., p. 52.
this backdrop of the decline of Christianity in the West that I argue, albeit euphemistically, that the faith may have taken “refuge” in Africa because it is under siege in its former heartlands.

Many Africans have recently returned from visits to the West, Europe in particular, traumatized by the sight of cathedrals that have metamorphosed into restaurants and pubs. This decline of Christian presence in the modern West is one that, according to Sanneh, carries at its heart a moral relativism that discounts Christianity’s transcendent claims and resists that or any religion as a valid source of truth.9

In addition to the above, the experiential dimension around which religion revolves is very important in primal thought or what Sanneh referred to as “preindustrial sensibilities.” The neglect of the experiential dimension of Christianity was therefore problematic for many African believers. Already in the early 1960s, Kofi A. Busia, the Ghanaian sociologist, Methodist lay preacher and later prime minister, had written for the IRM expressing grave disquiet with the manner in which Europe—the main geographical source of mission work in Africa—was consciously edging God out of public life:

There is an even more serious problem that arises. It concerns the attitude of Europe to Christianity today. It is being seriously asserted that through the advances in science and technology, man has learnt to cope with all questions of importance without recourse to God as a working hypothesis; that everything gets along without God, and that in scientific as well as human affairs generally, God has been edged out of life.10

This observation, coming almost a decade prior to Barrett’s, was an indication of how the IRM served as the source of much knowledge on developments within world Christianity. Africa’s place within those developments has received good attention. In his article, Busia also spoke about how the dismissive European approach to the existence of God had affected theologies crafted in those contexts:

Consequently, some eminent theologians are not only advocating a re-interpretation of Christianity to make intelligible to modern man, but also, it would appear from some of their writings, maintaining that the Christian image of God must be limited to the depths of human experience of modern self-sufficient man. As if the Gospel was ever intended for those who felt themselves to be self-sufficient.11

11 Ibid.
These and other such factors contributed immensely to the decline of Christianity among Westerners. Today, in Europe and North America, African Christianity represented by immigrant churches contributes significantly to keeping the faith alive in people. This confirms John Mbiti’s observation that the centres of the church’s universality are no longer in Geneva, Rome, Athens, Paris, London, and New York, but rather in, Kinshasa, Buenos Aires, Addis Ababa and Manila. Much of the modern West seems to have opted for the privatization of faith, demystification of the supernatural and secularization in the process of development and the organization of public life. This means the moral imperatives of Christianity and the right to make moral judgments, for example, are now subordinated “to liberal concepts of personal rights.”

Thus Africa, a continent that was minimally Christian by profession when the missionary movement began has moved virtually to a position where it may have more professing Christians than any other continent.

That Africa has emerged from the margins to become a significant factor in world Christianity is the motivation for the title of this essay. If we take Egypt to be representative of Africa and African hospitality at the time of the birth of Jesus, then it might well be that God the Holy Spirit is preserving the faith by using the continent as a site for its preservation and re-launch. This was very much the thinking of Taylor, himself once a missionary to East Africa, when he observed the religious innovation championed by the AICs. Impressed with their innovation, spiritual dynamism and fervour he noted:

In Africa today it seems the incalculable Spirit has chosen to use the Independent Church Movement for another spectacular advance. This does not prove that their teaching is necessarily true but it shows they have the raw materials out of which a missionary church is made—spontaneity, total commitment, and the primitive responses that arise from the depths of life.

In Pauline thought, the God of mission is said to call into being things that are not as if they were; God uses what is foolish and despised in the world to shame the wise. In choosing Africa, God seems to have been acting true to character by choosing “what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; . . . what is weak in the world to shame the strong; . . . what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to

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12 Quoted in Jenkins, p. 2.
nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God” (1 Cor. 1:27–29). This does not mean that African Christians have gotten everything exactly right and that Christianity has so receded from the West that the faith there has ceased to matter. Nevertheless, the growth and dynamism of Christianity in Africa and among Africans in the diasporas seems to have given the faith some new lease on life that may ensure its survival as a world religion. The ultimate examples of this are signalled theologically by the incarnation and the cross. In the incarnation, the eternal Word became flesh and dwelt with humanity revealing his glory in the midst of weakness and failure (John 1:14). Also, the message of the cross of Christ, as Paul puts it, “is foolishness to those who are perishing” but “the power of God” for salvation (1 Cor. 1:18).

Africa and the transformation of Christianity

The Eurocentric approach to world history missed developments such as Africa’s enhanced place in the modern transformation of Christianity in the world,16 as indicated in the title of the important book, African Christianity: It’s an African Story.17 For over five centuries the story of Christianity had been inextricably bound up with Western civilizations.

From the early decades of the 19th century, Western missionary enterprise in Africa culminated in the formation of historic mission churches. These missions prioritized formal education and provided health care and other social services as tools of evangelization.18 Pastoral ministries, theological education, religious services, liturgical orders, clerical accoutrements and the architectural designs of chapel buildings with high spires and stained-glass windows perpetuated models inherited from Western European Christendom traditions of the Victorian era. Missionaries had a double identity as representatives of Christ and also as representatives of Westerners “shaped by Western history and conditions and values, and Western social networks and intellectual discourse.”19

Vestiges of the European Christian heritage, still remain to some extent in Africa’s historical mission denominations, but African Christianity, with particular modes of

19 Walls, p. xviii.
religious expression and faith has changed seismically. In 1955, E.A. Asamoa wrote an *IRM* article entitled, “The Christian Church and African Heritage.” It appeared at a time when the church in Africa was still searching for relevance, more than a century after missionary work began. It had been struggling to make Christianity relevant within a culture, unlike European Enlightenment societies, in which supernatural realities remained real, active and significant. The clash of religious cultures generated a number of important responses among Christians in Africa.

The first response came towards the end of the 19th century when nationalist or “Ethiopianist” churches emerged under indigenous leadership.20 David Vincent Brown of the Niger Delta was representative of this development. He formed the Native Baptist Church. To give practical expression to the African repudiation of Christianity as a Western religion, in the late 1880s, he changed his name to Mojola Agbebi. Subsequently, several nationalist churches appeared across Africa. Although they did not become a mass movement, they were important indicators of the desire to express the Christian faith in ways that remained loyal both to the Bible and to indigenous religious sensibilities. The quest of these Christian nationalists was for an Africanization of the church that challenged white monopoly over ecclesial administrative structures and “countered the denigration of indigenous cultures with a nationalist anti-structure.”21

Later (in the 1960s) this challenge led African academic theologians to begin to write theology that could authentically engage African concerns. These included John S. Mbiti, E. Bolaji Idowu, Kwesi A. Dickson, Jean Marc Ela, and Vincent Mulago. Mercy A. Oduyoye of Ghana later formed the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, who together reflected on religion in Africa from women’s perspectives.

The second response to mission Christianity came through the formation of the AICs. These blazed the trail in integrating traditional worldviews and charismatic renewal phenomena into Christian belief and practice. They also championed a gender perspective that supported ordaining women, and pursued practical forms of salvation that gave pastoral attention to what are traditional religious matters, such as healing and fertility. Unlike the nationalist churches, whose main agenda was administering and recognizing local cultural values and languages as important vehicles for Christian

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20 It is important to add that the nationalist or Ethiopianist churches differ from later religious innovations in Africa who appeared as the Christian religious counterparts of local parties, such as the Aborigines Rights Protection Society that initiated the agitations leading to political independence beginning in the 1950s.

expression and practice, the AICs had a much more popular agenda of reform. Their key concern was how the Holy Spirit had been overlooked in church life. The situation that had given rise to the AICs and popularized their stream of Christianity is what Asamoa identified and criticized: the negative attitude of historic mission Christianity to traditional worldviews of supernatural causality and, in particular, the power of witchcraft. Witchcraft had been attacked in missionary preaching and teaching as a psychological delusion and figment of the African imagination.

In response, Asamoa articulated what the AICs had long integrated in Christian worship through their charismatic experiences and decisive prayers for health, wholeness, employment, marriage, business, and promotions. Their pneumatic approach to Christianity made them so popular that the nationalist churches started to slip into oblivion. The older denominations these churches had left, now started to lose large numbers of adherents. The AICs critiqued these older denominations for clutching at the Western European missionary theological heritage that had alienated traditional worldviews as nonsensical and superstitious, as having no contribution to make for appropriating the gospel. Asamoa wrote that the dismissive approach to African worldviews would not edge out such ideas from people’s imagination after they came to Christ.

Anybody who knows African Christians intimately will know that no amount of denial on the part of the Church will expel belief in supernatural powers from the minds of the African people. What often happens as a result of such denunciation is that a state of conflict is created in the mind of the Christian, as he becomes a hypocrite who in official church circles pretends to give the impression that he does not believe in these things, while in his own private life he resorts to practices which are the results of such beliefs.22

These words pointed to the fact that African Christians, as beneficiaries of Western mission Christianity and theological education, had reservations about the type of Christianity they had been given. Mission Christianity had not engaged very constructively with the primal imagination, especially traditional notions of spiritual causality. To place this in perspective, Asamoa began with a statement made by the International Missionary Council meeting at Willingen in 1952 which read in part:

While the Church of Christ in any place and at any time must exhibit the marks without which it will not be a church, it has the responsibility to exhibit them in a distinctive way, incorporating into the service of Christ whatever heritage of cultural values it may have been given by God’s grace. This is not being “rooted in the soil” but related to the soil. The Church can only be rooted in Christ. But the eternal Gospel must be so presented to men and women that its contemporary and compelling

relevance is recognized. It cannot be recognized as long as it appears in a foreign guise, imitating and reproducing the characteristics of a church in some remote alien land.23

In fact, the article came 50 years after the beginning of African-initiated Christianity. By 1926, when the World Missions Conference reconvened in Le Zoute, Belgium, indigenous charismatic prophets—Garrick Sokari Braide of the Niger Delta, Isaiah Sheme of South Africa, William Wade Harris of West Africa, and Simon Kimbangu of Central Africa—had already taken the process of evangelization to another level, drawing crowds and leading to the formation of AICs across Africa. Due to their disproportionate emphasis on the power of the Spirit and prayer, the new AICs became known as “Spiritual” churches (churches of the Spirit) in Ghana and “Aladura” churches (churches of prayer) in Nigeria.

In the process, West European Christianity gradually ceased to be paradigmatic for the faith on African soil. The AICs emerged as embodiments of Christianity that were acclaimed as thoroughly Christian and truly African. As Lamin Sanneh observes:

A process of internal change was thus initiated in which African Christians sought a distinctive way of life through mediation of the Spirit, a process that enhanced the importance of traditional religions for the deepening of Christian spirituality. The Charismatic Churches, therefore, combined the two fundamental elements of Christianity and African culture in a way that advertises their intentions without undervaluing their African credentials. Biblical material was submitted to the regenerative capacity of African perception, and the result would be Africa’s unique contribution to the story of Christianity.24

The new African churches, inspired by what they had read in the translated scriptures and their own charismatic experiences, developed a strong interventionist theology. This helped followers make sense of the spiritually precarious African world and how the name of Jesus was able to deal with the fears and insecurities emanating from the African universe. After all, “belief in the supernatural was a prevalent feature of primal societies as it was, in the worldview of the societies of the Bible, including the Greek.”25

As Emmanuel Lartey discussed in the IRM (1986), the pneumatic approach to Christianity helped Pentecostal churches, both culturally and religiously, to become amenable to the popular masses. They found in these churches a congeniality and familiarity that was absent from the staid, silent, orderly form of worship and liturgy in the Western

23 Ibid., p. 292.
25 Sanneh, Translating the Message, p. 57.
mission churches, with their non-interventionist theology.\textsuperscript{26} If we accept Taylor’s point that the Holy Spirit is the chief actor in the historic mission of the church, directing the whole enterprise,\textsuperscript{27} then we realize that when Edinburgh 2010 was convened, the Spirit was already acting as the chief agent of mission in Africa through these indigenous renewal movements.

**Pentecostalism in African Christianity**

Lesslie Newbigin in *The Household of God* refers to Pentecostalism as a third force within worldwide Christianity, after Roman Catholicism and mainline Protestantism. In Africa, contemporary expressions of Pentecostalism, with mega-size urban-centred congregations, youthful membership, and innovative uses of modern media technologies may be included in what we consider as the third response to missionary Christianity. While Ethiopianism appealed to the African Christian elite of the late 19th century, the new prophetic movements and AICs took on a very pneumatic character. In the processes they were able to create mass conversions that enlarged the frontiers of Christianity in Africa beyond those of the missionaries. The large urban African expressions of Pentecostalism have emerged in the quite different socio-economic context of globalization.

The prophetic movements out of which the AICs were born laid the foundations for the rise of contemporary Pentecostalism in modern Africa. Ogbu Kalu explains that the prophets tilled the soil in which contemporary Pentecostalism thrives. The prophets succeed because their version of Christianity was closer to the grain of African culture, and because it resonated much more with indigenous worldviews than did the Christianity mediated through missionaries. Kalu thus concludes, for instance, with regard to the work of Prophet Harris that “the charismatic fire that he lit became more important for the future of Christianity in Africa than the grand Edinburgh Conference of 1910 that shut out African voices.”\textsuperscript{28}

Harold W. Turner summarizes the two main theological emphases of African Christianity that were mediated through the AICs. The first is a pneumatological emphasis in which God is envisaged as present and powerful through the Holy Spirit, who reveals the will of God and the destiny of the individual, guides through dangers and fills

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{27} John V. Taylor, *The Go-Between God*, p. 1.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Kalu, p. x.
\end{itemize}
people with new powers of prophecy, utterance, prayer and healing. The second is a
soteriological emphasis that calls people to turn away from the traditional spirits and
deities and traditional medicine men and women, with their magical powers and tech-
niques. They then turn towards the Christian God for their salvation, interpreted in very
practical terms, including protection from the host of evil forces that inhabit the
African universe.  

Contemporary Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism in Africa has not developed monolithically, but is manifest today as
mega-size urban-based independent churches; renewal movements within historic
mission denominations; and as trans-denominational charismatic fellowships. The best
known trans-denominational group is the Full Gospel Businessmen’s Fellowship Interna-
tional, originally from North America. Classical Pentecostal denominations of both
Western missionary and indigenous origins begin in the late 1920s in sub-Saharan
Africa, and developed alongside the AICs. Then in the late 1970s, new expressions of
Pentecostalism began to appear in Africa, further transforming the contemporary
African Christian religious landscape. The new mega-size churches, with their media
technologies and worship style have especially appealed to African youth. Perhaps the
best known theological orientation of this new wave is the prosperity gospel, which has
received both affirmation and criticism.

These churches have grown both within and without Africa. With more than 10,000
worshippers attending its various weekly services in London alone, Pastor Ashi-
molowo’s Kingsway International Christian Centre has taken over the territory of the
Church of England as a contemporary Pentecostal Church with the single largest active
congregation in Western Europe. Pastor Ashimolowo, aided by a vibrant media minis-
try, addresses more people around the world than any Protestant leader in Western
Europe. The same is true of Eastern Europe where another Nigerian, Pastor Sunday
Adelaja, runs a 25,000 member Church of the Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of
God for all Nations. A majority of its membership is white European and when it was
begun 15 years ago, most of its members were converted drug addicts and alcoholics.
It is the moving testimonies of conversion from drugs, alcohol and gangs, and their
grateful family members, that have helped this church to grow. Their pastor has become
a champion of Christian presence in formerly communist parts of Europe. This
charismatic Pentecostal church has also become popular in territories that until recently
the Eastern Orthodox Church simply took for granted.

These contemporary Pentecostals, together with their Africa-based compatriots—Enoch Adeboye of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, David O. Oyedepo of the Living Faith Church Worldwide also known as Winners’ Chapel (both of Nigeria); Ezekiel Guti of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God; and Nicholas Duncan-Williams of the Christian Action Faith Ministries International and Mensa Otabil of the International Central Gospel Church both of Ghana and others—have within a generation, transformed the global Christian landscape, helping to make Christianity a primarily non-Western religion today. In the hands of contemporary Pentecostals, a new process of the “pentecostalization” of Christianity has been underway for some time now.

They have also raised up new champions of Christian mission who are challenging the old paradigms of inculturation associated with the leadership of the historic mission denominations. The theologies of liberation and inculturation remain relevant as far as non-Western Christianity is concerned. However the growing importance of Pentecostalism in the Southern continents invites us to interpret these older theological forms in the light of the renewal and dominion theologies that have proven popular with Africa’s upwardly mobile youth.

Pastor Eastwood Anaba of the Fountain Gate Chapel in Ghana, another important contemporary Pentecostal leader in Africa today, travels widely as a revivalist. In his first book, *God’s End-time Militia*—which is what for him the new movement is—he talks about the development of contemporary charismatic Christianity in terms of a religious change reminiscent of the political revolutions that occurred in Africa at the time the new movements were emerging. This was in the late 1970s and early 80s when Ghana and Nigeria witnessed the formation of charismatic churches out of the then conservative evangelical non-denominational Town Fellowships and such youth musical groups as Calvary Road Incorporated. In the thought of Eastwood Anaba, the new churches were born to chart new paths in Christian mission:

> Whilst there is nothing new under the sun, these [new Pentecostals] are born for modification, alteration, revolution, modulation and variation . . . to resurrect great things long abandoned and forgotten. This is a revival and restoration . . . You may not have an example to follow but you can create your own path.30

Eastwood Anaba’s use of the word *revolution* to describe the new Pentecostals is instructive. They constitute, in his understanding, God’s “end-time militia” brought into being by the Holy Spirit as movements of revival and restoration. They have been called

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to chart a new path for Christianity by democratizing ministry, a process made possible by individual and corporate experiences of the Spirit. He suggests that the work of ministry must never be abandoned to professional clergy; but each person must use the gifts and graces of the Spirit to the glory of God.31 The veracity of Anaba’s thoughts is seen not only in how Pentecostals have grown but also the influence they now exercise in African religious and public life.

The prosperity gospel associated with contemporary Pentecostalism has often been criticized for its promotion of materialism in the name of Christianity. That may well be the case if considered only against the backdrop of the flamboyant and materialistic lifestyles of some of its leaders. But that is just one side of the story. Prosperity gospel has a very important empowerment and motivational dimension that often gets lost in the discussion. With the difficult economic conditions and disappointing political leadership that young Africans face, the motivational messages of contemporary Pentecostalism have enabled them to take their destinies into their own hands through self-improvement. Testimonies abound of people who have returned to school to improve their job prospects, start their own businesses, or simply choose Jesus. In choosing Jesus Christ they also move away from gambling, drinking, drugs and womanizing into more constructive purposes.

In theological terms, contemporary Pentecostals have sustained those themes identified previously with the AICs. In the words of Emmanuel Lartey:

The success of charismatic Christianity in Africa has lain largely in its ability to propagate itself as ‘powerful and efficacious’ in enabling people to be set free from the dangers and troubles of life. The worship and teaching of these churches have by and large been geared towards the experiencing of the effective presence of the Holy Spirit. . . . The freedom to dance, sing, clap, drum and ecstatic in worship has served to release a spirit of freedom and participation which has proved very amenable to large sections of the African community.32

Thus the theological emphases first observed in the spiritual or Aladura churches or AICs have been sustained in the new Pentecostal/charismatic churches. In other words, through contemporary African Pentecostalism, which constitutes a third major response to missionary Christianity, we find the general theological orientation that Africans consider important in Christianity. Pentecostalism is a religion that values, affirms and consciously promotes the experience of the Holy Spirit as part of normal

31 Ibid., p. 1.
Christian life and worship. To that end, there is a clear continuity between the religious orientation of the AICs and that of the new Pentecostals, as the 1986 collection of articles in the IRM demonstrates. As Walter Hollenweger argues in his lead article there, Pentecostalism has proven successful in non-Western cultures such as those of Africa because of its black oral roots.

The transformation of Christianity

The process of transformation of Christianity into a non-Western religion, through the work of the Spirit, has been inspired by several factors. An important tool used by the Spirit was access to scripture in the vernaculars. Lamin Sanneh explains:

The fact that Bible translation adopted into its canon indigenous names for God implied at the minimum a tacit rejection of the standard monotheism-polytheism dichotomy of evolutionary thought and opened the way for indigenous innovation and motivation in the religious life. . . . Bible translation had thus helped to bring about a historic shift in Christianity’s theological centre of gravity by pioneering a strategic alliance with local conceptions of religion.

In non-Western unlike Western Christianity, the Bible has largely continued to be greatly respected for its divinely inspired authority. In the hands of many Western theologians, on the other hand, it is now a mere textbook. In many cases the Bible seems to have lost its authority, holiness, and awe in church and family life.

I have argued elsewhere that if the Bible lost its place as the source of guidance for public life and morality in the West, it did so first by losing its status as a sacred book through a process of biblical relativism and gradual demystification. It may have been completely lost on many Western Christians that St Paul refers to “all Scripture” as “God breathed” as useful for “teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). Vernacular translations of the Bible were generally received in African churches as inspired by the Spirit of God. With these translations came “cultural renewal” that “encouraged Africans to view Christianity in a favourable

light.”37 Missionaries played lead roles in translating the Bible into the languages of these societies, and in so doing “became champions of non-Western cultures.”38 This buttresses my earlier observation that in the midst of the recession of the faith in its former Western heartlands and its accession in Africa, the major historical contributions of Christian missions needs to be upheld and commended.

The changes brought to bear on African Christianity by the various forms of pneumatic Christianity since the early 20th century, have been seismic.39 There is every indication that the Spirit of God has been at work in these changes. As Taylor has said, “The Spirit of Life is ever at work in nature, in history and in human living, and wherever there is a flagging or corruption or self-destruction in God’s handiwork, he is present to renew and energize and create again.”40

Theologically, I interpret the success of contemporary Pentecostalism as God’s Spirit of renewal at work. The Spirit of God was at work in creation and in the prophets (Heb. 1:1–3), as the presence accompanying Moses as he led Israel (Ex. 33:14), as the one who restored dry bones to life (Ezek. 37), and as overshadowing Mary to conceive and bear the Christ (Luke 1).

The Spirit came upon Jesus Christ at his baptism and anointed him to “bring good news to the poor. . . . to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour” (Luke 4:18–19). At Pentecost the Spirit was there to reinvigorate Jesus’ despondent disciples by empowering them for witness (Acts 2), and the promise of the Holy Spirit was for all generations, including those ‘who are far away’ (Acts 2:38–39). Those who are far away are the outsiders, those from Gentile territories who came from every nation to receive the blessings of Pentecost.

These developments have great implications for how we talk about the church in Africa in terms of theological scholarship. In the past the emphasis was on cultural relevance but that does not seem to be of much interest any longer because in making their choices for the faith, African Christians have not sought to make traditional religion “Christian” but instead have sought for biblical Christianity to answer African questions.

37 Sanneh, Whose Religion is Christianity, p. 18.
38 Lamin Sanneh, Translating the Message, p. 30.
40 Taylor, Go-Between God, p. 27.
African Christian scholarship

The writings of scholars in African Christianity, through journals like the *IRM*, demonstrate the extent to which the Christian tradition has become part of Africa, over the past century in particular. They indicate the distinctively African shape that Christianity is taking as a result being appropriated and integrated as an African religion. Christian scholarship follows and derives from Christian mission, and the need for scholarship arose as soon as the gospel crossed its first cultural frontier – that between Israel and the Hellenistic world.\(^{41}\) Thus from its inception, Christian mission has been a history of scholarship and documentation, which is also the case for its early planting in Africa. Early Ethiopian Christianity developed “its own distinctive literature and tradition of scholarship, using its own distinctive writing system,” which enabled Ethiopian Christianity to recover from near disaster.\(^{42}\)

The tradition of Christian scholarship continued with the modern missionary movement in Africa, which out of its central concern to communicate the gospel, was compelled to turn to “innovative scholarship.”\(^{43}\) As non-Western Christian theology, especially that focused on Pentecostal/Charismatic Christianity is shifting gradually to the centre as mainstream theology, Christian scholarship is called to realize the dawn of this new theological era and rise up to the occasion.

African theological scholarship will help determine the shape and quality of world Christianity, because through theological scholarship its leadership may shift into African hands. Authentic theological scholarship, Walls argues, must arise out of Christian mission and, therefore, from the principal theatres of mission like Africa. What this means is that if Africa and the other continents of the South fail to develop proper capacities for leadership in theological studies, for all practical purposes, no theological studies anywhere will be worth caring about.\(^{44}\) This is a challenge that the *IRM* must continue to take on in order to champion discussion on what the Holy Spirit may be doing through African Christianity in our age.

In conclusion, we began by observing that one of the surprises of the 21st century, as far as religion is concerned, is that Africa has emerged as an important mediator of

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\(^{42}\) Ibid., p. 45.

\(^{43}\) Ibid., p. 46.

\(^{44}\) Ibid., p. 47.
Christianity to the world. This importance lies in the recognition that the faith has taken refuge in non-Western cultures of Africa because they remain open to a faith that seems to have lost much ground in its former heartlands. Following the articles written in various issues of the IRM on Africa or Pentecostalism enables us to come to terms with the current transformation of world Christianity and Africa’s role within that change. The type of Christianity and Christian theology coming from Africa is important in understanding the current shape of world Christianity.

To this end, Turner has pointed out that as a science, theology depends on access to appropriate data in their most authentic and vital forms. Such data, he suggests, “will be more evident and accessible in unsophisticated churches where the living God is taken seriously as present in the healing and conquering power of the Spirit, with gospel-oriented growth and a spiritual creativity and confidence.”45 Africa is very much a context that has been open to the work of the Spirit through various revivals, and where the Bible has kept its place as containing God’s prophetic voice and authority. In the end no serious study of Africa can ignore Christianity and the role it has come to play in Africa. To understand African Christianity however, significant attention must be given to the ways in which indigenous Christians have appropriated the faith and made sense of it against the backdrop of traditional religious and cultural worldviews. It is within these cultural worldviews that people find their identity and live in relation to the transcendent powers of the universe with God at the helm and very active in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Primed for the Spirit: Creation, Redemption and the Missio Spiritus

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Abstract

The focus of this article is the pneumatological foundations of Christian mission. My thesis is that the work of the Holy Spirit in creation, redemption, and eschatological salvation is central to Christian mission theology. Theology of mission is thus approached both in terms of the missio Dei more generally and the missio Spiritus more specifically. This argument for a pneumatological missiology is attentive to recent trends and developments in both theological and missiological literature. In conclusion, practical implications of such a pneumatologically oriented theology of mission are explored.

Pneumatological foundations for Christian mission

Christian theology of mission can be understood as undergoing a paradigm shift. The older colonial, Enlightenment-based, and Western-motivated approaches have been undergoing convulsions in the last two generations and slowly giving way to postcolonial, post-Enlightenment, and post-Western voices and perspectives. The focus on spiritual or eschatological salvation has shifted toward more holistic emphases that include not only embodiment and materiality but also socio-economic and political considerations. These various developments have been signalled by missiological themes such as missio Dei, holistic mission, and transformative mission, as well as in other mission initiatives focused on indigenous agency and local contextualization or inculturation.¹

Missiological discourse has also been impacted theologically by the emergence of the doctrines of the Trinity and the renaissance of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit

¹ Representative of this transition is David Bosch’s magisterial Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission, Orbis, Maryknoll (1991).
(pneumatology) in the last half of the 20th century. Discussions after Barth have led to an invigorated thinking about trinitarian theology – e.g., Pannenberg, Moltmann, and Jenson, among others – and this also has been registered in the discussion in theology of mission. Not surprisingly, *missio Dei* perspectives have morphed in a trinitarian direction, not only in terms of emphasizing the divine economic missions of the Son and the Spirit but also in terms of exploring the relevance of trinitarian motifs for missiology.

Alongside developments in trinitarian theology has been the re-emergence of the theology of mission. This article will sketch the pneumatological foundations of such missiological discourse by tracing the implications of the doctrine of the Spirit for theology of mission, in relationship to the doctrines of creation, redemption, and the eschaton. By pursuing the *missio Spiritus* with regard to these traditional theological and doctrinal loci, we shall see how a pneumatologically based missiology both reflects and also interfaces with the ongoing paradigm shifts in theology of mission.

**Act I – Missio Spiritus: the Spirit of creation**

In thinking about pneumatology, pneumatological theology, and pneumatology of mission, we should begin with the doctrine of creation. This not only helps us to ground pneumatological reflection in the doctrine of God, but it also establishes the cosmic, creational, and global scope of the work of the Spirit. Unless connected to the doctrine of God as creator, the Spirit may turn out to be less than “holy,” perhaps not even related at all to the God of Judeo-Christian faith, much less to monotheistic or

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2 As a systematician, I presume the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, but at the same time, I am aware of the hazards of reading the Bible from this post-Nicene perspective. The challenges are particularly highlighted when thinking about pneumatology since, as John H. Levison argues – in *Filled in the Spirit*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids (2009) – the *ruah* of the Hebrew Bible and the *pneuma* of the Christian Testament are not easily translatable into the post-conciliar orthodox terms of personal hypostasis alongside that of the Father and the Son. This is neither the time nor the place to adjudicate these matters further. My only recommendation is that readers presuppose neither an unequivocal identity between the biblical references and our received trinitarian understanding of the Holy Spirit nor a discontinuity between them.


even theistic sensibilities.\(^5\) Indeed, there are many spirits, so that Christian thinking about pneumatology, at least initially, must be defined as the Spirit of the God who created the heavens and the earth. Without this connection to the cosmic expanse of the Spirit’s work, we may be tempted merely to interiorize or subjectivize the Spirit’s presence and activity.

The role of the Spirit in the Christian doctrine of creation has gradually become more recognized.\(^6\) In my own work, I have attempted a pneumatological reading of the Genesis narratives.\(^7\) This begins with the observation that while “the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep,” the author of the creation account notes that “a wind from God [\textit{ruah Elohim}] swept over the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:2). While traditional creation theologies have highlighted the creation of the world through the word of God, a pneumatological perspective notices both that the word of God is uttered through the divine breath and that the history of the world is blown or swept along by the presence and activity of the 
\textit{ruah Elohim}. The partitioning of the waters from land, the emergence of vegetation, the evolution of life itself – each of these can be understood from this pneumatological vantage point as being propelled by the breath of God that transcendentally hovered over the primordial creation.

The divine breath is not only transcendent over the creation but also immanent within it. This is because all living creatures have been constituted by \textit{Elohim}’s “breath of life” (Gen. 1:30). Human beings also have been personally visited by the creator God: “the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being” (Gen. 2:7). Thus living creatures, especially human beings, are essentially constituted by the divine breath. As we read later in the Hebrew Bible: “If he should take back his spirit to himself, and gather to himself his breath, all flesh would perish together, and all mortals return to dust” (Job 34:14–15). Beyond this, the Psalmist indicates that the divine breath not only gives life to creatures, but also that through this breath the face of the ground is renewed (Ps. 104:29–30). The prophet Isaiah proclaims that “a spirit from on high is poured out on

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\(^5\) There are also possibilities for thinking about the Spirit of God in relationship to monotheistic traditions more generally and to Islam in particular. I undertake a dialogue with Islam in my \textit{The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology}, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids (2005), ch. 6.


us, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest” (Isa. 32:15). The very rhythms of creation beat to the drumming of the creator Spirit.⁸

It is important to note the missiological implications of a pneumatological theology of creation. If a Logos theology emphasizes that the Word became flesh and, as the true light, “enlightens everyone” in the world (John 1:9), then the doctrine of creator Spiritus insists that all life, human life included, exists through the infusion of the divine breath. Thus, as the ancient poets recognized, “In him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). Human beings meet one another on a pneumatological plane. More pointedly, humans interrelate with one another pneumatically, through the breath of life given by the ruah of God. Christian mission is thus always and primordially missio Spiritus.⁹

One more layer of a pneumatological theology of creation should be lifted up before turning to the doctrine of redemption. Divine redemption is required because although the ruah Elohim hovered over the primordial waters and became the breath of life for all living creatures, with the fall of creation, the cosmos and all of its creatures remains alienated from God the Creator. Paradoxically, then, the ruah Elohim is both present to all creatures – enlivening and vivifying the creation – and yet also absent from them – in the estrangement creatures simultaneously feel toward other creatures and to their Creator. In anticipation of this redemptive work, the promise is given in the Hebrew Bible that God will redeem the world pneumatically through the chosen or elect nation of Israel.

There are two moments constitutive of such a pneumatological promise. First, God pledges to Abraham that, “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). Second, even the divine promises are insufficient to preserve and ultimately save the called people of God. Rather, God needs to accomplish an internal work, a work of the Spirit: “A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances” (Ezek. 36:26–27). This anticipates the later gift of the Spirit in Christ. But


⁹ Here I apply Lyle Dabney’s notion that we begin always and already in the Spirit, not only in the Christian sense of encountering God through the Holy Spirit but in the Hebrew sense of being enlivened by the ruah Elohim; see in particular Dabney, chapters 1 and 4 in Starting with the Spirit: Task of Theology Today II, Gordon Preece and Stephen Pickard, eds, Australia Theological Forum and Openbook, Adelaide (2001).
for our purposes at this juncture, it is important to point out that the creational mission of the Spirit not only infuses the dust of the ground with life but also looks ahead to another pneumatic outpouring and infilling. In other words, the creation as a whole, as well as its creatures, is primed to receive the redemptive fullness of the Spirit.

**Act II – *Missio Spiritus*: the Spirit of redemption**

The second moment of the *missio Spiritus* moves from the universality of the Spirit’s presence and activity in the creation to the particularity of the Spirit’s historical work in redemption. This redemptive history involves the incarnation of the Son via the power of the Spirit, followed by the Son’s gift of the Spirit to the people of God. But why are both essential? For at least two reasons, one historical and the other spiritual. Historically, the Son came in order to renew and restore Israel as the people of God; this renewal and restoration was intended both to serve as a template for the kingdom of God and to inaugurate that kingdom. But God’s offer of restoration and renewal in the Son was rejected, and he suffered a violent death. Yet his death became salvific because it served as a scapegoat that prevented further outbreaks of violence (at least for one generation). Spiritually, the life and death of the Son represented the obedience that served as the basis for reconciliation of human beings in particular and of the world as a whole with God. Then the resurrection and ascension of the Son confirmed the potentiality of the world’s transfiguration in the presence and power of God. Hence, as the ancient church confessed, the Son became human so that human beings might be redeemed as children of God; by extension, the Son was clothed with the dust of the earth, so that the creation itself might be renewed as the dwelling place of God.

The mission of the Son cannot be divorced from the *missio Spiritus*; they are inextricably intertwined. The Spirit is the power not only of the Son’s breath of life but also of the Son’s conception and generation in the womb of Mary. Just as the *ruah Elohim* hovered over the structural ordering of the primordial chaos, so also did the Spirit

10 Here, I am in basic agreement with the central thrust of N. T. Wright’s interpretation of the mission of Jesus; my own appropriation of Wright’s account is in my *In the Days of Caesar: Pentecostalism and Political Theology – The Cadbury Lectures 2009*, Sacra Doctrina: Christian Theology for a Postmodern Age series, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids and Cambridge (2010), ch. 3.

11 This historical reading of the significance of Jesus’ life and death I find in the persuasive even if controversial thesis of René Girard, who has written many books on mimetic violence and the scapegoat. There is also a growing secondary literature debating the pros and cons of his argument. My own point of entry into Girard’s work has been his *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, trans. James G. Williams. Orbis, Maryknoll; Novalis, Ottawa; Gracewing, Leominster UK (2001).

12 The preceding only outlines a few important trajectories for a theology of the atonement. A more in-depth discussion can be found in my *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh*, ch. 2. For greater elaboration of a pneumatological soteriology in dialogue with disability perspectives, see my *Theology and Down Syndrome: Reimagining Disability in Late Modernity*, Baylor University, Waco (2007), chs. 6–8.
overshadow and come upon Mary (Luke 1:35). Then the Spirit descends on the Son at his baptism in the Jordan (Luke 3:22) so that he can be filled with the Spirit for his public ministry, which is launched by his spiritual confrontation with the demonic powers of the world (Luke 4:1,14). Hence, Jesus announces that his mission is that of the Spirit: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour” (Luke 4:18–19). The rest of his public ministry unfolds this agenda according to the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38).13

If Jesus accomplished the saving works of God through the power of the Spirit – proclaiming the gospel to all, particularly the poor, healing the sick, delivering the oppressed and the captives, and inaugurating the Jubilee year of divine favour and redemption14 – then so also did his original disciples. They were initially told to wait in Jerusalem for “power from on high” (Luke 24:49) and then later, were promised: “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). As the gospel of Luke narrates the saving works of the Spirit impelling the life and ministry of Christ, so the book of Acts tells of Jesus sending from the right hand of the Father the promised redemptive power of the Spirit into the lives and ministries of the apostolic believers (Acts 2:33). Whereas Jesus came first to renew and restore Israel, with forays into Samaria, the Spirit-filled ministry of the earliest followers of Jesus took them to the ends of the earth.15

The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost brings to historical fulfilment two promises made to ancient Israel. First, if ancient Israel had been disobedient to the covenant with Yahweh due to hardness of heart, the newly reconstituted people of God were no longer merely bound externally by law but were empowered internally by transformed hearts that had been touched by the Spirit. This is one of the central

13 This is the basis for a Spirit-christology, not one thatdispenses with Logos-christology but that recognizes that the “from above” model insufficiently captures the historicity and humanity of the life and ministry of the Son through the Spirit. I elaborate on the Spirit-empowered ministry of Jesus as Saviour/deliverer, sanctifier, Spirit-baptizer, healer, and coming king in my In the Days of Caesar, part II.

14 There is virtual scholarly consensus that the “year of the Lord’s favour,” cited by Jesus from the Isianic scroll, refers to the ancient Israelite year of Jubilee in which economic justice was to have been re-established throughout the land. See, e.g., Razoucel Laseto, Nazareth Manifesto: Theology of Jubilee and Its Trajectories in Luke to Acts, ISPCK, Delhi (2006). A contemporary expansion is Andrew Lord, Spirit-Shaped Mission: A Holistic Charismatic Missiology, Paternoster, Bletchley, UK (2005).

messages of New Testament: that the Hebraic law provided for sacrifices for sins but the gift of the Spirit enables the evangelical obedience that produces sanctified and holy lives (see Heb. 9:13–14 and passim). In other words, the divine breath of life in every person as a result of the creative work of the Spirit, at least potentially, is the divine breath of holiness resulting from the redemptive work of the Spirit unleashed on the day of Pentecost.

Secondly, the Pentecost outpouring of the Spirit inaugurates the promised redemption of the nations, derived from the covenant made with Abraham. This occurred in two ways: at the Pentecost feast, the presence of “devout Jews [and proselytes] from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem” (Acts 2:5, 10), and through the apostolic missionary movement that went not only from Jerusalem to Rome (as recounted in Acts), but that also commissioned others to take the gospel in other directions (e.g., as did the Ethiopian eunuch inActs 8).16 There are innumerable cultural and religious implications here in the Pentecost narrative for the Christian mission (to which I will return later), but the root of the issue is that the promises made to Abraham are now available to the Gentiles, who together with the Jews constitute the church as the people of God.

This was a point of tumultuous contention among the earliest followers of Jesus as the Messiah, primarily because most of them were uneducated Jews who could not understand why the covenant promises were now being extended to their Gentile oppressors. The *missio Spiritus* thus generates ongoing surprises that involve the crossing of borders so that agents of mission continually find the lines between “insiders” and “outsiders” being blurred – at least on this side of the *eschaton*, a time during which we all see through a glass only dimly.

The lack of formal closure to the book of Acts invites readers in every place and time since then to participate in the work and witness of the Spirit of God in Christ, as if part of the book’s 29th chapter. The Spirit who empowered the Son, and who was poured out upon and filled the apostles, is the same Spirit who continues to accomplish the redemptive work of God in Christ, and through the post-apostolic church. This ongoing work in history leads to the third and concluding act of the *missio Spiritus*.

Act III – *Missio Spiritus*: the Spirit of the eschaton

We began with the work of the Spirit in creation, and in the preceding have discussed the Spirit’s redemptive work in Christ and the Pentecost outpouring that constituted the church. Now we turn to the eschatological work of the Spirit anticipating the final renewal and restoration of the creation as a whole. This eschatological work was inaugurated in the redemptive work of the Spirit in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. As the apostle Peter said: “In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh . . .” (Acts 2:17, citing Joel 2:28; italics added).17 Again, there are two dimensions to this eschatological work of the Spirit: the christological and the ecclesiological.

Christologically, the eschatological work of the Spirit is most clearly revealed in Jesus’ proclamation regarding the coming kingdom and his accomplishing the signs of the kingdom. These latter include his miraculous deeds, his healings, and his exorcisms of evil spirits.18 These are signs of the coming kingdom precisely because they can be understood either as suspending the present order of things (i.e., the “laws of nature” as currently conceived), or as anticipating the ways in which the coming world will operate.19 The Spirit enables Christ to accomplish the works that bring about the shape of the coming kingdom, and in the process announce the end of the present cosmic order.

Most importantly, however, the Spirit announces the arrival of the kingdom in the resurrection of Jesus. If death is the most ubiquitous sign of the world as we know it, resurrection life provides us with a foretaste of the world to come. The apostles noted that Jesus was “put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit” (1 Pet. 3:18b), or alternatively: “He was revealed in flesh, vindicated in spirit. . .” (1 Tim. 3:16) and “declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:4, italics added). So whereas sin, condemnation, and death reign in the


present dispensation, holiness, justification, righteousness, and resurrection life are
signs of the coming kingdom. Hence, “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the
dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal
bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you” (Rom. 8:11). However, even christo-
logically the fullness of the Spirit is not yet manifest in and through the Christ – that
awaits the parousia, the return of the anointed Messiah who will finally and fully
establish the coming reign of God. As the author of the first Johannine epistle writes:
“when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is” (1 Jn. 3:2).

Again, the work of the Spirit in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus is now available
to the followers of Christ, the church, the body of Christ and the fellowship of the
Spirit. We now also have received the Spirit as well as the gifts of the Spirit that are given
liberally for the edification of all and for the common good (1 Cor. 12:7–11). The
apostolic empowerment by the Spirit thus also enabled the apostles to work miraculous
signs and wonders, including healing the sick, exorcising demons, and even raising the
dead. These works continued proclaiming the imminent coming kingdom, even while
precipitating its arrival. As people of the eschatological Spirit, the apostolic message was
proclaimed “not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the
Spirit and of power” (1 Cor. 2:4). In this sense, then, the church as the people of the
Spirit glimpses through the eschatological mirror dimly (1 Cor. 12:13), even now
enacting the works of the kingdom in anticipation of the full glory that is to be revealed.
Thus, in a fundamental sense, the Spirit is both present – already having introduced the
coming reign of God – and yet also absent – not yet fully having established the
righteousness of God.

Yet the eschatological work of the Spirit is not only anthropocentric but also cosmic in
scope. The apostle Paul wrote: “We know that the whole creation has been groaning in
labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first
fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our
bodies” (Rom. 8:22–23). On the one hand, the outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh
has already begun the final transfiguration, such that the sun, the moon, and the
heavenly elements have also begun to anticipate the great and coming day of the Lord
(Acts 2:19–20). On the other hand, according to Acts 2, the gift of the Spirit has only
initiated the apocalyptic conditions under which the fullness of redemption – the “third
act” – will be fully accomplished in the coming reign of God. In the meanwhile, there
will be fleeting signs of the Spirit’s presence and activity, following after the works of

20 For more on my pneumatological theology of the charisms, see God is Spirit, God is Love: Love as the Gift of the Spirit, Baylor
University, Waco (2012), ch. 7.
the Spirit manifest in Christ and the charismatic experiences of the apostolic believers; these are a prelude of the fullness of the Spirit’s work in the coming future. While Easter Sunday has come in the resurrection of Christ and in the regenerating work of the Spirit (the “already” of the Spirit’s presence), nevertheless, the world also remains on Holy Saturday, betwixt and between the times (in the “not yet of the Spirit’s eschatological activity), anticipating the resurrection of all flesh.

Beyond the resurrection of dead bodies, this final eschatological revelation of the Spirit signals the completion of the divine work begun when the world was created, bringing to fruition what was set in motion as the ruah Elohim hovered over the primordial waters.21 All of creation is destined to be reconciled to the Creator, not only human beings but also the entire cosmic order. This is so that all things may be reconciled to God in Christ (Col. 1:15–20) and that “God may be all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28b): “For from him and through him and to him are all things” (Rom. 11:36, italics added). However, the dynamic “engine” driving this eschatological reconciliation is the Spirit. In other words, the Spirit of creation and redemption is also the coming Spirit, who enables the renewal and restoration of all things to the image of God in Christ. So if in Act 2 the redemptive work of the Spirit enables her to inhabit human flesh – first, the flesh of Jesus and then, of all flesh – then in Act 3, the eschatological work of the Spirit transforms and transfigures all creation as the dwelling place of the Spirit of the living God.22

**Pneumatological prolepsis and Christian mission**

This article has surveyed the pneumatological foundations of Christian missiology by identifying the mission, role, and work of the Spirit in creation, redemption (in Christ and through the church), and the eschaton. I proffer that such a pneumatological emphasis is essential for a fully trinitarian mission theology precisely because most have an anaemic theology of the Holy Spirit. Without a robust pneumatology, allegedly trinitarian theological constructs are inevitably reduced to “binitarian” formulations, at best.

A sturdy pneumatological foundation that understands the *missio Spiritus* as both related to but also distinct from the economy of the Son, will result in an enriched patrology and christology, while simultaneously comprehending the full scope of God’s redemptive work, both across space (cosmic) and across time (diachronic).

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21 See Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, ch. 8.3.

One further set of implications of a *missio Spiritus* in three acts concerns the scope of the Spirit’s presence and activity. If the Spirit’s creative reach stretches across the cosmos, and if the Spirit’s redemptive work covers all flesh, at least potentially, then a pneumatological theology of mission includes at least the following:

- a theology of culture in which the cultural dimension of human life already is imbued with the Spirit’s presence and activity, thereby enabling the gospel to be inculturated and contextualized;
- a political theology in which the Spirit is already at work in the public, social, and economic spheres of human life, thereby enabling the redemption and transfiguration of these dimensions of human existence consistent with the gospel;\(^{23}\)
- a theology of religions that views the religious dimension of human life as pointing to and awaiting fulfilment in the gospel of Jesus Christ;\(^{24}\)
- a theology of the environment or an ecological theology that sees the en-spirited nature of the creation and all creatures as anticipating the renewal of the cosmos as the dwelling place or habitat of the Holy Spirit.\(^{25}\)

Each of these can also have demonic aspects. Mission in the Spirit, however, enables discernment of spirits so that what is impure can be identified and exorcised, in order that what remains can be redeemed to bear witness – through the many tongues of the Spirit – to the wondrous works of God in Christ (Acts 2:11).

This tripartite pneumatological missiology also suggests that while we live in the world or cosmos as if we are not of it, we also abide in the present as informed by the past yet anticipating the future. More precisely, the eschatological Act 3 of the Spirit has already arrived in a real sense in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. This means that the present is now primed for transfiguration according to the power of the Spirit, whose kingdom is both here (Luke 17:21) but also paradoxically yet to come. In other words, our present era is also the time of God’s proleptic revelation. The future time of the

\(^{23}\) I suggest (in *In the Days of Caesar*, ch. 2.2.3 and passim), following Abraham Kuyper’s notion of sphere sovereignty, that these are prelapsarian dimensions of human experience, powers judged and redeemed by the gospel.


\(^{25}\) Aside from their many other important contributions to pneumatology, this has been one of the significant legacies of feminist theologies of the Spirit – e.g., Rebecca Buxton Prichard, *Sensing the Spirit: The Holy Spirit in Feminist Perspective*, Chalice Press, St. Louis (1999); Nancy Victorin-Vangerud, *The Raging Heartfelt Spirit in the Household of God*, Chalice Press, St. Louis (2000); and Molly T. Marshall, *Joining the Dance: A Theology of the Spirit*, Judson, Valley Forge (2003).
Spirit is now present, at least in part, in and through the body of Christ. Hence we both experience the resurrection life of the Spirit, even as we hasten the imminent arrival of the kingdom.26

Life in the Spirit is thus received in faith, experienced in love, and anticipated in hope. And the missio Spiritus is less driven by the forces of history than drawn forward by the pull of the eschaton. If that is the case, then the Christian mission is less about what we do – as important as that is – than about our participation in the last days’ work of the Spirit to renew, restore, and redeem the world. Come, Holy Spirit . . .27


27 The author presented this article at the May 2011 meeting of the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) working group on mission and spirituality in Kingston, Jamaica. Thanks to Dr Jooseop Keum of the WCC, CWME, for his invitation to participate in this working group on mission and spirituality. My graduate assistant Timothy Lim read and commented on a prior version of this paper. The ideas represented, however, are my own.
Editors of the International Review of Mission

This gallery of portraits presents photos and biographical sketches of the journal’s 13 editors, from its inception to today.

1. J.H. Oldham, IRM editor 1912–1928

The journal owes its existence to Joseph Houldsworth “Joe” Oldham, a Scotsman who in 1912 launched the International Review of Missions. Oldham was the secretary of the 1910 world missionary conference in Edinburgh, of which IRM is “a fruit”. In 1911 Oldham became the secretary of the Edinburgh 1910 conference continuation committee and from 1921–1938 he served as the secretary of the International Missionary Council (IMC), which replaced the continuation committee.

2. William Paton, IRM editor 1928–1943

William Paton, UK, succeeded J.H. Oldham as the secretary of the International Missionary Council and as the IRM editor. During his editorship he was the organizer of the Jerusalem (1928) and the Tambaram, Madras, India (1938) missionary conferences. Paton’s policy of encouragement of full participation of the so-called younger churches was highly significant. In 1938, with W.A. Visser ’t Hooft he became associate general secretary of the provisional WCC.

Norman Goodall, UK, succeeded W. Paton as the IMC secretary and *IRM* editor. As the Foreign Secretary of the London Missionary Society 1936–1944, he had travelled widely in India, the South Seas, New Guinea, and in other parts of the world as well. He was secretary of the Joint Committee of the International Missionary Council and the WCC, 1955–1961, prior to the union of the two in New Delhi (1961); assistant general secretary of the WCC, 1961–63.


E. J. Bingle, as a missionary, taught history and economics at Madras Christian College, India, for nearly twenty years. When in 1945 he returned to England, he served as editorial secretary of the IMC for ten years, for the last five years he was the editor of the *International Review of Missions* and was an active member of the staff of the Department of Mission Studies. To these tasks he brought mature scholarship and acute discernment and made for himself a very special place in the IMC secretariat; he won the confidence of the wide constituency he sought to serve.

Margaret Sinclair “came to the work of the Review in 1940 as editorial assistant to William Paton. From 1946 to 1958 she was assistant editor, and from that date till the end of June 1962 she carried the entire editorial responsibility.... Her remarkable catholicity of knowledge and interest, her sound sense of missionary priorities, her meticulous care and accuracy in all the many details of editorial work and her single-minded devotion to the interests of the Review have brought it to a point where its circulation stands higher than it has for over twenty years, and where its reputation is unchallenged. The missionary movement owes a debt of gratitude to Miss Sinclair....” (Lesslie Newbigin, IRM, 204: 4 (1962): 484.)


In 1959 Bishop Lesslie Newbigin from the UK became the general secretary of the International Missionary Council. He led the IMC to the point of integration with the WCC, completed at the New Delhi assembly in 1961. He served as director of the Division on World Mission and Evangelism till 1965. “The man who was to be the leader in the years leading to integration and in the period of making it a reality had to be a man in whose thought and teaching integration between ‘mission’ and ‘unity’ had already taken place. And this was especially true of Lesslie Newbigin. For he had been the advocate of the missionary cause among the ecumenists and the advocate of the cause of unity among the missionaries”.

Philip Potter, a Methodist pastor from Dominica, West Indies, devoted a long career in church service to mission, ecumenism and work with youth and students. As a Methodist Missionary Society overseas secretary he was active in the International Missionary Council during integration with the WCC. Potter was the director of the WCC Division of World Mission and Evangelism and the *IRM* editor (1967–1972). While he was director, the world mission conference “Salvation Today” was organized in Bangkok, Thailand (1972/73), and the *IRM* Index 1912–1966 produced. From 1972–1984, Potter was general secretary of the WCC. An eloquent and forceful speaker and leader of Bible studies, Potter received numerous honorary degrees and awards.


A Methodist pastor from Uruguay, Emilio Castro was involved in numerous church and ecumenical activities, e.g., executive secretary of the South American Association of Theological Schools (1966–69); coordinator of the Commission for Evangelical Unity in Latin America (1965–72). He was director of the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism 1973–1983. Under his directorship the mission statement “Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation” was elaborated and approved by Central Committee in 1982. Castro was WCC general secretary from 1985–1992. He received a doctoral degree from the University of Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1984.

The late Eugene L. Stockwell, a Methodist pastor from the USA, spent many years in Latin America as a missionary. Back in the US, he was Latin America secretary and assistant general secretary for programme administration in the World Division of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, associate general secretary for overseas ministries of the National Council of Churches of Christ, USA before becoming the director of the WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism and the *IRM* editor in 1984. Under Stockwell’s directorship the CWME world mission conference on the theme “Your Will Be Done: Mission in Christ’s Way”, San Antonio, Texas, USA (1989) was organized by F.R. Wilson.


Christopher Duraisingh, a presbyter of the Church of South India, served as a professor in theology (1970–1985) in India and the general secretary of the Council for World Mission in London (1985–1989) before he became director of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism in 1989. As the WCC executive secretary for Gospel and Culture he conducted the gospel and cultures study process across the world, leading to the CWME world mission conference on the theme “Called to One Hope—the Gospel in Diverse Cultures”, Salvador Bahia, Brazil (1996). He produced the gospel and cultures pamphlets series (1–18, on topics from the four corners of the world with different authors) of which no 1 “Gospel and Culture—An Ongoing Discussion within the Ecumenical Movement”, ed. S. Wesley Ariarajah, elicited much interest. During his editorship the second *IRM* index 1912–1990 was published. Duraisingh has been a faculty member of the Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, USA since 1997.

Ana Langerak, from the USA, has spent most of her life in Latin America. She is a pastor of the Costa Rican Lutheran Church. Ana was on the staff of the WCC during two periods. She was assistant director of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism from 1981–1984, and took office as director of Unit II: Health, Education and Witness in 1994. Under her directorship the unit produced the findings of a seminal study on HIV/AIDS and organized the world mission conference of Salvador, Bahia (1996) on the relation between gospel and cultures. Strongly committed to ecumenical cooperation, Ana led the Latin American Evangelical Center for Pastoral Studies (CELEP) and actively promoted the work of the Latin American Council of Churches. She worked in women’s empowerment and gender-based biblical reflection with groups in Central America. Upon retirement from the WCC she served as a pastor of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Arnold, Maryland, and coordinated Hispanic outreach for her Synod. She is currently in ministry in the Costa Rican Lutheran Church in the areas of pastoral training and accompaniment of persons with HIV.


Jacques Matthey, a pastor of the (Reformed) Protestant Church of Geneva, Switzerland, had his first experience with the WCC as an intern in the early 1970s. Later he organized the world mission conference “Your Kingdom Come”, Melbourne, Australia (1980). Matthey was appointed executive secretary for Mission Studies and editor of IRM in 1999 after many years of heading the “DM – Echange et Mission” (Mission Department of the French-speaking Protestant Churches of Switzerland) in Lausanne. Under his leadership the CWME world mission conference on the theme “Come Holy Spirit, heal and reconcile!” was organized in Athens, Greece (2005). In 2007 WCC reorganized and Matthey became the director of Programme 2: Unity, Mission, Evangelism and Spirituality. He served on many church committees and remains actively involved with the “Association Francophone Occuménique de Missiologie” (French-speaking Ecumenical Association for Mission Studies). Matthey retired in 2010.

Jooseop Keum, a missiologist from the Presbyterian Church of Korea, served the Council for World Mission as executive secretary for the mission programme from 2003–2007. He joined the WCC as executive secretary for Mission Studies and editor of *IRM* in 2008. As the secretary of CWME, he coordinates the development of a new WCC affirmation on mission and evangelism which will be presented to the WCC assembly at Busan, Korea, in 2013. In a changed context, the new mission statement will compliment the 1982 Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation.
“The Conference must be not an end but a beginning.” This thought was constantly present to the minds of those responsible for the preliminary work of the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh. An important step towards the attainment of the end desired was taken in the appointment of the Continuation Committee. It soon became evident that if that Committee was to render useful service, there must be some means by which it could be in the closest touch with the large body of missionary thinkers and workers throughout the world, keeping them informed of its plans and the results of its investigations, and receiving constant inspiration from the general movement of thought regarding the work of Christian missions. The present Review affords such a bond of union between those who, in all parts of the world, are seeking to carry out the ideals of the Edinburgh Conference. Interchange of thought and counsel is essential, if there is to be a united effort to respond to the call which came to the Church through the Conference.

The primary purpose of the Review is to further the serious study of the facts and problems of missionary work among non-Christian peoples, and to contribute to the building up of a science of missions. The term “science” is not used in any sense which would limit the freedom either of God or of man. The whole missionary enterprise rests on faith in a God with whom all things are possible. But this truth does not absolve us from learning from the past and from one another. The magnitude and complexity of the problems that have to be faced compel us to take wide and comprehensive views; to learn to see each particular piece of work in relation to the whole; to study and sift the vast body of experience that has been accumulated in different mission fields, and make it available for the direction of present work; to aim at reaching large guiding principles, based on a thorough and fearless examination of the facts; and to test all
methods with a view to securing the highest efficiency. The evangelization of the non-Christian world is too great an enterprise to be accomplished without sustained intellectual labour. Insight and knowledge, as well as energy and zeal, are needed for solid and enduring work. Not only an outward expansion, but an inward deepening and strengthening is necessary, if the missionary movement is to fulfil its high aims. To help in bringing this about is the chief purpose of the present Review.

The study of missionary problems will be undertaken in international co-operation. Each nation has the capacity of apprehending more clearly than any other some particular element or aspect of the whole, and in proportion as the special gifts of each are made contributory to the common good, there will result a larger, richer, and juster view of missionary work than has yet been attained. Practical considerations require that the language of the Review should for the most part be English, though, to emphasize its international character, we shall from time to time publish an article in German or French. While the Review will be published in Great Britain, the views of American and Continental students of missions will find as full expression in its pages of those of British thinkers. The representative advisory editorial board will be of great assistance in giving effect to this policy. The time being past, moreover, when missionary problems can be studied exclusively from the standpoint of Europe and America, prominence will be given to contributions from the leaders of the Church in the mission field.

It is our desire to serve all missionary societies and associations at home and on the mission field. We stand unreservedly for the principle of inter-denominational co-operation as distinct from undenominational or extra-denominational action. The Continuation Committee, so far as its limited membership permits, is representative of the leading missionary organizations of Europe and America, and the publication of the present Review may be regarded as the first effort of missionary societies and boards to undertake in international combination what it would hardly be possible for any one of them to do alone. We recognize, further, how much valuable work has already been done by existing missionary magazines, denominational and general, at home and on the mission field, in promoting the study of missionary problems. It will be our aim to supplement, and in every possible way to co-operate with, all good work that is being carried on at present.

It may be well to state more definitely what we have immediately in view. Among the subjects demanding serious study, one of the most important is the Missionary Message in relation to each of the non-Christian religions. We have made arrangements for a series of articles which will aim at shedding fresh light on two questions of fundamental
importance. The first is, What is found in actual experience to be really living in the non-Christian religions, as distinct from that which is mainly traditional and formal? What elements in them are genuinely prized as affording religious help and consolation, and exert a real influence on character and conduct? The second question is, What are the vital forces of the Gospel as it comes in contact with non-Christian peoples? What aspects of it possess the greatest power of appeal? The articles will be written by representative missionaries in different mission fields, and will deal with the subject in the light of the personal observation and reflection of the writers. They will carry further the work of the Commission of the Edinburgh Conference on the Missionary Message. The presentation and comparison of the opinions of those who have had the best opportunity of studying at first hand the contact of Christianity with the non-Christian religions, will promote a clearer understanding of the best means of delivering the Christian message. A beginning will be made with a series dealing with the Vital Forces of Christianity and Islam, the first article of which, by the Rev. W. H. T. Gairdner, appears in the present issue.

It was generally recognized at the Edinburgh Conference that the chief factor in missionary work at the present time is the Church in the mission field. In many countries the problem of making Christianity indigenous, and of building up a strong, independent, self-supporting, self-propagating Church is even more pressing than that of securing more foreign missionaries. This problem in all its aspects will receive large attention in the pages of the Review. In addition to articles on particular problems, a series of papers will deal from a historical point of view with the growth of the Church in important mission fields. The writers will be carefully chosen to represent different mission fields and different types of missions. The papers will not attempt to give in detail the external facts regarding the growth of the Church, but will discuss the problems which have had to be faced and the principles which have guided the development of the Church. The material thus collected, which does not at present exist in any easily accessible form, will be of value both to those engaged in the practical work of building up the Church in the mission field and to students of Church history. Dr. Warneck’s article in the present number, giving an account of the Church among the Bataks, is the first paper in the series.

Problems of Christian education, Christian literature, evangelistic work, medical missions, and women’s work, will be made the subject of systematic study. In particular, the subject of industrial training seems to demand fresh consideration, and will receive early attention. There are many problems relating to the home base of missions which will call for discussion. The Report of the Conference Commission showed how much need there is for further investigation regarding the means by which the home Church may
be led to an adequate recognition of its world-wide mission. We shall endeavour to bring to the notice of our readers new plans and methods that have been adopted and found successful by an individual society, or in a particular country. In view of the appointment of Boards of Study in Great Britain and America, the subject of the training of missionaries will be given prominence in the early numbers of the Review. Dr. Hodgkin’s article in the present issue will be followed by one by Professor Meinhof of Hamburg on the linguistic training of missionaries – a matter in which Germany is far in advance of most countries. A further paper will deal with the methods adopted for the training of missionaries in Holland.

The subject of unity and co-operation will be kept steadily in view. No attempt will be made to carry on a propaganda in favour of particular schemes of union, nor will the Review take one side in matters regarding which Christians are divided. It will seek to preserve the point of view, and enlarge the attainment, of the Edinburgh Conference, holding fast to the conviction that our Lord meant His followers to be one in visible fellowship, and recognizing that a new spirit and attitude and a better understanding of the position of others must come before everything else. The Review by its existence will strengthen the links, established at Edinburgh, between workers belonging to different nations and communions; it will promote Christian fellowship and foster the spirit of readiness to learn from one another; the contributions to its pages will reveal amid many diversities a real unity of conviction, aspiration, and purpose. The movements in the direction of co-operation and unity throughout the mission field will be carefully noted, so that those who are working at the problem in different countries may be kept in touch with one another; and opportunity will be given for the frank discussion of difficulties in a non-controversial spirit.

The history of missions has many valuable lessons to teach. The problems of the present day cannot be fully understood without reference to the past. We shall make it our aim to study the spread of Christianity in the early centuries, the work of medieval missions, and the past century of modern missionary effort, and to discover in what ways such historical study can clarify and illuminate the questions that are pressing for solution in our own day. The fundamental principles of missionary work – its ultimate grounds, motives, and aims – must also receive attention. Christian scholarship has not yet done justice to the fact that the New Testament is essentially a missionary book written out of the heart of missionary experience. The facts and problems of modern missions illuminate the pages of the New Testament, and there are in the latter rich stores of guidance and inspiration for missionary effort which have not yet been turned to full account. This field of study will claim consideration. To mention only one other class of subjects, we shall keep our eyes open to the wider relations of missions, in
which they influence, and are influenced by, the work of governments, national, social, and economic movements, and general tendencies of thought. It is obvious that to carry out the extensive programme outlined in the preceding paragraphs time will be needed. It will be more profitable to deal thoroughly with a few questions than to attempt to cover rapidly the entire field.

Many of the articles will embody the results of investigations which are being undertaken by the Special Committees appointed by the Continuation Committee. The Review will be more than a collection of individual papers; it will be the organ of a comprehensive, systematic, and united effort to study missionary problems. At the same time, it will be a fundamental principle in its policy to encourage free discussion. Contributions will be admitted which do not reflect the views either of the Continuation Committee or of the editor. When articles are an expression of the policy or views of the Continuation Committee, or of the conclusions reached by any of its Special Committees, this fact will be made clear, but in all other instances the writer of the paper is alone responsible for the opinions which appear over his name. The insertion of an article carries with it no further endorsement of the views expressed than that, in the judgment of the editor, they are entitled to be heard.

A full and systematic review of missionary literature will be a prominent feature of the magazine. Important works will receive an extended notice written by a specialist in the subject with which the books deal. It will be the aim of the review department to reflect as faithfully as possible current thought on missionary subjects, and special attention will therefore be paid to the reports of missionary Conferences. Not only will distinctively missionary books be noticed, but from time to time recognized authorities on subjects that bear closely on missionary work, such as the non-Christian religions or linguistic study, will be invited to write a review of recent literature, calling attention to the publications that are of most value for missionary workers. In addition to longer notices, there will appear in each issue a classified and annotated bibliography of the most important missionary books and articles in current periodicals in all European languages. A glance at the bibliography in the present number will show the value to students of such a compilation, which has never been attempted before.

Apart from the immediate gain that will come from united study and interchange of thought, there are other results which may be expected to follow from an attempt to look broadly and steadily at the impact of Christianity upon the non-Christian world. Such an attempt must lead to a clearer insight into the meaning of the Christian gospel. The conditions and problems of each successive age have been the means of disclosing
unsuspected depths in the Christian revelation, and the present situation is one well fitted, if it be honestly faced, to enlarge and deepen current conceptions of the meaning of Christianity. The light of historical criticism has beaten upon the Christian origins, driving away the mists of many prejudices, but leaving more clear the things that cannot be shaken, and making it possible to know with increasing certainty what our Lord taught and claimed, and what His immediate followers believed regarding Him. The historical figure of Christ, better known perhaps than to any generation except the first, stands face to face with the whole of humanity. The issues are clearer than ever before. The study of the missionary expansion of Christianity is a standpoint from which it should be possible to obtain a new insight into the breadth and height and true proportions of the Gospel.

There are fresh lessons to be learned with regard to not only the content, but also the power, of the Gospel. The concluding chapter in the Report of the Commission of the Edinburgh Conference on the Missionary Message dwelt on the inadequacy of the present resources of the Church to meet the great emergency with which it is confronted, and directed the attention of the Conference to the question whether there are not in God undreamed-of resources of love and power – whether God is not greater, nearer, and more available than the Church has yet dared to believe. No one who has attempted to look at the Missionary problem as a whole can doubt that far more important than organization or material resources are the spiritual forces on which the whole enterprise ultimately depends. Spiritual revival, a new trust and joy in God, a new birth of faith and love are the fundamental need; and it is in seeking to understand in its breadth and height the task set before it, and in going forward faithfully to perform it, that the Church will experience that quickening of its powers which it so greatly needs.

The Review is issued and edited by those who believe that God has entered into human history in the great saving acts which have from the beginning formed the substance of the faith of the Church, and which find their simplest expression in the Apostles’ Creed. This faith is widely called in question at the present day, and the necessity of restating it in terms that take account of all new knowledge, and of vindicating its truth against every challenge, is one the magnitude and gravity of which must be fully recognized. Yet it is this faith that has been the mainspring of all missionary effort. To the vindication of its truth, the missionary movement has its own important contribution to make. In the Kingdom of God truth is apprehended, not by those who stand by as spectators, but by those who do and serve. The task of evangelizing the non-Christian world is most intimately related to that of meeting the unbelief and intellectual perplexity so widespread at the present time, and only by attempting both tasks together can the
Church hope to accomplish either. The challenge is one that stirs the blood. It is a call to high spiritual adventure. There is force in the criticism often made by Orientals who are familiar with Western thought and life, that the Christian faith which seeks to propagate itself in the East is widely rejected, and is on its defence in the lands from which it comes. In such a situation the most daring course is the wisest. In boldly claiming the allegiance of every race and nation to Christ, in confronting all thought and all life with the Gospel, Christian faith will become aware of the depth and strength of its inner resources, and receive fresh confirmation of its truth. Its most convincing vindication will be its world-conquering power.

While the Review stands in closer relations with the Christian bodies represented at the Edinburgh Conference than with those that were not represented there, and its attention will, therefore, naturally be directed mainly to the work of the former, the missionary activities of the latter will not be left out of sight. The world has become one, and, when it is viewed as whole, the broad fact stands out that the greater part of its inhabitants own no allegiance to Christ, while over against them stand the nations which outwardly, at least, acknowledge His name. In contrast with non-Christian systems, there are many things which all Christians believe in common. Some types of Christianity may appear very imperfect, whether by excess or by defect. But they are there, claiming to be Christian. The non-Christian world, at any rate, will include them in its view of Christianity. They are a factor in the impact of Christianity upon the non-Christian races, and must be taken into account by all who desire to obtain a true view of the situation.

On the other hand, in adopting this point of view, we have no intention of shutting our eyes to realities. The Christian Church presents to the non-Christian world no united front. It is rent by deep differences within itself. Nothing will be gained by ignoring or minimizing these differences, or pretending that principles and methods are the same when they are different. No unity is possible or real that is based on compromise of the truth. The existence of differences will be frankly recognized in the Review, and no contributor will be expected to suppress his convictions. The statement of divergent views will be encouraged so long as the statement is positive. The purpose of the Review is to enable those who are united in believing Christ to be the Light of the world to learn from one another; and through the reverent study of all facts, with complete loyalty alike to conscientious conviction and to new truth, to obtain a clearer understanding of the Divine purpose in the great missionary task which confronts the present generation.

The scope of the Review will be limited to work among non-Christian peoples, and questions that are related more or less directly to the carrying on of that work. This is
not because other forms of missionary effort, and other tasks for which the Church is responsible, seem to us to be of less importance and urgency. Not only in itself, but as a means to the conversion of the non-Christian world, the spread of true religion in professedly Christian countries is a matter of the highest moment. The Review will always be in the fullest sympathy with sincere endeavours everywhere to bring men and women into vital relations with God in Christ, and with every attempt to make social conditions and institutions reflect more worthily the mind of Christ. The limitation of scope will appear to some to be an arbitrary exclusion of part of the activities of individual mission boards. But by its adoption no kind of judgment is passed with regard to the comparative importance of different forms of Christian work. Some limitation of the scope of the Review is necessary, and the line of division cannot follow the principles of organization of any particular missionary society, but must be sought in the broad distinctions that exist in the actual world. No division has been found so simple and convenient as that which distinguishes for practical purposes the non-Christian world from that which is professedly Christian. Work among non-Christians has a unity of its own and presents problems of a distinctive kind. Even when we limit our view to this class of work, the material to be dealt with is so vast that it is difficult to do justice to it. Moreover, co-operation in work among non-Christian peoples is possible for those who might find it difficult to co-operate in other forms of Christian activity.

It is our hope that the Review may be of help to workers in the mission field by bringing to them suggestions from other countries, and the thought of the wisest and most experienced missionary leaders, and by keeping before them that view of the whole which is essential to the highest quality of work, but which is apt to be lost in the pressure of immediate duties. Confronted by tasks for which their resources are insufficient, left not infrequently alone and without any to whom they may turn for counsel, their strength taxed in many instances by a trying climate, missionary workers have to deal day by day with problems of extraordinary complexity and far-reaching importance. If the Review is successful in making it easier for those bearing such responsibilities to find a right solution of their problems, it will justify its existence. Those engaged in the home administration of missions should find in the pages of the Review much fruitful suggestion. Its broad outlook will enable them to see their own work in its wider relations and true perspective. By the study of the missionary movement in its breadth and variety, we trust that the Review may also give to clergymen and ministers, to laymen, and to the whole home Church a more adequate conception of the greatness, dignity, and importance of that movement, and thus help to strengthen and inspire all the efforts that are being made to rouse the Church to a true appreciation of its responsibilities towards the non-Christian races.
To understand even imperfectly the aims that have been stated in the preceding paragraphs is to realize the insufficiency of human resources for their achievement. It is a long road from the vision of an ideal to its attainment. Much growth in knowledge, many years of patient labour will be needed to accomplish even that part of the task which has already been indicated; and the undertaking of what lies immediately to hand will assuredly discover new heights, and bring to light fresh difficulties. The attempt could not have been made, had it not been for the cordial co-operation of so many competent workers in different countries. Yet human labour at its best cannot bring us to the things which we have in view. The new vision of the purpose of God for humanity can come only from above. The message of the Edinburgh Conference was that the only thing which would make it possible for the Church to fulfil its mission to the non-Christian world is a new faith in the power, goodness, and availability of God. The Review will not be true to its origin unless that thought is behind all its work. It will accomplish little of value except in so far as both the writing and the reading of it are the expression of a corporate desire to make fresh discoveries of God. All study must be at the same time a prayer. Conscious of ignorance and weakness and of far distance from the mind of Christ, we lift up our eyes to Him from whom cometh our help, and ask that this Review may be a means by which He may lead His servants into a knowledge of the truth; that in it and through it His name may be hallowed, His kingdom may come, and His will may be done, as in heaven, so on earth.

It is impossible to issue the Review without a reference to two missionary leaders, who, had they lived, would inevitably have been associated with the new venture, and of whose influence it will bear the mark. Professor Dr. Gustav Warneck of Halle, the founder, and for thirty-seven years the editor, of the Allgemeine Missions-Zeitschrift, by his lifelong labours opened up the whole field of missionary science and missionary history in a way that has appreciably lightened the labours of all who follow him. The largeness of his aims, his enthusiasm for the missionary cause, his unwearied industry, his love of truth, are an abiding source of inspiration. Dr. George Robson, Chairman of the Business Committee of the Edinburgh Conference, Chairman also of the Central Advisory Committee which guided the work of the eight Commissions, had a larger share perhaps than any other man in making the Conference what it was. From the beginning he cherished the largest expectations regarding it; he prayed for it unceasingly; his wise counsel was a continual strength; his gracious and loving spirit was one of the strongest influences on the side of unity; it was his unwearied labours for the Conference that, more than anything else, wore out his strength. He had qualities which would have made his help in the conduct of the Review invaluable. His broad sympathies had gained for him many friends both in America and on the Continent of Europe, and he had a remarkable knowledge of the missionary efforts of other coun-
tries than his own. With an extraordinarily sure judgment and ripe experience, he combined in a striking degree the enthusiasm and hopefulness of youth. He was deeply interested in the various new movements of our time, and was brought into close association with men far younger than himself. In their eyes he always appeared the youngest of them all.

Explanation of the plan and purpose of the Review has demanded so much space that no room is left in this issue for comment on other topics. There are, however, two matters which affect so deeply the non-Christian world that they cannot pass without mention, however brief. The aggressive action of Italy with regard to Tripoli has given rise to a ferment throughout the Mohammedan world, the ultimate consequences of which no one can foresee. Into the political aspects of the subject it is not possible to enter here. The situation, however, forces upon the attention of the Church a religious question of fundamental importance. Mr. Gairdner, in his article on “The Vital Forces of Christianity and Islam,” reaches the conclusion that “the Spirit of Jesus” is the “sole asset” of the Church in its relations with Islam. How much has the Moslem world seen of this Spirit? The impact of Christendom on Mohammedanism has not been of a kind to convey any adequate conception of the real nature of Christianity, and the efforts of Christian Missions have been far too weak and scattered to make a positive impression on a large scale. A veil has hidden the face of Jesus Christ from the Mohammedan world. There must be a radical change if the Church is in any worthy sense to bear effective witness and discharge its missionary duty to Moslems.

The second event which demands mention is the revolution which is in process in China. The situation changes with such rapidity that many of the statements about China in this first number of the Review, which has to go to press before the end of November, may be out of date before they reach our readers. The revolution now in progress differs fundamentally in character from the uprising in the year 1900. There has been no attack so far upon foreigners, and the guidance of the revolution is in the hands of men who desire that China should enter on the path of progress and conform to the standards of Western nations. Whatever the ultimate outcome may be, a constructive task of extraordinary magnitude and difficulty must lie before the Chinese people when order has been restored. The break with the fetters of the past will be complete, and it will be necessary slowly to build up a new order to take the place of the old. It will be a creative and critical epoch in the history of the nation. The Chinese Church will stand before a unique opportunity, and will have opportunities of influencing the life of the nation in ways that have not been possible in the past. It is exceedingly unlikely that the difficulties which have hitherto stood in the way of Christians accepting public offices and posts in Government schools will be allowed to
continue. Chinese Christians will be free to take their full share in moulding the life of the nation.

The situation is one of deep concern to the whole Church of Christ. The fact that the eyes of all thinking men are being turned to China at the present moment is only an indication of the way in which that empire will command the close attention of Western peoples in all departments of life in the near future. It is important that the widespread interest in the present situation should be used to bring home to all Christian people the vital importance of the issue whether the new order that is coming into being shall be founded upon a naturalistic or a Christian view of life. Every endeavour must be made to help China in the great educational task which will have to be undertaken, and to inspire the new national system of education with Christian ideals. The various projects for promoting and improving Christian education in China, such as the United Universities’ Scheme, for which a widespread appeal is being made at the present time, deserve every support. In its efforts to meet the supreme opportunity which has been set before it, the Chinese Church will need all the help and love and service that the universal Church can offer. There is a real danger that amid the pressure of other interests and claims the greatness of the present opportunity in China may be ignored. Seldom has there come in the providence of God a stronger call to the whole Church for faithful and expectant prayer. In the months ahead there should be wide, continued, and united intercession, that the Chinese Church may be enabled to render to the nation the service that it requires; that the missionaries in China may be given wisdom and strength, largeness of thought, and breadth of sympathy to meet the present opportunity; and that the whole Church of Christ may have insight, faith, and power sufficient for the task to which it is called.
The Christian Mission at This Hour

Margaret Sinclair

The editorial by the first IRM woman editor reflects on the decision of integration between the International Missionary Council (IMC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC), taken at the IMC Assembly in Accra, Ghana in 1958, which was formally put into effect at the WCC Assembly in New Delhi, India in 1961. Source: IRM 47:2 (1958): 137–142.

The Ghana assembly of the I.M.C.

Planes landing in steady succession at the airport of Accra in the days around Christmas, 1957, brought one group of participants after another to what was virtually the International Missionary Council’s first all-airborne meeting; for at Whitby, Ontario, a decade ago, and at Willingen, Germany, five years later, the more leisured, if time-consuming approach, seaborne or overland, was still, for many, an order of procedure which appears, in ecumenical activity, to have gone for good.

Some two hundred people – delegates of member councils of the IMC, observers from non-member councils and consultants – came together to discuss “the Christian mission at this hour”. The setting was the Halls – Legon, Akufo, Commonwealth – of the University College, which is little older in date, as to its buildings, than the newly independent State whose name it bears. The welcome accorded by the Government, the churches and the people of Ghana began from the moment of contact with sympathetic immigration authorities and ran through personal and communal fellowship in many directions, in the University College, in the surrounding districts, with local churches and with the Prime Minister, who attended and addressed the social gathering arranged by the Ghana churches, who was present at the open-air service in Accra and who received a delegation from the Assembly towards its close. Within the composition of the Assembly itself, “Ghana, 1957” provided an occasion for the renewal of friendships formed at earlier gatherings – Madras, Whitby, Willingen. Some could go back in memory to the Jerusalem meeting of 1928. In Ghana, too, was forged a personal link in the sharing of sorrow at the fatal accident in his family which took the General Secretary back to his home in England when the Assembly was but four days on its way.

At its meeting at Willingen in 1952 the IMC had adopted a new Constitution according to which an Assembly was to meet every four years and an Administrative Committee
between Assemblies. “Ghana, 1957” was thus the first IMC Assembly to meet. The new Constitution provides for the participation of fifteen consultants, whose number was increased on this occasion to forty and who covered a wide field, geographically and in terms of specialist experience and knowledge. At its opening session the Assembly also increased its total of member councils from thirty-five to thirty-eight, when the Christian Councils of Ghana (the host council, whose chairman, the Rev. Christian Baëta, was the Assembly’s chaplain), Northern Rhodesia and Hongkong were admitted with acclaim. Among the member councils the absence of China, for the second time in succession, from an IMC gathering was deeply regretted, as was the refusal of an exit permit to a delegate of the German Evangelical Missionary Council resident in eastern Berlin.

In the course of the deliberations, further structural reinforcement, in itself a recognition of a clear trend towards regional machinery of consultation, came with the ratification of the East Asia Christian Conference, a proposal for the setting up of which had been the main outcome of the meeting held at Prapat, Indonesia, in March 1957. Already envisaged at Madras, in 1938, but not realized, on account of the war years, an East Asia secretariatship, jointly sponsored with the World Council of Churches, came into being in 1950, with the appointment of Dr, now Bishop, Rajah B. Manikam to that office. The body now set up, with a secretary, an associate secretary and a secretary for inter-church aid, is to carry still further, and on the widest regional scale, from West Pakistan to Japan, an undertaking already favourably begun and still under the joint auspices of the IMC and the World Council of Churches.

In other areas, moreover, the experience of regional consultation has evoked a pressure for more permanent facilities. The success of the Caribbean consultation, held in 1957 in Puerto Rico, led to the presentation and adoption of a resolution which requests the IMC to convene a further conference for that region as a whole, “but with wider representation”. A memorandum, again, addressed to the Assembly by the delegates and consultants from Latin America voiced satisfaction “that Latin America is being taken into consideration by the IMC to the extent of sounding out the possibility of a regional secretariat for this area” and requested the IMC to co-operate with the Christian Councils of Latin America and with other competent organizations in the All-Latin America conference in 1959 or 1960, plans for which are already in hand.

The Christian mission at this hour. Such was the Assembly’s theme and the subject of the address at the opening plenary session by the chairman, Dr John A. Mackay, who presented it as “an apocalyptic hour . . . a day of the Lord . . . a day of darkness rather than light” and yet as “one of God’s springtimes, albeit one of His terrible spring-
times”. Long association with the IMC enabled Dr Mackay to set the perspective from the Jerusalem meeting of 1928 and to view the process of secularization, from the form in which it preoccupied that gathering, down to the conditions to-day in which, as he declared, “the whole human order is challenged”. Papers were presented, in due course, one from a European, the other from an Asian, which also helped to set the scene in which the groups and committees, in which the Assembly was to work, would view their task. These papers, by Dr W. Freytag and U Kyaw Than, will be found in this issue of the Review.

The programme was so planned as to make maximum provision for work in committees, five of which were set up: 1. the study programme of the IMC; 2. the structure and co-operation of missions; 3. the ministry; 4. new forms of mission; 5. missions and inter-church aid. These committees reported back to the plenary sessions. It is impossible here to give even the gist of their deliberations, or to highlight their particular features. It is worth noting, however, that the presence among the Assembly’s consultants and observers of representatives of bodies which feel unable to co-operate with the IMC gave special substance to the work of the second committee, through the frank and friendly presentation of their points of view by members of the Southern Baptist and Pentecostal churches.

The time-table also allowed for the free discussion, in groups, with no obligation to produce “findings”, of some fundamental issues in the Christian Mission: 1. Christian witness in society and nation; 2. the Christian Church faces its calling to mission; 3. the Christian Church and non-Christian religions; 4. the place and function of the missionary; 5. what does “partnership in obedience” mean? That at many points the thinking of the groups overlapped and that in certain respects they worked to a common focus will be apparent from the report of their deliberations by the member of the Assembly who kept in touch with their discussions and who sought to co-ordinate their conclusions, a report which is included in these pages for the picture that it gives of the course that the thinking of the Assembly took.

Two practical matters, presented early in the programme, figured largely in the group and committee discussions. In the first place, in his report at the opening session, the General Secretary announced the offer, by Mr John D. Rockefeller, Jr, to contribute $2,000,000 to the IMC for a “Theological Education Fund”, subject to certain conditions, one of which was that mission boards in the U.S.A. should pledge a similar amount, a challenge which has already been met by nine of the Boards. The Fund, the Assembly was reminded, was only, with guarantees up to $4,000,000, at its initial stage and, as an oecumenical venture, should be supported and maintained by every member.
body of the IMC. On the recommendation of the committee on the ministry, the Assembly accepted the gift “with deep gratitude” and its subsequent business included the nomination of the members of a Theological Education Fund Committee, the setting up of which was included in the terms on which the Fund was established.

Acceptance of the Fund did not go through without the necessity for interpretation. Some found the conditions on which it was set up too exacting and required re-assurances as to the authority which the committee would hold. Others feared lest the procedure of the Fund’s administration should take the IMC beyond its recognized rôle of consultative and co-ordinating service. The Fund should, however, be viewed in the light of the IMC’s existing programme and deep commitments in the field of research into the training of the ministry, with surveys of standards and facilities in the theological colleges in three areas of Africa and in Madagascar already completed and published. There was much concern in the Assembly to see this new development as part of an already established and ongoing enterprise, and it was for that reason that the Assembly set up, on the recommendation of the committee on the ministry, a Standing Committee on the Ministry, to which the Theological Education Fund Committee would be closely related. This very significant contribution to IMC service was received with jubilation among the representatives of the churches who will benefit from the Fund, in a day when the building up of a strong, vigorous Church requires at the outset the provision of a trained and dedicated ministry.

The second matter was the proposal regarding integration between the IMC and the World Council of Churches. For some, the resolution of this issue formed the main purpose with which they journeyed to Ghana. For others it represented a structural matter that threatened to take a disproportionately large place in the programme. For all, as matters eventuated, it was a question over which no one was prepared to take any precipitate decision. The initial presentation showed, it was generally felt, too strong a tendency to force the benefits of “integration” upon the Assembly, to paint too one-sided a picture. And it was not surprising that the subsequent debate leant heavily, at first, in the direction of resistance. Some questioned the actual need for unity in mission to express itself in an administratively united structure, pointing to achievement within the Christian mission in many parts of the world with no such structural under-girding. The fears lest an ecclesiastical “superstructure” should emerge, which were very real to some, were felt by others to be based on prejudice or misinformation. Delegates from some councils, those of North America, for instance, and that of India, spoke with whole-hearted conviction in favour of the plan. Others, from Belgian Congo, some parts of Latin America, some countries of northern Europe, maintained their opposition to the end and voted against the motion. Others again, among the
councils of Europe for instance, discerning the enthusiasm of some of their fellows from beyond that Continent, were willing, putting aside their own reservations, to go with them into the venture. The turning point came with the intimation by its General Secretary that the World Council of Churches might be willing to postpone its next Assembly till 1961, thus giving the IMC time for further discussion and to summon, if thought advisable, another Assembly of its own. The prospect of a respite, in which to continue, unhurried, the study and interpretation of the scheme, was clearly acceptable to the Assembly as a whole, and it adopted, by 58 votes to 7, the resolutions in the first of which it “accepts in principle the integration of the two Councils” and which are set out in full on pages 150–2 of this Review.

Matters of significance in the life of the Christian Mission were thus wrought out, often in the context of deep cleavages of opinion; and it would be idle to pretend that the delegates left the first Assembly altogether satisfied. They had, however, worked and, above all, worshipped together. In the background was the daily gathering for devotional sessions and Bible study, in the chapel of Akufo Hall. Two delegates, the Rev. Philip Potter, of the West Indies, and the Rev. Dr Paul Devanandan, of India, shared the leadership of the hour of Bible study with which each day began. The Holy Communion was celebrated on the first Sunday according to the Anglican rite, and on the closing morning of the Assembly according to the Presbyterian. A New Year’s Eve Covenant Service culminated in a service of Holy Communion of the Methodist Church. On the first Sunday the Assembly held its own service, conducted by the Rev. Alfonso Rodriguez, of Cuba, while the second found many of the delegates far afield among the churches of Ghana, preaching, some of them conducting baptisms, all of them making contact with the Christians of Ghana and bringing something of the visible reality of the worldwide Church into parishes and congregations. The Ghana Christian Council organized a service of public worship and praise at the stadium in Accra, with a robed procession of Assembly participants, a choir drawn from Ghanaian churches and groups from those churches massing themselves around the arena. A congregation far in excess of the Assembly membership made its way up to Commonwealth Hall, on the top of the hill, on the eve of the Epiphany, for an act of worship and re-dedication, symbolically conceived to suggest the bringing of gifts from three areas of the world, Africa, Asia and the West, and with a sermon by the Rev. Seth Mokotimi, of South Africa. From it, all emerged into the darkness without, each one bearing a candle lighted from that of his neighbour, to the accompaniment of what began as an organ voluntary in the form of Charles Wesley’s hymn, “And can it be that I should gain an int’rest in the Saviour’s blood?”, but the singing of which was taken up and led, with gathering impetus and affirmation, by the many Africans present.
There was finally the Assembly’s closing act of worship, with the chairman’s address on a text from *Isaiah* 40: “They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength . . .” and with its reflections on “the glory of the walking pace”, the pace of people “who take God seriously”, the pace at which the Assembly had to learn to move if it was to know and do His will.

*M. S.*
Developments during 1962 –
An Editorial Survey

Lesslie Newbigin


An editorial survey

It has been the custom, ever since the inception of the International Review of Missions, for the Editor to devote the first issue of each year mainly to a survey of the events of the preceding year. There is evidence that this has been of great value, and it is our intention to continue the custom, though with some modifications in the method of compilation. In the present issue, however, we propose to follow another custom, equally ancient, and to use the Review to share with our readers news of recent developments in missionary co-operation and some reflections upon them. The January, 1962, issue of the Review included as its most notable features the addresses given during the final Assembly of the International Missionary Council by Bishop Bengt Sundkler and Mr Korula Jacob. The former surveyed the road which the IMC had travelled since the Edinburgh Conference of 1910, and the latter outlined the tasks ahead. Since these addresses were given the IMC and the WCC have become one, the process of integration has begun to take effect in ordinary daily work, and the Committee of the Division of World Mission and Evangelism has met for the first time, and has reported to the Central Committee of the World Council. Readers of the Review will wish to have some assessment of the way in which Bishop Sundkler’s story is being continued and Mr Jacob’s sketch filled in.

Joint action for mission

From the beginning this Review has been inspired by the vision of the world missionary task as one task. In the Editorial Notes which opened the first issue, Dr Oldham remarked that, while the Review would not advocate any one particular method of unity, it would “hold fast to the assumption that our Lord meant His followers to be one in visible fellowship”.

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To read these words after half a century is to realize with shame how slow progress has been. Consultation and co-operation have certainly increased, and the fact that the relationships of mutual help and counsel which lately were focused in the International Missionary Council are now rapidly being brought into a common pattern with the relationships between churches focused in the World Council of Churches marks a significant new stage in the story of co-operation. It is a stage which has its own problems and perplexities, and one of the main tasks of the WCC staff in these months following integration is to discover in practice ways in which the traditional relationships between mission boards and younger churches on the one hand, and the newer inter-church relationships fostered by the manifold work of the World Council on the other, may most helpfully be related to each other. But all this must be sustained and directed by the same vision as launched this movement, the vision of one visible fellowship commending one Gospel to the whole world. Consultation and co-operation are necessary steps on the way, but they must not become ends in themselves.

During the months before New Delhi, the staff of the IMC gave much time to reflection on the question: What are the next steps along the path of missionary co-operation? We were led to certain clear convictions which were expressed in a paper called *Joint Action for Mission*. Subsequent discussion at New Delhi showed that both the Assembly and the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism were ready to approve its proposals. The Commission commended them to its member councils, and instructed the staff to be available to assist in implementing them. Later, at its meeting in Paris in August, 1962, the Central Committee of the WCC asked that the member churches should “consider seriously the proposals outlined in the paper on *Joint Action for Mission*, so that they may respond more fully to the opportunities which God is creating in our time”.

What are these proposals? They are directed towards the practical application locally of the general convictions which are embodied in ecumenical statements about the missionary task. In the words of the paper, they are that “churches and their related missionary agencies in a given geographical area should come together to face together as God’s people in that place their total missionary task, and to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in fulfilling it”. The emphasis is on the place where God has put us. It is relatively easy to participate in global or regional discussions in which abstract principles are stated and approved. It is harder to submit one’s work to the scrutiny of one’s immediate neighbours, knowing that one will have to face the question, “Is this work more important than some of the things which we have not yet attempted?” and that practical conclusions will be drawn from the answer. It is relatively easy for a
conference to draw up a list of things which should be done; it is harder to answer the question, “Which of our present activities shall we drop in order to do them?” Not that we are unfamiliar with the latter question; the defect is that normally we ask it in a restricted context – in the finance committee of a single church or mission, and without reference to the whole people of God in that place. Thus it happens that decisions are made on the wrong grounds. Matters are decided, for example, not by the intrinsic importance of the task but by the accident that one church has access to foreign resources and another has not. New evangelistic opportunities – for instance, in newly developing cities, or colleges, or professional associations – do not have priority because they are not obviously the concern of any one church. Some decisions influenced by the needs of the developing relationship between a single mission board and the church to which it is related would have been different if the issue could have been faced by the whole Christian people in the area, looking at the whole missionary task which confronts them. The proposals described in *Joint Action for Mission* are an attempt to describe in detail what will be required in order to bring the insights of our wider fellowship to bear on the decisions which we make in our church synods and committees “in each place”.

By far the most ambitious plan in this respect is a series of “situation conferences” which the East Asia Christian Conference has called, to be held at Madras, Tokyo and Singapore in the early months of 1963. These may, if God wills, provide the common convictions and insights which will enable those present to return to their countries and seek in each place the kind of joint action which can come from a common waiting upon God for grace and guidance. That will be the criterion of their effectiveness. Perhaps the announcement of three more conferences does not at this stage evoke much enthusiasm. One sympathizes with the sentiments of a missionary who wrote, concerning a series of conferences planned in India, “Men were tired of conferences and felt that the duty of the hour was steady work and not talk”. But those words of J. N. Farquar referred to the meetings convened by John R. Mott in 1912, meetings which were to mark a new epoch in the life of the Church in India. Conferences can be mere talk. But talk and work are not mutually exclusive. “The business of the world is carried on by words”; that is the opening sentence of Hoskyn’s Commentary on the Fourth Gospel. Words are the necessary currency for any spiritual traffic. The urgent responsibility of those who are concerned with the ecumenical movement is to see that the currency does not depreciate through inflation. The proposals for “Joint Action for Mission” are an attempt to bring the coinage of our ecumenical talk to the touchstone of local action.

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Missions and inter-church aid

Several matters have called for a new pattern of relationships between the work of missions and the work of the World Council of Churches. Among these, none has been more prominent than the question of missions and inter-church aid. Since 1954, the work of the Division of Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service has been extended into lands which are traditionally of concern to mission boards, and as a result the powerful service agencies of the western churches have rapidly become involved in enterprises of the younger churches. No other issue loomed as large as this in the discussions leading to the integration of the two councils. It was always apparent that one test of the effectiveness of the integration would be at this point.

During the months following New Delhi there was much informal discussion on this subject among and between the staffs of the two Divisions. At the summer meetings in Paris a joint session was arranged for the members of the two divisional committees at which there was a helpful exchange of experiences and concerns. Following this, the Committee of the Division of World Mission and Evangelism had a further opportunity to reflect on the discussion, and as a result it adopted a statement which was afterwards received by the Central Committee. This statement has been sent to member councils of the Commission. It expresses the conviction that this is a time of new opportunities for missionary advance, but that the present forms of our church life and of our missionary agencies appear to be too inflexible to seize these opportunities. It continues:

In our discussions here we have seen that we have much to learn from the work of Inter-Church Aid. We welcome the growing volume of help – both financial and personal – which is now coming in to strengthen and supplement the work which has been done by missionary agencies. And we realize that we have much to learn from the pattern of ecumenical sharing of resources which the DICARWS has developed. We believe that we have to find comparable ways of mobilizing the full resources of the churches for swift and effective response to the new openings for missionary advance which God is giving us.

The statement speaks of the differences which have to be taken into account between the characteristic operations of Inter-Church Aid and those of missions, and after calling attention to the importance of the plans for “Joint Action for Mission”, it goes on to ask the staff for “the careful development of one or two projects of ecumenical aid to missionary advance in situations of particular promise and significance”, and to express the hope that “the churches will be willing to find resources – above all in dedicated men and women – to follow where these pilot projects show the way”.

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There can be no doubt that the work of the two Divisions is becoming increasingly inter-related. It is to be hoped that as a result the great and growing work of the agencies of inter-church aid will be a source of strength and vitality to undertakings in which missions have long been involved but which in some instances have outgrown the strength of their supporting agencies. But it is equally important – and this is the main thrust of the statement – that all the missionary agencies of the churches should learn to use the resources of ecumenical cooperation to achieve a greater mobility and a greater vigour in seizing new opportunities for missionary advance. To feed the hungry and clothe the naked, to give help to the victims of disaster and technical assistance to those who need it – all this is an essential part of our discipleship, and it is of God’s goodness that the churches are learning to do it together. But there is need to beware lest the churches give the impression that they are not equally concerned to share the supreme riches of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Some words written by Dr Oldham in the Editorial Notes to the first issue of the Review are as relevant now as then. After speaking of the widespread uncertainty in the western world about the Christian faith, and of the doubts which this engenders about the work of evangelization, he continues:

In such a situation the most daring course is the wisest. In boldly claiming the allegiance of every race and nation to Christ, in confronting all thought and all life with the Gospel, Christian faith will become aware of the depth and strength of its inner resources, and will receive fresh confirmation of its truth.

The Paris statement is a summons to all the churches to be as enterprising in mobilizing ecumenical resources for the task of world evangelization as they have been for the tasks of meeting human need. It will be the privilege of the Division of World Mission and Evangelism during the coming months to invite the churches in various ways to accept this invitation.

**Forms of the ministry and the congregation**

But missionary mobility calls for more than the mobilizing of resources on an ecumenical scale. It requires also that the inner life and structure of the churches should be such that they are capable of responding to the opportunity for missionary advance whenever it occurs. This raises two groups of questions which were prominent on the agenda of the discussions in Paris.

The first group concerns the ministry. The question has to be asked – and is being repeatedly asked – whether the traditional forms of the ministry which have been inherited from the “Christendom” period are fully compatible with the faith that the Church is called to be a missionary community. The identification of the Holy Ministry
with a particular salaried professional class, and the concentration of ministerial training and discipline upon an almost exclusively pastoral function in relation to those who are already Christians, are among the elements of the tradition which are being questioned. These questions have been engaging the attention of the Division and were prominent during the Paris meetings at two points. The first was the presentation of a report entitled *A Tent-Making Ministry*, which arose out of consultations in Asia, Africa and Europe, and which is being sent to member councils for their study. As the report is reproduced in this issue of the Review, it is sufficient here to note that its central concern is the recovery of the primacy of the missionary obligation as determinative of the forms of the Church’s life. The other point at which questions concerning the ministry were raised at the Paris meetings was in the First Report of the Advisory Group on the Future of the Theological Education Fund. In seeking to discern ways in which, after the expiry of the present mandate of the TEFC, the younger churches might receive the most effective assistance to seek true excellence in the training of their ministry, the Group was inevitably led to attempt to define what constitutes “true excellence” in this field. As a brief answer, they said:

The excellence which we seek to foster should be defined in terms of that kind of theological training which leads to a real encounter between the student and the Gospel in terms of his own forms of thought and culture, and to a living dialogue between the church and its environment. The aim should be to use resources so as to help students and teachers to a deeper understanding of the Gospel in the context of the particular cultural and religious setting of the church, so that the church may come to a deeper understanding of itself as a missionary community sent into the world, and to a more effectual encounter with the life of society.

The Report then goes on to describe in greater detail the tasks which the pursuit of this ideal would entail for the theological colleges. The entire Report has been sent to the member councils and will doubtless be the subject of discussion. When the Commission meets in Mexico City in 1963, it will have to be in a position to decide whether the churches are willing to provide further resources on an ecumenical basis to make this effort possible.

The second group of questions raised by this concern for the missionary character of the Church refers to the structure of the congregation. Does the very structure of our congregations contradict the missionary calling of the Church? This question is the subject of a long-range study undertaken by the Department of Studies in Evangelism. Much work has already been done in defining the terms and methods of the study, and groups are at work in various parts of the world under the guidance of Dr Hans Margull. We hope that papers arising from this study on “The Missionary Structure of the Congregation” will appear from time to time in the pages of the Review.
The nature of the church's mission

The questions so far discussed concern structure and relationships – whether at the ecumenical or at the local level. It was inevitable that, during the years immediately preceding the integration of the two councils, these matters should be in the foreground. But behind them there are deeper questions which cannot be evaded, and which concern the nature and purpose of the missionary task itself. While in one sense it may be said that these questions are always with us, because every generation has to formulate afresh the missionary task for its time, yet in another sense one may say that the year 1962 marks an important stage in the discussion of them. It is a little over ten years since the International Missionary Council undertook an important study of the theme “The Missionary Obligation of the Church”. At the Willingen Conference, where this was the central theme, such profound theological differences were revealed that it proved impossible for the conference as a whole to adopt the report of the group which had worked on the theme, and it was agreed that much further theological study was needed. This study received a fresh direction at the Ghana Assembly when it was agreed to re-formulate the main question thus: What does it mean, in theological terms and in practice, in this ecumenical era, for the Church to discharge its mission to the world? It was agreed that “conversations” in various parts of the world between theologians on the one hand and those engaged in the practical work of missions on the other should be an integral part of the study. As these proposals were developed they led to a new and significant experiment in ecumenical study, which involved both a combination of individual writing with group discussion, and an interchange of thinking between theologians and groups engaged in practical missionary responsibilities. The fruit of this process, which has drawn in participants in many parts of the world, was the appearance in 1962 of two books: The Missionary Nature of the Church, by Johannes Blauw,2 and Upon the Earth, by D. T. Niles.3 The publication of these two books, together with the report written by a group of theologians and entitled The Missionary Task of the Church,4 marks the conclusion of this programme. Certainly the discussion will continue, but it is to be hoped that these two books will be studied seriously as the fruit of a sustained effort of common study, and that they will give a helpful lead to further thinking.

The staff of the Division has been working also on another subject which appears to us to be of great importance. Missionary thinking in the years since the Tambaram Conference has been to a great extent centred in the doctrine of the Church. This “Church-centric” period in missionary thinking has indeed been a most fruitful one, and we are indebted to it for the consensus which has led to the integration of the IMC and the WCC, as well as for other important developments. But there is also much evidence to show that this way of formulating the questions which missions have to answer is inadequate. From many sides, notably, for example, in the thinking of outstanding Asian Christians, questions are being insistently asked about God’s action in the world outside the Church. After the Willingen Conference it was clear that one of the central issues which remained unresolved was (in the words of the report presented by Dr Goodall at that time): “What is the relation between history and ‘salvation history’? Between God’s sovereignty in creation and his grace in redemption?” This question has become still more insistent in the decade that has passed since then. It is one which perplexes many who see the influence of the Church and the freedom of missions being more and more severely limited, and who contemplate the fact that Christians are a steadily diminishing percentage of the world’s people. It presses also upon those who sense the dynamic quality of revolutionary movements outside the Church and recognize in them elements which a Christian can only accept with gratitude. It is our hope that as a result of these discussions something may be published in due course, which will help to stimulate further thought on this question.

The missionary image

When commending the plan “Joint Action for Mission”, the New Delhi Assembly said that such developments would “call for profound changes in the thinking of the churches and their people about their missionary responsibilities”, and therefore stressed the need for the Division to help the churches in educating their members for this task. It is noteworthy that the “home base” figured very largely in the concerns of the International Missionary Council in its earliest days. It was the subject of the largest of the volumes arising out of the Edinburgh Conference, and of many papers in early issues of this Review. In later years this concern almost disappears from the records. It is understandable that during these years the emphasis shifted so much to the concerns of the younger churches and to the relations between missions and churches, that little attention could be given to the problems of the “home base”. Manifestly, anything said on this subject to-day must be founded upon the conviction that the “home base” is everywhere where the Church is, and must be as applicable to the missionary outreach of the Asian churches as to that of the western churches.
But there can be nothing more vital for the missionary task than to foster in all the churches a true understanding of what missions are, what they are doing, and what kind of service they need.

After discussing the Assembly’s instruction, the divisional committee decided in Paris on two small initial steps: first, the production of a volume on the missionary dimension of the theological curriculum; and secondly, a study in certain selected countries of the “image” of missions which is being projected in the missionary literature of the churches, and of the “image” which is in fact being received by those for whom this material is prepared. The results of this study can hardly fail to be interesting, and may provide useful material for further ecumenical thinking and experiment in the field of missionary education.

A new situation

In a statement on “Principal Tasks for the Next Few Years”, which was prepared for the Assembly at New Delhi and accepted by it, first place was given to the following:

To assist churches, missions and other Christian bodies to recognize and draw the practical conclusions from the fact that:

i. The Christian mission is one throughout the world, for the Gospel is the same and the need of salvation is the same for all men.

ii. This world mission has a base which is world-wide and is not confined to the areas once regarded as constituting ‘western Christendom’.

iii. The mission implies a reaching out both to one’s own neighbourhood and to the ends of the earth.

The Assembly itself put the matter succinctly by saying, “We face not three continents but six”.

It is easy to say this, but difficult to draw all the practical conclusions. In spite of everything that has been said, there is still much to be done before, for example, Christians in Africa feel a real sense of responsibility for the pagan masses of the great cities of the West and are ready to make a sustained effort to bring the Gospel to them. For the work of the Division, too, it will take time to realize the implications of this statement. Our staff has never been deeply involved in the problems of evangelism in Europe and America. We have to learn slowly and with much experiment how the Division can play a useful part in such work. Even in such a relatively small matter as the character and content of the *International Review of Missions* it will take time for the new situation to have its full effect. But it must certainly bring big changes. In the selection
of topics for articles and of books for inclusion in the bibliography it will become apparent that the focus has changed. It is when one comes to such small but concrete issues that one really becomes aware of the significance of the new definition of the differentia of missions in the total Christian task.

Another very important consequence of the new situation is that the Orthodox Churches are now involved in the work of the Division. The growth of a new missionary spirit in the Church of Greece, which is the subject of an article in this number of the Review, is a matter for thanksgiving. But it is also evident that for the work of the Division we shall have much to learn from the unparalleled experiences of the Russian Church during the past three decades. The issues which Communism presents to the Church are everywhere acknowledged to be among the most serious that we confront. In the men from the churches of Russia, both Orthodox and Baptist, who are now coming to share in our counsels, we have men who are learning what it means to bear a missionary witness in the midst of an extreme form of secularism. What they have to teach the rest of us may be one of the most important subjects for our study in the coming years.

The year ahead

The outstanding event of the coming year for the work of the Division will be the first full meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism which is to take place, by invitation of the Evangelical Council of Mexico, at the Evangelical Seminary, Mexico City, December 8th to 20th, 1963. It will bring together approximately eighty delegates of member councils, thirty-five delegates of the WCC Central Committee, between twelve and twenty youth delegates, and a number of advisers, observers and guests. The main work of the meeting will be done in four sections, on the following subjects: 1. The Witness of the Christian to Men of other Faiths. 2. The Witness of the Christian to Men in the Secular World. 3. The Witness of the Christian Congregation in its Neighbourhood. 4. The Witness of the Church across National and Confessional Boundaries. The basic work of the sections will be Bible study followed by discussion of the subject assigned in the light of insights arising from the corporate Bible study. In addition to this study in the sections of selected Bible passages, the whole conference will be led in the study of key biblical words relevant to the missionary task of the Church. These key words will also be the basis of printed Bible studies which will form part of a preparatory study booklet. It is hoped that this booklet, which will be published about July, will be widely used in the churches as a preparation for the meeting.
Also in preparation for this meeting, papers have been written on the four sectional themes by Dr Daud Rahbar, Pastor Horst Symanovsky, Dr Richard Shaull and Principal C. H. Hwang. The writers are being asked to revise their papers in the light of comments made, and it is hoped that the revised papers will play an important part in guiding the thinking of the sections.

There will be other important elements in the meeting. Decisions will have to be made about the programme of the Division for the ensuing five years, and especially about the future of the Theological Education Fund. There will be opportunities for contact with the life of the Mexican churches, and for hearing news of God’s work among different peoples and in varying situations. But above all the meeting will be an opportunity for waiting upon God. It is hoped that the main lines of its thinking will arise from the corporate study of the Bible. Times will be set apart for intercession for the missionary work of the Church, in addition to the regular times of morning and evening prayer. If God grants it, it will be an occasion when we can break free from the traditional categories of missionary thinking inherited from the era of “Christendom”, and confront the total task of world evangelism as members of a world council of churches committed both to mission and to unity. It is not too early to ask the readers of the Review to begin to pray for God’s blessing upon this meeting.

As one reviews these developments and tries to convey to a wider circle of readers an impression of what is happening in this work of ecumenical missionary co-operation and study, one is ever conscious of the fact that all these plans and ideas can become empty noise and meaningless motion. But if they are humbly offered to God, He can use them in His own gracious way. All true vitality in the work of missions depends in the last analysis upon the secret springs of supernatural life which they know who give time to communion with God. All true witness to Christ is the overflowing of a reality too great to be contained. It has its source in a life of adoration and intercession which is, of its very nature, hidden. Perhaps too much of our work is done “to be seen of men”, and if so, it has its reward. But one cannot write about these things without the reminder that any real power that God may give them will come through those secret channels which are in this age, as in every age, the true means of blessing for the world.
Dropping the “S”

William H. Crane

Dropping the “s” from the title of the International Review of Mission(s) was the implementation of the missio Dei concept in IRM. Source: IRM 58:2 (1969): 1–5.

With this issue of the IRM we change the name of the oldest ecumenical journal in existence from International Review of Missions to International Review of Mission. Authority for this decision was granted by the divisional committee of the Division of World Mission and Evangelism in its meeting at Odense, Denmark, in November 1968. This brings the title of the IRM into line with the designation of the division itself, with the thinking of the 1963 Mexico City meeting of the Commission of World Mission and Evangelism which gave wide currency to the concept of Mission in Six Continents, and with the broad consensus of missionary thinking of most of the member churches of the World Council of Churches.

We hope that the change from missions in the plural to mission in the singular will make the IRM more palatable to Asian, African and Latin American readers, for many of whom the old title must have been uncomfortably reminiscent of an era in which their continents were the only targets of the inexorable thrust of one-way missions from north to south, and an era in which mission was primarily the business of professional, dedicated expatriate Christians from the north rather than the primary business of all Christians, in every country in every continent. We hope too that the change will also make the IRM more palatable for many of our traditional subscribers in Europe and North America, many of whom must be troubled by the contradiction between what has until now been printed on the cover as the name of the journal and what is published inside as the content of the growing consensus that the mission is one for the church wherever it may be. For some time now the IRM has been publishing articles that reflect this conviction about the mission of the Church to the whole inhabited earth, and we do not do justice to the growing conviction about that transcendent, universal, excitingly diverse and amazingly unique mission by the host of outdated images which are perpetuated by the old title. Missions in the plural have a certain justification in the diplomatic, political, and economic spheres of international relations where their nature, scope and authority are defined by the interests of both those who initiate and those who receive them, but the mission of the Church is singular in that it issues from the One Triune God and His intention for the salvation of all men. His commission to
the Church is one, even though the ministries given to the Church for this mission, and
the given responses of particular churches in particular situations to the commission,
are manifold.

The various studies and programmes initiated by the Division of World Mission and
Evangelism in the past few years since integration into the life of the World Council of
Churches, also reflect this concern for the one mission of the Church in six continents
rather than the traditional concern for missions from three continents to the other
three. These include: the study of the theology of mission, the study of churches in
missionary situations, the missionary structure of the congregation, urban-industrial
mission, joint action for mission, the Christian encounter with men of other faiths, and
now the study of missionary participation in human institutions. All of these studies
and programmes already undertaken make imperative the recovery within every con-
gregation of the missionary dynamic which will enable Christians, as individuals and as
communities, to break out of their walls of self-concern to witness the love of Christ
within every level of the institutions which govern their activities, in their neighbour-
hoods, in the market-place, in the home, as well as to the ends of the earth.

It is that last phrase “to the ends of the earth” that troubles many for whom the shift
from “missions” to “mission” raises the question of missionary priorities. If the phrase
“to the ends of the earth” becomes only another way of saying that the whole inhabited
world has become a field for mission, including those parts of the world which have
already heard and in many cases rejected the Gospel, what is to be the instrumentality
of the Church’s obedience to the command to preach the Gospel to those who have not
even had a chance to hear it for the first time? If the business of mission is every
Christian’s business, they claim, there is the danger that no one will make it his business
to go to the two billion who still have not heard, or who have given no response at all
either of acceptance or rejection to the Gospel. At the risk of caricaturing a position
worthy of serious consideration and which has a certain justification in church history,
such a theology of evangelism in actual practice tends to limit the inexorable march of
the Church to “the ends of the earth” to quick occupation of enemy territory by “blitz
forces” whose essential task is to present the Gospel in such a convincing way as to
make the maximum number of prisoners, who are then marched to the rear and safely
tucked away in the churches where presumably their rehabilitation begins to take place.
There may be some justification of this image of evangelism in II Corinthians 2:14 with
its picture of the triumphal procession of Christ. But even here the mystery of redemp-
tion is suggested in such a way that Christians as the “aroma of Christ”, whether an
aroma of life or of death, can be pervading the atmosphere with that aroma in the most
unexpected places, in the jungles of New York or London among the one billion that
have heard the Gospel, as well as in the jungles of New Guinea among the two billion who haven’t.

The trouble with this position is that it fails to project the complex interrelationship, and interdependence, of the biblical doctrines of both Creation and Redemption as the Bible does. It fails to see the Old Testament dimension of salvation as liberation, and the concern for the restoration of God’s shalom, as Israel accepts the full missionary implications of being God’s covenant people witnessing His chesed (covenant love) to the nations. Biblical man is called to be the steward of God’s creation and responsible for his brother, as God is Creator of them both. Because of this failure to relate the doctrine of Man and Creation to the doctrine of Redemption many of the Church’s missionary battlefields are untidy, reflecting the passage of “blitz forces”, and there are far too many unhappy prisoners cooped up in the churches, as well as in the societies which have not been effectively evangelized, oblivious to the freedom to which they have been called as children of God. In short, because of our enchantment with the “ends of the earth” as a geographical and logistical reality we have left the “rear areas” in a mess, and it is time that we see them as being just as essential a priority for mission as the so-called “two billion”. T. S. Eliot effectively described for the phenomenon of imperialistic expansion much of what is also true for the expansion of the Church in a memorable passage from his “Choruses from the Rock”:

When your fathers fixed the place of God,
And settled all the inconvenient saints,
Apostles, martyrs, in a kind of Whipsnade,
Then they could set about imperialist expansion
Accompanied by industrial development.
Exporting iron, coal and cotton goods
And intellectual enlightenment
And everything, including capital
And several versions of the Word of God:
The British race assured of a mission
Performed it, but left much at home unsure.1

In the same meeting in which the decision was made to drop the “s” in our name, plans were made by the divisional committee to liven up the IRM, and to attempt to make it a more effective platform for the discussion of those issues which most concern the churches as they attempt to understand their missionary task in this post-Uppsala period. The old editorial advisory board was dropped, not because it was no longer

useful, but primarily because resources had never been available to allow it to meet and function as a real advisory board. A new advisory board was named, made up of members of the divisional committee who would be able to meet periodically to plan the future of the journal. However, one member of the old advisory board was retained and promoted to the post of honorary chairman of the advisory board. This was Dr Kenneth Scott Latourette, the noted missionary historian, author, and late professor of missions at Yale University. As we go to press we have just heard of Dr Latourette’s tragic death in an automobile accident in the state of Oregon.

The best appreciation of Dr Latourette which we could think of comes from a closing passage in one of his own books:

> Always, we need again and again to remind ourselves, the secret of the Church’s strength is not organization. Age after age it is men and women, who have been captured by Jesus and have entered a new life through Him, who have been the centre of Christian advance, the active agents through whom the faith has gone on. The greatest of early Christians clearly saw this. They declared that Jesus was the expression, in such fashion that men could see it, of the Eternal God Himself, that He was and is the Logos, the Word, through whom God touches human life, that in Him was life, and that life is the light of men. Always that light, so they saw, shines in darkness. Yet, they declared, the darkness never puts it out. The experience of nineteen centuries has justified their insight. It is this life and this light which constitute the secret of the power of Christianity and of the Church. It is this life and this light, emanating from the creative heart of the universe and of its very essence, which are the sure hope of the future.²

This better than anything else affirms the faith of one of this century’s greatest missionaries, and certainly of this century’s greatest missionary historian! He was himself one of those unusual men “captured by Jesus”. We will miss him – the whole Church will! But most of all we will miss the long, critically sensitive and excitingly fresh contributions to the IRM which he sent in regularly every year – the fruit of his own thinking and the thinking of a small group of missionary strategists who used to meet with him at periodic intervals to discuss the contemporary issues of mission and evangelism. He took his responsibility as a member of our advisory editorial board very seriously, and it is unlikely that anyone can fully take his place as senior statesman, strategist and prophet of the modern missionary movement.

William H. CRANE

In his first editorial, Christopher Duraisingh reflects on the San Antonio World Mission Conference (Texas, USA, 1989) and its significance from an ecumenical mission perspective.


The *International Review of Mission*, the oldest continuous ecumenical journal, has sought, since its inception in 1912, to facilitate the common witness of the churches “in each place and in all places.” It is not simply a journal of mission but an organ of the ecumenical movement intended for the promotion of ecumenical thinking and practice in mission. The IRM seeks to reflect the changing understanding of the church’s one mission and the growing diversity of perspectives on mission within the world church. To this end IRM continues to provide a wide forum for mission debate. Many viewpoints are included and various perspectives are acknowledged. Its primary purpose, however, is to promote serious reflection and study of the church’s unchanging mission and “to support the churches in their worldwide and missionary calling.”

In the midst of a growing diversity of mission perspectives within the ecumenical family of churches, there are some clear motifs that have been crystallized within the ecumenical history. Periodic conferences of the World Council of Churches on world mission have highlighted them. Three such new concentration points have emerged through the experience and discussions of the San Antonio Conference on World Mission and Evangelism. In the days ahead, the IRM needs to draw the attention of its readers to these and facilitate discussion around them. These insights are part of the ecumenical history and therefore can constitute the cutting edge, as it were, of an ecumenical missiology. They are not new, but they have come to function as “concentration points” in recent times.

First, the vision of the oikoumene, a renewed earth and a reconciled humanity in Christ, has come to be the undergirding perspective that defines the very purpose of the mission of the church. Time and again, and in no uncertain terms, the San Antonio report calls our attention to this. The report of Section I says within the first few lines: “The church’s mission cannot but flow from God’s care for the whole creation, unconditional love for all people and concern for unity and fellowship with and among all human beings.” The same report says a little later: “The church is called
again and again to be a prophetic sign and foretaste of the unity and renewal of the human family as envisioned in God’s promised reign.” Report of Section II affirms definitively that “God in Trinity is a community of divine persons . . . human life can reflect God’s trinitarian life – God’s likeness – only in community, obedient to the will of God.” In Section III we hear that God’s will is “for one inclusive human family.” In fact, the preamble to its report states: “We are called to participate in God’s reconciling work “for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him” (Eph. 1:9b–10a).” Underlying Section IV on “Towards Renewed Communities in Mission” is the unequivocal affirmation that “it is God’s firm purpose to unite all human beings in a single community.”

What do these affirmations imply? Are we at a point in ecumenical mission history where we are called to affirm the vision of oikoumene, of God gathering up and renewing all things in Christ as the central paradigm, principal motif, controlling vision of all our mission thinking and practice? Will the unity of the oikoumene and the coming into being of a community, reconciled and renewed in Christ, become a central and overarching theme for missiology in the ’90s? Can a missionary understanding of the oikoumene become a critical principle for the unity of the churches that we seek? Would not our understanding the goal of mission primarily in terms of God’s activity of gathering all into the oikoumene, one new creation in Christ, call for a radical integration between doctrines of creation and redemption? How often in the history of Christian mission has the radical separation between creation and redemption led to an unhealthy dichotomy between the church and the world, the former being held as the exclusive realm of grace and the latter merely the realm of nature? One can multiply this sort of question. But it shows that the eschatological vision of the oikoumene as an overarching perspective for an ecumenical missiology needs to be further explored. We hope that the pages of IRM will facilitate such a search.

The second concentration point is the central role of people’s struggle. In ecumenical mission history, since Melbourne solidarity with people in their struggle has been affirmed as an act of our missionary obedience. But since then, and more clearly in San Antonio, the perspective of people in the midst of suffering and struggle seems to emerge as constitutive of our mission thinking. In September 1989, there was a major Asian mission conference in Indonesia under the theme: the mission of God in the context of the suffering and struggling people of Asia. It appears that this mission conference suggests in no uncertain terms that solidarity with people in their struggle should be the crucible of authentic thinking and practice in mission. Without the perspective of the people in whose pain and struggle God’s solidarity is made manifest through the cross of Christ, the eschatological vision of the oikoumene
would be empty. In one of the main addresses of that Asian mission conference, Kim Yong-Bock suggests that the term “solidarity” may be a more relevant “ecumenical paradigm” for our understanding and search for “unity” in the days ahead. All these call for serious reflection on this second point of concentration in recent ecumenical missiology. What is the relation between the search for unity and solidarity with people in their struggle? Who are the people, suffering and struggling? What does the perspective of the people on the peripheries of society really mean in mission thinking and practice? It would appear that there is an inseparable link between the eschatological vision of God reconciling and uniting all things in Christ and the suffering and struggles of the people; an integral relation between the vision of Ephesians 1:9 and Romans chapter eight. How do we explore this link in our mission debate? Here too it is hoped that the pages of the IRM will provide a forum for wider discussion in the days ahead.

The third concentration point in the ecumenical mission perspective is the experience of signs of renewal and hope within Christian communities. In San Antonio, time and again one heard witness to the church as the sign and foretaste of God’s eschatological promise for all people and, at the same time, as a community that shares in and manifests the brokenness and pain of all humankind.

Here then are three concentration points, three inseparable perspectives that constitute strands of an ecumenical missiology. They are God’s unconditional will to gather up and renew all things in Christ, the present pain and struggle of people at the periphery and the provisional experience of the church as a sign and foretaste of God’s purpose for all creation. How are these three strands to be related? What shall be the practical implications of an ecumenical missiology at the intersection of the three perspectives? These are questions that need urgent attention.

Of course, within the ecumenical movement the churches around the world will gather soon, in early 1991, to pray together: Come, Holy Spirit – Renew the Whole Creation. It is important that this theme of the forthcoming WCC assembly be related as well to the mission thinking and practice of Christian people around the world. Some of these concerns will need to find a place in forthcoming issues of IRM.

But, as readers are aware, the last few issues of the IRM have been devoted to a nodal point in the history of the ecumenical missionary movement, namely the San Antonio Conference on World Mission and Evangelism. This issue continues the reflections on the experience and insights of San Antonio. Several persons had been invited by Eugene Stockwell, the former director of CWME and editor of this journal, to offer
their understanding of the significance of San Antonio for their thinking and practice of mission. The essays offer a wide variety of perspectives, including that of Orthodox and Roman Catholic.

From an evangelical perspective, Susan Perlman shares with readers her first experience of a missionary conference of the ecumenical world and in places makes some brief but helpful comparison between her experiences at San Antonio and at Lausanne II in Manila. An article by George Lemopoulos fruitfully summarizes the responses from several Orthodox participants, particularly Cyril Argenti and Alexander Veronis, while Sheshagiri Rao, one of the eight participants in San Antonio representing people of other faiths, reflects on the conference from the standpoint of a Hindu. Robert Kownacki, a Roman Catholic, writes as one involved “on the scene” in the local planning committee in San Antonio, and Thomas F. Stransky locates his personal reflections on the conference within the context of his experience of earlier world mission conferences as a Roman Catholic observer.

The report of the general secretary of the WCC, Emilio Castro, to the meeting of the Central Committee in Moscow in July 1989 is also included. Castro interprets the function of the WCC to facilitate the common witness of the churches. His use of the experience and the text of San Antonio, together with the various mandates of the council for supporting the mission of the church in the contemporary world, is powerful and very helpful.

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From time to time, the IRM has reminded us of the richness of our ecumenical heritage. It has highlighted the wealth of gifted persons with lifelong commitment to the cause of mission and unity. One such person who has enriched our ecumenical missionary thinking and practice over the past several decades is Bishop Lesslie Newbigin. It is fitting that IRM honours Newbigin as he celebrates his 80th birthday and invites its readers to thank God for the bishop’s wisdom and words, which have given us all joy and encouragement. He has indeed refreshed many a heart in the cause of mission. As the first director of the then-called Division of World Mission and Evangelism, immediately after the integration of the IMC into the WCC, he shaped this journal for a period. We honour Bishop Newbigin through a collection of tributes from some of his friends and former colleagues. Bernard Thorogood’s extended article introduces us to the depth of the man that Newbigin is and the variety of his contributions to the world church. Through all that Newbigin has done, he has led the world church and the World Council of Churches to
see “that the distinctive task of Christian witness is not optional or secondary, but is
the primary call to apostleship, and that if direct proclamation is neglected all else is
enfeebled.”

My introduction to Lesslie Newbigin was in 1966. I had just finished my ministerial
training. In a major national conference on the mission of the Church in India, I was
called to be the rapporteur of a group to which Bishop Newbigin was the Chair. The
topic was conversion; the debate was over a phrase that I found to be a bit jarring. As
any fresh graduate of theology is prone to, I rushed to label the phrase as being “too
calvinistic.” I vividly remember to this day the quick and firm but gentle rebuke from the
bishop as he sought to correct his own phrase at the same time. There was laughter in
the group. The tension was eased. I learned that day a significant lesson that the church
is called to be the pars pro toto of humanity. It has been the same experience ever since.
During the past twenty-three years we have met often, discussed at length, and at times
disagreed; but always I have been immensely enriched in mind and strengthened in the
Spirit by every encounter with him.

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The journey of the church, the missionary people of God, continues, led and nourished
by women and men like Newbigin. It will remain the particular responsibility of IRM to
follow the ecumenical discussions concerning the shape and content of our mission
today and especially to facilitate a wider forum, greater collaboration and enriched
sharing of insights among churches as they seek to participate in the mission of God
which frees, reconciles and renews all things in Jesus Christ. May our endeavours in the
days ahead be faithful to that calling.

Christopher DURAI SINGH

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