

THEMES AND QUESTIONS IN MISSIOLOGY TODAY

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Introduction

While the case may be made that “missiology” or (etymologically) “the study of mission” is an activity that is as old as the Bible, as a recognized *academic* discipline it has only emerged in the last century and a half. It is certainly correct to speak, as does Christopher J. Wright in his massive *The Mission of God*, that the entire Bible is a missionary book. It is certainly true, as Martin Kähler famously wrote, that “mission is the mother of theology,” in that the New Testament was written as a reflection on the church’s actual missionary practice.¹ It was, however, only in 1867 that Alexander Duff was appointed to a chair of Evangelistic Theology at New College, Edinburgh—only after convincing the rest of the theological faculty that his new chair would not affect the other theological disciplines at all. Even then the chair did not last. Duff had only one successor and then the chair of missiology was retired. Scotland continued to be a leading sender of missionaries in the field, but preparation for the missionary life was recommended for extracurricular reading.²

Most missiologists trace the real beginning of their discipline to the German Gustav Warnek, who was appointed to the chair of missiology at the University of Halle in 1897. Catholic missiology would have to wait until 1914, when Joseph Schmidlin was appointed to the chair of missiology at the University of Münster. In the Catholic world, Münster would emerge as one of two important schools of missiological thought, the other being at the University of Louvain in Belgium. Prior to the Second Vatican Council, Münster would argue for the goal of mission being primary the salvation of souls; Louvain under the leadership of Pierre Charles would argue that the purpose of mission was primarily the establishment of the church. The debate was solved at the Council in AG paragraph 6: “the special end of this missionary activity is the evangelization and the implanting of the Church among peoples or groups in which it has not yet taken root.” In a real sense, both sides had “won” the debate.

The Council’s document on missionary activity represented a real breakthrough in missiological thought. In particular, as we saw in the paper on the church’s missiological teaching, it rooted the church’s mission not so much in the *external* command of Jesus to make disciples of all nations, but in the *internal* reality of the church’s participation in the mission of the triune God as such. In addition, the document emphasized the goodness of the world’s various cultures and the need for the church to immerse itself in them. After the Council missiology was faced with the question, especially in the light of its positive treatment of other

¹Christopher J. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006); Martin Kähler, *Schriften zur Chrisologie und Mission* (Munich: Kaiser Verlag, 1971 [originally published in 1908]).

²See Andrew F. Walls, “Missiological Education in Historical Perspective,” in J. Dudley Woodbury, Charles Van Engen and Edgard J. Elliston, eds., *Missiological Education for the 21st Century: The Book, the Circle and the Sandals* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 17).

religious ways and its clear statement of the possibility of salvation outside of the church and explicit faith in Christ, of why mission at all. That question was answered in the 1970s with an understanding of mission that focused not on the expansion of the church but the proclamation of God's Reign of justice and liberation. The missiology of the 1980s and '90s emphasized as well the dialogical nature of mission, particularly in regard to other religions, and missiological discussions reflected Roman concerns that *dialogue* would replace *proclamation* as mission's primary concern.

Missiology today, which is the focus of this paper, continues to reflect on all of these issues, for while we have come very far in our renewed understanding of mission, we still have a long way to go. Missiology today might be said to be a reflection on how mission might be carried out in terms used by two of the most influential works of missiology today. Protestant South African missiologist David J. Bosch in his magisterial *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* speaks of the need to do mission in "bold humility."³ Roger Schroeder and I, borrowing from the wisdom of our religious congregation, the Society of the Divine Word, talk about mission as "prophetic dialogue" in our 2004 book *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*⁴ In this paper we will speak, in a first part, about mission in general as "prophetic dialogue." Second, we will reflect briefly on the six "elements" of mission as activities to be done in the spirit of prophetic dialogue. In a third and final part we will reflect on some other issues that concern mission today, and how they too might be understood from a prophetic dialogue perspective.

Mission as Prophetic Dialogue

The term "prophetic dialogue" has not, of course, been universally developed to describe how mission is to be carried out. A good number of missiologists, however—especially Catholics—have begun using the term.⁵ Roger and I did not invent it. The phrase was coined at the SVD General Chapter in 2000, and I was there when the phrase was proposed. The Asians in our congregation had proposed that we speak of doing mission simply as "dialogue," but the Latin Americans strenuously objected. For them, in the context of their commitment to liberation in the midst of Latin American poverty and political and cultural oppression, doing mission was closer to engaging in *prophecy*. As we argued about this, one of our Indonesian members suggested that, as a compromise, we speak of "prophetic dialogue." Everyone seemed satisfied, and so we adopted the notion.

³David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991).

⁴Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004).

⁵See, for example, Gerard Hall, SM, "Prophetic Dialogue as a Practical Theological Category," *Australian E-Journal of Theology*, Pentecost Issue (2007); L. Stanislaus and Alwyn D'Sousa, *Prophetic Dialogue: Prospects and Challenges in India* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2003); Lawrence Nemer, SVD, "Prophetic Dialogue: A New Way of Doing Mission?," *South Pacific Journal of Mission Studies*, 36 (January, 2007): 30-36.

Mission as Dialogue

Roger and I have developed the idea of prophetic dialogue in our own way, however. For us, mission is first and foremost *dialogue*. One enters into mission with a profound openness to the place and to the people in which and among whom one works. Max Warren's famous dictum, "when you come to another land, another people, take off your shoes, because the ground on which you are standing is holy"⁶ should function as a basic text for missionary work. In previous General Chapters as well, we had developed a spirituality of "passing over" into other cultures and peoples. We first of all need to *leave* our homelands or our places of comfort (*leaving* is necessary; many missionaries really never *leave*), and *pass over* into people's cultures, languages, economic standards. Another text that needs to be emphasized is one I heard once from the great South African Catholic theologian Albert Nolan: "Listen, listen, listen. Ask questions. Listen!" My colleague Claude-Marie Barbour has coined the term "mission-in-reverse": we need to be evangelized by the people before we can evangelize them; we need to allow the people among whom we work to be our teachers before we presume to teach them.⁷

Mission as dialogue is the ministry of presence, of respect. It is a witness, at base, to the God who moves among us in dialogue, the Word become flesh, communion in Godself who calls us to communion with our universe and with one another. Some of its great exemplars are women and men like Francis of Assisi, Pandita Ramabai in India, Charles de Foucauld, a French hermit and contemplative in Algeria, a C. W. Andrews or a Bede Griffiths. Among several scripture passages that I might offer as a foundation, one that particularly strikes me is Paul's description of himself and his work in 1Thessalonians: "...we were gentle among you, like a nurse taking care of her children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us (1Thes 2:7-8).

Prophecy

But authentic mission also involves prophecy, and this in several senses. First, the basic motivation for mission must be to share the astounding, challenging, self-convicting, amazing, *good* news about the God of Jesus Christ and God's vision for the world. I love the way the term "gospel" is translated in Pilipino or Tagalog as *magandang balita*—literally *beautiful news*. Prophecy is first of all a "telling forth," not on our own authority but on God's authority. This is why, in the powerful words of Pope Paul VI, there is no evangelization worthy of the name

⁶Max Warren, Introduction to John V. Taylor, *The Primal Vision: Christian Presence and African Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), 10.

⁷Claude-Marie Barbour, Kathleen Billman, Peggy DesJarlait, "Mission on the Boundaries: Cooperation without Exploitation," in Susan Thistlethwaite and George F. Cairns, eds., *Beyond Theological Tourism: Mentoring as a Grassroots Approach to Theological Education* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 82-83.

unless “if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed” (EN 22). Engaging in mission is not simply for the physical betterment of humanity, the increase of communications among Christians, or the development of one’s own personal depth—even though all these things are worth while. Mission is about the respectful, gentle, dialogical, and yet faithful speaking forth—in word and deed—of God’s love revealed in Jesus of Nazareth.

The second way that mission is prophecy is, in the spirit of Old Testament prophets like Amos, Hosea and Isaiah, its clear critique and exposure of any kind of injustice in the world. To allude again to that 1971 episcopal document, working for justice is a *constitutive part* of the prophetic preaching of the gospel. The gospel which Christians proclaim is a gospel of justice. It is the proclamation of a world of equality and participation, a world in which the greatest is the servant of all, a world of peace and opportunity. There is a long list of prophets in the history of the church’s mission, among whom one might number Bartolome de las Casas, Pedro Claver, Martin Luther King, Jr., Dorothy Day.

Third, we might speak of the witness of the church community as prophetic. Gerhard Lohfink writes powerfully of the need for the Christian Community to form a “contrast community,” to be a demonstration to the world around it what the Reign of God might look like.⁸ In Lesslie Newbigin’s words, the church needs to be a “sign and foretaste” of the coming Reign of God.⁹ Even if one would not fully espouse the “countercultural model” of contextual theology, there is indeed something in the Christian life and message that deeply challenges the status quo. The way Christians care for one another, their hospitality, their involvement in the world of politics and the arts, their moral stances—all these can be gentle or not-so-gentle challenges to the world around them.

Prophecy does not have to be something serious or angry—although sometimes it may very well be. Certainly the well-known exclamation of people of the Roman Empire in the early centuries of Christianity—“see how they love one another”—was a recognition of prophecy. But even when it is angry—like the anger of the Old Testament prophets against Israel, or the anger of Jesus toward the Pharisees—is an anger born out of love. It is only because the prophets and Jesus *loved* Israel that they could fulminate so strongly against it. Christians “tell it like it is” in the world not because the world is ultimately evil, but because of what it is and can be in God’s sight.

Prophetic Dialogue

Mission needs to be done both as dialogue and as prophecy: in “prophetic dialogue.” To refer again to David Bosch’s wonderful phrase of “bold humility,” we need boldly to proclaim

⁸Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus and Community: The Social Dimension of Christian Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).

⁹Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: Sketches for a Missionary Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978).

the “beautiful news” of God’s story in Jesus and God’s vision for our world, but we need to do it in the way *God* does it: with patience, with respect, in dialogue.

I quoted from Paul’s letter to the Thessalonians as an example of Paul doing mission in dialogue. In its full context, however, the text reflects much more an attitude of the bold humility or prophetic dialogue that I am advocating here.

For you yourselves know, sisters and brothers, that our visit to you was not in vain; but though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the face of opposition. For our appeal does not spring from error or uncleanness, nor is it made with guile; but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please people, but to please God who tests our hearts. We never used either words of flattery, as you know, or a cloak for greed, as God is witness; nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nurse taking care of her children. . . . (1Thes 2:1-7).

Paul certainly becomes “all things to all people,” a slave to all,” but this is because “woe to me if I do not preach the gospel” (see 1Cor 9:16-23).

Six Elements of Mission in Contemporary Missiological Discussion

As I have pointed out in the paper on church teaching on mission, the 1971 Synod of Bishops, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* in 1975, and *Redemptoris Missio* of 1990 widened the notion of mission to include working for justice, inculturation, and interreligious dialogue. A 1984 document from the Secretariat for non-Christians spoke of five elements of mission, namely (1) presence and witness, (2) development and liberation, (3) liturgical life, prayer and contemplation, (4) interreligious dialogue, and (5) proclamation and catechesis.¹⁰ Andrew Kirk insisted on ecological commitment and peacemaking as an integral part of mission, and Robert Schreiter has written significantly about reconciliation as essential to understanding mission today.¹¹ In an effort to synthesize these elements and several others proposed by a number of authors, Eleanor Doidge and I proposed six elements of mission in an essay we wrote in 2000.¹² These are the six elements on which I will reflect here.

¹⁰Secretariat for Non-Christians, “The Attitude of the Church toward the Followers of Other Religions (Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission,” *Bulletin Secretariatus pro non Christianis*, 56, 2.

¹¹J. Andrew Kirk, *What Is Mission? Theological Explorations* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1999); Robert J. Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997).

¹²Stephen Bevans and Eleanor Doidge, “Theological Reflection,” in Barbara Kraemer, ed., *What Mission Confronts Religious Life in the U. S. Today?* (Chicago: Center for the Study of Religious Life, 2000), 37-48.

Witness and Proclamation

The interconnectedness of Christian witness and explicit proclamation of the gospel is perhaps expressed most clearly in the charge attributed to St. Francis of Assisi: “Preach always; if necessary use words.” As Pope Paul VI wrote in EN, “the first means of evangelization is the witness of an authentically Christian life” (41); and the document DP insists that proclamation “is the summit and center of evangelization (10). Witness and proclamation go together. “The deed, wrote David Bosch, without the word is dumb; the word without the deed is empty.”¹³

The church’s missionary witness is of at least four kinds. At a first level, there is the witness of individual Christians: famous Christians like Albert Schweitzer or Mother Teresa, or ordinary Christian parents, teachers, factory workers. Secondly, there is the witness of the Christian community—its vitality, its inviting nature, its prophetic or countercultural stance on particular issues. Third, we can speak of the church’s institutional witness in its schools, hospitals, social service agencies and orphanages. Finally, there is the “common witness” of Christians of different traditions living and working together, and engaging in continuing dialogue. As the *Manila Manifesto* so aptly puts it, “If the task of world evangelization is ever to be accomplished, we must engage in it together.”¹⁴

John Paul II spoke of proclamation—the explicit proclamation of the Lordship of Jesus and of his vision of the Reign of God—as “the permanent priority of mission” (RM 44). Nevertheless, this prophetic proclamation needs to be done dialogically, taking account of the situation of those to whom the good news is addressed. It can never be done apart from witness, for “no matter how eloquent our verbal testimony, people will always believe their eyes first.”¹⁵ Moreover, proclamation is always to be given as an invitation, respecting the freedom of the hearers. “*The church proposes,*” insisted John Paul II, “*she imposes nothing*” (RM 39).

Liturgy, Prayer, and Contemplation

The church, says Lutheran liturgist Robert Hawkins, “lives from the center with its eyes on the borders”¹⁶ Liturgy is a dead end if it is its own end. My colleague Richard Fragomeni said once that the goal of liturgy is *worship*—and worship is not what takes place in a church but in the world. Liturgy needs to be celebrated “inside out,”¹⁷ as an anticipation of the “liturgy

¹³Bosch, 420.

¹⁴*The Manila Manifesto*, in James A. Scherer and Stephen B. Bevans, eds., *New Dimensions in Mission and Evangelization 1: Basic Statements* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 301.

¹⁵Commission on World Mission and Evangelization, San Antonio, 1989, in Scherer and Bevans, 78.

¹⁶Robert D. Hawkins, “Occasional Services: Border Crossings,” in Thomas H. Schattauer, ed., *Inside Out: Worship in an Age of Mission* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1999), 201.

¹⁷The title of Schattauer, cited above.

after the liturgy,” as the Orthodox say. Celebration of the liturgy is an evangelizing act on several levels. It is always the evangelization of the Christian faithful who day after day, week after week, make up the liturgical assembly, forming them more perfectly into Christ’s body in the world and calling each individually to more authentic Christian life. But, since there are always visitors in the congregation who may be non-believers or the unchurched, the worthy and vital celebration of the liturgy in Eucharist, Baptism, marriages and funerals can be moments when the gospel proclaimed and celebrated may find particular resonance in those who are seeking more depth in life, or may even be able to break through indifference or resistance.

In 1927, Pope Pius XI declared Francis Xavier and Thérèse of Lisieux patrons of the church’s missionary activity. The Jesuit Francis Xavier was no surprise; his exploits on behalf of the gospel in India and Japan make him one of the greatest missionaries of all times. But naming Thérèse was a bit unusual. After all, she was a strictly cloistered Carmelite nun and never left her convent in France. Nevertheless, her autobiography, published a few years after her death, revealed her to be a woman on fire for the gospel, whose heart was always beyond her convent walls, calling all humanity to faith in Christ. Her life of prayer was so intense, so universal, so missionary, that she could very justly be named patroness of the missions. The pope’s action in 1927 points to the truth that commitment to the spread of the gospel is not simply a matter of heroic work in cross-cultural situations; it is a matter of allowing the missionary task to shape Christian spirituality. Prayer and contemplation is seeing and feeling with the missionary God, aligning one’s needs and wants with the saving activity of God’s missionary presence in the world.

Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation

“Action on behalf of justice . . . fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel. . . ;”¹⁸ “if you want peace, work for justice;”¹⁹ “we discern two types of injustice: socio-economic-political injustice . . . and environmental injustice;”²⁰ “. . . the responsibility of the church towards the earth is a crucial part of the church’s mission.”²¹ Commitment to justice, peace and integrity of creation is a seamless garment. All are constitutive of the church’s missionary task.

Commitment to the poor and marginalized of the world takes shape in the first place as the church acts as a voice for the victims of injustice on the one hand and a goad to the

¹⁸1971 Synod of Bishops, “Justice in the World,” in David J. O’Brien and Thomas A. Shannon, eds., *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books), 289.

¹⁹Paul VI, “Message for World Day of Peace,” *Origins*, 1, 29 (January 6, 1972): 490-491.

²⁰Leonardo Boff, “Social Ecology: Poverty and Misery,” In David G. Hallman, ed., *Ecotheology: Voices from the South and North* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994): 235-237.

²¹Frederick R. Wilson, ed., *The San Antonio Report: Your Will Be Done, Mission in Christ’s Way* (Geneva, WCC Publications, 1990).

consciences of the rich on the other. People like Oscar Romero and Desmond Tutu, and documents like the U. S. Bishops' peace and economics pastorals and the Kairos Document in South Africa are shining examples of this justice ministry. Secondly, the church needs to work to help those who suffer injustice find their *own* voice. If the church did only the first it would ultimately only be patronizing. The goal of justice ministry is to help the poor and the marginalized find their own subjectivity and hope. Third, the commitment to justice inevitably means committing oneself to a life of practice that is in solidarity with the victims of this world, through simple lifestyle, through political stances, through a constant siding with the poor and oppressed and their causes. Finally, as the 1971 Synod of Bishops puts it, a church committed to justice must be just itself: "everyone who ventures to speak about justice must first be just in their eyes."²²

In 1981, Pope John Paul II visited Hiroshima, the site for the first hostile use of the atomic bomb in 1945. "From now on," he said, "it is only through a conscious choice and through a deliberate policy that humanity can survive."²³ The mission of the church, contemporary missiologists insist, involves making sure that governments and other groups keep making that "conscious choice" and follow that "deliberate policy" towards peace. In a similar way, the church's commitment to justice cannot but be concerned for personal and institutional witness of simplicity of life, and for support of legislation and movements that promote the integrity of creation and the care of the earth. Repentance, wrote Canadian novelist Rudy Wiebe, is not "feeling bad," but "*thinking different*."²⁴ The Kingdom call to "repent and believe" takes on a whole new dimension in the light of today's consciousness of creation's fragility and humanity's vocation to stewardship. This area is one of the "cutting edge" areas of missiology today.

Interreligious Dialogue

"Dialogue is . . . the norm and necessary manner of every form of Christian mission"²⁵ This general norm for doing mission, however, has particular relevance as Christians encounter people of other faiths or people who have no faith at all. Mission is carried out "in Christ's way," reflective of the dialogical nature of God's trinitarian self. Dialogue is based on the conviction that "the Spirit of God is constantly at work in ways that pass human understanding and in places that to us are least expected."²⁶

There is, first, the *dialogue of life*, in which Christians live and rub shoulders with people

²²"Justice in the World," in O'Brien and Shannon, eds., 295.

²³John Paul II, "Moral Choices for the Future," *Origins*, 10, 39 (March 12, 1981): 621.

²⁴Rudy Wiebe, *The Blue Mountains of China* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Inc., 1970 [1995 edition]), 258.

²⁵"The Attitude of the Church . . . ," paragraph 29.

²⁶World Council of Churches, "Ecumenical Affirmation: Mission and Evangelism," in Scherer and Bevans, eds., 43.

of other faiths and ideologies. In this way people get to know one another, respect each other, learn from each other, and reduce the tensions that exist among people who may have radically different worldviews. Second, we speak of the *dialogue of social action*, by which women and men of differing faith commitments work together for common issues of human life. Working together for fairer immigration laws, for the abolition of the death penalty, for the sacredness of human life, against racism and sexism are ways that committed people can learn to live with one another and be inspired by the social doctrines of the various religious and secular tradition. Third, there is the *dialogue of theological exchange*. While this may be the area for experts, as they probe one another's doctrines and practices, challenging and inspiring one another, it can also take place among ordinary Christians as they read one another's sacred documents and cherished authors. Finally, there is the *dialogue of religious experience*. While there always will remain differences of content and method, this is an area where many traditions seem to converge in major ways. While perhaps people of differing faiths may not be able to pray *together*, they can, as Pope John Paul II did at Assisi in 1986 and 2002, come together to pray in their own ways.

Inculturation

Throughout the history of the church there have been many prophetic Christians who have practiced in some way what we call today "inculturation." Peter and Paul, Justin Martyr, Francis of Assisi, Clare, Ramón Lull, Matteo Ricci, Martin Luther, Mother Teresa, Roland Allen and Charles de Foucauld are just a few names in a long litany. Missiologists, particularly those who specialize in church history, have recently emphasized their important contributions to the history of the church and to the development of theology.²⁷ But while we can argue that the church has always practiced inculturation to some degree, today there is an understanding that it is not just something for a few women and men who live dangerously "on the edge." Rather, inculturation is acknowledged today as an integral part of communicating the gospel, if the gospel is truly to be communicated. "You may, and you must, have an African Christianity," proclaimed Paul VI in 1969. "Contextualization . . . is not simply nice," writes Evangelical missiologist David Hesselgrave. "It is a necessity."²⁸

The central place of inculturation in today's missiology is something that has only emerged as theology and spirituality began to recognize the essential role of experience in any kind of human living. Traditionally, theology was conceived as reflection-in-faith on Scripture and Tradition. There was one theology, always and everywhere valid. As theology began to

²⁷See Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement*, Two Volumes (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001 / 2009); Stephen B. Bevans, *An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009).

²⁸Paul VI, "The African Church Today," *The Pope Speaks*, 14, 3 (1969), 219; David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally: An Introduction to Missionary Communication* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zonvervan, 1978), 85.

acknowledge the anthropological turn that has so marked western modern consciousness, the role of experience in theology became more and more influential. It was not, however, that experience was just *added* to the traditional sources; the anthropological turn revealed the fact that Scripture and Tradition themselves were highly influenced by the experiences of women and men at particular times, places and cultural contexts. And so experience has taken on a normative value that it did not have in times past. The theology of the West, we now recognize, was itself a limited, contextual product of a particular set of experiences. Every time and every culture has its validity, and needs to reflect on faith on its own terms, and needs to use its own lens to interpret Scripture, past doctrinal formulations, ethical practices, and liturgical customs. Today the experience of the past (Scripture and Tradition) and the experience of the present (context) may interact in various ways that are conditioned by particular circumstances and/or theological convictions, but whether Christian faith needs to engage a context authentically is simply accepted as a missiological imperative.²⁹

Reconciliation

In a world of increasing violence, tensions between religions, terrorist threats, globalization and displacement of peoples, the church's witness to and proclamation of the possibility of reconciliation may constitute a new way of conceiving the content of the church's missionary task. Missiology today recognizes that reconciliation needs to take place on a number of different levels. There is, first, the *personal* level of healing between spouses, between victims and their torturers or oppressors, among victims of natural calamities such as earthquakes or tsunamis. There is reconciliation between members of oppressed cultures like Australian Aboriginals, North American First Nations, Latin American indigenous peoples and those who have oppressed and marginalized them for centuries. A third level of reconciliation might be called *political*. One may think of the reconciliation called for after years of Apartheid in South Africa, the by years of forced disappearances and massacres as in Argentina or Guatemala.

Reconciliation, insists Robert Schreiter, involves much more of a *spirituality* than a *strategy*.³⁰ In the first place, reconciliation is the work of God, a work of grace. It is offered first and foremost by the victims of injustice and violence. The church's task is not to develop strategies for this to take place, but to witness in its life and proclaim its fearless hope that God's grace *does* heal, and that, through the reconciling work of Jesus Christ, the barriers of hostility can be broken down, and those who are divided can be made one. For "it is he who is our peace" (Eph 2:14). To facilitate the recognition of God's gracious working in the midst of so much violence and tragedy, the church needs to develop communities of honest, compassion and acceptance. Ministers of reconciliation need to hone their skills of contemplative attention

²⁹See Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 3-15.

³⁰Robert J. Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997).

and listening. Ways might be found to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation in a manner that better ritualizes God's reconciling action.

Three Newer Issues in Contemporary Discussion

There seem to me to be four issues that have emerged in recent years that are the object of a growing amount of missiological reflection: globalization, migration and women. We have treated the question of ecology in reflections on how issues of justice now include *eco-justice* or ecology. The other three questions deserve at least some brief treatment as we bring our survey of contemporary missiology to a close. Much more could be said about them, of course, since they represent—with several other themes we have discussed—some of the “cutting edge” issues in mission and missiological reflection today.

Globalization

Globalization is a complex phenomenon, with both positive and negative aspects.³¹ From one perspective, it is the result of the compression of space and time through the development in the last several decades of more and more advanced communications technology (the Internet, mobile phones, satellite communications) and rapid and easily accessible transportation. These real advances have connected the peoples of the world as never before in history, and provided new levels of human, educational, economic and political possibilities. But globalization has negative implications as well, because it threatens, perhaps as never before, to exclude whole peoples from economic and political participation and to extinguish traditional languages and cultures. Robert Schreiter cites a United Nations report that “notes that . . . the disparity between rich and poor is growing worse in nearly all parts of the world, with roughly 20 percent enjoying the fruits of global capitalism, and the rest struggling to hold their ground and slipping away into deeper poverty.”³² And there is a tendency in globalization to create what Benjamin Barber has termed a “McWorld”—a standardization of local cultures by the introduction of McDonald's, KFC restaurants and the like, U. S. American rock music and clothing styles, with English as the common language.³³

Despite the strong critique of globalization leveled by many Christians in general and many missiologists in particular,³⁴ globalization is fact and is simply the context in which the church carries out its mission today. In his message for the annual World Day of Peace in 1998,

³¹The best introduction to the phenomenon of globalization is Malcolm Waters, *Globalization* (New York: Routledge, 1995). See also Robert J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997). See *Theological Studies*, 69, 3 (March, 2008), which is a thematic issue on globalization.

³²Schreiter, *The New Catholicity*, 7.

³³Benjamin R. Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld* (New York: Times Books, 1995).

³⁴See *Spiritus* (Latin American Edition), 38, 1 (March, 1997): thematic issue: *Globalización: Nuevos Desafíos para la Misión*.

Pope John Paul II recognized this fact, but noted soberly that “we are on the threshold of a new era which is the bearer of great hopes and disturbing questions.” The pope called for the development of “a globalization *in solidarity*, a globalization *without marginalization*.”³⁵ As it engages in mission, then, the church needs to be both “partner” with globalization’s advantages for human and cosmic wholeness, and “prophet” against its excesses. It can use the wonders of contemporary means of communication, for example, to inform people quickly and accurately of events of importance or tragedy in all places in the world, or it can use today’s possibilities of distance learning to educate clergy and laity throughout the world according to the highest standards of education. On the other hand, it is part of the mission of the church in the context of globalization to denounce any injustice that globalization brings about.³⁶

Today, and in the years to come, globalization will be a major factor in any development of thinking in the area of mission theology and practice.

Migration

Like globalization (and in some ways related to it), migration today forms a major context for the church’s mission of evangelization and solidarity with the poorest of the earth’s poor. “One of the most pervasive features of the contemporary world,” writes Professor Hugo Graeme of the University of Adelaide, Australia, “. . . is greater human mobility.”³⁷ Graeme cites a United Nations report from 1998 that estimates that in 1990, 120 million people were living outside their country of birth, not counting the millions more who were in other countries temporarily, traveling, working or studying. Today, one person in twelve in today’s world lives in a country other than the one in which she or he was born, and a 1996 U.N. report stated that out of 184 countries surveyed, “136 indicated that international migration was an important policy element”³⁸ – a statistic that is almost certainly still valid today as well. Add to this the fact that the world contains, in some estimates, fifty million refugees or internally displaced people and we see that the question of migration—forced or unforced—is one of the burning issues in the world today, and one that affects many countries and all parts of the world in significant ways.

The situation of the world’s migrants and refugees also represents, said Pope John Paul

³⁵John Paul II, “From the Justice of Each Comes Peace for All,” Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace, 1 January, 1998, 3. See http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_08121997_xxxi-world-day-for-peace_en.html.

³⁶See Stephen Bevans, “Partner and Prophet: The Church and Globalization,” *Verbum SVD*, 41, 2 (2000): 177-198.

³⁷Hugo Graeme, “Key Issues in International Migration Today: Trends,” in *Migration at the Threshold of the Third Millennium: IV World Congress on the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees* (Vatican City: Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, 1998), 31.

³⁸Robert J. Schreiter, “The Changed Context of Mission Forty Years after the Council,” *Verbum SVD*, 46, 1 (2005): 80.

II in 2003, “a vast field for the new evangelization to which the whole Church is called.”³⁹ Especially in the world’s more affluent countries the church’s pastoral presence among migrants and refugees needs to be one of the major commitments of the church’s evangelizing mission today, but this is also true of other countries like Kenya, the Sudan, and Mexico. Mission was always understood classically as *going* to another place; now the people of other places have come to our home countries!

Reflection on mission in the context of migration suggests that it might be carried out in two ways. On the one hand, the church’s mission is *to* migrants—that is, migrants should be the *objects* of the church’s pastoral care. On the other hand, however, the church’s mission is *of* migrants—that is, the migrants in our midst are the *subjects* of mission. They both call the local church to new ways of being church, and they themselves need to be active *within* the church, serving the church within and outside of their own communities, and serving the wider world as well. Today there is a growing literature in this relatively new area of missiological reflection and practice.⁴⁰

Women in Mission

Already in 1963, in his encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, John XXIII included the growing consciousness of among women of their dignity and equality as one of the three characteristics of “the modern age” (PT 39): “Far from being content with a purely passive role or allowing themselves to be regarded as a kind of instrument, they are demanding both in domestic and in public life the rights and duties which belong to them as human persons” (PT 41). Since this time there has been a steady growth in this area, and many—both women *and* men—are convinced that the women’s movement throughout the world in the last four decades has indeed been a “transforming grace”⁴¹ for both society in general and the church in particular.

What the women’s movement (also called feminism) has emphasized is that all over the world, women have been objects of oppression and marginalization, and so are in desperate need of the liberation that the gospel proclaims and brings. It is common knowledge that women are among the world’s least educated people, that they are victims of injustice and violence—especially spousal violence—and that they are among the world’s poorest. Just to mention a few well-known but still shocking statistics: Women comprise only one third of the world’s paid labor force, but do two thirds of the world’s work; they early one tenth of the world’s income, yet own only one one hundredth of the world’s property; two thirds of the

³⁹John Paul II, “Address of Pope John Paul II,” *People on the Move*, 35, 93 (December, 2003): 9.

⁴⁰Two of the most important books to appear are Gioacchino Campese and Pietro Ciallella, eds., *Migration, Religious Experience, and Globalization* (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 2003), and Daniel G. Groody and Gioacchino Campese, eds., *A Promised Land, A Perilous Journey* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008).

⁴¹This is the title of the fine book by Ann Carr, *Transforming Grace: Christian Tradition and Women’s Experience* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988).

world's illiterate persons are women. One woman is beaten every fifteen seconds; one woman is raped every three to six minutes; thirty-seven percent of women of every race, class and educational background are physically abused during pregnancy.⁴² As Marilyn Ann Martone, the Vatican delegate to the UN Commission on the Status of Women said in a report in March of 2004: "My delegation is convinced that the road to ensure swift progress in achieving full respect for women and their identity involves more than simply the condemnation of discrimination and injustices, necessary though this may be. Such respect must first and foremost be achieved through an effective and intelligent campaign for the promotion of women, involving all sectors of human society."⁴³ This is why a kind of "preferential option for women" should be considered an essential part of the church's mission in today's world. The church should be in the forefront of such an "effective and intelligent campaign," both by working for justice for women within the church itself as well as society at large.

One other aspect regarding women should be mentioned as we reflect on contemporary missiology, and this is the emphasis today on recovering the memory of the countless women who have worked as missionaries throughout history. Scholars like Dana Robert, Cathy Ross, and Susan Smith—and many more—have produced important works in recent years which have helped historians of mission to recognize the essential role of women in spreading the gospel from the beginning of Christian history.⁴⁴ But as these and other scholars will agree, current scholarship has only scratched the surface of what is rich and no doubt complex history, and so there is much hope for the future in this area.

Conclusion

The area of missiology is an exciting field to read or study today. Because of our globalized and globalizing world—teeming with people on the move, experiencing a renaissance of the world's religions, brimming over with multicultural societies, threatened by violence and terrorism—theology and ministry are recognizing that they need to be thoroughly missiological. Mission is not something that special people do in exotic lands. It is not something that is far away. Mission is rather the daily reality of the church today. Missiology has become the daily reality of a theology and a ministry that seeks to serve the church in a credible way in today's church.

⁴²The source for these statistics is my colleague Barbara Reid; some of the data is from the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

⁴³Holy See's Address on Status of Women, ZENIT News Agency, <http://www.zenit.org>, March 8, 2004.

⁴⁴Dana L. Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996); Cathy Ross, *Women with a Mission* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 2007); Susan E. Smith, *Women in Mission: From the New Testament to Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007).

Discussion questions

Professor Bevans spoke of mission as “being a single complex reality” in which there are 6 constants or essential elements.

1. Witness and proclamation
2. Liturgy, prayer and contemplation
3. Justice, peace and the Integrity of Creation
4. Interreligious dialogue
5. Inculturation
6. Reconciliation

According to the context, at different times and places, various elements need to have emphasis or priority. **In the Church of your unit of the congregation, which of these elements would you like to see be given the greater emphasis?**

Steve spoke of 3 newer issue in current missiology: Globalization; Migration; and Women in Mission. **Choose one current issue and discuss the importance of that issue for you and for the church in your unit of the congregation.**