Global Missiology

Current Issue

Vol. 18 No. 3 (2021): July

Published: 2021-07-23

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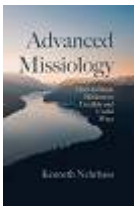

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Guest Editorial

Keep the Embers Alive

Wanjiru M. Gitau

Published in *Global Missiology*, www.globalmissiology.org, July 2021

I grew up in the rural countryside in the Muranga district of central Kenya. In the mud and wattle homes that dot the hillsides, people still cook with woodfires built around three stones. Firewood comes plenty, but fire needs to be tended so it does not go out. After all the cooking is done for the night, one gathers hot ashes around remnant embers at the center of the hearth. In the morning one pokes the ashes to expose glowing embers, and with fresh kindling builds a fire to prepare a pot of hot black tea. Upon leaving to work the land during the day, one preserves the embers under ashes again. Late in the afternoon, woody chunks are used to create a large fire for big pot of *githeri* (a meal of maize and beans that requires a long period of boiling*)* for the family meal. Repeat at bedtime to keep the fire alive for the next day. You never quite tire of covering embers or blowing in the ashes to awaken the heat. If one ran out of smoldering embers, one would need to have a matchbox handy, which is quite improbable in an impoverished countryside area, so the more likely scenario is to walk up the hill to the neighbors to scoop live embers from their hearth.

This recollection comes to mind as I reflect on the articles we have in this issue of GM. The work of tending, spreading, and making the gospel useful to the world that needs it is a bit like the fire in that rural setting. It sparks, grows, glows, smolders, even fizzes out as it is attentively tended, or not. Sandro Oliveira explores the subject of "reverse missions" as one of the ways the fire of the gospel is being rekindled and sparked in secularizing western nations. Defining reverse mission is actually not as strenuous as imagined. It feels strenuous if one thinks of and measures cross-cultural mission work done by non-western missionaries in the West, using the same yardstick that western missionaries used to measure their work across the Global South in an earlier era. Times, cultures, geographies are different. It goes without saying that the methods of mission are different, particularly as socioeconomic circumstances impose an unequal power differential between the would-be missionaries and would-be evangelized society. What is without a doubt is that those who move to western countries from southern and eastern countries are presently more attuned to the gospel, and their presence influences the religious environment of the West. While we appreciate Oliveira's affirmation that reverse mission is a reality, we need to resist the temptation to think of mission in the same terms in which it was carried and conducted across the Global South. What is crucial to grasp about mission, reverse or otherwise, is that it is a vital way continually to cultivate the awareness that each generation must do its part to find its place in God's mission in the world in its time. Those who have moved from the non-western world to the western world are called upon to seek God's guidance in how they may bear witness in their adoptive homelands. Specific case studies of how immigrants are witnessing—of how they are kindling many little fires all over their new homes, how they are scooping embers from their host neighbors—may also help move the debate on reverse mission from generalities and often repeated tropes, to demonstrate the principle of the gospel at work.

In Paul Hertig's piece, "Trouble with Kindness," explored through the Book of Acts, we see kindness as a fire that never goes out, indeed, a perpetual fire kindled in the bosom of God's eternally redemptive hearth. Indeed, kindness is good trouble. The Acts Community, already ablaze with the Fire of Pentecost, unleased wave upon wave of kindness in what was an unkind

and troubled world, and the Lord added to their numbers daily. They were persecuted and fled, they traveled to trade, they followed God's nudging to witness, and in each place they went acts of kindness created a hearth, a new blaze, a new community of faith, till the gospel has reached our times in all faithfulness. To our deeply troubled world, may kindness spark the fire of the gospel like a good old bonfire, warming the cold exterior of troubled humanity to the love that God offers in Christ Jesus.

The specialists' article by Nelson Jennings concludes a lengthy three-part exploration of the complex models of mission developed by Ralph Winter. For the well-schooled mission specialist, this issue's suggestive piece is worth engaging in depth, not only here in the article itself but also in digging afresh into the models as Winter presented them. In the working metaphor of this editorial, what Jennings writes is like deeply sustained, late night chat around a full bonfire, one that explores weighty matters of models of mission with deep introspection and care. We are at a point where the future of Christian mission invites serious thinkers to do the deep work of reflection about the current state of our world, the status of the unfinished task of sharing the gospel, and what we as mission agents must do in our time. We do well to revisit—appreciatively and critically—what those who have gone before us have said and done, so that we may catch a spark from their fire to light our own.

This issue's two book reviews also spread their own embers on already hotly discussed matters of contemporary missiology, namely so-called Insider Movements and the nature of the missiological task itself. The books reviewed, as well as the penetrating analyses of them here by John Cheong and Samuel Law, contribute significantly to this entire issue's attempt to "Keep the Embers Alive."

Global South Reverse Mission in Europe: An Examination of the Limiting Factors and Prospects

Sandro G. de Oliveira

Published in *Global Missiology*, www.globalmissiology.org, July 2021

Abstract

This article offers a critical analysis of the newly emerged missional paradigm called "reverse mission." Despite the paradigm's controversial nature, the article argues for its validity in missional discourses. Beginning with a general discussion of the term reverse mission, the discussion moves on to explore the challenges that reverse missionaries encounter in their efforts to evangelise native Westerners. Finally, the article investigates the contribution of reverse missionaries in the revitalisation of the Christian faith in those parts of the world where it has lost its vitality. It also shows that migration plays an important role in the reverse missionary efforts of the Global South church in the West. The article concludes that, in spite of significant challenges, reverse mission can be considered a reality that offers a tremendous opportunity for the revitalisation of Christianity in the West.

Key Words: church revitalisation, contextualisation, Global South, racism, reverse mission

Introduction

A number of authors have commented at great length on the decline in the number of Christians in the West and the remarkable growth of the Christian faith in the Southern Hemisphere (Jenkins 2007a; Hill 2016, 13-15). Scholars have called this phenomenon the great "shift of the center of gravity" (Walls 2004, 9) of the Christian world, such that the majority of Christians are now located in Africa, Latin America, and Asia (Tennent 2007). This exponential numeric growth in that part of the world has created Global South Christianity (Jenkins 2007b). 'Reverse Mission', therefore, comes out of this phenomenal revival of the Christian faith in those regions of the world, which were at the receiving end of missions from the sixteenth century to the late twentieth century but have now become senders themselves (Adogame 2010, 67). The old paradigm of missions, most evident during the Edinburgh 1910 ecumenical missionary conference (Sunquist 2015, 150) and which can be described as "from the West to the Rest" (Kim 2011, 353), has been challenged. Likewise, churches and mission agencies across the South have developed a growing interest in sending missionaries to Europe, creating a new paradigm, which Catto calls "From the Rest to the West" (Catto 2008a).

There has been some debate about the meaning of the phrase 'reverse mission' and how it has been applied in both the academic and practitioner circles. Some use it to refer to subalterns taking the gospel back to the colonisers (Burgess 2011, 432), others as the blacks taking mission to the whites (Ola 2017, 20), and others even refer to it as the act of missionaries returning to their home countries and helping people there understand the reality of the mission field (George 2001, 41). Recently the term reverse mission has also been defined as a sociological process through which members of migrant religious communities seek to educate their host society, and particularly its government, about the hardships that their compatriots back home face as the result of Western foreign policy (Byrnes 2011, 2). Even more recently, reverse mission has been used to refer to those individuals who were converted while living in the West and then decide to go back to their home settings to promote the gospel among their compatriots (Kim 2013, 172). While these aforementioned uses of the term reverse mission allude to a reversal of roles, they do not contribute to a clear understanding of the concept of reverse mission. On the contrary, these many variations of the terminology have generated confusion and controversy, leading some to question the term's validity (Morier-Genoud 2018).

However, the scope of this work aligns with the more comprehensive and accurate definition proposed by Adogame: "The (un-)conscious missionary strategy by churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America of (re-)evangelizing the 'West'" (Adogame 2013, 169). This description seems more precise, as it implies that, quite rightly, reverse mission can also be described as a "by-product" (Ola 2017, 20) of the migratory movement of people from the South to the North.[1] With this definition in mind, this article seeks to examine the process by which churches in the Global South (Africa, Asia, and Latin America) engage in mission in Europe, thus 'reversing' the "one-directional" (Marsh 2003, 370) mission paradigm prevalent from the sixteenth to twentieth centuries.

Before moving forward, two important clarifications are required. First is to note the difficulties produced by blunt generalisations and to recognise the significance of the analysis of the particulars of a discourse or of a geographical area. Even so, this study's approach is one of identifying common issues that will likely have implications for reverse missionaries from Africa, Latin America, and Asia coming to Europe. Second, this article's approach to reverse mission in Europe arises from my (the author's) own personal experience as a Global South missionary serving in the United Kingdom. Undoubtably similar situations are developing in North America, where churches from the Global South are working to evangelise the populations of Canada and the United States. In this regard, while this article highlights the critical issues for reverse mission in Europe, it is likely that the findings and conclusions drawn here will resonate with what is happening in North America as well.

With these two clarifications in mind, two critical issues are recognised as universally applicable to the context of reverse mission from the Global South to Europe. The first one relates to the reality and the prospect for reverse mission discourse, particularly in diaspora contexts. The second regards a certain aloofness between Global South missionaries and native Europeans, which has a significant impact on the process of reverse mission. This reality is evidenced in several studies, notably by Catto (2008a; 2012) and Freston (2010), who have drawn similar conclusions after analysing the cases of reverse missionaries from Africa, Latin America, and Asia working in various countries within Europe.

As a final point, it should be noted that some have questioned the validity of the reverse mission concept, arguing that in our day mission should be seen as "from everywhere to everywhere" (Nazir-Ali 2009) and therefore the direction of mission should not really matter. However, one major drawback of this approach is that it fails to account for the particulars of a missiological discourse, as Catto points out: "Having said this, though 'from everywhere to everywhere' captures something of globalising processes and the related complexity of contemporary Christian mission, and may be an ideal, it discounts discerning difference and more specific trends/patterns. Therefore, the concept is analytically empty and inadequate" (Catto 2008b, 116–17). Besides, while one should celebrate the reality that any Christian anywhere can participate in God`s mission, reverse mission does not contradict this. Reverse mission is simply one of the facets of the missio Dei.

The Motivation for Reverse Mission

What, however, motivates these churches in the Global South to send missionaries to Europe? Their primary motivation is a deep sense of appreciation from those who have benefited from historical European missionary activity, and it is out of this sense of gratitude that reverse mission was born (Burgess 2011, 434).[2] Second, these Christians are aware of the much-spoken about decline of Christianity in the West and consider secular Europe a "dark continent" (Adogame 2010, 68) and a "spiritual desert in need of reevangelisation" (Koning 2011, 12). Third, these Global South Christians feel commissioned and have a divine call to evangelise

Europeans (Fesenmyer 2014). Some of them have intentionally moved to Europe after receiving such divine leading, while others received their calling after they have arrived on the continent (Kahl 2014, 72–84). At the same time, some scholars have argued for a less noble drive behind the reverse missionary efforts. For example, some see reverse mission discourse as a way to "boost the self-image of postcolonial nations and their diasporas" (Freston 2010, 172), and others call it "mechanisms to negotiate the hardships and deprivations that individuals encounter in the process of establishing themselves in Europe" (Burgess 2011, 434). While there may be some truth in such criticisms, they appear to be based more on the judgment of the scholar than in research findings.

Worlds Apart: Limiting Factors

Building a significant and meaningful relationship with the host culture is considered essential for any missionary success (Kahl 2014, 83). However, developing such relationships has proved to be a great challenge for reverse missionaries in Europe. Scholars talk of a complete lack of mutual understanding that creates a "huge gap" (Paas 2015, 12) between these missionaries and the native Europeans. Koning calls it "boundaries" that are "not easily overcome" (Koning 2011, 127). For Knibbe, the encounter between reverse missionaries and Europeans represents the "intersections of different worlds" (Knibbe 2011, 475). Remarkably, the causes for this disassociation between the reverse missionaries and the native Europeans have been interpreted differently. For Europeans the gap is the result of cultural differences and the inability of reverse missionaries to acculturate themselves, while for reverse missionaries the gap is associated with socio-economic and racial distance (Koning 2011, 84–86). Nevertheless, there is a consensus that this 'gap' has major implications for reverse mission efforts in Europe. This study will thus proceed to examine the reasons behind this debilitating gap.

Lack of Contextualisation and Acculturation Skills

The apparent inability of the reverse missionaries to contextualise and be relevant to European host cultures has been a recurrent theme in the scholarly writings. For instance, Ola detects that two of the major limitations for an effective reverse mission in Europe are "the absence of a well premeditated cross-cultural missionary plan and acculturation challenges" (Ola 2017, 24). Similarly, for Kahl, the efforts of reverse missionaries are being hampered by "a widespread inability to overcome cross-cultural communication barriers" (Kahl 2014, 84). Notably, Knibbe quotes the complaint of native Europeans in the Netherlands who draw a parallel with the lack of cultural sensitivity of European missionaries in Africa, accusing reverse missionaries of "making the same mistake" (Knibbe 2011, 478). Moreover, there has also been some criticism of the use of evangelistic techniques that, though effective in the South, are ineffective in reaching Europeans (namely, street evangelism, door to door, bus evangelism) (Adogame 2010, 61; Kahl 2014, 84). Some have even taken issue with the message preached by reverse missionaries, deeming it to be "beyond their listeners' frames of reference" and, instead of drawing people in, "put[ting] people off" (Kahl 2014, 84; see also Paas 2015, 23). References to witches, demons, end times, hell, divine punishment, and ancestral curses are mentioned as unpalatable to Europeans' sensibilities. Additionally, some posit that reverse missionaries demonstrate a lack of theological training, particularly in the areas of church planting and contextualisation (Ola 2019, 63; Paas 2015, 25).

On a positive note, there are signs that reverse missionaries, aware of these shortcomings, are taking steps to become more culturally relevant in Europe. For example, some diaspora churches are adapting their church practices in order to attract native Europeans (Ola 2019, 63–64). They have also offered cultural training to their congregations and employed the second generation to work in evangelism and in other high-visibility roles (Koning 2011, 150, 177).

Another strategy has been to team up with indigenous churches in order to gain cultural insights (Burgess 2011, 449). In terms of evangelistic strategy, aware of their inaptitude for personal methods of evangelism, reverse workers started to use methods that are more relevant for the Western European context (Adogame 2010, 61). Perhaps the most significant development is the increasing number of available theological and cross-cultural training programmes tailored to reverse missionaries working in Europe (Ola 2019, 64). There is much room for improvement; however, it seems that reverse immigrants are making good progress in raising their cross-cultural skills.

As a final note, it is relevant to mention that, despite the real cultural challenges mentioned above, reverse missionaries and diaspora churches have experienced some success in attracting native Europeans exactly because of their uniqueness and difference in comparison to what Europeans are accustomed to have in their mainstream churches (Koning 2011, 188; Catto 2012, 100). Thus, while trying their best to acculturate and fit in, these reverse missionaries must also be aware that people in Europe are tired of the old forms of Christian practice and are looking for something new and exciting.

Post-Colonial Superiority Complex in Europe

To what extent does the post-colonial mindset found in Europe contribute to this huge relational gap between Europeans and reverse missionaries? Firstly, some have accurately argued that Western societies, particularly Europe, have, as a result of contact with the Enlightenment and Modernism, become secularised and see Christianity as outdated, as something of the past (Jenkins 2007a, 1–54). Therefore, for Europeans, the efforts of reverse missionaries are seen as a call to regression, an attack on modernity (Knibbe 2011, 480). Remarkably, this uneasiness of Europeans with reverse missionaries has been exacerbated by an antagonising political discourse and media coverage of Global South Christianity in the West (Jenkins 2006, 1–17; 2007a, 98–101; Verstraelen 2007). Secondly, racial prejudice seems to be another significant contributor to the disconnect between Europeans and reverse missionaries. As Ola asserts, "Racism is still deeply entrenched into the cultural fabric of the global north, perhaps only modernized and cloaked in newer lingo" (Ola 2017, 54). He also criticises the use of labels, such as 'white and black Christianity', or 'local and immigrant churches', for they imply the "othering" (Haar 2008, 39–41) of one group from another on the grounds of ethnicity. Corroborating this argument, both Koning (2011) and Catto (2012) report cases of reverse missionaries experiencing racial prejudice and even abuse in their efforts to evangelise native Europeans. Thirdly, in general, reverse missionaries come from poorer and, in many ways, less developed societies in the South (Jenkins 2006, 68). Remarkably, this significant economic gap between the Global South and the West is understood to be the most significant cause of the contemporary massive migratory movement to Europe (Hanciles 2003, 147). Concurrently, there seems to exist in Europe an assumption that someone from the poorer South is not qualified or sufficiently prepared to do missions in the West (Knibbe 2011, 7; Ola 2017, 27). For them, mission should come from above, from the "people in positions of power" or from a "superior civilisation" (Ola 2017, 24). Catto alludes to this sense of superiority prevalent among Europeans, quoting a Global South missionary in the UK as saying: "…and the British, some say "we are grandfather of mission, so we don't need you" (Catto 2012, 97). Fortunately, while Europeans' sense of superiority is an extremely controversial and frequently avoided issue, even in church contexts (Ola 2019, 65), there have been some voices crying out for a recognition of this prideful superiority prevalent in post-colonial Europe and for a change of attitude (Smith 2016, 179).

In view of the foregoing, one obvious conclusion is that reverse mission can be depicted as "mission from below" (Escobar 2003, 19) or, as Kahl calls it, "from the margins to the center

of global power" (Kahl 2014, 72). As such, the experience of reverse missionaries "evokes sharp images of the biblical paradigm of God's people as pilgrims, migrants, and refugees" (Hanciles 2003, 150). In light of this biblical parallel, there is great hope for Christianity's future in Europe (Smith 2016, 177–79). As Gyatu posits: "Throughout the New Testament, it is within such diaspora conditions that the Gospel takes root. Similarly, we eagerly expect that, as Christianity moves from the South to the North through migration, we shall discern in it the move of God empowering the weak to fulfil his purposes among the strong" (Asamoah-Gyadu 2015, 192).

Reverse Mission, a Reality!

Reverse mission discourse has been under severe scrutiny, and its success has been highly criticised. Many empirical studies seem to imply that the numbers of Europeans reached by reverse missionaries is relatively insignificant (Koning 2011, 12; Ola 2017, 26; Catto 2008a; 2012, 105). These observations have led some scholars to question whether reverse mission is in fact a reality or only a rhetorical discourse of some Global South leaders (Freston 2010). Some have gone as far as to consider reverse mission a "myth" (Emirade 2017, 263) or a "mission impossible" (Kahl 2014, 82). Without belittling the significant challenges for Global South reverse missionaries in Europe, it must be noted that most of the scholars questioning reverse mission discourse base their argument on its apparent lack of quantifiable success. While numbers are important for gauging the realisation of an enterprise, mission should not only be about numbers.[3] Take, for instance, the many men and women of old who devoted their entire lives as missionaries in Africa and Asia. Many of them did not see much fruit during their lifetime; however, few Christians today would dare to affirm their mission was a failure (Ola 2017, 61). Similarly, reverse mission needs to be considered as a long-term endeavor, and its success should be evaluated by different criteria than numerical increase alone (Burgess 2011, 431, 437–38).

Despite the strong voices questioning the tangible impact of reverse missionary efforts in the revitalisation of faith in Europe, there is significant evidence for affirming that Global South Christian migrants and the formation of diaspora churches are having a positive impact on the religious milieu in the continent. A few researchers have shown that diaspora churches have attained some success in reaching out to Western Europeans (notably Olofinjana 2013). Koning (2011, 187-196), for instance, talks of Dutch people being attracted to the immigrant churches because they found in them not only a more orthodox belief and liturgy but also care and a sense of community, in contrast with individualistic western society. Similarly, Catto describes a Korean church in the UK which has had "an impact beyond their own diaspora congregation" (Catto 2012, 100), validating the recognition by Lady Warsi, the former UK Foreign Office minister and minister for faith, that "immigration was making Britain more Christian" (Fesenmyer 2014). Another noteworthy example is the success of Latin Americans in reaching out to indigenous people in Portugal and Spain (Hartch 2014, 189–90). In addition, one should not exclude the well-known case of the Nigerian pastor Sunday Adelaja, the founder of the 'Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for All Nations' in Ukraine, considered to be the largest evangelical church in Europe with around 25,000 members, most of whom are native Europeans (Koning 2011, 13).

Besides, considering Christianity`s own history and the massive influx of Christian migrants into Europe, the most reasonable expectation is of a spiritual revitalisation in the land. Mission historian Andrew Walls has masterfully demonstrated that it is possible to reconstruct the history of global Christianity as a series of successive waves of migration and the formation of ethnic diasporas (Walls 2014, 19–37). The Lausanne Movement encapsulates this notion with great finesse:

> Global diasporas and migration have been and will continue to be a significant and indispensable means by which God accomplishes his redemptive purposes in this world through Jesus Christ. The developmental process of the Church's expansion – inclusive of past, present, and future – cannot be explained without taking into consideration 'God's sovereignty, ruling over the nations, and the moving of His people' from everywhere to everywhere (Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization 2010, 20).

Therefore, the potential for the revitalisation of Christianity in Europe through migration is immense. The Lausanne Movement remarkably concurs with this view, stating that "these migrants now offer the possibility of helping their new brothers and sisters in the process of revitalizing Western Christianity and the evangelization of now largely post-Christian societies" (Lausanne Movement 2004). Furthermore, while it is true that the first generation of reverse immigrants may struggle to engage with European societies, the same may not be true for subsequent generations. In fact, there is great hope that the children of these migrants will have an even greater impact on the revival of belief in Europe. Having grown up on the continent, the second generation of immigrants show a better understanding of the value system, as well as fluency in the language of the society of which they have become part. At the same time, they carry with them a deep spirituality and evangelistic zeal inherited from their parents. To illustrate this point, Kahl alludes to two significant developments in Germany, where second generation migrants are engaged in missional church planting. Both initiatives seek to create new ways of doing church and communicating faith, which may have meaningful impact on the wider society (Kahl 2014, 86).

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that defining reverse mission is a strenuous task, given the variety of the uses of the concept, as well as the many nuances attached to it. It has also identified a significant cultural and socio-economic gap between native Europeans and Global South missionaries, which negatively affects the reverse mission enterprise in Europe. Despite contrasting views for the reasons behind this divide, where native Europeans see it in terms of cultural differences and reverse missionaries view it as a case of racial prejudice, it has been shown that the problem is in reality a combination of both issues. The study has also noted that, despite significant challenges, reverse mission is happening and is indeed a reality. Moreover, the prospects of reverse immigrants having a significant impact on the religious outlook of the 'old continent' is very positive.

For further study, there are several other important nuances to reverse mission that have not been discussed here and will need to be addressed separately. The most significant one is the transnational nature of reverse mission and the diaspora communities in Europe, which involve the formation of transnational networks linking the North and the South (Adogame 2010). The next relevant theme to be explored is multiculturalism in Europe (Ola 2017, 25). Without doubt, the recent changes in Europe's population may also have major consequences for reverse mission.

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[1] With this definition in mind, the terms reverse missionary, reverse worker and reverse immigrant (including their plural forms) will be used interchangeably.

[2] This stated reason resonates with my own motivation to do missions in the UK, as well as with the discourses I hear from church leaders in my home country.

[3] This obsession with numbers resembles the contested Managerial Missiology Paradigm and has been severely criticised by some, including Wan 2014, 111-118.

The Trouble with Kindness in the Acts of the Apostles

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Published in *Global Missiology*, www.globalmissiology.org, July 2021

Abstract

This article explores the theme of kindness in the book of Acts. Following Pentecost, the first act of kindness leads to the first act of persecution. Peter heals a man crippled from birth and charges his accusers of indicting him for "an act of kindness" (4:8-10). The story puts Peter and the earliest church in a positive light while simultaneously critiquing the religious and political establishment. Acts of kindness usher various disciples into the realm of spiritual warfare, and evil forces attempt to thwart the good deeds of the church at every turn. Peter describes Jesus as "doing good and healing all oppressed by the devil" (10:38). Thus, acts of kindness become a gateway into the spiritual battle. Luke's term translated as "kindness" is εὐεργεσίᾳ ("benefaction"), a technical word embedded in social structure that depicts financial support for persons and groups; those who benefit from benefactors promise their loyalty to them. The Apostles assume the role of benefactors as they follow in the footsteps of Jesus and have a dramatic impact on society for the greater good. But, unlike Roman benefactors, they expect nothing in return. What the Apostles offer in contrast to the quid pro quo demands of benefactors is restoration of life. They declare this restoration in temple courts where the disciples become the new authority figures while testifying to "new life." There disciples enter and authoritatively occupy sacred space while religious and civic leaders seek to obstruct them. Kindness may be the most powerful force in the world. It can harden or soften people's hearts. Kindness can reach the heights of heaven and knock on the gates of hell.

Key Words: Acts of the Apostles, Acts 3:6, 4:9, benefaction, good works, healing, kindness

Precursor

Luke-Acts refers to Luke's Gospel and Acts, both written by Luke. The themes in Luke, relevant to this study, clearly match the themes in Acts: deeds of kindness, persecution against the early disciples, deliverance of the poor and marginalized, and unrestrained worldwide mission.

Introduction: Acts in Civic Context

In the Acts of the Apostles, Luke articulates the account of the early church in civic context. As the Christian movement progressed from region to region, the birth of worldwide missions also challenged ancient Greco-Roman decision makers to sustain the ideals of true and just civic life. In and around the first century, historians spoke forthrightly about the virtue of citizenship and held those in power accountable to their duties of keeping law and order and improving conditions in society. As a historian, Luke does not exhibit political or social naiveté, but he conveys how to overcome misuse of power in social, religious, and political life (Penner 2003, 78, 94-96).

For instance, Peter heals a man crippled from birth and responds to his indictment, by the rulers and elders of the people, by charging his accusers of arresting him for "an act of kindness" (4:8-10).[1] Luke's telling of this story, a key passage in this study, puts Peter and the earliest church in a positive light while simultaneously critiquing the religious and political establishment. Historians, and Luke without exception, often depicted public and political life in Greco-Roman context as riddled with power games and status seeking. Luke recounts deliberations, debates, and

criminal proceedings that include appraisals of civic discourse and community life (e.g., Acts 4-7, 12-17, 25-26). The early church sets the tone for kindness in an unkind world.

The Progressing Theme of Kindness in Acts

Luke develops the counter-cultural theme of kindness throughout the book of Acts. The sovereign God initiates the big bang of the accelerating power of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Peter then gives a Pentecost sermon in which the people are "cut to the heart" and ask Peter, "What shall we do?" He responds by highlighting the need for repentance, baptism, and receiving the gift of Holy Spirit (2:37-38). The Holy Spirit then empowers the community to "do" what is good and just: Immediately after Pentecost, the earliest church community begins to share everything in common, giving to anyone who has need, partaking in table fellowship in homes, engaging in temple courts (2:42-47), and having "no needy persons among them" (4:34). Furthermore, kindness does not remain confined to the community alone; the community shows kindness to outsiders as well, "enjoying the favor of all the people." As a result, the Lord adds daily the number of those who were being saved (2:47). These core values fit civic ideals in Greco-Roman society. First-century historian Josephus emphasized a society led by the examples of virtue and goodness with shared equity that emphasizes "justice, truth and gentleness." He also spoke of justice as "the aim and end of the law" (Penner 2003, 91-92). The early Christian disciples exhibited kindness to one another and extended that kindness to citizens outside of their own community, thus contributing to the betterment of civil society (2:47; 4:9; 10:38).

The fact that new believers were added daily to the community implies that the needs of newcomers from outside the community were also met. A community led by the Holy Spirit will be constantly driven to reach out beyond itself. If the Christian community had merely served itself, it would not have enjoyed the favor of all the people. The great appeal was how ministry genuinely met spiritual and physical needs without polarizing either domain. The community shined its light on a social context that included illnesses and poverty, characterized by an abundance of beggars and sick people (cf. Acts 3:1, 5:15-16, 8:7; Luke 16:19-31).

The church's voluntary and sporadic sharing of property and possessions, as mentioned above, hints at the social location and urban context of the first disciples and those added daily to the church. Sharing all things in common was not only evidence of the counter-cultural work of the Holy Spirit, but it was also a way to provide for the community's needs. Luke portrays a community never striving after greatness or wealth, including its leaders (20:33-36), a group of humble servants joyfully prepared to suffer persecution for Jesus and receive power in his name (5:41). The persecuted early church experienced signs and wonders that included sharing all things in common and unity in diversity—even in the midst of suffering.

The kind-heartedness of the community contrasted the Palestinian economic system, as depicted by Jesus' social interactions and parables that depict absentee landlords, day laborers, ubiquitous tax collectors, and cumulative debts of the poor (Freyne 2014, 120, 131). Giving was spontaneous, generous, and from the heart—not institutionalized, but inspired by the Spirit. "All the believers were one in heart and mind" (4:32a). Kindness characterized the community. Selfishness was renounced: "No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had" (4:32b).

Kindness Leads to More Kindness

Noteworthy is what happens after this supernatural community, fresh from Pentecost, living in joy and harmony, relates to the surrounding world. In the very next passage, after the description of the oneness and generosity of the early church (2:42-47), on their way to the temple Peter and John meet up with a beggar, crippled from birth. Significantly, the move from communal living to missional engagement serves as a transition from a community of kindness to an opportunity to do kindness.

A disciple, graced with a new way of relating to people outside of the community, is summarized in one concise sentence by Peter: "I have neither silver nor gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk" (Acts 3:6; author's Greek rendering). Peter indicates that there is something far more valuable than money, and that is the healing power of Jesus. Peter gives two mandates: "Look at us!" and "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk" (3:4,6). Next, he literally takes hold of the man's right hand and yanks him up (3:7). Suddenly the man enters the temple, walking, leaping, and praising God (3:8). The people are filled with wonder and amazement (3:10). The account demonstrates how words must accompany the deed; otherwise, the sign would leave onlookers bewildered.

Healing as a Sign

Peter's words emphasize the power of Jesus in healing the lame man, rather than "our own power or godliness" (3:12). Peter and John thus express a power that breaks in from on high, carefully directing attention to Jesus and the God of Israel who performed the miracle. The power of the good deed comes not from status or human strength but from dependence on "the name of Jesus" as the source of power, a power in consonance with human faith, "the faith that comes through him" (3:16).

The man's healing was not an end in itself. He immediately accompanied Peter and John into Solomon's Colonnade walking, jumping, and praising God, astonishing the Israelites (3:8-10). A key feature in Acts involves disciples entering sacred space and authoritatively occupying it (cf. 5:20-22). Initially, the beggar had sat outside the temple gates daily, impaired and unable to worship inside the court; now he not only walks inside the gates but leaps and praises God. In this important change of scene, "all the people," a cohesive group, "came running" into Solomon's Colonnade to see the healed man with Peter and John (3:11). Peter addresses them as "people of Israel," signifying completeness (4:12). The two Apostles now have the complete attention of the Israelite people within their sacred space during their sacred time. The afternoon service peaked in attendance because it coincided with the time of the daily whole offering, explaining the beggar's presence at that time and the crowds that gathered upon his healing (3:11;4:4). Reversing the power dynamics, Peter and John spoke to "all the people," while the priests and captain of the temple guard and Sadducees approached "greatly disturbed," seized Peter and John, and put them in jail (4:1-3, 10).

Ironically Solomon's Colonnade was built as "a hall of justice" a porch of judgment for the king (1 Kings 7:7). Now it exhibited a new form of justice, the healing of a crippled beggar, provoking the authorities to come forth, reassert their power, and pronounce their biased judgment in the "halls of justice." After jailing the disruptors who healed a poor and suffering individual, God's message prevailed "and the number of believers grew to about five thousand" (4:4). The questions begin to surface: Who are the legitimate authority figures of Israel—from the perspective of the people, from the perspective of the Apostles, and from the perspective of the established leaders? James D.G. Dunn seems to have pondered some of these questions. He states that "striking

is the contrast between the boldness of the unlettered apostles . . . and the confusion and weakness of all the most powerful people in the city" (Dunn 1996, 51). A reversal of authority is at hand.

Authoritatively, in the aftermath of the miracle, Peter's first words to the people of Israel gathered at the Colonnade are, "Why does this surprise you?" In other words: 'A new and powerful era of kindness has dawned and you might as well get used to it!' The healing is one of the many signs and wonders following Pentecost. A sign is not an end in itself; it leads to something greater. It glorifies God. Focusing on signs misses the point. No wonder Peter carefully articulates that this surprising event did not transpire through human power but through the God of Israel who has glorified his suffering servant Jesus (3:12-13).

There is an abiding continuity between Jesus' approach to suffering and the approach of the early community of disciples. A considerable amount of time and attention in the early community was spent ministering to suffering people through deeds of kindness. Typically, when a person on the street asks for money people either give some coins or walk hurriedly past. Peter and John, however, looked the crippled beggar directly in the eye, gained his full attention, and met his deepest needs, both for healing and salvation (3:4-5).

Peter expresses that there is something far more valuable than money, which the disciples share freely with one another, and that is the healing power of Jesus (3:6).[2] And yet, these very acts of kindness got the early church in trouble with authorities. The Sanhedrin was disturbed by the Apostles' proclamation of the resurrection (4:2), but Peter also viewed it as persecution against the mission of kindness: "We are being brought to trial for an act of kindness to an ailing man" (4:9; author's Greek rendering).

Kindness: A Pillar in Judaism

Simeon the Righteous (or Simeon the Just), a Jewish High Priest during the Second Temple era (ca. 300 BCE) and one of the last members of the Great Assembly of 120 scribes, sages, and prophets, said, "Upon three things the world stands; upon Torah, upon worship, and upon the showing of kindness." Kindness, steeped in Jewish tradition, provides continuity between Jewish historical practice and the early church. It also provides continuity and contrast with Greco-Roman society. The word translated as "kindness" in 4:9 is "benefaction," a technical word imbedded in social structure that depicts financial support for persons, groups, and even whole cities. This system pervaded every level of society; those who benefited from benefactors promised their loyalty to them. The early disciples assumed the role of benefactors because they followed in the footsteps of Jesus and had a dramatic impact on society for the greater good. However, unlike Roman benefactors (Luke 22:25), they expected nothing in return. What Jesus and the Apostles had to give was more precious than the quid pro quo benefits of silver or gold of benefactors: the restoration of life itself.

Peter described Jesus as doing kindness, literally "benefaction" in his earthly ministry: "doing good and healing all oppressed by the devil" (10:38). Thus, acts of kindness become a gateway into spiritual battle. As the book of Acts unfolds, we discover that the church does not initiate encounters with the devil or even hunt down the devil; instead, the forces of evil attempt to thwart the good purposes of the church at every turn. Therefore, the first act of kindness leads to the first act of persecution. After putting the whole judicial process on trial— *"for an act of kindness to an ailing man" we are being brought to trial*—Peter goes on to contrast the unkindness of putting Jesus ("whom you crucified") to death (4:9-10).

An example from today's world comes from a woman in Cincinnati (Ohio, USA) who was sentenced to jail for "obstructing justice" when she fed overdue parking meters prior to ticketing. This 63-year-old grandmother of ten was sentenced to 90 days in jail and a $750 fine for these random acts of kindness so the offenders would avoid parking tickets. "Sylvia Stayton should be congratulated for her act not punished," said her lawyer. She became a folk hero and received money from people donating to her "legal abuse fund." A church group that has been anonymously feeding parking meters for years printed up T-shirts: "Sylvia Stayton . . . guilty of kindness" (Carlson 1996, A15). The jail sentence of Peter and John can be summarized similarly: "Peter and John: Guilty of Kindness." Kindness has a powerful impact on legal systems that are not set up to welcome kind deeds. Enforcers of the letter of the law slighted the kind deeds of the early church.

Arrest Leads to Unrest

Luke's narrative transitions to the motives of particular Sadducees who arrest and jail the Apostles: they are filled with 'religious zeal', translated as 'jealousy' (5:17-18). Their self-centered motives lack integrity and foresight. After releasing the apostles from prison, an angel sends them to declare about "this new life" in the "temple courts" (5:20), the sacred space that represents the locus of power for the high priest. The true identity of the leadership of Israel comes into question. To 'stand' and 'teach' in the temple courts places the apostles in the arena of legitimate authority over the people of Israel (5:20, 21). This authority is evidenced by their daybreak arrival, when the people gather for the morning worship service, and the apostles "tell the people all about this new life" (5:20). The shift: no longer are the apostles on trial, but the authority figures of Israel admit that they have been charged as guilty of Jesus' death (5:28) and have become afraid to use force against the apostles for fear of being stoned by the people (5:26). The high priest and associates thus became diverted in their responsibilities of presiding over the morning service due to their preoccupation with silencing the apostles who stand in their sacred space teaching the people of Israel. "Who are the real leaders of Israel? Who currently staffs the temple? Who is teaching the people at the temple? The 'official leadership'? No, those roles are filled by the apostles" (Chance 2007, 94).

The irony is that the faithful followers win by losing while the opponents think they win yet actually lose. For instance, in narrating the release of the Apostles from jail, Luke pokes fun at the Sadducees, the persecutors, who did not believe in angels. Luke tells the story with a wry sense of humor: the next morning the prison guard stands guarding an empty cell! The religious leaders create their own comedy of errors—all in response to the kindness of the apostles.

Noteworthy as well is how the apostles did not simply accuse the Jewish leadership of participating in Jesus's death but early on invited them to repent (5:31), another mark of kindness. The response to rulers is not to bring down God's judgment upon them (although that is how the high priest misunderstood the invitation), but to specify their error so that they might turn back to God. Peter responds to the charge, "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," without defending against the charges but by declaring the gospel story (5:28-32). The apostles are "witnesses" who testify to the gospel as their only defense (Chance 2007, 95). As in chess, the best defense is an offense. Jealousy and guilt motivate the religious leaders, while the message of repentance and forgiveness of sins motivate the apostles (5:31).

Peter and the other apostles respond: "We must obey God rather than human beings" (5:29). This declaration is not a universal rejection of human authority, but refers to a particular conflict. Peter and John are not necessarily questioning the Sanhedrin's authority, or searching for mandates

to disobey. A key theme in Acts is God's "kindness" to "all nations" (14:16–17) and God's sovereignty over all creation and over all of human life (17:25–28); thus, Peter's statement that he must obey God corroborates with this overarching theology.

Further Acts of Kindness

Stephen, full of grace and power, who did great wonders and signs among the people (6:8), also engaged in acts of kindness. He and Philip were among those assigned to wait on tables for poor widows (6:1,5). Could it be that service and miracles are not ranked as one better than the other? Many want to engage in the spectacular, but meeting needs of suffering people is also an essential spiritual practice.

Philip proclaimed the Messiah (8:5), casted out unclean spirits, healed the paralyzed and lame, and produced great joy in Samaria (8:7-8). Philip's preaching, exorcisms, and healings were mutually reinforcing; the signs were not random showcases of power, in contrast to Simon's magic, but affirmations of the word Philip preached. Word and deed accompanied hearing and seeing (8:6), and signs and wonders pointed to the greatness of God (8:5, 8, 12). Peter's travels led him to "visit," or "strengthen," the believers in Lydda (9:32b). There he heals another crippled man, in continuity with his earlier healing of a man crippled from birth shortly after Pentecost (3:2-6).

Tabitha's ministry of good works for the poor was so vital that God raised her from the dead so that she may continue her good works (9:36-37,40). She was "always doing good and helping the poor" and made clothing for widows. Tabitha's service was an enactment of Jesus' declaration of "good news to the poor" (Luke 4:18). Her deeds of kindness fit the description of kindness and Jewish piety, also descriptive of Cornelius and Jesus in the next chapter (10:2, 38). The narrative flows from an earlier passage about widows: just as the once-neglected Hellenist widows' needs were met in the daily distribution of food (6:1-3), so Tabitha met the needs of widows by making clothing for them (9:39). The term referring to her "good works" bestowed honor in civic Greco-Roman society. Tabitha fits the role of a benefactor; however, the fact that she made her own clothing likely indicates that she was not giving out of her wealth, which typified benefactors, but out of a sacrificial lifestyle. Tabitha's lack of abundant resources could also explain why she got sick and died as well as why disciples of Lydda urged Peter to come immediately, which he did.

Upon arrival, knowing what he needed to do, Peter sent the weeping widows who were surrounding her out of the room, got on his knees, and prayed. Then he turned to the dead woman and told her to get up. She opened her eyes, Peter helped her to her feet, and he presented her alive. This miraculous event created an exciting stir all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord (9:36-42). This passage provides continuity with the proclamation of the resurrection in sermons in Acts (2:31; 3:15; 4:10, 33; 5:31; 10:40; 13:30; 17:18, 31, etc.). The resurrection demonstrates the authenticity of Jesus and Christian faith. Upon healing the woman, Peter "called for the believers, especially the widows, and presented her to them alive" (9:41). The widows, surrounding Tabitha and weeping just prior to her resurrection and their specific mention after the resurrection, highlight a core issue in this healing: These widows had depended on Tabitha, and her rare gift of kindness, to provide for their needs. Luke's accounts present a contrast between those who hid resources and therefore died (Ananias and Sapphira), and Tabitha, who provided resources openly and was resurrected from the dead! The narratives also point to the power of the prayers of extremely poor widows that set the scene for the resurrection of a woman who takes care of their needs. The backdrop of this episode is God's very own kindness in answering their prayers through a spectacular miracle of the resurrection of the dead.

The connection between the resurrection and kindness is also evident in Peter's speech on

> . . . how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him. 'We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen' (10:38-40).

All the dots are connected above: Jesus' deeds of kindness and healing propel him into spiritual battle, resulting in his being persecuted through death but culminating victoriously in resurrection. This sequence depicts the trouble with kindness as well as the triumph of kindness.

Cornelius, devout in prayer, feared God and gave generously to the poor (10:2). The angel responded, "Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God" (10:2-5). God is blessed by our giving. We show our faithfulness to God through kind words and good deeds (10:38). Described as "respected by all the Jewish people" (10:22), Cornelius was also respected in heavenly realms. An angel commends him for his prayers and gifts to the poor, literally "alms" that show pity on the poor (10:2), features of Jewish piety. These prayer and alms "came up to God" as a memorial offering, which is equivalent to a sacrificial offering in the Temple (10:4; Neil 1973, 138). Heaven and earth have taken notice of this man due to his prayers backed by action. This account flows appropriately from the passage on Tabitha, "always doing good and helping the poor" (9:36).

The question arises about the religious background of Gentile Cornelius and his household of "devout God-fearers" who gave generously to people in need (10:2). He may be practicing his own religion and/or may have been influenced by Judaism. He might have been a "God fearer" in the technical sense of a Gentile who practiced Jewish ways. "God fearers" worshiped the God of the Jews and observed Jewish Laws as strictly as they were able, but in the synagogues they sat in separate areas. Many historical records describe "God fearers" who resonated with the civic identity of the Jews. Josephus, for instance, states that every city in Syria had both its Jews and its Judaizers and that Jewish practices appealed to large numbers of citizens of Antioch (Rajak 2009, 118).

The Reciprocity of Kindness

Kindness can go both ways. During Paul's final journey, he and his shipwrecked companions washed ashore on the island of Malta. Immediately the text states, "The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold" (28:2). The narrative of kindness *to those* who do not know Christ now transitions to kindness *from those* who do not know Christ.

Publius, the chief official of the island of Malta, owned an estate and "welcomed us to his home and showed us generous hospitality for three days" (28:7). This generosity is quickly reciprocated by Paul: "His father was sick in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and, after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him. When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured. They honored us in many ways; and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed" (28:8-10). In summary, the islanders first show kindness and generosity, then Paul responds with an act of kindness and generosity of healing. Once this healing extends to the remainder of the sick on the island, they

"honored" the disciples "in many ways," kindly furnishing the supplies they needed for their journey. Kindness opens the door to people's hearts and becomes the gateway for the contextualization of the gospel.

Contemporary Illustration and Conclusion

Deeds of kindness usher the Apostles into the realm of spiritual warfare (10:38); evil forces attempt to thwart the good purposes of the church at every turn. In the last decades of the twentieth century, in many communist countries of Asia churches were shut down and pastors imprisoned. Those who came from other countries for ministry silently walked the streets and prayed for weeks at a time. Anything more overt would lead to immediate imprisonment. Yet over the years, persecution has lessened in many of these regions because of the Christians' kindness. Although sharing the gospel is in many cases illegal, communist officials have begun to express appreciation for Christian service to prisoners, the sick, peasants, and farmers. Kindness has become the key to ministry in communist contexts.

A pastor in Asia had been caught in the vicious cycle of drugs, prison, release, relapse, and resentencing. One day, this cycle came to a dramatic halt when he met Jesus Christ. He began to share his joy with other drug addicts, utilizing his home as a Christian rehab center. Former addicts were transformed into catalysts for a social movement of doing good deeds in a communist setting. They reached out to friends who were drug addicts, then widened their involvement in civic transformation to caring for orphans and disaster relief. They deliberately reached out to "the most culturally destitute."

The success of this movement led the pastor back to the same prisons where he had been incarcerated, where it is illegal to share Christian faith, but where suddenly the closed door swung wide open for him to proclaim good news. Thousands of prisoners and hundreds of staff, moved by the gospel story, eye-witnessed God's good work of transformation.

The pastor reflects: "I did not dare to dream about this in a communist country, but God convinced me to move forward in faith." The ministry has flourished because of the positive working relationship the pastor has developed with local government officials. When ushered before these authorities, he explains to the government officials that prison rehabilitation and an improved society go hand in hand. Standing in front of government officials, the ministry leader parades former drug addicts to the front of the room and states, "These were once your enemies who harmed society; now they are your friends who care for the well being of society." He has effectively defended his ministry by utilizing the civic argument, just as the early apostles did before the authorities when they defended their healing ministry as "an act of kindness."

Kindness may be the most powerful force in the world. It can harden or soften people's hearts. Kindness can reach the heights of heaven and knock on the gates of hell. God's kindness bursts forth from on high in beauty and bounty. We see its evidence everywhere. Through kindness, we enter the world of the other, and we either rock that world or gain access. Either way we would do well to be kind in an unkind world.

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[1] Scriptures are quoted from the NIV, unless otherwise stated.

[2] In a parallel passage, Paul states that he did not hesitate "to proclaim to you the whole will of God" (20:27), did not covet anyone's "silver or gold or clothing" and worked with his own hands to support himself and his companions (20:33-34). "In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'" (20:33-35).

God's Plan for the Fullness of Time: Overhauling Ralph Winter's "Ten Epochs" and "Three Eras" Models (Part III)[1]

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Published in *Global Missiology*, www.globalmissiology.org, July 2021

Abstract

Over the past half-century, Dr. Ralph Winter (1924-2009) shaped the framework, goals, and strategies of evangelical missions more than any other single missiologist. Winter's monumental presentation at the 1974 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, entitled "The Highest Priority: Cross-Cultural Evangelism," steered the focus of evangelical missions away from converting individuals and their countries to reaching people groups. Winter argued persuasively that distances missionaries needed to traverse were cultural more than geographical. The concept of two ongoing structures he termed sodalities and modalities, along with his identification of modern missions' "closure" trait, are only two of many other seminal insights that reinforced Winter's expansive influence.

Related were Winter's two historical models that have influenced evangelical missiology. His "Three Eras of the Modern Missions Movement" has especially shaped Evangelicals' historical sensibilities; Winter's broader "Ten Epochs of Redemptive History" links with and supports the "Three Eras" model. Both of these models substantiate Evangelicals' expectation that today is both the final missions era and the age of Jesus's return. As such, Winter's "Three Eras" has provided evangelical missiologists and missions mobilizers a useful historical framework for inspiring fellow Christians to become involved in today's missions movement.

These "Eras" and "Epochs" models have undoubtedly galvanized evangelical missions with easily understandable historical metanarratives necessary to sustain any movement. They convey a passion and spirit to be cultivated and treasured. Even so, the models seemingly de-emphasize important biblical-theological themes. Moreover, due to contextual changes the models appear to have inadequate capacity for current historical sensibilities as well as the kind of theocentric and worldwide-collaborative character required for future mission movements.

Divided into three parts, this study conducts an overhaul of the two models to see what repairs and enhancements might be needed. Part I introduces the models, including their general context and basic components. Important influences on the models' formations are noted in Part II, leading into an analysis of the models' contextual moorings, traits, and limitations for wider use. Part III then considers viable courses of action, including commending features of more adequate historical models for Evangelicals to consider for moving forward. Recognition of the inherent limitations of all human constructs for explaining God's "plan for the fullness of time" (Ephesians 1:10) concludes the study.

Key Words: context, iterations, limitations, mobilization

Moving Forward

The primary purpose of this study's overhaul of Ralph Winter's "Ten Epochs" and "Three Eras" historical models has been, first, to understand the schemes more thoroughly. Unveiling the influences on the models' origins and developments has been required. So has pinpointing the models' contextual traits and limitations. Suggesting viable courses of action comes next.

One option would be to scrap or stop using one or both of the models. For some, the models' contextual limitations and blind spots might render them misleading at best and harmful at worst. Hence continuing to use either model as it is, even with supplemental qualifications, would no longer be tenable.

Another possibility would be to keep using one or both of the models but in renamed form. To pursue renaming the "Three Eras" model in particular, one thorny question concerns the existing name. In actuality, there have been several different titles of the model's essays and graphic representations. The study noted early on that Winter's most mature visual presentation of the original model was the 1999 "Three Eras of the Modern Missions Movement," which appeared in the essay entitled, "Four Men, Three Eras, Two Transitions: Modern Missions" (Winter 1999a). There are several earlier and later iterations, almost all having unique titles.

The more substantial question concerns whether or not to retain the explicit focus and purpose of the models, namely to mobilize U.S.-American (and Canadian) Evangelicals to participate in frontier missions to unreached peoples. Such participation involves becoming a mobilizer, mobilizing "the overseas churches," or going as a missionary "to the pioneer fields, at home or abroad, but especially at home" in North America. One look at the Lausanne Movement's range of "Issue Networks" is one indication of how Evangelicals worldwide understand Christian missions to have a broader meaning (Lausanne Movement n.d.). If, however, "The unreached peoples of the world must become the Church's greatest priority" (Lambert 2015), and if "missions" indeed means what "Winter patiently insist[ed], in countless writings and discussions, that … the term *missions* [means] the initial cross-cultural breakthroughs in [unreached] people groups" (Coote 2000:162; emphasis original), and if U.S.-American (and Canadian) Evangelical Christians are at the forefront of frontier missions mobilization, then keeping the models intact, but with new names, is not only viable but preferable and arguably even obligatory.

Clarifying that focus and purpose of the essays and graphics would be important in renaming the models. The "Ten Epochs" model's main title, "The Kingdom Strikes Back," is certainly a viable way of conveying the overall redemptive theme of the essay. As Winter himself noted, "This would make a good title for the Bible itself were it to be printed in modern dress" (Winter 2009a:7), even though the immediate connection with a blockbuster movie may have dissipated four decades later. As noted at various places earlier, however, there are inherent problems in the existing subtitle, "Ten Epochs of Redemptive History." This title is used for the graphic as well, implying that all of redemptive history has progressed as depicted—including the impending end of history. Clearer would be something like, "A Memory Device for Detecting Historical Patterns since Abraham for Mobilizing Today's U.S.-American Evangelicals (and Those They Mobilize) for Frontier Missions."

In the case of the "Three Eras" model, one new name for both the essay and graphic might be, "Ways for Today's U.S.-American Evangelicals (and Those They Mobilize) to Detect Historical Precedents in Parts of the Western Protestant Missions Movement for Focusing on the Current Need to Cross New Frontiers in Cross-Cultural Missions to Non-Western Unreached Peoples." That title would be a bit unwieldy, but it more accurately and constructively conveys the model's contents and purpose than either "Three Eras of the Modern Missions Movement" or "Four Men, Three Eras, Two Transitions: Modern Missions" has conveyed and still does.

Having considered the options of recasting and renaming the models, next comes exploring the possibility of rebuilding them.

Before Rebuilding

One preliminary matter concerns the mode of presenting rebuilt models and their features: conceptually-verbally-textually ("in writing"), graphically, a combination of the two, or some other creative way. Both of Winter's models seem to have been formulated first conceptually-verbally-textually, with related graphics emerging early for stimulation, consolidation, and presentation. This study has attempted to consider the two models' textual and graphic presentations in tandem, often rotating between the two to procure as much relevant content as possible. Probing for conceptual, personal, and contextual underpinnings has also been an important component of the approach.

For the present purposes, verbal-textual will be used, while graphic presentation will not be pursued except when verbal description of mental pictures might be needed.

A second preliminary item concerns whose input should be considered most heavily. Ralph Winter's input is a given, as are the panoply of inputs from those who influenced him. A survey of other models is not in view, but the range of people in various orbits of the study's awareness—especially people to whose input English-speaking evangelical missions circles heretofore might have been inadequately exposed—are certainly available to be considered.

One more preliminary matter is not so much "preliminary" as it is consolidating: What, after all, is the "heartbeat" of Winter's two historical models? After examining several trees in Ralph Winter's forest of redemptive and missions history, what is the best description of the forest as a whole? To switch metaphors again, what makes the models' clocks tick?

A suitable candidate is reaching the unreached peoples of the world. UPGs constitute "the ends of the earth" and the "final frontier" in the models' current epoch/era of redemptive and missions history. Mobilizing Christians to join the massive task of reaching the world's remaining UPGs was, after all, the purpose for Winter engineering his essays and accompanying diagrams. If enough Christians would give themselves to the monumental but completable task of frontier missions, the current epoch/era would be the final epoch/era of missions (and perhaps all) history.

Further consideration, however, reveals the models' life-giving heartbeat to be more fundamental, cosmic, and comprehensive. Reaching the world's UPGs may be the models' final frontier, but stretching through, underlying, and arching over all the models' epochs and eras is nothing short of "the restoration of all creation and the reglorification of God," to use Winter's own phrase articulated in 2005 (Winter 2008b:284). That divine mission is what "The Kingdom Strikes Back" means: "the grace of God intervening into history in order to contest the enemy who temporarily is 'the god of this world'" (Winter 1981e:138). Later versions of the essay add, "so that the nations will praise God's name" (Winter 2009a:8). God's plan for restoring all creation and "reglorifying" his name is to bless Abraham's family, then subsequently other nations, all of whom are enlisted into God's missions army to share that blessing with other nations (Winter 2009a:8). While Winter identified the final frontier in the final missions era to be the remaining UPGs, and while he saw U.S.-American Evangelicals as standing at the kairos of being mobilized to lead the charge in the final missions battles, the historical models' enlivening spirit was the ultimate victory of God's creation being restored to him and bringing all glory to God alone.

It is no wonder then that John Piper quickly sensed that spirit and used Winter's models in their earliest stages in conveying his own emphasis on God being worshipped among all nations.

Rebuilding the models, using existing and new components in creating a new design, would involve conveying, in some form or fashion, Winter's models' same essence and purpose.

Seven Elements

In proceeding to consider rebuilding Winter's historical models, this study sees seven components that can strengthen Winter's fundamental purpose of creation's restoration and divine "reglorification" while shedding constraints of Winter's missions-mobilizing models that coalesced almost a half century ago.

1. The first trait is for any model to be explicitly "triune-theocentric." Winter mentioned God's gracious intervention in the world, including through "the appearance of the good Person in the center of the story" (Winter 2009a:8). Winter also noted how God has always preferred that his blessed people voluntarily obey him in missionary outreach, "but where necessary, He accomplished His will through involuntary means," for example through Joseph, Jonah, and the nation as a whole through the exile (Winter 2009a:9). As for the present day, "If we in the West insist on keeping our blessing instead of sharing it, then we will, like other nations before us, have to lose our blessing for the remaining nations to receive it. God has not changed His plan in the last 4,000 years…. God can raise up others if we falter" (Winter 2009a:23). God's ultimate control is evident in "The Kingdom Strikes Back" model, but new models need to be more explicitly God-centered.

Pointing out this needed component resembles the mid-twentieth-century corrective toward a *missio Dei* paradigm. In the wake of two devastating European wars and the seeming end of missions in China, Western mission leaders began to realize that their focus and confidence had been on their mission strategies and activities at the expense of acknowledging and trusting God to accomplish his mission. For this study, even more so than the "Ten Epochs" model, the "Three Eras" model of modern missions history emphasizes the role and responsibility of Christians' insights and activities—to the point of crowding out God's role and responsibility. Restoring the world is ultimately and in actual effect God's work. We Christians can thus wholeheartedly and tirelessly throw ourselves into missions service because our hope and confidence are in God.

In one sense this point is a matter of emphasis. As described earlier, when noting the absolute necessity of prayer for frontier missions and acknowledging that missions is a spiritual battle, Winter still laid the burden on Christians in missions service: "[W]e know that it is our fight, not just His, and that He is fighting with us" (Winter 1996:64). However, the burden is God's more than ours as his weak and frail people. A "triune-theocentric" model would reverse Winter's war-language to "Missions is God's fight, not just ours; we are fighting with him."

One implication of a "triune" theocentric historical model is that commitment to God as triune—as confessed in early Christian history by various Christian traditions within differing cultural-linguistic and imperial settings—would be affirmed. Another implication is that the essential roles of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit would be acknowledged and trusted. While the three divine Persons' roles overlap and interrelate, and while flexibility among different peoples in Christ's body of theological understandings would also need to be acknowledged, the Father's creation and caring rule, the Son's redeeming the world as Prophet-Priest-King, and the Spirit's comforting, guiding, and empowering God's people all need to be recognized and trusted.

It is difficult to find enough of such a "triune-theocentric" emphasis in either the "Ten Epochs" or "Three Eras" models. Jesus's main role seems to be that of taking away the Great Commission from Israel and assigning it to others (Winter 2009a:9-10). In a mid-1980s presentation entitled "Christology and Missions?" Winter's main concern is that missionaries not impose traditional creedal formulations about Christ's Person and Work, crafted in settings alien to those of the people whom the missionaries are serving, but instead allow the Bible to speak for itself to people and follow Jesus's example of love and service (Winter 1985d:297-299). Those points are well taken but are too reductionist at the expense of acknowledging and trusting the triune God and his work.

A triune-theological historical model will present God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as having been actively working throughout all of history to restore the world to how God wants it to be and to bring glory to God for his gracious work of redemption. God promised at humankind's earliest rebellion to defeat Satan through a coming Redeemer (Genesis 3:15), a covenant promise fulfilled in the crucified and risen Jesus Christ. The triune God will also be presented as continuing that work, including through the Spirit graciously enlisting, empowering, guiding, and using us who are his people in mission service, until whenever he re-creates the final new heaven and new earth. Such a model is not simply academic, scientific, and impractical: it breathes passion for God's covenant-fulfilling work in the world (and in unseen realms, throughout the cosmos) and beckons people to trust, follow, and serve him wherever and however he wishes.

2. A second component of a rebuilt historical model is that it be comprehensively world-historical and—in the positive and constructive meaning of the term—ecumenical. No model should try and cover everything, but neither should it inherently exclude parts of God's world. The Bible includes all peoples within God's concern and rule, either explicitly or by implication. Landmark events in various parts of God's world also are noted. Any historical model of God's mission should follow that example and not frame missions history in reference to historical junctures and figures from only one sector—in the present case, Great Britain and the United States of America.

Related is the historical unfolding and development of redemptive history. In the "Ten Epoch" model, the first half depicts Israel's commission to share God's blessing with other peoples, followed by the second half's depictions of nations other than Israel being blessed so they can in turn bless other peoples. Rather than such a disjointed two halves of redemptive history, however, God's fulfillment of his promise to redeem his people in Christ involves expanding Old Israel into the worldwide, international people of God. A rebuilt model of redemptive history will convey such an organic progression into God's international people.

In reading the Old Testament, one common oversight Christians can make is how God deals directly with peoples other than Israel, be they Ninevites, Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Canaanites, Moabites, Philistines, or many others. Israel or Israelites never take God to these other people. Rather, God brings Israel or individual Israelites to these various people as part of his dealings with them. God also works through non-Israelites in his dealings with Israel.

The same is true with people in the New Testament. Whether with people who encounter Jesus, or years later people who encounter Apostles or other followers of Jesus, God has been overseeing and dealing with their lives, "that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him" (Acts 17:27)—particularly through God's bring Jesus's witnesses to them. Cornelius, the Ethiopian eunuch, Romans, the Wise Men, Greeks in Antioch—the list is almost endless of people in the New Testament among whom God had always been at work.

Similarly, a reconstructed history of redemption/missions model should depict all sorts of people to whom God brings his messengers, as well as the messengers (missionaries) whom God leads to them. Recipients of mission initiatives are just as vital to gospel communication as are the messengers; and, recipients' vantage points are at least as important as those of the missionaries. God's dealings are with both gospel conveyors and receivers, and neither is a passive object of the others' targeted actions. Historical models somehow need to convey that interaction—not just action and inaction.

Moreover, various Christian groups—newer and older, "Eastern" and "Western," larger and smaller—need to be included in a new missions historical model that purports to be general. A depiction of "modern missions," for example, would somehow need to include newer independent movements, megachurches, Orthodox, Charismatic, various Protestant, Catholic, and others that God has been directing and continues to use. As much breadth as the "Ten Epochs" model has, Orthodox traditions do not appear, for example. Neither do Roman Catholics in the "Three Eras" model, including post-Vatican II when monumental missions adjustments were implemented. Especially if a model is not identified as focusing on a particular tradition, proper ecumenical inclusion is important for depicting the breadth of God's use of all of his people throughout all of his world.

Winter's and others' emphasis on frontier missions that are focused on UPGs is well taken. An allegedly general, comprehensive historical model that intends to convey that focus should clearly convey that intention, even as it also carries the first two components just described.

3. A third component is that of multiple agents of mission. For its part, "The Kingdom Strikes Back" goes to great lengths to convey a wide variety of mission agents throughout Western Christian history. Additionally, in the essay's brief description of the "first half" of redemptive history, inclusion of four "mission mechanisms" operative in creating cross-cultural missions interaction is helpful: "1) going voluntarily, 2) involuntarily going without missionary intent, 3) coming voluntarily, and 4) coming involuntarily" (Winter 2009a:9). These "mechanisms" appear somewhat in the essay's various accounts of "second half" interactions, but there is little indication of their place in the "Three Eras" scheme about modern missions. Per the "Three Eras" model, missionaries and mission agencies are the only active agents at work. Moreover, ostensibly white men have been the only leaders and formulators of new approaches or "eras" in missions.

Explicit space needs to be given to the rich tapestry of Christ's servants who have led and served and recent generations of missions. That colorful array of Christ's servants has included women and girls, people of all sorts of ethnicities and nationalities, poor and wealthy alike. God has always used all kinds of people in various roles to convey his love and grace to others. The "involuntary going" of God's people has always been vital, as in the Israelite slave girl testifying in Naaman the Syrian's household (II Kings 5:2-5) or those early Christians fleeing persecution in Acts 8:1-4 and 11:19-20. Models of what has occurred need to depict multiple agents in Winter's various "mission mechanisms" categories.

Perhaps Winter's concerted efforts to promote the legitimacy and importance of mission sodalities (agencies and other so-called "parachurch" ministries) caused him to focus on those who go voluntarily and intentionally as missionaries, as well as on the related infrastructure. The Spirit of God's guidance and use of Christ's witnesses who are refugees, immigrants, students, laborers, and others in diaspora has been part of reaching the unreached and modern missions in general.

4. Fourth, overhauled historical models should convey the messy and multidirectional character of missions interactions. Missions have never come or gone unidirectionally, including in modern times. How, for example, would the mid-nineteenth-century missions movement of Twi-speaking Akan people receiving Jamaican Christians, who had intentionally moved inland in the Gold Coast in West Africa, fit in a rebuilt historical model? What about Korean slaves of Japanese invasions in the 1590's becoming Christian through Japanese Christian witness? Or Korean Christians being forcibly moved to Japan during the 1910-1945 Occupation? Surely William Wade Harris reaching throngs along the southern West African coasts and Russian Orthodox missionary work among Alaskan unreached peoples would need space as well.

5. A fifth needed element is reconfigured periodization and dating. Modern missions progressed in fits and starts, differently in different settings, and with revivals and declines at varying moments—but not in a mathematically symmetrical manner. Redemptive history has progressed more organically, through covenant-promises and fulfillment. Also, especially until the global proliferation of the Western-Gregorian calendar, different peoples around the world have had their own periodization and dating systems, be they lunar, generational, by ruler's reigns, or seasonal—all of which were used in biblical times as well. Use of such contextually determined periods as "centuries" and "decades" should not mindlessly be assumed.

Furthermore, the question of when "modern" missions began—when Spain, Portugal, and other Western nations sailed more widely, when the British and Russian Empires started competing more intensely, when Pentecostal or "Spirit-empowered" Christianity began to proliferate (Empowered21 2020) during the heyday of Western and Japanese imperialism, or by some other single marker or constellation of landmarks—is another vitally important consideration.

Whether or not to include a "closure" element by labeling the current period (along with whatever other label might be used) as "final," which inevitably would carry eschatological connotations, is its own separate consideration within the aspect of periodization and dating.

6. Sixth, the theme of suffering in Christian witness—in Greek μάρτυρας or "martyr"—is central enough to need explicit attention. Suffering almost always accompanies missions efforts in the Bible. That has been true throughout Christian history as well, including in recent generations. In fact, Winter's central stress on the "reglorification" of God connects with suffering, not just blissful light. Just as Jesus was "lifted up" both in majesty and in his suffering, so have Christian missions both accompanied the might of economic, military, and political power and suffered the indignity of martyrdom and humility (Jennings 2010:229).

7. A seventh element of a rebuilt historical model of missions involves interacting with public matters. Interestingly, Winter moved in this direction in his later years with his passion about "Kingdom Mission" and the eradication of disease. Perhaps that shift was in part a rebound from moving away from concern about socio-political, structural economic, and other public matters with his mid-1970s concentration on "people groups" as the *ethne* of Scripture, at the exclusion of political *nations* as well. It could have been that not only Winter but many Western evangelical leaders wanted to leave public matters behind altogether after the shock of China's mid-twentieth-century turn toward communism and its expulsion of expatriate missionaries, followed by a shift within the World Council of Churches toward wrestling with unjust political and economic matters. Even with the importance of focusing on ethno-linguistic people groups, God's ongoing dealings with the "nations" of the world include countries, be they Zimbabwe, Japan, China, the

United States of America, or any other. However evangelical mission leaders navigate involvements in such matters, God's wider mission involves working in all affairs of his world (Jennings 2020).

In any case, frontier missions among unreached peoples also affect and are affected by public realities. For example, recipients of Jesus's cross-cultural ambassadors see them in association with public identifiers, usually nationality. How groups and communities live and interact within socio-political contexts is of fundamental importance and needs some sort of place in historical missions models.

This study understands overhauled versions of Winter's "Ten Epochs" and "Three Eras" to be viable. Such rebuilt models should consider incorporating the seven elements of triune-theocentric, world-historical/ecumenical, various agents, messy-multidirectional, reconfigured periodization, suffering, and public realities. That kind of model would more appropriately continue the "Kingdom Strikes Back" and "Three Eras" heartbeats of creation's restoration and divine reglorification, including the particular focus of unreached peoples being restored to their estranged Creator.

Proceeding further with an actual overhaul of the models must be taken up beyond this study. Others' input is needed. Collaboration between various types of people must also take place. Traits of recast models have been suggested. Attempting to move beyond that here would be folly and run counter to the group effort required.

All Models' Inadequacies

This study necessarily concludes on a tentative note. Just as the "Ten Epochs" and "Three Eras" models of redemptive history and modern missions have never been beyond revision, so is any human attempt at depicting history—even if the intent is expressly to *use* history—in some way inadequate. Accuracy, comprehensiveness, and usefulness are always elusive. Especially when depictions include events particularly dependent on divine involvement, human limitations become all the more pronounced and inevitable.

God's mysterious Providence makes even retrospects tentative. Any historian, whether amateur or professional, views and explains a period, process, movement, person, event, or any other phenomenon from within a particular context and tied to certain interests. "God's plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth" (Ephesians 1:10) is comprehensive enough to deny any human historical depiction an achievement of full adequacy.

Dr. Ralph Winter's laser focus on Evangelicals' obligation to cross the frontiers of unreached people groups compelled him tirelessly to use all means possible to mobilize his fellow U.S.-American Christians for frontier missions. His "Ten Epochs" and "Three Eras" depictions of redemptive history and of the modern missions movement, incomplete and unintentionally misleading as they have been, have helped to achieve his mobilization objective. Two generations after the models' inceptions, this study's partial overhaul has shown that the time and context for scrapping, renaming, or—preferably—rebuilding have come.

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[1] Part I was published in the January 2021 *Global Missiology* issue and can be found at http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/2418. Part II was published in the April 2021 *Global Missiology* issue and can be found at http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/2426.

Book Review

S. T. Antonio, *Insider Church: Ekklesia and the Insider Paradigm*

Reviewed by John Cheong

Published in *Global Missiology*, www.globalmissiology.org, July 2021

Antonio, S. T. (2020). *Insider Church: Ekklesia and the Insider Paradigm*. William Carey, Pasadena, CA, 236 pp., $16.99 paperback / $9.99 e-book, ISBN: 978645082729.

Since the emergence of the Insider Movement (henceforth IM) paradigm, great debates have surrounded it. Comprised of two groups (i.e., missionary advocates and insider believers from Muslim backgrounds or BMBs), the IM's soteriology, ecclesiology and missiology has challenged traditional church and mission approaches. Antonio enters in "not to solve this debate, but to … focus on … the nature and identity of the church" (xvii) and "outline a fresh and robust biblical vision for the nature of the church that can illuminate the insider paradigm and ultimately guide our efforts in multiplying churches among Muslims" (xxii).

Insider Church is divided into two major sections. The first details a biblical vision of the Church to clarify the narrative and themes of its identity (ch 1), the marks of the Church (ch 2), and how Church is contextualized (ch 3). The second appraises the IM by explaining what their insider conception of ekklesia is (ch 4), evaluating it (ch 5), and its implications for conversation with IM advocates (ch 6). The book concludes with an epilogue of recommendations for multiplying biblical churches among Muslims. Due to the challenge of unpacking the IM's "interlocking" traits such as Islam, contextualization, pneumatology, and ecclesiology, Antonio only examines its ecclesiology (xxi).

Antonio hits many right notes by elucidating a clear picture of the Church when identifying how God's people are mainly portrayed in Scripture as a "covenant" people, Jesus' "kingdom community," and an apostolic-founded church (5), as well as through such metaphors as "exile," "remnant," and "holy nation" throughout the book. For Antonio, the essence of the Church must include the paired traits of Church universal versus local as well as visible and invisible. Also, there must be a strong and healthy relationship between Church and salvation (i.e. there is no salvation outside the Church other than rare exceptions, such as Melchizedek, that come to faith independent of other believers' witness). Antonio also includes regular, not intermittent, gatherings as one of the Church's core functions. He warns against holding a stripped-down or confused ecclesiology that maximizes the exceptions in soteriology but minimizes the main avenues to salvation (41). The local church must also be visible, not just among themselves but in relation to their closer social context (i.e. the Muslim community) and with other churches (51). In turn, the latter must find ways to incorporate the former. IM advocates that hinder BMBs from fellowshipping with the universal body (in spite of security risks) are arresting their development (47); regular churches that do not welcome BMBs also fall short.

Antonio continues by noting that in the New Testament churches were visible and known to outsiders. In comparison, insider churches are *visible only amongst themselves* and *invisible* to outsiders (109-111). The NT Church also made adjustments to prevent scandalizing other believers while insider churches make few adjustments for other Christians (96). An illuminating insight is the insider church is "not significantly influenced by classical attributes of the church (one, holy, catholic and apostolic)" but leans more toward the Protestant marks of "the Word, baptism and

communion" (112, 153). Antonio raises concerns, however, over how baptism and communion are conceived differently among insider churches. For their part, IM advocates have offered their own marks as valid indicators of an emerging biblical church (from Acts 2:42-46): prayer, the apostles' teaching and fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer, meeting in the temple and house-to-house, devotion to the Word, prayer and relational discipleship (113).

While these IM church marks are uncontroversial, other stances raise eyebrows, most especially not only can salvation be found *outside* the Church but it can "flourish *inside a non-Christian* 'socio-religious' community" (italics mine; 114). Another claim that concerns many is that the kingdom of "God's exercise of his reign and rule …includes [other] religions" (117). How this IM claim looks on the ground is, however, not detailed in the book. To correct such an expansive and questionable vision of Church, Antonio calls the IM church paradigm to a 'single expanded ecclesiology' (134) – a visible church where two distinct groups of believers are under one roof (i.e. a heterogenous unit principle) as followers of Christ.

Antonio also rightly critiques the IM's omission of biblical metaphors for the Church such as "holy," "set-apart people" and "the new humanity" (135-136). These omitted metaphors stress a distinct and visible community rather than an invisible one among Muslims, and IM proponents overemphasize "yeast" or "seed"—metaphors that convey inside-out, gradual transformation. Another critique concerns the framework of the IM base religious narrative of prime reference as the Quran rather than Scripture (137). Overall, Antonio concludes this section by stating that the IM's ecclesiology is selective and amiss on a number of key areas. At the same time, he states that other, more established churches have also been wanting in wholly emphasizing voluntary, individualistic ecclesiologies in contrast to the insider churches' focus on communal commitment and responsibility.

Insider Church excels in its detailed examination of the themes of contextualization and the nature of Church to help everyone assess its fidelity to a more authentic biblical vision. The book, however, does not adequately represent the IM's ecclesiology.

Firstly, though Antonio notes that space delimited discussions of IM pneumatology (xxi), at least a page or two to outline related issues could have been discussed. This point is salient because the Holy Spirit is deemed the critical teacher (or factor) in the insiders' ability to contextualize their soteriology, ecclesiology, and missiology. Also, while critiquing the insider churches' overemphasis of certain biblical metaphors for Church, Antonio hardly explicates the ecclesiological understanding of "kingdom of priests" (7-8). A key doctrine of the Reformation, the priesthood of all believers has been upheld more in word than in practice in many regular churches today. Conversely, IM churches have strongly practiced this. Finally, by stating that "Paul regularly appointed elders in every church he planted" (142), the book risks giving the false impression that no bottom-up selection of leaders occurred (but see Acts 1:15-23, 6:3, and 20:28) thus implying the insider church's leadership selection is unbiblical. Antonio's definition of a local church (44) also omits mission, even though that lies at the heart of insider churches and is fundamental to any church.

Elsewhere, the telic nature of insider churches' contextualization process is overlooked, even though all IM advocates have stressed that as an ongoing or open-ended process where change cannot be mechanically programmed or predicted. While Antonio fairly describes IM churches as "embryonic" and "emerging," his critiques could be read as the need for "instant purity now" rather than the inherently long, generational change involved. If established churches themselves still

labor to purge the syncretisms of their own after many generations, can we also be patient to trust in God's Spirit to effect purity and change among insider churches over a long-time span?

Insider Church will not resolve all differences between IM advocates and critics. At the same time, by its more honest and open approach to appreciate yet critique both sides, Antonio's analysis models a more balanced treatment of the whole discussion for others to emulate.

Book Review

Kenneth Nehrbass, *Advanced Missiology: How to Study Missions in Credible and Useful Ways*

Reviewed by Samuel K. Law

Published in *Global Missiology*, www.globalmissiology.org, July 2021

Nehrbass, Kenneth (2021). *Advanced Missiology: How to Study Missions in Credible and Useful Ways.* Cascade Books, Eugene, OR, 338 pp., $39.00 paperback / e-book, ISBN: 9781725272224 / 48.

In *Advanced Missiology: How to Study Missions in Credible and Useful Ways,* Kenneth Nehrbass adds a significant contribution to the field of missiology. This book should be on the reading list of any Intercultural/Missions Studies program as it provokes thought and reflection, and it is well-designed for personal or classroom study. There are very few books that teach "missiology" in this manner. It will serve as a useful companion to works such as Charles Van Engen's *Mission on the Way* (Van Engen 1996) and Stanley Skreslet's *Comprehending Mission* (Skreslet 2012). Nehrbass's book is not without shortcomings, but *Advanced Missiology* is commendable in its purpose and effort.

In introducing *Advanced Missiology,* Nehrbass recognizes the increasingly complex nature of missiology, targeting the twin needs for an interdisciplinary approach and to address the disconnect between theory and practice. Theories are defined as "*descriptive* explanations of the way the world works," and Nehrbass uses the word "model" for best practices, "*prescriptive* ways for doing things" (5). He considers the book "advanced" because he is not merely introducing theories and models but critiquing them (2). As such, he considers David Bosch's *Transforming Mission* and Timothy Tennent's *Invitation to World Missions* among others as "introductory." Nehrbass writes, "What we have found lacking is a book that shows how missiologists have actually generated academically credible theories that are useful for those missionary-practitioners who are making disciples across cultures" (2). The book is thus an attempt to advance an interdisciplinary process where theory is connected to practice.

The book is lengthy, nearly 400 pages, but it is easy to read and follow. *Advanced Missiology* is structured as a river (see following paragraphs) and is divided into two parts: seven chapters in Part I under the heading "Tributaries of Missiology" and four chapters in Part II under the heading "Distributaries of Missiology." Each chapter begins with an inset box of Chapter Goals, "Action goals," and "Heart goals," and ends with suggestions for Future Research, Review Questions, and Reflection Questions. Key definitions and ideas have their own boxes throughout each chapter. Sixteen diagrams and ten tables help readers understand how the various topics are related to each other. Of note are the sidebars of key missiologists and their contributions that serve to illustrate the topics being presented. In summary, the book is well-designed to be used as a textbook on missiology.

In Chapter 1, Nehrbass sets the stage for the rest of the book by providing two constructs: a new definition and a new metaphor for missiology. First, Nehrbass begins with Alan Tippett's definition of missiology: "the academic discipline or science which researches records and applies data relation to the biblical origin, the history … the anthropological principles and techniques in the theological base of the Christian mission" (13). While seminal, Nehrbass feels it is unhelpful as contemporary missiology involves more than theology, history, and the social sciences; moreover, it does not include the process which connects theory with practice.

To address these shortcomings, Nehrbass redefines missiology to be "the utilization of multiple academic disciplines to develop strategies for making disciples across cultures" (14).

Second, Nehrbass proposes a better metaphor for contemporary missiology to be that of a river of interdisciplinary academic fields rather than the common metaphor of a "three-legged stool" comprised of theology, history, and the social sciences. He argues that the three-legged stool metaphor is too restrictive, presenting missiology as static, with separated disciplines, lacking the ability to provide a proper unifying meta-theory, and not accurately describing the recursive process between disciplines. In response, Nehrbass proposes the following:

> I will develop a metaphor of missiology which attempts to rectify the deficiencies of models like three-legged stools, Venn diagrams, and spokes on a wheel. I envision the science of Christian missions more as a river with countless tributaries (theoretical disciplines) that converge at the common goal of making disciples in cross-cultural contexts. As the river moves downstream, it serves multiple communities in endless ways (mission strategies) (25).

Nehrbass's contention is that missiology must be much more interdisciplinary in nature if it is to address the increasingly complex contexts of the twenty-first century.

With this new definition and new metaphor, the remainder of the chapters connect various upstream disciplines to the downstream goal of cross-cultural discipleship. The following chapters in Part I explore how theology, history, anthropology, intercultural studies, development theory, and education each connect to cross-cultural discipleship. Part II focuses on defining cross-cultural discipleship as "any activity that helps people across cultures to bring these spheres of their lives under the lordship of Christ" (202) and presents seminal theories and models that can be used to achieve it. Finally, chapter 11 discusses the future of missiology.

There are many strengths in the book. First, the book is well-designed as a textbook for pedagogy. Second, the book has substantive breadth in presenting the gamut of theories and models in the various disciplines that can be used to develop healthy missions practices. *Advanced Missiology* also serves as an extensive resource compendium for students and missiologists. Third, the book fulfills its purpose to connect theory with practice by using multiple examples. Examples of how theories contribute to new practices include an analysis of shifts in historiography which helps one understand the shifts in roles of the global missionary force in chapter 3, the discussion of how Mary Douglas's grid-group theory aids in understanding cross-cultural dynamics in chapter 5, and a much-needed discussion in Chapter 6 on development studies in missiology on the role Christianity and churches play in the twenty-first century as globalization transforms nations, societies, and cultures. Fourth, Nehrbass fulfills his intention not just to introduce but to critique the strengths, weaknesses, and limitations of the various theories and models presented.

In addition, there are several other aspects of the book to keep in mind. First, Nehrbass's premise that the "three-legged stool" metaphor is outdated and inadequate may be misplaced. Insofar as Nehrbass sees the metaphor as descriptive, his argument has merit. But his argument falls apart if the "three-legged stool" is viewed as prescriptive. In other words, prescriptively used, for any theory or model to be valid, all three must align. As a woodworker, I know making a "three-legged stool" is not as easy as it seems. It requires a recursive process to ensure that all the legs have the proper angles and are positioned properly. Making a stool is a dynamic, interactive process. In the same vein, Nehrbass's river metaphor works descriptively but does not hold its weight prescriptively (see pages 29-32); that is, while Nehrbass may encourage collaboration, the metaphor does not require it. Streams can flow any which way without the

need to be supportive of other streams; a river just flows, but the interactions of streams are *ad hoc,* not intentional.

Second, *Advanced Missiology's* limited framework presents missiology more like a stream than a river. Though Nehrbass uses terms such as "complex," "recursive," and "fuzzy," he never enters the meta-theory framework from which these terms derive their particular meanings here—Complex Systems Science (CSS) or Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS), an approach almost every hard and soft science discipline has adopted since the turn of the millennium (Law 2016, 43; Matenga 2019). Hence, as much as Nehrbass endeavors "to rectify the deficiencies of models like three-legged stools, Venn diagrams, and spokes on a wheel" (25), he nevertheless does not illustrate "fuzziness" but still uses Venn diagrams (Figure 2), wheels (Figure 5), and taxonomies such as "systematic missiological theology" in Chapter 2.

Lacking a complex systems framework, coupled with a narrow definition of "missiology," thus results in three shortcomings:

1. The book orbits an anthropocentric pole. By defining missiology as "the utilization of multiple academic disciplines to develop strategies for making disciples across cultures," Nehrbass has limited the discipline to finding best practices. Though Nehrbass calls for the generation of new theories (293), the definition primarily focuses on "utilization" and "strategies." If best practice is Nehrbass's focus for missiology, my comments here in this review are moot.

Andrew Walls appropriately cautions that missiology should not focus on best practices alone (Walls 1996, 234); it must seek to understand what the Great Practitioner is doing. Van Engen's and Skreslet's missiological texts, as well as those of Bosch, Goheen, and Piper that Nehrbass cites, all sought to integrate both divine and human poles. While the "Holy Spirit" is mentioned 30 times, He almost always is the subject of study, not the One under Whose guidance missiology should take place. Nehrbass connects disciplines well with cross-cultural discipleship but could have better developed a recursive loop back to the Master. A systems approach of both/and would have avoided circling around just one pole.

2. Missiology's narrow redefinition places *Advanced Missiology* in an academic eddy, a criticism others have raised (Baker 2014, 19). Many streams enter, but there does not seem to be much interaction with the rest of the river. Nehrbass studied missiological journals with regards to expiry dates of theories and models (285); but, had he compared the missiological journals with those from other disciplines in the river, he would have realized how missiology lags the other academic disciplines in studying twenty-first-century complex realities (Law 2016, 206). The other disciplines are already much further downstream (Rynkiewich 2011, 151-152).

A systems approach would have thrust missiology into dynamic interaction with the universe of disciplines. It is not enough to utilize theories and models from other disciplines: missiology should be in constant dialogue with them, both to keep missiology current as well as to cross-fertilize, even serving as a corrective to, the other disciplines. Unfortunately, such interaction is increasingly rare (Paas 2011, 5). Hence, while *Advanced Missiology* may improve the usefulness of missiology, its approach remains weak in improving academic credibility.

3. The book is U.S.-American-centric, drawing largely from North American publications. For example, I could not find a single article cited from the European and more interdisciplinary *Mission Studies.* This limited field of sources then begs readers to question if Nehrbass is addressing a primarily U.S.-American issue (Walls 1996)—where the majority of missiologists are now trained in seminaries (Baker 2014; Rynkiewich 2011).

It should be noted that perhaps I may have been a bit too critical than I should, as I am both *emic* and *etic* in perspective toward missiology. I do consider myself a "American-trained missiologist," but I am also critiquing from a secular discipline and serving in a non-Western setting. If this book review is overly critical, the fault rests with me and I must apologize for that.

In the end, I wish to reiterate my strong recommendation for *Advanced Missiology*, and I will be adding it to my Missions Research course. It is a well-written, comprehensive work on the current state of missiology. Recognizing its limitations should help to provoke even more thought as to how missiology might advance in the future.

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