

**The De-Jesus-ing of Mission:
Andrew Walls and the Church's Continuing Conversion**

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Abstract

This article argues that the fragmentation of contemporary Christian witness into specialized ministries—apologetics, evangelism, discipleship, and spiritual formation—reflects not merely institutional differentiation but a deeper christological distortion: the de-Jesus-ing of mission, in which Jesus Christ is gradually displaced from the living subject who acts through the Church's witness to an object administered within its ministries. Drawing on Andrew Walls's account of Christian conversion as *shub*—the turning of what is already present toward Christ—and Peter Berger's sociology of institutional reproduction, the article traces how operational maps formed through genuine conversion can, once stabilized within plausibility structures, acquire a logic increasingly independent of Christ's continuing agency. Quebec's Quiet Revolution serves as a diagnostic anchor rather than an evidential foundation for this argument. Read alongside John Flett's dogmatic account of mission and Dallas Willard's epistemology of Christ's self-authenticating reality, the article proposes that the Church's own renewal proceeds not by new structures but by the continual conversion Walls calls "*shub*": the Church's ongoing turning of its inherited institutions toward the living Christ.

Key Words: Andrew Walls, conversion, missiology, plausibility structures, Christ's agency, *shub*, secularization

Introduction

For Andrew Walls, the history of Christian expansion is the history of a single Hebrew verb enacted across cultures: שׁוּב. *Shub*—the recurring biblical language of turning and returning—supplies the grammar for what Walls understands as Christian conversion: not the adoption of a new religious civilization but the turning of what is already present toward Jesus Christ (Walls, 2025, pp. 11, 19–20). In *Christian Conversion and Mission*, published posthumously, Walls traces this turning as it recurs serially: from the Jewish Church's turning of Israel's own hope, through the Hellenistic turning birthed in Antioch, then throughout the "barbarian" peoples of Europe, and most recently the churches of the Global South. Christian expansion does not reproduce a single Christian culture but continually generates "new Christian keynotes" as the gospel is translated into new cultural worlds (Walls, 2025, p. 130). This turning is not a generic religious phenomenon into which Christ is absorbed as one symbol among others; it presupposes, in Dallas Willard's terms, both Christ's universal active subjectivity and his unique deliverance authority: The same Christ who addresses every culture prior to the Church's arrival is the particular Jesus of Nazareth in whom alone that address becomes historically decisive (Willard, 2009, pp. 177–88).

If *shub* is the governing grammar of Christian conversion, it also raises a corresponding missiological question. What becomes of that turning when it is mediated through the institutional life of the Church itself? Contemporary Christian witness increasingly appears not as one integrated participation in Christ's mission but as a constellation of specialized ministries—apologetics, evangelism, discipleship, and spiritual formation—each possessing its own literature, institutions, practitioner communities, and internal standards of success. Such specialization is not

inherently problematic. The question is whether these ministries continue to participate in one living movement toward Christ or have gradually acquired operational logics of their own.

The contemporary fragmentation of Christian witness reflects a deeper christological distortion that can be described as *the de-Jesus-ing of mission*: the gradual operational displacement of Jesus Christ from the living subject who acts through the Church's witness to the object increasingly administered within its ministries. Apologetics defends Christ, evangelism proclaims him, discipleship follows him, and spiritual formation seeks life with him—yet each risks functioning according to institutional logics that increasingly proceed apart from Christ's continuing agency. The problem is therefore not primarily organizational but the operative agency of Jesus Christ.

Walls's missionary history explains how such fragmentation became historically conceivable. Because the gospel is infinitely translatable, Christianity repeatedly enters cultures through their dominant patterns of thought and social organization. As Western modernity increasingly construed persons as autonomous individuals rather than members of corporate communities, conversion itself came to be translated into the language of individual decision and personal application (Walls, 2025, p. 124). That translation was a genuine enactment of *shub*. Yet that individualizing of conversion also created conditions under which the Church's one witness could gradually differentiate into specialized ministries addressing distinct dimensions of individual experience.

What Walls renders historically intelligible, John Flett grounds theologically. Flett argues that mission becomes distorted whenever its warrant shifts from the living Christ to the cultural or institutional forms that claim to embody him (Flett, 2010, p. 184). Read together, Walls and Flett suggest that the contemporary fragmentation of Christian witness is not merely a sociological development but the operational displacement of Christ's continuing agency.

This article develops its argument in three movements. First, the study diagnoses this displacement through Walls's convert/proselyte distinction, Berger's sociology of institutional reproduction, and the Montreal case (explained below). Second, the mechanism of operational displacement through Walls, Berger, Willard, and Flett will be explained. Finally, the article proposes the continuing movement of *shub* as the Church's own renewal through the re-agentification of Jesus Christ within its witness. This threefold argument pursues one vantage on that displacement, combining historical-missiological, sociological, dogmatic, and epistemic registers. Among several vantages the wider diagnosis admits, a fuller treatment would also engage its anthropological-formational and civilizational registers.

Diagnosing the De-Jesus-ing of Mission

The first movement diagnoses the de-Jesus-ing of mission by tracing Andrew Walls's distinction between convert and proselyte into the Church's own institutional life, then locating its sociological mechanism through Peter Berger and its observational anchor in Montreal.

Walls's Diagnostic Grammar

The New Testament Church, Walls insists, deliberately rejected the proselyte model for the Gentile mission; conversion, not proselytism, was the pattern Jerusalem and Antioch settled on.

For Walls, the distinction between convert and proselyte is fundamental to understanding the history of Christian mission. A proselyte enters another people's religious world, adopting its

inherited cultural forms as the conditions of belonging. A convert, by contrast, is not transferred into a foreign religious civilization but experiences *shub*: the turning of what is already present within a culture toward Jesus Christ—a distinction that is “vital to Christian mission” (Walls, 2025, p. 19). Because the gospel is infinitely translatable, Christian expansion has always depended upon converts rather than proselytes. The Church’s missionary history is therefore not the replication of a single Christian culture but the continual translation of the gospel through the cultural resources of those who receive Christ.

Walls develops this convert/proselyte distinction primarily to illuminate the history of Christian mission crossing cultures. It also exposes an analogous danger within the Church’s own institutional life. The distinction is not only intercultural but intra-ecclesial. Christian witness has always expressed itself through diverse practices, including apologetics, evangelism, discipleship, and spiritual formation, yet these practices share one living subject: Jesus Christ. Their diversity is therefore not itself problematic. Fragmentation begins only when these practices become capable of reproducing themselves, independent of each other, apart from continual reference to Christ’s own agency. At that point, what began as distinct modes of participating in one conversion gradually hardens into self-sustaining institutional forms that cultivate allegiance to themselves as much as to Christ.

The distinction between convert and proselyte therefore names not merely two missionary outcomes but two fundamentally different ways in which Christian faith may be embodied and reproduced. Converts are continually turned toward Christ; proselytes are progressively conformed to settled forms. When applied to the Church’s own life, Walls’s grammar suggests that Christian witness becomes distorted whenever its ministries cultivate allegiance to their own settled forms rather than continual turning toward the living Christ. The question is not whether such a distortion is possible, but whether it has become structurally embedded within the contemporary practice of Christian witness.

Structural Proselytism and the De-Jesus-ing of Mission

Walls’s convert/proselyte distinction raises a further question: How does proselyte drift become embedded within the Church’s own institutional life? This article describes that process as structural proselytism. Christian ministries that begin as faithful participations in Christ’s mission necessarily develop institutions capable of preserving memory, training practitioners, and transmitting practices across generations. Such institutional development is neither accidental nor undesirable. The danger arises only when these structures acquire sufficient autonomy to reproduce themselves according to their own internal logic rather than through continual participation in Christ’s ongoing work. Structural proselytism therefore names not the existence of institutions but the gradual substitution of institutional reproduction for continuing conversion.

Berger’s sociology explains why this transition, once established, proves remarkably durable. Institutions do more than organize activity; they create plausibility structures that render particular patterns of belief and practice socially natural and self-evident (Berger, 1967, p. 45). Ministries therefore come to inhabit institutional worlds that continually reinforce their own assumptions, priorities, and standards of legitimacy. Fragmentation persists not merely because individuals emphasize different aspects of Christian witness, but because institutional life itself reproduces those differences. Berger thus provides the sociological mechanism by which Walls’s convert/proselyte distinction becomes an enduring feature of ecclesial life.

Structural proselytism thus provides the bridge between Walls's missionary grammar and the contemporary fragmentation of Christian witness. The question is no longer whether institutional reproduction occurs—it inevitably does—but whether such reproduction remains continually ordered by conversion toward Christ. Montreal provides an illuminating vantage point from which to observe this relationship between institutional continuity and continuing conversion.

Montreal: A Diagnostic Anchor

The Montreal case explained below is employed not as the evidential foundation of the argument but as its observational vantage point. The theoretical claims advanced through Walls and Berger stand independently of the case. Montreal is selected because it concentrates within a single metropolitan context the simultaneous erosion of one historic Christian plausibility structure and the emergence of new translated expressions of Christian faith. It therefore renders unusually visible the relationship between institutional reproduction and continuing conversion that the preceding sections have described conceptually.

Before the Quiet Revolution that began in 1960, the Roman Catholic Church exercised a pervasive influence over Quebec's educational, welfare, and cultural institutions (Gauvreau, 2000, pp. 803–805). Catholic Action's own reformers named this shift explicitly: a “spiritual collectivism” that relocated salvation in institutional and social reform rather than a believer's relation to Christ (Gauvreau, 2000, pp. 808, 814–815)—the same displacement this article traces from a different angle. For much of the twentieth century, Catholicism had provided what Berger would describe as the dominant plausibility structure through which Quebec society understood itself (Berger, 1967, p. 45). The Quiet Revolution rapidly transformed that institutional landscape through the deconfessionalization of education and social services, the expansion of the modern state, and the erosion of the Church's public authority. Historians widely regard this period as marking the decisive marginalization of Catholicism's social and cultural role within Quebec society (Gauvreau, 2000, pp. 828–833). Although Quebec remains culturally distinctive, Catholic affiliation and religious practice have continued to weaken across successive generations (Nault & Meunier, 2017, pp. 236–238, 240–241).

Read through Walls's convert/proselyte grammar, the Quebec experience directs attention beyond the decline of institutional Christianity itself to the mode by which Christian faith had been reproduced. The collapse of a plausibility structure does not in itself distinguish between conversion and proselytism. It does, however, expose the degree to which Christian identity had depended upon institutional continuity rather than continual conversion. Montreal therefore renders visible the distinction developed in the preceding sections: institutional reproduction can preserve Christian forms across generations, yet only *shub* continually turns persons and cultures toward Christ. The coexistence of declining historic Catholicism and newly translated immigrant Christian communities within the same city sharpens that contrast. This coexistence illustrates Walls's central insight that Christianity endures not by preserving a single Christian civilization but by continually engendering “new Christian keynotes” as the gospel is translated into new cultural worlds (Walls, 2025, p. 130).

Montreal is therefore significant not because it proves the argument, but because it renders unusually visible the relationship between institutional reproduction and continuing conversion. The dynamics observed there are not uniquely Québécois. They illuminate a wider question that turns from diagnosis to mechanism: How does Christ remain conceptually central while becoming operationally displaced within Christian witness?

Mechanism: Operational Displacement

The second movement explains the operational displacement of Christ's agency mechanically, tracing how Walls's operational maps become stabilized by Berger's plausibility structures, reoriented epistemically by Willard's account of Christ as operational reality, and rendered theologically decisive by Flett's account of mission's acting subject.

Operational Maps and the Direction of Conversion

Walls locates Christian conversion within the dynamics of worldview. A worldview is a “mental map of the universe” through which individuals and communities interpret reality, locate themselves within it, and determine how to act (Walls, 2025, pp. 75–76). These maps are not merely repositories of belief but operational systems that organize relationships, obligations, sources of authority, places of danger, and means of protection. Consequently, what matters is not only what a worldview contains but the relative operational importance assigned to its various elements (Walls, 2025, pp. 76–77).

For this reason, Walls distinguishes conceptual from operational importance. A community may conceptually affirm God as creator and ruler of the universe while operationally giving far greater attention to ancestors, territorial spirits, or other powers that are believed to govern everyday life (Walls, 2025, p. 77). The distinction is not limited to so-called primal religions. Christians likewise construct operational maps by selectively appropriating the theological resources available to them. There is therefore no single abstract “Christian worldview” but in fact many Christian worldviews sharing common Christian convictions while continuing to reflect the cultural worlds from which they arise (Walls, 2025, pp. 77–78).

Conversion does not replace one worldview with another. Rather, it revises an existing operational map. “The past has to be converted,” Walls writes; “conversion means turning—turning what is already there toward Christ. It is less about content than about direction” (Walls, 2025, p. 79). Christian conversion therefore consists not in abandoning one's past but in progressively reordering inherited assumptions, relationships, and practices under the lordship of Christ (Walls, 2025, pp. 78–81).

This distinction between replacement and revision supplies the mechanism underlying the present argument. The de-Jesus-ing of mission does not begin when Christian ministries cease to confess Christ conceptually, but when the operational maps by which they function acquire a logic increasingly independent of his continuing agency. The related question is therefore not simply what Christian ministries say about Jesus, but what—or who—governs their operative life. Walls develops this distinction to explain the conversion of persons and cultures. The following sections propose that it also illuminates the operational life of a church's own ministries.

Plausibility Structures and the Stabilization of Operational Maps

Walls explains how operational maps are formed and revised through conversion. Berger explains why those maps, once socially embodied, become remarkably resistant to revision. Human beings do not sustain worldviews by private conviction alone but within social worlds that continually reinforce what is taken to be natural, credible, and self-evident. Berger describes these socially maintained worlds as plausibility structures: institutional and communal arrangements that make particular understandings of reality appear not merely possible but obvious (Berger, 1967, pp. 38–

60). Operational maps therefore become durable not simply because individuals believe them but because they are continually reproduced through shared practices, institutions, and communities.

This sociological insight extends the preceding discussion. If Walls explains why conversion consists in the continual revision of operational maps, Berger explains why such revision is never complete. Every successful Christian movement eventually develops institutions capable of preserving memory, transmitting practice, and training successive generations. Such institutional development is not itself problematic. Indeed, without it the Church could not sustain its witness historically. The difficulty arises when institutional continuity gradually acquires greater operational importance than the continuing conversion it originally existed to serve. What began as participation in Christ's mission increasingly becomes participation in the institutional world that has grown around that mission.

The result is what was described earlier as structural proselytism. Operational maps no longer belong merely to individual Christians but become embedded within institutional worlds that define what faithful ministry is expected to look like. Apologetics, evangelism, discipleship, and spiritual formation each cultivates its own operational assumptions, educational pathways, professional communities, and criteria of success. These are sustained not only by theological conviction but by the plausibility structures each ministry has developed around itself. Consequently, fragmentation persists not because a church consciously rejects Christ but because each ministry inhabits a social world that continually reproduces its own operational logic.

Berger's earlier reflections deepen this diagnosis. The Christian life requires not only an exodus from the false securities offered by the surrounding culture but also a continual exodus from every religious world that tempts believers to mistake institutional security for living dependence upon Christ (Berger, 1961, p. 180). The danger is therefore not simply secularization but ecclesial domestication. Christian institutions may continue to confess Christ while functioning within plausibility structures that subtly relocate operational authority from Christ's continuing agency to the settled practices of the institution itself. Operational displacement thus persists because institutional worlds naturally reinforce the assumptions upon which they themselves depend.

Six years later, however, Berger's own retraction of the uniqueness of a living dependence on Christ supplies a striking illustration of the same displacement at the level of theological method itself. He declared the very distinction between Christian faith and religion "quite inadmissible," insisting that "in any empirical discipline the 'Christian faith' is simply another case of the phenomenon 'religion'" (Berger, 1967, p. 179). What began as participation in a christological standpoint had, within his own career, been absorbed into the settled methodological assumptions of sociological analysis—Christ had been retained as an object of study, no longer received as the standpoint from which study proceeds.

Christ as Operational Reality

Dallas Willard provides the epistemological register of the argument: "In practical terms, reality is what you can rely on" (Willard, 2009, p. 45). The de-Jesus-ing of mission therefore involves more than a defective theology of ministry; it reflects an epistemic distortion. Ministries may continue to speak truthfully about Christ while gradually ceasing to rely upon him as the operative reality that governs their life and practice.

Willard later describes Christ as “a self-authenticating reality beyond the myriad social cocoons” (Willard, 2009, p. 146). Christ's reality is therefore neither constituted by institutional recognition nor validated by methodological success. Rather, Christian witness continually receives its own reality from his living presence and action. What is more important for ministries is not simply confessing Christ faithfully but remaining practically dependent upon him.

When this order is reversed, operational displacement becomes an epistemic inversion. Christ remains the confessed center of Christian witness while practical trust shifts toward the institutional systems, methods, and practices developed in his name. Apologetics increasingly relies upon the cogency of its arguments, evangelism upon the effectiveness of its methods, discipleship upon the quality of its programs, and spiritual formation upon the reliability of its practices. None of these is illegitimate. The distortion arises when confidence gradually rests in these operational logics rather than in Christ himself.

The de-Jesus-ing of mission therefore represents more than institutional fragmentation. Ministries continue to speak truthfully about Jesus while increasingly administering claims about him rather than participating in his continuing agency. The loss is not primarily doctrinal but relational: Christ remains the content of Christian witness while ceasing to function as its operational reality.

Mission's Acting Subject

The preceding discussion has argued that the de-Jesus-ing of mission is not primarily a matter of doctrinal error but of operational displacement. John Flett's theology of mission reveals why this operational shift is ultimately christological. Flett argues that mission derives neither from the Church nor from its cultural effectiveness but from the continuing agency of the living Christ. Echoing Karl Hartenstein's dictum, he insists: “Mission stands and falls with the reality and truth of the living Christ, with his word and with his mission. If he is there—and he is there—mission will be there” (Flett, 2010, p. 131, quoting Hartenstein, 1934, p. 217). Flett does not receive Hartenstein's formula uncritically. He traces how the *missio Dei* concept itself first emerged from a negotiated settlement in which Barth's trinitarian dialectic was fused, at Hartenstein's hands, with a *Volkstum* missiology that made national and racial community co-constitutive of the Church alongside confession (Flett, 2010, pp. 80–135). Flett's own argument recovers the dogmatic core of “*missio Dei*” by turning it back toward Christ's agency alone—a theological instance, in miniature, of the very *shub* this article traces at the level of ecclesial practice. Even the Church's inherited categories require continuing conversion. Mission is therefore not first an activity the Church undertakes but the Church's participation in Christ's own mission.

For this reason, Flett warns that when mission becomes grounded in “contingent human capacity” it inevitably becomes “derivative of a preexisting institution, and its necessity relative to the social, cultural, political, and economic capital of that institution” (Flett, 2010, p. 225). This drift into institutional dependency is precisely the trajectory described in the preceding sections. Walls has shown how operational maps may diverge from conceptual confession; Berger has explained how those maps become socially stabilized through institutional reproduction; Willard has demonstrated how practical reliance shifts from Christ to operational systems. Flett now exposes the theological significance of that progression. Mission has ceased to proceed from Christ as its living subject and has instead become mediated through institutional forms that claim to represent him.

Operational displacement is therefore not merely an organizational deficiency or an epistemic failure. It is a christological inversion. Jesus remains the proclaimed object of Christian ministry while no longer functioning as its operative subject. The de-Jesus-ing of mission is complete precisely at this point. If the de-Jesus-ing of mission consists in the operational displacement of Christ's agency, its renewal cannot consist merely in institutional reform or methodological refinement. Renewal requires the continual turning of the Church's operational life toward Christ himself. It is to this constructive recovery of conversion as the re-agentification of Jesus Christ that the discussion now turns.

Constructive Turn: Conversion as Re-Agentification of Jesus Christ

The third movement proposes the Church's renewal as the re-agentification of Jesus Christ, tracing how the continual turning of *shub* restores the Church's ministries to their proper unity in Christ and, finally, to his renewed operative primacy.

Shub Turns Home

Walls's account of conversion offers more than a diagnosis of missionary history; it provides the Church's own pattern of renewal. If *shub* is the continual turning of what is already present toward Christ, then the Church's ministries remain perpetually subject to that same turning. Conversion is not exhausted in the Church's first reception of the gospel but continues wherever inherited practices, institutions, and traditions are repeatedly reoriented toward the living Christ. The Church is therefore not only the agent of *shub*; it also remains one of its continual recipients.

Walls further observes that Christian conversion unfolds across generations rather than within a single historical moment (Walls, 2025, pp. 18, 130). No culture, and therefore no ecclesial tradition, is converted once for all. Every generation receives the Church's inherited institutions anew, not as settled achievements to preserve but as realities to be continually turned toward Christ. This continuing conversion also grounds the Church's own theological discernment. Faithful reflection is not an autonomous methodological exercise but an expression of the Church's ongoing return to Christ's living agency.

This reflexive movement answers the de-Jesus-ing of mission. Fragmentation arises not because apologetics, evangelism, discipleship, and spiritual formation exist as distinct practices, but because they become capable of reproducing themselves apart from Christ's continuing agency. Their renewal therefore requires neither abandonment nor replacement but continuing conversion. Wherever dependence on Christ's agency is renewed, *shub* turns home: The Church itself undergoes the same conversion it proclaims to the world.

One Christ, Four Participations

If Christ once again becomes the operative subject of Christian witness, the ministries of apologetics, evangelism, discipleship, and spiritual formation do not disappear; they recover their proper relation to one another. Their unity is not achieved by structural integration or methodological coordination but by their common participation in Christ's continuing agency. Each retains its distinct vocation precisely because each participates in a different aspect of the one mission of Christ. Diversity therefore ceases to be fragmentation whenever Christ remains the living subject from whom every ministry continually receives its direction and life.

Apologetics, evangelism, discipleship, and spiritual formation are consequently renewed not by acquiring new methods but by recovering their proper dependence upon Christ. Apologetics removes obstacles to knowing Christ as reality. Evangelism participates in Christ's continuing summons to repentance and faith. Discipleship accompanies Christ's continuing work of conforming his people to himself. Spiritual formation cultivates responsive life with the risen Christ through the Spirit. Their practices remain irreducibly distinct, yet each continually receives its coherence from the same living Lord.

Re-Agentification as the Fruit of Shub

Re-agentification names the recovery of Christ's operative primacy as the answer to the de-Jesus-ing of mission. If the de-Jesus-ing is the operational displacement of Christ's continuing agency, re-agentification is the restoration of the Church's practical participation in the continuing agency of Christ. That restoration does not introduce a new ministry, nor does it propose a comprehensive framework by which existing ministries might be coordinated. It describes what occurs whenever the Church's continuing *shub* restores Christ to his operative primacy.

This "re-Jesus-ing" is neither episodic nor complete. Because every generation inherits institutions, practices, and traditions, every generation must also submit them anew to conversion toward Christ. The Church therefore remains not only the bearer of mission but one of mission's continual recipients. Re-agentification is simply the contemporary name for that continuing ecclesial conversion.

The de-Jesus-ing of mission is overcome not when the Church becomes less diverse, but when its diversity once again participates in the continuing agency of the risen Christ. Institutions remain; ministries remain; traditions remain. What changes is their operative center. Christian witness becomes coherent again because Jesus Christ once more functions not merely as its confessed object but as its living subject.

Missiological Implications and Conclusion

Having traced the de-Jesus-ing of mission through diagnosis, mechanism, and remedy, the article closes by drawing out its implications for the task of missiology before concluding.

The De-Jesus-ing of Mission and the Task of Missiology

This article's argument invites a reconsideration of missiology's primary task. Contemporary discussions on the challenges of secularization, contextualization, ecclesial decline, and cultural translation become properly intelligible only when viewed through a prior question of agency: Does Christian witness continue to proceed from the living agency of Jesus Christ?

The de-Jesus-ing of mission identifies a distortion that conventional missiological categories often overlook. The problem is not the emergence of specialized ministries nor the differentiation of Christian practices. Throughout its history the Church has continually generated new forms of witness as the gospel entered new cultures. The decisive question is whether these forms remain participations in Christ's continuing mission or gradually become self-reproducing institutional worlds whose operative logic no longer depends upon his present agency.

This question reframes the work of missiology itself. Missiology must attend not only to the Church's witness before the world but also to the Church's continual conversion toward Christ. The missionary question is therefore not exhausted by how faithfully the gospel is translated into

new cultures but extends to whether the Church's own inherited practices remain continually turned toward the One whose mission they serve. Wherever that turning ceases, operational displacement begins. Wherever the turning continues, Christian witness retains its unity amid legitimate diversity.

The vantage points pursued in this article do not exhaust the registers at which the de-Jesus-ing of mission can be diagnosed. Structural-sociological, anthropological-formatational, and civilizational accounts of the same displacement remain to be drawn out elsewhere; each would sharpen, without altering, this article's argument.

Conclusion

The contemporary fragmentation of Christian witness is more fundamentally christological than organizational. The de-Jesus-ing of mission names the gradual operational displacement of Jesus Christ from the living subject of the Church's witness to the object increasingly administered within its ministries. The problem is therefore not specialization itself but the loss of Christ's operative primacy within the Church's own practices.

Andrew Walls's grammar of *shub* provides both the diagnosis and the remedy. If conversion is the continual turning of what is already there toward Christ, then the Church's own ministries remain perpetually subject to that same turning. Apologetics, evangelism, discipleship, and spiritual formation need not become less diverse; they must remain continually converted. Re-agentification simply names the recovery of Christ's continuing agency within those diverse practices. This article is itself an exercise in theorizing about Christ's agency, and any study of this kind risks performing the very displacement it diagnoses if analysis substitutes for encounter. The article's adequacy is finally tested not only by its conceptual coherence but by whether or not it returns its readers, and its author, to participation in the continuing conversion it describes.

The future coherence of Christian witness will therefore depend less upon new structures, better coordination, or more refined methodologies than upon the Church's willingness to undergo its own continuing conversion. Paul Hiebert names the same discernment missiologically: "Our central task is not to communicate a message but to introduce people to that person, Jesus Christ" (Hiebert, 1999, p. 116). Wherever *shub* turns home, Christ remains not merely the content of the Church's proclamation but the living subject of its mission.

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