

Whole and Reconciled

Gospel, Church, and Mission
in a Fractured World

Al Tizon



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I dedicate this book to Tomas Alex Tizon, my Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist brother, whose untimely death in March 2017 has left what feels like a permanent void in my life. After reading one of his brilliant pieces, I paid him a compliment, saying that I wished I could write like him, to which he replied, “Brother, I may be a good writer, but you have something to write about.”

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Foreword

A bomb blast here. Summary executions there. Children recruited as soldiers. Students murdered at school. Wars and rumors of war. Violence in streets and in homes. While the weapons industry rules supreme, vulnerable people are forced to leave behind their home and land in search of safety, often finding nothing but rejection and further oppression. The current global scene is not unlike the one faced by the first followers of Jesus.

As Roman armies plundered conquered lands and people were taxed into grinding poverty, children, women, and men were forced to wander in search of safe haven. Vulnerable migrants traversed deserts, braved oceans, and were thrown together in unlikely mixes in haphazard cities. Anyone who dared to question the system was silenced. All this in the name of the Pax Romana, a repressed “peace” pounded precariously together by cross-nails.

In the midst of that reality, Jesus declared to his fear-filled disciples as he was preparing to return to the Father, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid” (John 14:27).

The peace of Christ, Pax Christi, contrasted starkly with imperial “peace.” It was a peace brokered not by weaponry or economic oppression but by self-giving love. Through his life, death, resurrection, and loving rule, Christ embodied, made, and proclaimed true peace (Eph. 2). It was into this subversive peacemaking endeavor that Jesus called his followers. “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (John 20:21)—as peacemakers, reconcilers, wall-breakers, bridge-builders, and mediators in a fractured and violent world.

This calling is surely not new to the readers of this book. Since you’ve chosen this title among the many out there, you’re surely acquainted with,

or at least interested in exploring, the implications of this calling for your understanding and engagement with the gospel, church, and mission. You will not be disappointed!

What my dear friend Al manages in this deeply theological and creatively practical book is exactly what he sets out to do. Through solid biblical reflection and making heard the voices of followers of Jesus from around the world, he faces the bad news of colonialism, racism, Christendom, the false gospels of hate, prosperity, comfort, and empire, and the reduced gospels of personal salvation or social liberation, with the good news of God's reign of *shalom* and whole, healthy relations. In doing so, he provokes a hard reset in our understanding of the church and its mission. Broken and in constant need of confession, repentance, lament, and forgiveness for their complicity in the bad news, the people of the Triune God are called to wage reconciliation through whole-life evangelism, peacemaking, and stewardship. This book helps us see what that looks like in our everyday lives.

When tempted to respond to violence with further violence, to legitimize repression with religious veneers, to nourish conflict by denying the full humanity of the "other," followers of Christ, the Reconciler, moved by the Spirit of Truth, the Comforter, contribute to the Creator's purposes in the world when we wage reconciliation through all we are, say, and do as a community.

Thank you, Al, for helping us see this more clearly! And thanks be to God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of whole reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18)!

Ruth Padilla DeBorst

Santo Domingo de Heredia, Costa Rica

Preface

This book reflects my attempt to make sense of God’s mission as I have understood it via my messy lecture notes, personal experiences, and big ideas that have swirled around in my brain for far too long. It took about four years to write, and it completely consumed me. I am tired. To be honest, I thought it was going to be easier.

I set out to provide a fresh, updated volume on holistic ministry, a subject that has come to define “my thing,” my life’s purpose. By “fresh and updated,” I mean that I wanted to enrich the vision of holistic ministry by developing the crucial practice of reconciliation, which in my estimation needed more missiological attention. I thought I could simply add reconciliation to my already-intact theology of the whole gospel. But as the study progressed, the bigness of reconciliation would not allow me to treat it as a mere addition. It in fact began to reshape, revise, and redefine my very understanding of holistic ministry. Throughout the writing of this book, I increasingly asked myself, How can we claim to be holistic if we continue to see God’s desire to reconcile all things in Christ as optional to our practice of ministry in the world? So *Whole*, the one-word title I had in mind at the beginning, became *Whole and Reconciled*.

The world needs reconciliation—a contender for the understatement of the century! The world is broken, more broken in fact than ever before. Mass shootings. Civil wars. Religious wars. Racism. Genocide. Human trafficking. Grinding poverty. The threat of nuclear annihilation. The rise of dictators. The refugee crisis. Terrorism. Explosions in airports, restaurants, churches, synagogues, mosques, and concert halls. Hatred between peoples has intensified, and our technological ingenuity has not only enabled us to act on our hatred in unprecedented ways but also enabled us to watch the animosity,

cruelty, and self-destruction in HD before our very eyes. We encounter evil acts so regularly that we have become numb to them.

I would not be a gospel minister/missionary/scholar/activist/pastor/leader if I did not believe that the church, at its best, has an important role to play in the healing of hearts and nations. God desires to heal, mend, and make whole again the very good world that God created, and humanity desperately needs to know this. Enter the church, which has good news to show and tell. Paul summed up God's project best when he revealed that in Christ, "all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross" (Col. 1:19–20). We engage in holistic mission when we participate with God in putting the world back together in Jesus Christ: reconciliation as mission.

I need to thank some people. When I began this project, I served on the faculty of Palmer Theological Seminary of Eastern University and as president of Evangelicals for Social Action near Philadelphia. During that time, I had the privilege of working alongside Dr. Ronald J. Sider. Ron has been my primary model of Christian discipleship since college. I have done my best to follow Ron as Ron has followed Christ (1 Cor. 11:1). What an incredible honor, then, that he was willing to read and provide feedback on rough drafts of chapters as I finished them, as well as to write an afterword. If this book channels the theology of Ron Sider in some form, then it will have been worth the effort. Having said that, I own any and all heresies that may be found here.

Stefanie Wilson, a Palmer graduate who theologizes beyond her years, also slogged through awful rough drafts of chapters and provided invaluable input. As Ron's veteran holistic ministry insights informed the process, Stefanie's Millennial perspective made sure that the book will also speak to the next generation of reflective practitioners. A cofounder of a multiethnic church with her husband, Steve, in Coatesville, Pennsylvania, Stefanie's on-the-ground input on the practice of reconciliation was invaluable to the writing of this book. Thanks, Stefanie, for keeping me on track, not only with your insights but also with your periodic check-ins.

In the middle of this endeavor, I changed jobs. In my mind, at that point I had a legitimate reason to abandon the project; for part of its appeal, to be honest, was to write the next book on holistic ministry as president of Evangelicals for Social Action and thereby build on Ron's seminal work on the subject. As it has turned out, however, my new role as executive minister of Serve Globally (SG), the international ministries of the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC), has required drawing from all my holistic ministry experiences. I therefore express sincere gratitude to my denominational colleagues, as well

as to the faculty members at North Park Theological Seminary, for taking on someone with the baggage of an unfinished book.

I especially need to thank the SG office staff, whom I essentially forced to serve as an ad hoc advisory board to this project. I set up a monthly theological reflection time, shamelessly using my chapters as discussion starters. The input they gave me improved this book greatly. The SG team is large, so I won't name each person here. However, I do need to single out Chrissy Palmerlee, who helped me draft the discussion questions at the end of each chapter. To the entire SG team, please know how much I appreciate the inspiration each of you were to me as I chipped away at this book. SG's missionary personnel and ministry partners serving in over fifty countries also inspired this project, whether they know it or not, just by living out the whole and reconciled mission together, across cultures and around the world.

My good and brilliant friend Ruth Padilla DeBorst agreed to write the foreword, for which I am extremely grateful. Among other things, Ruth leads the networking team of the International Fellowship for Mission as Transformation (INFEMIT), of which I have been a part. We have been meeting monthly by Skype and annually in person as a team now for the past ten years and counting. These colleagues from all over the world keep me going: they regularly remind me that other holistic scholar-practitioners exist in the world. Thank you for existing, friends and partners, and thank you for leading us, Ruth. You are the global community of like-minded followers of Jesus through which I find my sustenance.

Speaking of sustenance, my deeply spiritual, but salt-of-the-earth friend Willette Burgie-Bryant has been nourishing my soul for years now, and I just need to thank her. There is a cost to taking on a project like this, especially when it is on top of a ridiculously busy schedule that includes Platinum Medallion-worthy travel on Delta Airlines. She has nicknamed me "Turbo," and from a distance she checks in on me, prays for me, encourages me, and exhorts me to slow down occasionally and breathe in the Spirit of God who loves me. Thanks for being *that* voice, Willette. When I listen to you (which is not always, to my detriment), I find myself in a better place.

Bob Hosack, Eric Salo, and the rest of the editorial staff at Baker Academic, thank you for essentially taking a lump of clay called a rough draft and painstakingly molding it into something readable. May your gamble on this project result in genuine service to the global church-in-mission. And yes, may you sell hundreds and thousands of copies!

I know at least five buyers: my wife, Janice, and our four children, Candace, Christian, Corrie, and Zoey. (Actually, I will likely buy them copies.) Thank you, Janice, for keeping it real for me. You see, book writing involves no small

amount of ego. There, I said it: authors are egotistical. We think “we’re all that” just because we wrote a book or two. Well, Janice brings this particular egomaniac down to earth, deflates his head, and reminds him that words don’t amount to much if they do not take on flesh and serve people—especially the poor, oppressed, and marginalized. She does this not by preaching but by living out her call as a nurse practitioner at Lawndale Christian Health Center, located in the heart of the city of Chicago. Out among the sick, the addicted, and the poor, she lives what I think and write about and sometimes practice. She reminds me by her life that if our words, even published ones, do not ultimately imitate the Word made flesh, then, well, they’re just words. Thank you, Janice, for your partnership in real life and concrete ministry. I love you. As for our kids, what an inspiration they are as they forge their own respective journeys of creative life and meaningful service in the world. As I said to you with my other books, you don’t have to read this one either: just own a copy and be proud of your dad.

The photograph on the cover of this book shows Sarah Nyatuach Muon, a deaconess in the Evangelical Covenant Church of South Sudan and Ethiopia, blessing a group of visitors, including the author, as we left her village. May her outstretched hand bless all who read this book.

Solomon wrote, “Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh” (Eccles. 12:12). I do not interpret this as, “So don’t make books, and don’t study.” Rather, I view scholarship as an all-consuming task, which, if done in the Spirit, can truly contribute to the inspiration of the church, the transformation of the world, and the glory of God. In that light, what’s a little weariness?

Introduction

I wish that the words “gospel,” “church,” and “mission” had no need of additional adjectives to convey their compelling truths. I wish that when outsiders heard these words, they would imagine a community of ordinary but loving people who shine the light of God in a darkened world (Matt. 5:16). I wish these words would evoke an image of people who, by virtue of their claim to follow a revolutionary named Jesus, are living out peace, justice, freedom, and love for the good of the community and are announcing God’s message of hope for a better world. I wish.

That “gospel,” “church,” and “mission” do not conjure up these kinds of images, that many of these words represent quite the opposite—a community marred by a colonial past, along with an intolerant, paternalistic, even scandalous reputation in the present—is profoundly disturbing. Although these awful descriptors do not tell the whole story, we as Christians would be foolish to become too defensive; for an honest critique of the church’s past (and present, for that matter) would uncover a multitude of tragic sins in need of radical forgiveness.¹ So much evil has been done in the name of Jesus that, for some, the words “gospel,” “church,” and “mission” are beyond redemption. For those, however, who can see through (not past) the evil side of Christian history, for those who continue to take biblical teaching seriously, for those who can still see the good in the gospel, the relevance of the church, and the necessity of mission, it is not optional or desirable to abandon these words.

Because of the church’s less-than-shiny witness, these words need something, though—perhaps an adjective such as “whole”—to help restore their

1. See Mae Cannon, Lisa Sharon Harper, Troy Jackson, and Soong-Chan Rah, *Forgive Us: Confessions of a Compromised Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), which courageously takes on the sins of the church, past and present.

reputation or at least enable us to have intelligent, nondefensive conversations about God and God's mission. Perhaps the language of "whole" can help recover the beauty and power of the truth that God so loved the world that Jesus pitched his tent among us to communicate that love personally and profoundly (John 1:14; 3:16–17). If, for example, the Lausanne Movement's slogan, "the whole church taking the whole gospel to the whole world," helps God's people embrace both evangelism and justice, then by all means let us use "whole" to the fullest.² "The divided church taking half the gospel to select parts of the world" may be more accurate, but it is not a very compelling slogan! Nor does it convey where we want to stay.

The New Whole in Holistic Mission

Those in touch with the debates in the last century over the nature of the Christian mission know that the language of "whole" has indeed been used at various times precisely to recover the glory of gospel, church, and mission. In chapter 9 I briefly sketch that history. For now, let me simply state my growing sense of the need to rethink what it means to engage in holistic mission, of the need for a new kind of whole, which is the impetus for this book.

We find ourselves living amid massive global changes, and contrary to the notion that holistic mission was forever settled and defined by the raging debates of the last hundred years concerning the relationship between evangelism and social concern, it is a dynamic reality that needs fresh formulations according to an ever-changing world. Indeed, a church that seeks to share good news amid increasingly volatile times faces new missional challenges.

In our diversifying, globalizing, and increasingly fracturing world, I have found it vitally important to consider the ministry of reconciliation as central to a contemporary understanding and practice of mission. I join others who have been urging the church to see reconciliation as the necessary paradigm of mission in the age of unprecedented global fragmentation. Since the turn of the twenty-first century, reconciliation has received renewed attention among missiologists and missionaries. After describing the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural consequences of colonialism, as

2. This is the slogan of the Lausanne Movement. For a detailed theology behind the slogan, see Theology Working Group, "The Whole Church Taking the Whole Gospel to the Whole World," Lausanne Movement, last modified June 1, 2010, <http://www.lausanne.org/content/twg-three-wholes>.

well as the ubiquitous, disorienting effects of globalization (more on these global realities in part 1), Robert Schreiter, one of the first among those who can be called reconciliation theologians, writes, “It is out of this miasma of violence and division that the theme of reconciliation began to surface as a compelling response to all that was happening in terms of mission.” To show that reconciliation is emerging as a paradigm of mission for the twenty-first century, he cites the British and Irish Association of Mission Studies (2002), the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches (2005), the International Association of Mission Studies (2008), and the Lausanne Movement (2010), all of which took up the theme in their respective annual meetings.³

I write this book, in part, simply to applaud this development and to reinforce the efforts of those who have seen the crucial importance of reconciliation as a way to think and do mission in today’s world. I seek to explore the depths of reconciliation from my theological location—namely, as an Asian American Christian within the context of the global evangelical journey toward holistic mission—and thus hopefully add to the conversation. Historically, amid the infamous fundamentalist-modernist split in North American Protestantism, holistic mission has referred to efforts on the part of a group of courageous evangelicals who dared to challenge a myopic evangelism-only missiology.⁴ Their efforts sought to reintegrate social justice into the evangelical missionary agenda, to make whole again the mission of the church, especially but not exclusively among evangelicals around the world.

I see a great need to advance the meaning of holistic mission, to build on the evangelism and social justice affirmation, by understanding the ministry of reconciliation as the new whole in (w)holistic mission. In the age of intensified conflict on virtually every level, it can no longer be just about putting word and deed back together again (though it will take ongoing effort on the part of the church to keep them together); holistic mission also needs to be about joining God in *putting the world back together* again. It needs to be about participating with God in the healing of the nations.

3. Robert Schreiter, “The Emergence of Reconciliation as a Paradigm of Mission,” in *Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation*, ed. Robert Schreiter and Knud Jørgensen (Oxford: Regnum, 2013), 11–12. See also his definition of reconciliation in “Reconciliation,” in *Dictionary of Mission*, ed. Karl Müller, Theo Sundermeier, Stephen B. Bevans, and Richard H. Bliese (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 381.

4. For an overview of this split as background for the development of holistic mission among evangelicals, see my chapter “Precursors and Tensions in Holistic Mission: An Historical Overview,” in *Holistic Mission: God’s Plan for God’s People*, ed. Brian Woolnough and Wonsuk Ma (Oxford: Regnum, 2010), 61–75.

Reconciliation: What Is It?

From a biblical perspective, reconciliation flows out of God’s big vision to transform—that is, mend, heal, restore, renew, re-create, and make whole—the world and everyone in it. Colossians 1:19–20 beautifully sums up God’s agenda: “For in [Christ] all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.”

God’s vision of reconciliation only makes sense in light of the biblical story of creation and fall, when in the beginning God created *shalom*—that is, a social order wherein perfect harmony existed between the Creator, creature, and ecosystem—but also when that *shalom* was shattered by sin (Gen. 1–3). Theologically, then, reconciliation means God’s initiative to restore wholeness to a shattered creation. The ministry of reconciliation to which God has called the church (2 Cor. 5:18–20), therefore, participates in God’s big vision to reconcile all things in Christ. Brenda Salter McNeil defines “reconciliation” as “an ongoing spiritual process involving forgiveness, repentance and justice that restores broken relationships and systems to reflect God’s original intention for all creation to flourish.”⁵

We participate in God’s vision of reconciliation as ambassadors. Emmanuel Katongole and Chris Rice explain what that means: “An ambassador is a representative who bears someone else’s message in their absence. Ambassadors live in foreign countries, which they never really call home. Living within a country other than their own, their practices, loyalties, national interests and even their accent appear strange to the citizens of those countries where they are posted. So it is with Christ’s ambassadors of reconciliation inside the world’s brokenness.”⁶ Practically, as Christ’s ambassadors, our ministry of reconciliation includes the hard work of overcoming distrust, misunderstanding, bitterness, and even hatred between deeply conflicted parties in the power of the gospel. Reconciliation as God’s way of redeeming creation and the church’s way of representing Jesus Christ, bringing a message of peace to a broken world, is clearly missiological at the core.

As we shall see, reconciliation has social, ecclesial, cultural, ethnic, and political implications, but any biblical treatment of this ministry sees the reuniting of humanity to God as the basis of all other levels of reconciliation. This vertical reconciliation between God and humanity in the death

5. Brenda Salter McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation: Moving Communities into Unity, Wholeness and Justice* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2015), 22.

6. Emmanuel Katongole and Chris Rice, *Reconciling All Things: A Christian Vision for Justice, Peace, and Healing* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2008), 51–52.

and resurrection of Christ leads (or should lead) to horizontal reconciliation between warring factions within the human family. As the Cape Town Commitment plainly states, “Reconciliation to God is inseparable from reconciliation to one another.”⁷

I am convinced that in today’s fractured and fracturing world, if the church does not operationalize this understanding of reconciliation, then it cannot claim to be engaged in holistic mission. The whole church, which desires to bear witness to the whole gospel throughout the whole world, therefore needs to be gripped anew by the vision of reconciliation in Christ. It needs to discover the compelling image of being God’s reconciled and reconciling people, modeling for a fractured world the power of God to mend, heal, and make whole even the most intense of enmities. For what does it mean to be the whole church engaged in God’s whole mission if it does not include the goal of reconciliation between men and women, young and old, rich and poor, and black, white, and brown in a broken world?

Objections to Reconciliation as a Paradigm of Mission

Valid objections have been raised against reconciliation as a paradigm for mission today. On a conceptual level, as McNeil avers, “one cannot reconcile those who have never enjoyed conciliatory relationship in the first place.”⁸ In other words, if reconciliation means bringing back together the broken pieces of what was once whole, then in some cases (perhaps most cases), what exactly needs reconciling in a relationship that has never enjoyed any sense of oneness? There has not been a time, for example, in the history of black-white relations in the US that could be considered healthy and whole. What would the ministry of reconciliation look like in that context? The same can be asked by the formerly colonized around the world.

A sociological objection follows: when initiated by the church in power, the ministry of reconciliation and its kissing cousin, the multiethnic church movement, can represent yet another project of the dominant class conducted primarily to appease their collective Christian conscience. Their efforts may be sincere, evoked by a genuine move of the Spirit; but when an unwillingness to change power dynamics and racist structures accompanies the efforts, these efforts can amount to nothing more than tokenism. Those on the wrong end of injustice—the poor, oppressed, and marginalized—have valid reason to

7. Lausanne Movement, “The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action,” January 25, 2011, <https://www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment>.

8. McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation*, 20.

interpret these reconciliation efforts “as assimilation, appeasement, a passive peace, a unity without cost, and maintaining power with only cosmetic changes.”⁹ Let us be reconciled . . . as long as you become one of us at the end of the process!

We must also raise a missiological objection—namely, whether the church has the right to practice reconciliation. Based on its historical collusion with colonialism and participation in other human-rights abuses through the ages, has the church disqualified itself? Emily Choge asks it this way: “What role does the church have as a minister of reconciliation in situations where it has been silent, or worse still, where it has been part of the oppressive system?”¹⁰ Without sincere repentance on the part of the Western church, the objection—even outrage—of the formerly colonized toward any reconciliation efforts coming from the West would be understandable. Though historically missionaries have rarely repented, according to Choge, to humble themselves, confess their sins, and ask their victims for forgiveness would carry “a powerful message.”¹¹ As we shall see in chapter 11, the possibility of reconciliation depends on the genuine repentance of those who have had the upper hand in situations of oppression.

These objections—conceptual, sociological, and missiological—are valid and must be taken seriously. However, I ultimately agree with McNeil, who writes, “Since reconciliation is a biblical concept that is rooted in and modeled by the reconciling work of Jesus, I have chosen to reclaim the term instead of replacing it. I want to redeem it and recover its holistic, mysterious and profoundly biblical meaning.”¹² For the most part, these objections come from the historically oppressed who are tired of words with no actions to back them up. They are ultimately not against reconciliation, but their voices need to lead the way; for it is their voices that will “set free the word *reconciliation* to shock and overcome us by its power!”¹³

Whole and Reconciled

The obvious key words for this book are “whole” and “reconciled,” as we seek to advance holistic mission by way of the ministry of reconciliation. Part 1

9. Allen Aubrey Boesak and Curtiss Paul DeYoung, *Radical Reconciliation: Beyond Political Pietism and Christian Quietism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016), 10.

10. Emily Choge, “Reconciliation,” in *Dictionary of Mission Theology: Evangelical Foundations*, ed. John Corrie (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 330.

11. Choge, “Reconciliation,” 330.

12. McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation*, 22.

13. Boesak and DeYoung, *Radical Reconciliation*, 11.

analyzes the “whole world”—that is, it looks closely at significant realities today—globalization, post-Christendom, and postcolonialism—that pose both challenge and opportunity for the church-in-mission. Part 2 asks anew, “What is the gospel?” in the context of the new world. How must the whole gospel be understood and practiced in order to remain prophetically faithful in this new world? After identifying and critiquing false and half gospels that have unfortunately gained momentum in the context of today’s global realities, part 2 seeks to articulate anew the gospel of the kingdom that Jesus preached—that is, the whole gospel—in terms of reconciliation. Part 3 necessarily follows up with a fresh ecclesiology, reminding us of the radical nature of the church in terms of both its personal and social wholeness, as well as in its spirituality, as the whole church takes its missional vocation seriously.

After sociological, theological, and ecclesiological analyses, part 4 provides a fresh formulation of the whole mission, as it first rehearses the history of the development of holistic mission (chap. 9) and then advances it by establishing the ministry of reconciliation as the new whole in holistic mission. What does it look like when the whole church is integrally engaged in evangelism, peacemaking, and stewardship (chaps. 10 and 11) as constitutive of the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations? This question lies at the heart of this book, and the church’s missional relevance in today’s world hinges on how we answer it.

Part 1

Whole World

Missiology and Culture

“What do you do?”

I can answer that question several ways: I am a professor, a denominational executive, a minister, a theologian. But to solicit the blankest of stares, I would say, “I am a missiologist.” It is a conversational nonstarter, and what a travesty! Scholars should be passionate about their field, and I certainly am about mine. Missiology explores the intersection of active faith and culture, and therefore provides invaluable resources to those who seek to understand the interaction between God, the active church, and the cultures of the world.

Admittedly, it is confessional; that is, it would be difficult to be a missiologist if one did not profess faith in Christ and Christ’s purposes in the world. I say this as a concession because missiology’s confessional nature has made it suspect as a legitimate academic discipline in some circles.¹ But has not postmodernism debunked total academic objectivity, showing that every scholar of any discipline confesses something, that every scholar comes from a particular perspective? As an interdiscipline that sits at the intersection of theology and the social sciences, missiology assumes the essential missional

1. The academic objection to missiology is based on the assumption that true scholarship must be done dispassionately and “objectively.” Therefore, the requirement that a scholar commit to a particular religion in order to engage in the discipline of missiology makes it illegitimate. For more on this debate, as well as a creative way to do missiology that is both legitimately academic and confessional, see Jan A. B. Jongeneel, “Is Missiology an Academic Discipline?,” *Transformation* 15, no. 3 (1998): 27–32.

nature of the church while maintaining high respect for the cultures and societies in which the gospel drama plays out.

In addition to missiology's confessional nature as grounds for dismissal, some institutions have also found the historical missions-colonialism connection disturbing enough to question the ethics of mission at all and therefore also the inclusion of mission studies in the theological curriculum. Although to say that the church has simply colluded with colonizers oversimplifies the matter, history reveals enough missionary complicity in the colonial project that the church cannot escape the judgment of time.² Furthermore, like a tormented ghost, the colonial spirit has refused to go away, continuing to this day, albeit in subtler ways, to haunt the way some groups continue to engage in mission.³ And if missiology keeps this spirit alive in any way, then I applaud the institutions that have eliminated the discipline from their course offerings.

If missiology, however, refers to the scholarly interdiscipline that affirms both the mission of the church and the value of culture, then it can potentially serve as an avenue for the healing of the nations from postcolonial trauma. It can provide resources in the service of reconciliation. Moreover, it can detect blind spots, prevent ill-advised alliances (with, say, neocolonizers and imperialists), and discern God's activities in the midst of a people. It can help the church maintain the dignity of cultures while remaining true to the gospel. It can help the church do mission right!

Global Contextualization: An Essential Task for Missiology Today

Missiology has this potential because of its commitment to contextualization. As Dana Robert points out, "The language and practices of contextualization

2. Elsewhere I interact with church historians such as Brian Stanley and others who make the case for a more sympathetic view of Christian missions as it relates to colonialism. It is true that a fuller historical picture would reveal altruistic motives in the work of missionaries alongside the blind motives that enabled them to take part in the colonial project. Nonetheless, in light of the lingering effects of colonialism in many countries today, I argue that anything less than resistance during that time makes the missionary enterprise as guilty as the rest. See F. Albert Tizon, "Remembering the Missionary Moratorium Debate: Toward a Missiology of Social Transformation in a Postcolonial Context," *Covenant Quarterly* 62, no. 1 (February 2004): 13–34.

3. The work of postcolonial theologians and missiologists does not just consist of calling out the sins of the colonial past; it also detects the colonial spirit that still operates today. For an excellent volume on the postcolonial challenge, see Kay Higuera Smith, Jayachitra Lalitha, and L. Daniel Hawk, eds., *Evangelical Postcolonial Conversations: Awakenings in Theology and Praxis* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014).

appeared as a way to move beyond the tired colonialist frameworks for mission theology.”⁴ Contrary to the notion that contextualization simply seeks to dress up the gospel in culturally appropriate clothing to draw people of that culture to Christ, it means negotiating the complex and delicate balance between revelation and context; for while the good news comes “from God” (that is, it does not come from within but by revelation), it is also culturally conditioned in both its delivery and its reception. How we work out this dialectic in specific cross-cultural situations defines the task of missiological contextualization.

As a missiological study, this book necessarily begins with the contextualization question, as part 1 takes on the “whole world.” It calls us to consider holistic mission anew in terms of reconciliation because the world pulsates with massive and rapid changes, the kinds that have created deeper, wider, and more violent rifts between peoples. These changes, rightly interpreted by way of the contextualization process, warrant rethinking the nature and practice of God’s whole mission in terms of reconciliation.

Keen contextualizers would likely raise a red flag at this point, for by definition contextualization refers to a localizing, particularizing process. So the thought of contextualizing the whole world sounds like a contradiction in terms. However, due to the forces of globalization that have caused the unprecedented convergence of cultures, economies, politics, and religions everywhere, the world has become an experientially smaller, more integrated place.⁵ A global culture has emerged, making it possible and necessary to apply the task of contextualization to the world as a whole.

An Understanding of “Whole World”

Part 1 seeks to understand several major global shifts that have massive implications for the church-in-mission. Chapter 1 takes on the phenomenon of globalization. If cultural and social interpreters have discerned correctly, then this global culture I speak of has primarily taken on the contours of the marketplace. An unprecedented coming together (some say a collision or clash) of cultures in the world marketplace, globalization offers both opportunity and challenge to the church-in-mission.

4. Dana L. Robert, “Forty Years of the American Society of Missiology,” *Missiology* 42, no. 6 (January 2014): 13.

5. See Donald Hornsby’s “The Incredible Shrinking World,” *Vision*, February 2005, <http://www.vision.org/visionmedia/article.aspx?id=167>. This is a three-book review of Thomas Friedman’s *The World Is Flat*, Joseph Stiglitz’s *Globalization and Its Discontents*, and Jagdish Bagwati’s *In Defense of Globalization*.

So does an overlapping set of “post realities.” Chapter 2 looks closely at a world that is no longer dominated by the Christian West, a reality that scholars have identified as a post-Christendom world. Whereas the Western church once shared the moral and political center of the globally dominant, cultural forces have begun to decenter it, relegating it to the margins, where, according to most post-Christendom scholars, the church is actually better positioned to be the prophetic people of God they were always meant to be. Furthermore, whereas the Christendom church took it upon itself to go out into all the world, mission today is now characterized by “*from everywhere to everywhere,*” as missionaries from non-Western lands feel increasingly called to bear witness to the gospel around the world, including post-Christian peoples of the West. Indeed, life in the post-Christendom era affects the church and its mission both within and outside Western culture.

If post-Christendom describes a reorientation of the church and the development of a polycentric mission, then postcolonialism—the subject of chapter 3—describes in part a global reality wherein the formerly colonized nations of the non-Western world have begun to lift up their voices, seeking justice and demanding new ways to do church and mission. In light of such postcolonial demands, is mission so hopelessly tied to historical colonialism that the church simply needs to fold up its tents and abandon the practice of mission altogether, or is there such a thing as a postcolonial missiology?

Part 1 seeks to understand these global changes, believing that they greatly affect the way in which we understand and practice the faith—that is, gospel, church, and mission—in a diversifying, globalizing, and fracturing world.