

The Centenary of the World Missionary Conference of 1910, held in Edinburgh, was a suggestive moment for many people seeking direction for Christian mission in the twenty-first century. Several different constituencies within world Christianity held significant events around 2010. From 2005, an international group worked collaboratively to develop an intercontinental and multi-denominational project, known as Edinburgh 2010, and based at New College, University of Edinburgh. This initiative brought together representatives of twenty different global Christian bodies, representing all major Christian denominations and confessions, and many different strands of mission and church life, to mark the Centenary.

Essential to the work of the Edinburgh 1910 Conference, and of abiding value, were the findings of the eight think-tanks or 'commissions'. These inspired the idea of a new round of collaborative reflection on Christian mission – but now focused on nine themes identified as being key to mission in the twenty-first century. The study process was polycentric, open-ended, and as inclusive as possible of the different genders, regions of the world, and theological and confessional perspectives in today's church. It was overseen by the Study Process Monitoring Group: Dr Maria Aranzazu Aguado (Spain, The Vatican), Dr Daryl Balia (South Africa, Edinburgh 2010), Mrs Rosemary Dowsett (UK, World Evangelical Alliance), Dr Knud Jørgensen (Norway, Areopagos), Rev. John Kafwanka (Zambia, Anglican Communion), Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum (Korea, World Council of Churches), Dr Wonsuk Ma (Korea, Oxford Centre for Mission Studies), Rev. Dr Kenneth R. Ross (UK, Church of Scotland), Dr Petros Vassiliadis (Greece, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki), and coordinated by Dr Kirsteen Kim (UK, Edinburgh 2010).

These publications reflect the ethos of Edinburgh 2010 and will make a significant contribution to ongoing studies in mission. It should be clear that material published in this series will inevitably reflect a diverse range of views and positions. These will not necessarily represent those of the series' editors or of the Edinburgh 2010 General Council, but in publishing them the leadership of Edinburgh 2010 hopes to encourage conversation between Christians and collaboration in mission. All the series' volumes are commended for study and reflection in both church and academy.

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A Century of Catholic Mission

Roman Catholic Missiology 1910 to the Present

Edited by Stephen B. Bevans, SVD

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First published 2013 by Regnum Books International

Regnum is an imprint of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies
St. Philip and St. James Church, Woodstock Road
Oxford OX2 6HR, UK
www.ocms.ac.uk/regnum

09 08 07 06 05 04 03 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-908355-14-0

Typeset by Words by Design
Printed and bound in Great Britain
for Regnum Books International
by TJ International LTD, Padstow, Cornwall

The paper used for the text of this book is manufactured to ISO 14001 and EMAS (Eco-Management & Audit Scheme) international standards, minimising negative impacts on the environment. It contains material sourced from responsibly managed forests, certified in accordance with the FSC.



The publication of this title is made possible by the generous financial assistance of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, facilitated by its Secretary, Bishop Brian Farrell.
Additional funding for distribution of the book to theological libraries in the Global South was provided by Stephen Bevens, SVD and Roger Schroeder, SVD, both at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago.

To

Rev. Lawrence Nemer, SVD

Always an inspiration

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INTRODUCTION

Stephen B. Bevens, SVD

The origins of this book lie in a lunch engagement to which I was invited by Drs Wonsuk and Julie Ma of the Oxford Center for Mission Studies in 2009. It was then that Wonsuk Ma asked if I would be willing to edit a volume that would trace the development of Catholic mission practice and thinking from 1910 – the year of the Edinburgh World Mission Conference – to the present day. Dr Ma said that Regnum Books International – of which he was publisher – was planning to publish a series around the Edinburgh Conference, and he was convinced that any series that did not include the immense Catholic contribution of mission in the last century would be incomplete. I heartily agreed with him, and, after some consideration agreed to take on what I knew would be an immense project, and yet one worthy of the effort.

Just *how* immense, however, I did not completely realize. In order to offer as complete a picture as possible of a century of Catholic mission I had to engage the help of a large number of authors, and contacting them and encouraging them to write was to take a good bit of time. An even more immense task was editing the twenty-six chapters as they came in. While the authors who agreed to submit chapters were all relatively prompt in their submissions, I found myself swamped with many other projects and found very little time to devote myself to reading, revising, formatting, and in a few cases shortening their work. The fact that I was so busy about many things in the last three years is the principal reason why this volume has taken so long to see the light of day.

What has finally been published, however, is a volume that I believe has been well worth waiting for. It is the product of twenty-six authors from every continent, from several generations, of both genders. It is a volume that is truly Catholic: geographically, content-wise, and theologically. It is the work of both scholars and practitioners – practitioners who are scholars and scholars who are practitioners – all of whom are deeply committed to God's mission and many of whom have themselves shaped the disciplines of missiology and mission theology in the last quarter of the century about which they write.

MISSION AS WITNESS AND PROCLAMATION

Jonathan Y. Tan

This chapter seeks to explore the relationship between witness and proclamation in contemporary Catholic missiology. It surveys the discussion of these two tasks at Vatican II, papal and curial pronouncements, as well as in the documents of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), discussing their implications for evangelization in today's pluralistic world in general, and Asia in particular.

Vatican II

Lumen Gentium

The theological foundation of Vatican II's theology of mission is rooted in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (LG). The missiological dimensions of ecclesiology permeate the opening sentence of the document, which comprises the explicit proclamation that 'Christ is the light of all nations. Hence, this most sacred Synod, which has been gathered in the Holy Spirit, eagerly desires to shed on all men that radiance of His which brightens the countenance of the Church. This it will do by proclaiming the gospel to every creature' (LG 1).

On the one hand, LG insists on the necessity of the church for salvation (*Ecclesiam necessariam esse ad salutem*, LG 14), explaining that the church is 'the universal sacrament of salvation' (*universale salutis sacramentum*), because the risen Christ is leading all peoples to the church (*ut homines ad Ecclesiam perducatur*) and 'through her joining them more closely to Himself' (LG 48). On the other hand, LG also presents the possibility of an extra-ecclesial way of salvation when it suggests that non-Christians 'also can attain to everlasting salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and, moved by grace, strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience' (LG 16). However, three strict conditions are laid down: (i) through no fault of their own (*sine culpa*), non-Christians do not know the gospel of Christ or the church; (ii) they must, with a sincere and open heart, seek God, the Creator whose existence they may know by reason, but whom they do not yet know as the

God revealed in Christ; and (iii) they must try to do God's will as they know it through conscience, i.e., on the basis of natural law, striving to lead a good life and moved by grace (*sub gratiae influxu*). On that basis, 'divine providence' will not deny them the assistance necessary for salvation, although the mode by which this grace operates (*modus gratia*) is left open.

By being cautious and refusing to speculate on the mysterious workings of God's grace outside the church, the Council Fathers left room for future dogmatic development of this principle. Even as they accepted the possibility that salvation can be mediated extra-ecclesially, nonetheless they took pains to argue against any lessening of the urgency of mission when they held that by 'promot[ing] the glory of God and procure the salvation of all such men, and mindful of the command of the Lord, 'Preach the gospel to every creature' (Mk. 16:16), the Church painstakingly fosters her missionary work' (LG 16).

Nostra Aetate

The 'Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions', *Nostra aetate* marks a paradigm shift in the church's understanding of other religions. Eschewing the traditional terminology such as 'pagan' (*paganus*), 'idolatry' (*idolatria*) and 'false religion' (*religio falsa*), the Council fathers introduced a new atmosphere of recognition, respect and dialogue, recognizing the plurality and diversity of religions. The most radical aspect of this declaration is its presumption that other religions contain at least some elements of truth, although this presumption does not lessen the dominical mandate to proclaim the gospel to the ends of the earth:

The Catholic Church rejects nothing of which is true and holy in these religions. She looks with sincere respect upon those ways of conduct and of life, those rules and teachings which, though differing in particulars from what she holds and sets forth, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. Indeed, she proclaims and must ever proclaim Christ, 'the way, the truth, and the life'... (NA 2).

The Declaration also lays out the foundations for inter-religious dialogue as a form of Christian *witnessing* when it urges Catholics to 'prudently and lovingly, through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, and in witness of Christian faith and life, acknowledge, preserve, and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among [them], as well as the values in their society and culture' (NA 2).

Gaudium et Spes

In the 'Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World', *Gaudium et Spes*, Vatican II acknowledged the diversity of cultures and the fact that the Christian gospel is not a communication of timeless truths, but

rather God's intervention in human history. The Council Fathers explained the relevance of cultural discoveries to witnessing and proclaiming the gospel as follows:

Living in various circumstances during the course of time, the Church, too has used in her preaching the discoveries of different cultures to spread and explain the message of Christ to all nations, to probe it and more deeply understand it. (GS 58)

The Council Fathers also asserted there is no one culturally normative way to be Christian. They pointed out that the church, which is 'sent to all peoples of every time and space, is not bound exclusively and indissolubly to any race or nation, nor to any particular way of life, or to any customary pattern of living, ancient or recent', and therefore it 'can enter into communion with various cultural modes, to her own enrichment and theirs too', as it 'strengthens, perfects, and restores them to Christ' (GS 58).

Ad Gentes

The missionary decree, *Ad Gentes*, begins with a statement that the church, which 'has been divinely sent to all nations that she might be "the universal sacrament of salvation"', strives 'to proclaim the gospel to all' in response to the innermost requirements of her own catholicity and in obedience to her Founder's mandate' (AG 1). It initiated a profound change in its fundamental understanding of the church's task of mission when it grounded the necessity of mission within the Trinitarian *missiones* of the Son and the Spirit, and insists that the whole church is missionary by its very nature (AG 2). It asserted that 'the specific purpose of this missionary activity is evangelization and the planting of the church among those people and groups where she has not yet taken root' (AG 6). While it insists on the necessity of preaching the gospel, notwithstanding the possibility that salvation may be available by other channels (AG 7), it also gives an expanded role to the Holy Spirit – 'Doubtless, the Holy Spirit was already at work in the world before Christ was glorified' (AG 4). In an application of Justin Martyr's notion of *logoi spermatikoi*, the decree suggests that the Holy Spirit 'calls all men to Christ by the seeds of the word and by the preaching of the gospel' (AG 15). It explains that these 'seeds of the Word' (*semina Verbi*) lie hidden in the national and religious traditions of peoples (AG 11).

Papal and Curial Pronouncements

Evangelii Nuntiandi

In his 1975 apostolic exhortation EN, Pope Paul VI emphasizes that evangelization is the *raison d'être* for the church's existence:

The church exists in order to preach the Gospel, that is to preach and teach the word of God so that through her the gift of grace may be given to us, sinners may be reconciled to God, and the sacrifice of the Mass, the memorial of his glorious death and Resurrection, may be perpetuated. (EN 14)

The pontiff defines evangelization 'as consisting in the proclamation of Christ our Lord to those who do not know him, in preaching, catechesis, baptism and the administration of the other sacraments' (EN 17-18). He insists that 'there is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed' (EN 22). Going one step further, he also spoke of the necessity to evangelize human cultures:

The rift between the gospel and culture is undoubtedly an unhappy circumstance of our times just as it has been in other eras. Accordingly we must devote all our resources and all our efforts to the sedulous evangelization of human culture, or rather of the various human cultures. They must be regenerated through contact with the gospel. (EN 20)

While recognizing that evangelization entails the proclamation of 'an explicit message, adapted to the various conditions of life and constantly updated' (EN 29), Paul VI also held that the church is obliged to:

proclaim the liberation of these hundreds of millions of people since very many of them are her children. She has the duty of helping this liberation, of bearing witness on its behalf and of assuring its full development. All this is in no way irrelevant to evangelization. (EN 30)

Redemptoris Missio

Pope John Paul II's 1990 encyclical RM, which was written to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of Vatican II's missionary decree, AG, stands as the most important missiological pronouncement of his pontificate. In this encyclical, the pope insists that '[m]issionary activity must first of all bear witness to and proclaim salvation in Christ' (RM 83). He defines the task of mission as 'directed to people or groups who do not yet believe in Christ, who are far from Christ, in whom the Church has not yet taken root... and whose culture has not yet been influenced by the Gospel ... It can thus be characterized as the work of proclaiming Christ and his Gospel, building up the local Church and promoting the values of the Kingdom' (RM 34).

From the beginning, John Paul II emphasizes the centrality of the explicit verbal proclamation of Christ, arguing that 'the moment has come to commit all of the church's energies to a new evangelization and to the mission *ad gentes*. No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples' (RM 3). He argues that there 'must be no lessening of the impetus to preach the Gospel and to establish new Churches among peoples or communities where they do not yet exist, for this is the first task of the Church' (RM 34).

On the one hand, John Paul II acknowledges unequivocally that 'the first form of evangelization is witness.' He notes that (alluding to EN 41) 'people today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers, in experience than in teaching, and in life and action than in theories' (RM 42). He acknowledges that:

The first form of witness is the very life of the missionary, of the Christian family and of the ecclesial community, which reveal a new way of living. The missionary who, despite all his or her human limitations and defects, lives a simple life, taking Christ as the model, is a sign of God and of transcendent realities. But everyone in the Church, striving to imitate the Divine Master, can and must bear this kind of witness; in many cases it is the only possible way of being a missionary. (RM 42, emphasis added)

But on the other hand, the pope also insists that life witness *per se* is insufficient. There has to be a proclamation of Christ as necessary for salvation. For him, 'proclamation is the permanent priority of mission', and because it has a 'central and irreplaceable role,' therefore 'the Church cannot elude Christ's explicit mandate' (RM 44). By proclamation, he means *verbal proclamation* from the evangelizers to those who are evangelized, who 'have a right to hear' (RM 44). He points out that the 'subject of proclamation is Christ who was crucified, died and is risen: through him is accomplished our full and authentic liberation from evil, sin and death; through him God bestows "new life" that is divine and eternal' (RM 44).

In RM, John Paul II also accepts that 'inter-religious dialogue is a part of the Church's evangelizing mission', recognizing that 'dialogue not in opposition to the mission *ad gentes*', but 'has special links with that mission and is one of its expressions' (RM 55). Nonetheless, he also emphasizes that dialogue 'does not lessen her duty and resolve to proclaim without fail Jesus Christ who is "the way, and the truth and the life"' (RM 55). Indeed, he underscores the 'permanent priority' of proclamation – 'all forms of missionary activity are directed to this proclamation' (RM 44). At the same time, the pontiff also acknowledges that proclamation is sometimes not possible because of particular restrictions, and under these circumstances *inter-religious dialogue* may be 'the only way of bearing sincere witness to Christ and offering generous service to others' (RM 57).

Dialogue and proclamation

The 1991 curial document, *Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflections and Orientations on Inter-religious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (DP), which was jointly published by the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, insists that dialogue and proclamation are not incompatible, pointing out that 'true inter-religious dialogue on the part of the Christian supposes the desire to make Jesus Christ better known,

recognized and loved; proclaiming Jesus Christ is to be carried out in the Gospel spirit of dialogue' (DP 77).

More significantly, DP has gone beyond whatever other papal and magisterial documents have enunciated regarding the soteriological efficacy of other religions:

From this mystery of unity it follows that all men and women who are saved, share, though differently, in the same mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ through his Spirit. Christians know this through their faith, while others remain unaware that Jesus Christ is the source of their salvation. The mystery of salvation reaches out to them, in a way known to God, through the invisible action of the Spirit of Christ. Concretely, it will be in the sincere practice of what is good in their own religious tradition and by following the dictates of their conscience that the members of other religions respond positively to God's invitation and receive salvation in Jesus Christ, even while they do not recognize or acknowledge him as their Savior. (DP 29)

Commenting on this paragraph, Jacques Dupuis is of the opinion that 'a door seems to be timidly opened here, for the first time, for the recognition on the part of the Church authority of a 'participated mediation' of religious traditions in the salvation of their members'. (Dupuis 1997: 178).

Moreover, DP also makes the radical suggestion that Christians not only witness their faith to others, but rather they must also be prepared to be witnessed to by others through dialogue:

In the last analysis truth is not a thing we possess, but a person by whom we must allow ourselves to be possessed. This is an unending process. While keeping their identity intact, Christians must be prepared to learn and to receive from and through others the positive values of their traditions. Through dialogue they may be moved to give up ingrained prejudices, to revise preconceived ideas, and even sometimes to allow the understanding of their faith to be purified. (DP 49)

The Asian Bishops on Witness and Proclamation

From its founding, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) has consistently sought to work within the diverse pluralism of the Asian milieu with its manifold peoples, cultures and religions. The Asian Bishops have always maintained that at the heart of the task of mission of the Asian local churches lies the *dialogical* encounter between the local churches and the Asian milieu with its threefold reality of Asian poverty, cultures and religions (FABC I 1997: 14). For the FABC, dialogue is 'an integral part of evangelization' (FABC I 1997: 100), 'intrinsic to the very life of the Church' (FABC I 1997: 111), an 'essential mode of all evangelization' (FABC I 1997: 131), and 'a true expression of the Church's evangelizing action' (FABC I 1997: 101). As for the relationship between dialogue, proclamation and conversion, the FABC has pointed out, rightfully, that 'dialogue and proclamation are complementary. Sincere and authentic dialogue does not have for its objective the conversion of the other. For

conversion depends solely on God's internal call and the person's free decision' (FABC I 1997: 120).

At the same time, the FABC has also explained that dialogue *does not preclude* the need for the proclamation of the Christian gospel: in fact there could be a moment when 'we shall not be timid when God opens the door for us to *proclaim* explicitly the Lord Jesus Christ as the Savior and the answer to the fundamental questions of human existence' (FABC I 1997: 282, *italics in the original*). However, a distinctively Asian approach of proclamation which is sensitive to the culturally diverse and religiously pluralistic Asian milieu is needed:

Mission may find its greatest urgency in Asia; it also finds in our continent a distinctive mode. We affirm, together with others, that 'the proclamation of Jesus Christ is the center and primary element of evangelization' ... But the proclamation of Jesus Christ in Asia means, first of all, the witness of Christians and of Christian communities to the values of the Kingdom of God, *a proclamation through Christlike deeds*. For Christians in Asia, to proclaim Christ means above all to live like him, in the midst of our neighbors of other faiths and persuasions, and to do his deeds by the power of his grace. Proclamation through dialogue and deeds – this is the first call to the Churches in Asia. (FABC I 1997: 281-282, *italics in the original*)

On the basis of the foregoing, the Fifth Plenary Assembly equates the triple dialogue with the Christian mission imperative and concludes thus:

Mission includes: being with the people, responding to their needs, with sensitiveness to the presence of God in cultures and other religious traditions, and witnessing to the values of God's Kingdom through presence, solidarity, sharing and word. *Mission will mean a dialogue with Asian's poor, with its local cultures, and with other religious traditions.* (FABC I 1992: 280, *emphasis added*)

It is at the Seventh Plenary Assembly (Samphran, 2000) that the Asian Bishops emphasized their preference for the 'witness of life' as the Asian way of proclaiming the Christian gospel in Asia:

The most effective means of evangelization and service in the name of Christ has always been and continues to be the witness of life. The embodiment of our faith in sharing and compassion (sacrament) supports the credibility of our obedience to the Word (proclamation). This witnessing has to become the way of the Gospel for persons, institutions and the whole Church community. Asian people will recognize the Gospel that we announce when they see in our life the transparency of the message of Jesus and the inspiring and healing figure of men and women immersed in God. (FABC III 2002: 12-13)

This identification of proclamation with life witness builds upon the earlier statement made by the Third Bishops' Institute for Missionary Apostolate meeting in Changhua in 1982:

It is true that in many places [in Asia] Christ cannot yet be proclaimed openly by words. But He can, and should be, proclaimed through other ways, namely: through the witness of life of the Christian community and family, and their striving to know and live more fully the faith they possess; through

their desire to live in peace and harmony with those who do not share our faith; through the appreciation by Christians of the human and religious values possessed by their non-Christian neighbors, and through these same Christians' willingness to collaborate in those activities which promote the human community. (FABC I 1997: 105)

Moreover, the Seventh Plenary Assembly of the FABC coined a new term – 'active integral evangelization' to describe an approach to mission which integrates commitment and service to life, life witness, dialogue, and building up the kingdom of God. The Assembly explains the rationale for this term as follows:

For thirty years, as we have tried to reformulate our Christian identity in Asia, we have addressed different issues, one after another: evangelization, inculturation, dialogue, the Asian-ness of the Church, justice, the option for the poor, etc. Today, after three decades, we no longer speak of such distinct issues. We are addressing present needs that are massive and increasingly complex. These issues are not separate topics to be discussed, but aspects of an integrated approach to our Mission of Love and Service. We need to feel and act 'integrally'. As we face the needs of the 21st century, we do so with Asian hearts, in solidarity with the poor and the marginalized, in union with all our Christian brothers and sisters, and by joining hands with all men and women of Asia of many different faiths. Inculturation, dialogue, justice and the option for the poor are aspects of whatever we do. (FABC III 2002:8)

CONTEMPLATION AND SERVICE: CENTRAL DYNAMISM OF CHRISTIAN MISSION

Maria Clara Luchetti Bingemer

The concept of mission has been constitutive of the deepest identity of Christianity since its beginnings, and is a concept that has gone through many modifications and transformations through the two thousand years of history of the Christian churches. From 'the salvation of souls' at any price to dialogue; from Christian conversion as goal to the respect fostered by inter-religious dialogue; from the midst of the tension between intra-church affairs and social activism – mission is something which is always being rethought and reflected upon by theology. Our intention here is to try to offer again a contribution that looks at the essential core of mission, where contemplation and service intersect and mutually enrich each other.

To do that, we will first examine the meaning mission has for theology, turning our attention above all to the Trinitarian matrix of mission. Then we will see how, when speaking of Christian mission, service is constitutive of that same mission and configures it utterly to the incarnate and redeeming work of Jesus Christ. We will seek to highlight how that process of configuration is given within the contemplation of the person of Jesus. Finally, we will see how missionary service today gets its face and form in the ecclesial community and what might be some of its priorities given the questions posed by the world today. In a concluding part, we will give highlights of reflections made on this theme in Latin-American theology in the last few decades.

The Missionary, Trinitarian Sendings

In Christian theology, mission is understood as coming from great distance and great height. Its origin is divine and, more specifically, Trinitarian. According to Christian doctrine, mission is above all the sending of one of the divine persons outward, into time and into history (see Rahner 1979). Understood in this way in Christian doctrine, mission has the sense of a movement of sending which begins with God the Father who, from all eternity, sends the Son. With the Son, dead and risen, the Father sends through his mediation the Holy Spirit, who will henceforth craft mission. It is this Spirit who will then send the ecclesial community, which is called to effect and give continuity in the world to the same mission of the Son.

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