MISSION AND POSTMODERNITY, NEOCOLONIALISM AND GLOBALIZATION

John Arun Kumar[*]

INTRODUCTION

World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910, was a working conference "to consider missionary problems in relation to the non-Christian world."[1] Inspired by this conference, Edinburgh 2010 in one of its many commissions, "Mission and Post-Modernities," focuses on post-modernity as well as related contemporary developments such as post-colonialism, globalization and information technology.[2] In a contemporary and forward-looking context, the anticipation at the Edinburgh 2010 conference is that it will give an opportunity for connections to be made which will be fruitful in shaping Christian mission for a new century.

In light of this, the paper will review the categories: mission, postmodernity, neo-colonialism, and globalisation, and their relationship to each other. In addition, it will seek an answer to the question, how can this understanding be engaged fruitfully in Christian mission for 21st century? As an Indian Christian committed to an evangelical persuasion, my theological convictions will shape the way I respond to the subject.

REVIEW OF THE CATEGORIES

First, let me review the categories—mission, postmodernity, neo-colonialism and globalisation. In the present pluralistic context, these terms are still in the process of being defined. Hence, it becomes necessary for the discussion to note their origins, their processes, and the current trends in the understanding of these concepts.

Mission

The term mission refers to that of Christianity. Generally, Christian mission could be defined as the aim, purpose and activity of Christians evangelising, discipling, and serving others in obedience to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ, as recorded in the Gospels of the Bible (Matt 28: 19; Mark 16:15). However, this definition is too simple.

---

[*] Dr. John Arun Kumar is HOD of Religion Department at South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies (SAIACS), Bangalore.

[1] Kenneth Ross notes the WMC stood at the close of the great chapter of the western missionary movement in initiating world Christianity. Representing foreign missionary committees, it stood at the opening of a new chapter in world Christianity, the modern ecumenical movement, which resulted in fulfilment of the vision of the Christian church as the global missionary force, and fostered a modern theology of mission. The aim of the WMC was to make "a united effort to subject the plan and methods of the whole missionary enterprise to searching investigation and to coordinate missionary experience from all parts of the world." Kenneth R. Ross, *Edinburgh 2010: Springboard for Mission* (Pasadena, California: William Carey International University Press, 2009), 3, 8, 9.

[2] Ross, *Edinburgh 2010*, 45.

With the growth, development and changing circumstances and contexts of church and mission globally, redefining mission has been an ongoing process.

Focusing on the century following Edinburgh 1910, various scholars have identified dominant trends in the understanding of mission. I have chosen the works of two of them, Kenneth R. Ross and Timothy Yates, to show these trends. Ross' *Edinburgh 2010: Springboard for Mission*, which is a working document for Edinburgh 2010, and Yates' *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century*, a respected historical study have traced dominant trends in the understanding of mission by looking at the major conferences which both shaped and were shaped by the mission of the church in the 20th century. Yates' in addition deals with some key personalities in the decades before and after Edinburgh 1910.[3] His approach is to characterise with a distinctive label.

In 1900-1910, the understanding of mission was expansion—the task of mission was understood as carrying the gospel from "fully missioned lands" to "not yet fully missioned lands" or the non-Christian world.[4] Prominent in this understanding was the emphasis on individual conversion.[5] According to Ross, this understanding was still in force in the immediate decade following Edinburgh 1910.[6] However, Yates observes drawing on the work by German mission, mission was understood as *Volkskirche* approach, which was heavily debated—where the aim of the mission was to create the church of a people, a national church, expressing the particular individuality of that race or ethnic group.[7] Of late, this thesis has taken on new significance in light of contextualization and indigenization thought.

Writing on the Jerusalem conference in 1928, Ross points out that, with wider representation than Edinburgh 1910, a deconstruction of terms on which the Edinburgh 1910 conference operated had begun.[8] The real religion of the "non-Christian world" was understood as secularism and thus mission took a new meaning in the context of binary division of the world—Christian and secular.[9] Yates himself writing on the two decades 1920-1940, makes two appraisals.[10] First, he focuses on mission in general while noting the understanding of Christian mission was holistic—that is, a comprehensive view of mission meeting the whole of human need.[11] The second concentrates on mission as the church relating to other faiths.[12] Regarding the Tambaram conference (1938) that, from a

---

[3] Timothy Yates, *Christian mission in the twentieth century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[4] Yates, *Christian mission*, 7-33; Ross, *Edinburgh 2010*, 29.

[5] Yates, *Christian mission*, 34.

[6] Ross notes, with the formation of the International Missionary Council and the launching of the journal, *International Review of Mission*, both programmes being slowed down by the First World War (1914-1918), the terms "Christian" and "non-Christian" were still understood very much on geographical and territorial terms. Ross, *Edinburgh 2010*, 19-20.

[7] Yates, *Christian mission*, 35, 34-56.

[8] Ross, *Edinburgh 2010*, 20.

[9] Ross, *Edinburgh 2010*, 20.

[10] Yates, *Christian* mission, 57-93.

[11] Yates, *Christian mission*, 93, 57-93.

[12] Yates, *Christian mission*, 94-124.

wider participation in the conference, mission was understood to include the emerging churches on the mission fields to participate in mission.[13]

Speaking of the Whitby (Whiting) Conference in 1947, after the Second World War, the emphasis was on "partnership" in evangelism. In 1948, the World Council of Churches was constituted by bringing together the "Faith and Order" and "Life and Work" movements.[14] Yates sees mission in the 1940s as ecumenical witness by the church. [15]

Writing on Willingen 1952, Ross notes a further development in the understanding on theology of mission—mission was understood in terms of *missio Dei*, and the relation of church to mission.[16] Achimata 1958 conference saw the fruit of the conviction began in 1938 to integrate WCC and IMC in the form of a plan for merger of the two.[17] Yates writing adds that, in the decade 1950-1960, mission was understood as presence and dialogue.[18] In 1961, New Delhi conference saw the absorption of IMC with WCC.[19] Yates notes that, in 1960s, mission was understood as proclamation, dialogue and liberation.[20]

According to Yates in the decade 1970-1980 mission was understood as proclamation and church growth.[21] Ross while noting that there were a number of WCC conferences 1963, 1973, 1980, 1989, 1996, 2005, observes that an important result was the integration of "the Eastern Orthodox, with the more centripetal understanding of mission" with WCC.[22] Ross adds that the Lausanne Conference for World Evangelisation was convened in order to recover the emphasis on mission in Edinburgh 1910, and since has had subsequent large meetings in 1980, 1989, and 2004.

Here it is helpful to mention Ross' summary on trends in the understanding of mission during 20th century. Initially "missions," understood as outposts of Christian witness came to be understood as "mission," the fundamental category as a comprehensive description of witness to Jesus Christ in all its forms.[23] From uncertainty about the relationship of church and mission, it changed to conviction that "the church is proper agent of mission and must have the missionary function constantly at its heart." [24] Mission as from "the West to the rest" changed to all six continents being mission fields as well as "home base" for mission.[25] From an understanding that Christian faith was correct and progressive to faith must be contextualised. New contexts would yield new

---

[13] Ross, *Edinburgh 2010*, 21.
[14] Ross, *Edinburgh 2010*, 21-23.
[15] Yates, *Christian mission* ,127-132.
[16] Ross, *Edinburgh 2010*, 24.
[17] Ross, *Edinburgh 2010*, 24.
[18] Yates, *Christian mission* ,133-162.
[19] Ross, *Edinburgh 2010*, 24.
[20] Yates, *Christian mission*, 163-192.
[21] Yates, *Christian mission*, 193-223.
[22] Ross, *Edinburgh 2010*, 24.
[23] Ross, *Edinburgh 2010*, 25.
[24] Ross, *Edinburgh 2010*, 25.
[25] Ross, *Edinburgh 2010*, 25.

insights to the faith.[26] A close affinity between the power of empire and the advance of Christian faith gave way to an awareness of God's "preferential option for the poor…and the development of a much more critical approach to proper social location of authentic faith."[27] From an expectation that "the other world religions would melt away as the superiority of Christianity" became known, the new reality was that of resurgence of these religions and necessity for the continuing Christian mission. Replacing the traditional view that missionary work is the human response to the command of Christ has been, "God is the primary agent of mission and the role of human beings is to participate in the mission of God."[28] Instead, excluding considerations of questions about the organic unity of the church, the importance of church unity is now a concern of Christian mission. Defining missions in the present context of postmodern, neo-colonial, and globalism is the new challenge.

Postmodernity

Postmodernity is largely a Western intellectual phenomenon. Even defining the term is quite controversial. At best we can grapple with questions about its origin, form, proponents, and history, and the current trends in its understanding.

The suffix "-ity" denotes the quality or condition of being postmodern as well as an instance or degree of this. The prefix "post" in the term describes the economic and/or cultural state or condition of society which is said to exist *after* modernity. By the time of eighteenth century Enlightenment, the dominant worldview that emerged was modernity and continued to develop over the next two centuries. Among the features are materialism, rational positivism with an emphasis on empirical testing as final authority of truth, and a mechanistic view of the world. The hallmarks of modernity are science and technology. Postmodernity is "the questioning and redefining of the values and methods inherited from the European Enlightenment that has swept through all areas of intellectual reflection in the last twenty years or so."[29] In other words, it "is the contemporary reaction to the hegemony and arrogance of modernity, and calls for the deconstruction of grand narratives, a reaffirmation of the subjective nature of knowledge, and relativism."[30]

There are different schools of thought about the relationship between modernity and postmodernity. Some hold the view that modernity ended in the late 20th century, and was replaced by post-modernity.[31] Others say that it is the last stage in the evolution of

---

[26] Ross, *Edinburgh 2010*, 25.
[27] Ross, *Edinburgh 2010*, 25.
[28] Ross, *Edinburgh 2010,* 26.
[29] Here John W. Drane is writing on the New Age and notes that it is in essence a form of postmodernity. John W Drane. "Methods and Perspectives in Understanding the New Age" in *Themelios* edited by vol.23:2 (February 1998), 23-24.
[30] Paul G Hiebert, R. Daniel Shaw, TiteTiénou, *Understanding Folk Religion: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 16.
[31] M. Pauline Rosenau, *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences: Insights, Inroads, and Intrusion.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 5,6.

modernity.[32] Still others label postmodernity as another short-lived reaction to modernity similar to romanticism in the eighteenth century.[33] Postmodernity can even be seen as a personal response to a postmodern society.

Postmodernity should be distinguished from postmodernism, the conscious adoption of postmodern philosophies or traits in art, literature and society. Most commentators use the two terms interchangeably.[34]

Such Indian scholars as Vishal Mangalwadi, Makarand Paranjape, and others expressed doubt with regard to postmodernism or postmodernity. They argue that it manifested differently in India. According to Vishal Mangalwadi this phenomenon takes the form of mysticism and negative pluralism.[35] Makarand Paranjape, an English professor, feels postmodernism is an imposed western construct, and according to him, is the West wielding power over the rest. He argues that it is all right to engage with it as an academic exercise, but one should keep distance from its influence.[36]

In another article, Paranjape claims that in India the ideologies of tradition, modernity and postmodernity live cheek by jowl, and that tradition is what people in India have.[37] He proposes a literary theory of interrelation between two sets of triads, the ideologies— tradition, modern, and postmodern and the regions—regional, national, and international, and argues for using permutations and combinations of the two sets to combat the ills of each other.

The Edinburgh 2010 commission's presuppositions are expressed in these words: "The acids of modernity have dissolved faith in societies where Christian faith used to be strong. The post-modernities which define life and community for many people today pose new and searching questions for Christian mission."[38]

Neocolonialism

Neocolonialism is the use of economic, political, or cultural pressures by former colonial rulers or powerful countries to control or influence other countries, especially former

---

[32] David Harvey, *The Condition of Post-Modernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Culture Change* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 101-313.

[33] Peter L. Berger, Brigitte Berger, and Hansfried Kellner, *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness*, (New York: Random House, 1973), Ellul, Jacques. *The Technological Society*, trans. John Wilkinson (New York: Random House, 1964), and Ernest, Gelner, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion* (London: Routledge, 1992).

[34] Carson, D. A. Carson, *Gagging of God: Christianity confronts pluralism* (Leicester: Appolos, 1996), 20-21.

[35] Vishal Mangalwadi, Missionary *Conspiracy: Letters to a Postmodern Hind* (Mussoorie: Nivedit Good Books, 1996), 65-102, 66.

[36] Makarand Paranjape, "Postmodernism and India," http://www.makarand.com/acad/PostmodernismandIndia.htm; accessed 30 October 2009.

[37] Makarand Paranjape, "Tradition, Modernity and Post-Modernity/Region, Nation, and Internation: Challenges in Theory," http://www.makarand.com/acad/Traditionmodernity.htm; accessed 10 December 2009.

[38] Ross, *Edinburgh 2010*, 45.

dependencies that became independent. This is accomplished either by administering through economic arrangements, or direct involvement in the affairs of less powerful countries. This refers more specifically to the post World War II, post-colonial contemporary period. In one sense, this is a socio-economic form of the classical, European colonialism practiced from the 16th to the 20th centuries. When it refers to a reaction to the cultural legacy of colonialism, it is termed post-colonialism, and in this sense it relates to a specifically post-modern intellectual discourse that holds together a set of theories found among the texts of philosophy, film, political science and literature. Recolonialism is a related phenomenon where the independent nations are induced to be subject to their former colonial rulers or other powerful states. When this becomes a concerted effort, it is neocolonialism at global level, a globalisation of neocolonialism.

Globalization

Globalization is understood in at least two ways.[39] The first is as a positive concept, referring to the processes involved in making this world a global village.[40] The second is of the negative sense, is that hegemony at a global level by collective powerful nations over less powerful nations. In this sense, it is neocolonialism at a global level. However, between these two senses lie other senses of globalization.

In the former sense, globalization is a product of a generalized interaction between the groups of people in different parts of the world, a process which has been accepted by societies and individuals.[41] It is revealed in the manner the same forms of information and means of exchange have been found across the world, objects we utilize on an everyday basis ranging from coke to blue jeans to television to internet and mobile phones are now global in their distribution. This is the result of applying ideological and technological systems developed in one part of the world to other parts of the world. This includes transportation, electronic communication, adoption of a common language such as English, the introduction of generalized rules relating to the process of exchange as a means of organizing the marketplace, and so on. Globalization as a process has given rise to a sudden increase in inter-cultural and intra-cultural interactions and its impact is felt among all peoples both corporately and individually. Among the cultural features are community and language, but the family demonstrates strong resistance to the processes of globalization.[42]

Some see globalisation as an element of globalism, when globalism becomes an ideology, globalization denotes a process of increased global interconnection. They emphasize

---

[39] S. Jeyapragasam, "Globalisation and Inter-Religious Relations" in M. Valliammal Baskaran, Roderic L. Owen and Jesudason B Jeyaraj, *Inter-Faith Relations and Higher Education* (New Delhi: ISPCK and Lady Doak College, Madurai, 2007,243-246), 244/

[40] Roland Robertson, *Globalization:social theory and global culture* (SAGE Publications Ltd, 1992) ,8; Pilger, John, *Hhidden agendas* (London: Verso, 1999), 61.

[41] Olivier Dollfus, "Globalization, Families, and Communities in Europe" in Globalization and Indigenous Culture, Inoue Nobutaka, General editor, Institute for Japanese Culture and Classics Kokugakuin University, 1997, http://www2.kokugakuin.ac.jp/ijcc/wp/global/index.html, accessed on 20 August 2009.

[42] Inoue Nobutaka, Globalization's Challenge to Indigenous Culture, http://www2.kokugakuin.ac.jp/ijcc/wp/global/02inoue.html, accessed 21 August 2009.

globalism as a political belief or policy, and include the idea of a central world government based on the notion that global governance is better than national advantage. This means that the "harmonizing" national laws under a global body of law, the idea that autonomy of nations is related to chauvinistic urges, and that international trade agreements should be signed for a higher purpose despite disadvantages to either party. Scholars such as Joseph Nye[43] treat globalism as a benign point of view related to inevitable processes. Further, scholars such as Francesco Stipo believe that the "world is evolving towards a unitary framework, where different organized communities cooperate to prevent conflicts and promote the progress of humanity."[44]

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CHRISTIAN MISSION AND POST MODERNITIES

Challenges to mission

Having considered these definitions of terms, we can see the challenges that these phenomena pose to doing mission. Noting that much has been written in recent years about the challenge of modernity to Christianity, Hiebert explains: "It has led to a secularism that denies the existence of God, the deity of Christ, and the reality of the miracles recorded in the Bible. It has marginalized those who continue to hold religious convictions, because it relegates religion to the private sphere of personal opinions and feelings."[45] Further, he notes, "Today we face another challenge to Christian faith—*postmodernity*. Here spiritual experiences are no longer denied: they are all affirmed. The issue is not secularism but relativism and pragmatism. The debate centres about the uniqueness of Christ and his claim to be the only way to salvation (John 14:6). To deny his uniqueness, however, is to deny the truth of the gospel."[46] Similarly, neocolonialism presents the challenges of the struggles between haves and have-nots. Globalisation poses problems of secularisation and communal ideologies that disregard God and the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. Although these are significant ideologies they no way exhaust all new developments, as already noted the understanding of mission has been revisited over the decades with its developments and challenges in various spheres. It is well to pause to seek a fresh understanding of mission in the present times.

---

[43] Joseph S. Nye, *The paradox of American power: why the world's only superpower can"t go it alone* (Oxford University Press US, 2002), 138.

[44] Francesco Stipo, *World Federalist Manifesto: Guide to Political Globalization* (Miami, USA: Francesco Stipo**,** 2007); Stipo, Francesco "World Federalist Manifesto. Guide to Political Globalization" April 10, 2007, http://www.worldfederalistmanifesto.com, 30 March 2010.

[45] Paul Hiebert, writing on "Reflections on Epistemological Foundations" from a western standpoint proposed there were shifts in worldview of missionaries and anthropologists, in terms of three eras, namely, colonial era, anti-colonial era, and the global era, and he notes the shifts in worldviews under four categories: Missions, Anthropology, Theology, and Epistemology. Paul Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 53-73.

[46] Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections* ,73.

A Mission Approach for the Contemporary World

In light of the above, the present form of globalization, postmodernity, and neo-colonisation the question posed is, what form should the Christian mission take? We are facing more challenges than ever before. However, should we look at postmodernity, globalisation and neo-colonisation as new developments in principle? I suggest these realities have been present in every age/era/generation, of course taking new forms within each period. This phenomenon may happen again in the future. One can argue that the human beings at the core have remained the same with the same basic needs at the relational level towards God and other people.

Any mission approach has to consider these relational aspects of God and individual persons or groups to other persons and groups. According to Hiebert, "Critical contextualization is an ongoing response that sees the gospel as outside culture…. It comes as the message of salvation, not from West to East, but from God to people in all cultures."[47] He proposed the critical contextualization approach, which is borne out of his evangelical conviction. Critical contextualization involves a four step process, phenomenological analysis, ontological reflection, critical evaluation, and missional transformation.[48] Phenomenological analysis is to understand the phenomena of the beliefs and practices of people. Ontological analysis is to test the truth claims of these against scripture and objective reality. Critical evaluation is to evaluate biblically the beliefs and practices. Missional transformation is to effect changes following critical evaluation. This could be usefully adapted to the situation under consideration. Central to the discussion is the nature of mission.

Hiebert, Shaw and Tiénou clarify what mission is all about. First, they note that mission is about people, not programs.[49] They explain that mission should not be thought as projects to be accomplished through human engineering and action. They emphasise an incarnational approach, which is begins with learning to understand people deeply, identifying with them, building relationships of love and trust, and communicating the gospel to them in ways that can help them to analyze their old religious ways, and to think biblically in their everyday lives.[50] This point emphasises the importance of understanding people deeply. People from the groups affected by postmodernity, neocolonialism, and globalism, need to be understood and ministered to using cross-cultural approaches, especially the incarnational approach.

The second point Hiebert and others make is that mission is about principles, not pragmatic answers. They point out that missions should not be reduced to problem solving but be about upholding biblical principles, such as truth, love and righteousness, and the like. Mission concerns these in both the ends it seeks and the means it uses to achieve those ends. There are no shortcuts to the goals of Christian ministry.[51] Christian

---

[47] Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections*, 64.
[48] Hiebert, *Understanding*, 21.
[49] Hiebert, *Understanding*, 16.
[50] Hiebert, *Understanding*, 16.
[51] Hiebert, *Understanding*, 16.

principles remain the same and they guide the methods of doing mission in each period and context.

The third point is that mission has to do with the particular, not only the universal. Here they emphasise that God addressed particular people groups in their languages and contexts. Gospel is truth for people who live in specific places and times, and are caught in particular straits in life.[52] This is relevant especially since most postmodernists emphasise their particularity. Some globalists emphasize the universal while others emphasize hierarchy.

Finally, Hiebert and his friends note mission is a process, not a task to complete. The process is ongoing of calling people to faith, discipling them, organizing them into living congregations, encouraging them to do theological reflection in their contexts, and sharing with them the vision of God's mission to the world.[53] This must continue as each generation of Christians in each location discover for themselves the message of the gospel and its transformation for themselves and their times and places.[54] In other words, mission is an ecclesiological task, but the Triune God is in the forefront of the project, and we need to be sensitive to the Spirit's guidance.

As we consider applying the process of critical contextualization to the subject matter at hand, the following table depicting "A Visual Representation of Postmodernism" presented in the Conference of Educators in Trinidad (2004) seems useful.[55] This version of the chart demonstrating the shift in worldview from the 1700 to the present was used to provide an initial insight into the implications for the church's response to postmodernity.[56] I suggest that this chart could serve a similar purpose concerning applying Hiebert's analysis.

DOCTRINES	Theistic Worldview (until 1700s/ Revelational)	Modern Worldview (1700-1980s/ Empirical)	PostModern Worldview (1970s-Present/Process)
CENTER	God	Rationalism	Individual/Subjective
TRUTH	Absolute; Revealed in Bible	Absolute; Discovered (Science and Reason)	Relative; Community Based
KNOWLEDGE	Leads to God; Helps	Is certain, good,	Tentative, good and

---

[52] Hiebert, *Understanding*, 16.

[53] Hiebert, *Understanding*, 16.

[54] Hiebert, *Understanding*, 11-21.

[55] Cf. Anthony Manswell, Caribbean Theological CollegeManswell explores the idea that understanding postmodernism and incorporating a theistic worldview with redeemable aspects of postmodernism could bring about an effective relevancy to theological education. Manswell, "Message, Methodology, And Relevancy Of Postmodernism," http://didache.nts.edu/pdfs/GTIIE_Manswell.pdf accessed on 30 March 2010 2/7.

[56] Cf. Manswell, "Message, Methodology, And Relevancy Of Postmodernism," 2/7.

	us to reflect His character	objective and is used to control nature	bad; cooperative; includes intuition and emotion
GOD	Good, holy, personal; Ruler of all	Distant, removed, irrelevant; Figment	Many gods, including the individual
NATURE	Created by and dependent upon God	Eternal and Evolutionary	Deconstructive
HISTORY	Purpose and direction	Cause and effect with no purpose but with direction	Pleasure seeking with direction
HUMANITY	Created in the image of God	Combination of physical elements	Spiritual and relational
CHURCH	Fortress/Bulwark of Truth	Creation of nonscientifict crutch	Community; Familial relationships
MISSION	Global	Regional	Local
OUTLOOK	Hopeful	Optimistic	Guardedly pessimistic
THEOLOGICAL TASK	Codification and certification of biblical authority/Truth	Rational, scientific critique of religious/biblical tradition	Seeking relational/spiritual aspects of life for practical application

The chart has the doctrinal areas listed on the left of the chart. For each of these, there is an explanation of what the Theistic, Modern, and Postmodern worldviews emphasized. For example, in a theistic world, God was at the center, in a modern worldview human thought was at the center, and in a postmodern worldview the individual (even though related to the modern worldview) is at the center. [57]

According to Hiebert's model, phenomenological analysis is to understand phenomena of the beliefs and practices of people. This step is necessary for us to utilize the incarnational approach, which is a cross-cultural method that includes the need to determine the worldview. By tracing the definitions of the categories, postmodernity, neocolonialism, and globalization, we have touched upon phenomenology of the postmodernities. The above chart helps to note the shifts in the beliefs and practices from pre-modernity to modernity and postmodernity.

---

[57] Cf. Manswell, "Message, Methodology, And Relevancy Of Postmodernism," 2/7.

The next step in critical contextualization is ontological analysis that is to test the truth claims of the postmodernities against scripture and objective reality. In light of this it is important to note current discussions on ontology in relation to postmodernity. In contemporary political theory, White notes, a curious commonality, emerging across a wide variety of contributions, is that there is increasingly a turn to ontology.[58] The waning of this self-confidence has engendered a widespread recourse to ontological reflection. White terms this phenomenon as "ontological turn" in political theory. In this light, Heidegger's analysis in *Being and Time* becomes relevant and plays a crucial role.[59] White writes, ontological reflection thus becomes inextricably entangled with distinctive characteristics of human beings, such as mortality and "mood" *(Stimmung).*[60] He notes that, Heidegger in his later work, gave ontological investigation a historical dimension, insofar as he turned against the dominant, modern way of understanding human beings or subjectivity and indicted the whole tradition of Western metaphysics that, in his view, had sought cognitive frameworks within which to "grasp" being conclusively.[61] Heidegger's view was appropriated and modified in various ways by familiar poststructuralist or postmodern thinkers, such as Foucault, Derrida, and Lyotard.[62] In each of these initiatives, ontological concerns emerge in the form of deep re-conceptualizations of human being in relation to its world. Therefore, it is important to emphasize this diversity in the ontological turn.

White suggests based on typically exhibited characteristics, two ideal types of ontology, strong and weak. He argues that strong ontologies involve too much "metaphysics." White's *weak ontology* is intended to highlight what is distinctive about this new phenomenon by resisting strong ontological thought, on the one hand, and the strategy of much of liberal thought, on the other.[63] Generally, White notes, the latter has ignored or suppressed ontological reflection, sometimes implicitly affirming the Teflon self, sometimes expressing neutrality toward it and so weak ontology finds the costs of such strategies to outweigh the claimed benefits.[64] White further argues that weak ontology represents a "turn" in contemporary political philosophy that speaks to some of the deepest problems facing late modernity. In other words, in the best tradition of political theory, White uses textual interpretation as a staging ground for his own original contribution to political theory in his analysis of ontology of late modernity.

---

[58] Cf. Stephen K. White, *Sustaining Affirmation: The Strengths of Weak Ontology in Political Theory* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, c2000), 3.

[59] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time,* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).

[60] White, *Sustaining,* 7.

[61] See, for example, "What Is Metaphysics?," "Letter on Humanism," and "The Question Concerning Technology," in *Basic Writings,* ed. David Krell (NewY ork: Harper and Row, 1977).

[62] See White's discussion of this theme in *Political Theory and Postmodernism* (NewY ork: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and Michael Dillon, "Another Justice," *Political Theory* 27, no. 2 (1999): 155–75; Derrida, J. *Of grammatology.* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1974); Lyotard, J. F. *The postmodern condition: a report on knowledge.* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986).

[63] White cites this in relation to Gianni Vattimo's term *weak thinking* . White is doubtful whether Vattimo would find White's elucidation of the characteristics of a felicitous weak ontology compatible with his own views. See Vattimo, *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture,* trans. Jon R. Snyder (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 85–86.

[64] White, *Sustaining,* 7, 8.

Towards an Evaluation and Transformative Steps

In terms of critical evaluation, mission approaches to any group have to consider biblically the group's dominant core value, as well as the group's web of relationships to other core values within and without the group. On the one hand, the core relational values have been present in each age in some form (either simpler or sophisticated), and have posed as challenges to mission. On the other hand, missionary principles and approaches have been in place and developed to meet those challenges in forms that suited the needs of the past. I would suggest here lays the clue for doing missions in the 21st century.

In order to grasp the interrelationships between Christian mission and postmodernity we need an evaluative frame of reference or a meta-grid from the point of view of missions. For this the perceptions and construction of the basic or root categories of self and other or others, and their relationship to each other become important. The grid helps us in not only locating ourselves in it but also to locate others. This will be useful not only to examining ourselves but also others.

The Gospel is relevant to every age and era. It is relevant to this age and era characterized by postmodernity, neocolonialism, and globalization. I suggest that these three characteristics in order correspond to and relate to core or root ideologies related to notions of self and others such as individualistic or particularistic ideology, hierarchical ideology, and communal ideology. In individualistic or particularistic ideology autonomy is stressed, in hierarchical ideology hegemony is stressed, and in communal ideology egalitarianism is stressed. Postmodernity as a core contemporary philosophy, and according to D.A. Carson, has its roots in pluralism, especially in philosophical pluralism, which in turn could be explained as a new form of individualistic and particularistic ideology marked by self-referentiality[65] and metacognition.[66] Hence, autonomy is its key value. Neocolonialism and in turn its offshoots—post-colonialism, anti-colonialism, re-colonialism, and colonialism itself—have their roots in hierarchical ideology. Its key value is hegemony. Globalisation, characterized by the interrelation of various cultures in the world and its apparent trend of becoming one big global village, has its roots in communal ideology. Hence, egalitarianism is its key value. By applying a root metaphor approach, we arrive at the core values of autonomy, hegemony, and egalitarianism that guide each of the dominant present day phenomena—postmodernity, neocolonialism, and globalisation respectively. These core values help us to set the

---

[65] J. Williamson, *Decoding advertisements*. (London: Marion Boyars, 1978) 175-178.

[66] D. Schön, *Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Toward a New Design for Teaching and Learning in the Professions.* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987); Brian Curtis, in his paper on "Practical applications of Postmodern Theory for promoting learner autonomy in a foundation studies program" argues that "theories of postmodernity and learner autonomy are inextricably linked, each informing and informed by the other, resulting in practice and applications in both fields that mirror each other in an endless cycle of reflection." (Proceedings of the Independent Learning Conference 2003 Published 20 September 2004), 7, http://independentlearning.org/ILA/ila03/ila03_curtis.pdf?q=ila03/ila03_curtis.pdf accessed on 16 February 2010.

contemporary phenomena and Christian mission in an evaluative and useful relational framework based on identity of the self, the other, or others.

Most people while belong to one of the three dominant value groups, but also are part of the other two groups. Thus, they are participating in all the three types of values in various combinations. They are caught in the web of all three core-values. However, at the centre of it all is the question of identity. It is about the perception and construction of the self and the other or others, and the relationship of the self to the others. This also includes how one group perceives and constructs relationships between other groups.

The triune God perceives, constructs, and relates to the same categories of identity, the self and the other, or others. This understanding acts as normative, evaluative, and corrective. God's view also includes his perception of how each group or individual perceives itself or themselves and the other or others, which includes God. We need to recover those missionary principles and approaches in relational terms of identity and apply them in the ways that communicate the gospel to the needs of contemporary world.

People belonging to postmodern entities need the missionary approaches that meet the challenges of autonomy; those belonging to neocolonial groups need the missionary approaches that meet the challenges of hegemony; and those of globalisation groups need the missionary methods that meet the challenges of egalitarian values. Here, I will attempt to provide some examples, but only as my initial thoughts.

When we consider postmodernities that already have autonomy as their dominant value, I think this could still be a valid and appropriate approach only this time the focus has to be to concentrate Christian efforts in addressing the issues related to weak ontologies. Here perhaps, as already noted, *volkskirchke* approach of doing mission could be appropriated to the present context of postmodernity. Gianni Vattimo's book is another example of how out of a postmodern-faith (belief) could arise - an authentic Christian philosophy for post-modernity.[67] Vattimo's "rediscovery" of Christianity, a personal experience, was paradoxically through studying Nietzsche and Heidegger. Vattimo, uses the term "weak belief." He uses Kenosis, an idea that never flourished under classical metaphysics - but in our new, post-metaphysical age, he has conceived a secularized interpretation of Christianity using kenosis.[68] Vattimo's book is a secularized outline for contemporary belief out of Heidegger's "weak ontology" - the undoing or "weakening" of Being in the classical metaphysical sense. [69] Here Heidegger's concept of "weakening" parallels the essence of the Christian message and the essence of belief is seen as the continual secularization of spiritual structures. Here, belief is the "weak belief" in the possibility of belief. [70]

---

[67] Gianni Vattimo, (Author), Luca D"Isanto (Translator), David Webb, *Belief (Cultural Memory in the Present)* (Stanford University Press; 1 edition, 1999).
[68] Cf. Alex Sydorenko, "Believing that one believes", http://www.amazon.com/Belief-Cultural-Memory-Present-Vattimo/dp/0804739196, July 23, 2003 accessed on 29 March 2010.
[69] Cf. Alex Sydorenko, "Believing that one believes."
[70] Cf. Alex Sydorenko, "Believing that one believes."

It is important to regard the principle of respect for autonomy as "first among equals" approach as the key missional approach. It won the day in cross-cultural missionary work among those who were bound up in a hierarchical social framework in India and in other African countries. Perhaps, these missionary approaches might be adapted to those belonging to neocolonial groups faced with the challenges of hegemony.[71] The Wesleyan Methodist missionaries such as Rev. Sawday had audience and cordial relationship with the Maharaja of Mysore in India that resulted in ministering to people in various ways, especially developing medical service in the mid 20th century.[72] Such other good examples could be suitably adapted as missionary approaches to reach the current neocolonial rulers with the message of Jesus Christ.

In addition, Missions is now a global marketplace with egalitarian values. Rapid communication has influenced mission organizations across cultures in the world.[73] The global neighborhood encourages some churches to bypass mission agencies. Churches can collaborate directly with national mission organizations of churches, with a dedicated missions staff and strong infrastructure and support. Not only are missionaries on a competitive global support grid, but also missions and indigenous mission organizations. Mission organizations can more easily collaborate with other missions for specific projects. Rapid information has built rapport between missions and communities, mission and churches and individuals. Support is available for missionary work at internet portals such as www.give.org4. Globalization has brought specialization to missions. Most cross-cultural missionary work could be managed locally. With the present technological abilities, Bible translation could be speeded up, specialist information could be electronically transferred and made use of online. Online training could be provided and made use of creating real time impact on the missionary work.

From the above suggestions, the postmodern self seeks to make a statement in her or his being and doing. Neo-colonial subjects seek justice, the voice of the deliverer on their behalf. Neo-colonial rulers need the help of a voice that analyzes them from without. In globalisation, there is a seeking of narrative of the self in the global meta-narrative. What Christopher J. H. Wright writes in his footnote 22 on the case of postmodernity is relevant here, that the features of the Bible—cultural, local, relational, narrative—are welcome to the postmodern mind. That where the missional hermeneutic will part company with radical postmodernity, is in its insistence that through all this variety, locality, particularity diversity, the Bible is nevertheless actually *the* story. He affirms

---

[71] Michel Foucault suggests that hegemony is a subtle process. It is gained most effectively through practices, techniques, and methods. These infiltrate minds and bodies, cultural practices which cultivate behaviors and beliefs. They also cultivate, tastes, desires and needs as seemingly naturally occurring qualities and properties embodied in the psychic and physical reality of the human subject Foucault in Smart, B. "The politics of truth and the problems of hegemony" In D. C. Hoy (Ed.), *Foucault: A critical reader* (Oxford : Basil Blackwell, 1986).) 159.
[72] A. J. Anandan, "Kingdom in a Kingdom: Methodist Mission in Mysore State 1813-1913; Its successes and Failures" unpublished thesis, (Bangalore: SAIACS, 2010), 270-3.
[73] Jim Sutherland "Globalization and Christian Missions", 9/2005, http://www.rmni.org/teaching_papers/Missions/Globalization%20and%20Christian%20Missions.pdf, accessed 29 March 2010.

that this is the way it is and it is the grand narrative that constitutes truth for all. Within *this* story, the story of God's mission, he suggests that, as narrated or anticipated by the Bible, there is at work the God whose mission is evident from creation to new creation. It is a coherent story with a universal claim and at the same time, it is a story that affirms humanity in all its particular cultural variety.[74] I suggest that the people within the framework of identity, comprising of values of autonomy, hegemony and egalitarianism pose as hermeneutic texts seeking answers. The need of the hour is mission as biblical hermeneutics where Jesus is the response and answer.

The way forward in mission to subjects of postmodernity is a theology and mission of hermeneutical being and doing where the challenges of autonomy are addressed as exemplified by Jesus in his incarnational, yes, and more so in his kenosis, the Word (the Statement) became flesh (the Being and Doing Self) and dwelt among us. The mission to neo-colonial subjects and rulers needs a theology of justice and righteousness where the challenges of hegemony are addressed—Jesus as deliverer of the subjects, and the one who analyzes the rulers and invites them to follow him. The mission to the world of globalisation needs a theology of the kingdom of God for the individual and corporate living, where the challenges of egalitarianism are addressed—In Jesus there is a new order of things. There is no Jew or gentile but a new man and community, the church.

Louis Dumont, analyzing Indian culture in his work *Homo Hierarchicus*, said that the renouncer stands outside the caste system as an individual and from that standpoint is able to effect changes in the society.[75] As already noted, in India the ideologies of tradition, modernity and postmodernity, to this I add neocolonialism, and globalisation live cheek by jowl, and that tradition is what people in India have.[76] Paranjape proposed a literary theory interrelation between two sets of triads, one of the ideologies—tradition, modern, and postmodern and other of the regions—regional, national, and international, and argues for using permutations and combinations of the two sets to combat the ills of each other. Traditional, modern, and postmodern, including neocolonised, and globalised, India needs Jesus to bring deliverance and transform the society. Jesus stood as a questioner of his times and traditions. He stands as such through every age to every people in the Gospels and through his church and its mission. He stands outside the cultures as a questioner (knocking at the door) but also enters each one of them (when cultures respond to him in a positive way). He calls the tax collectors, the rich young rulers, and the common folk into a relationship with his self. He calls people to himself and ministers to them in the marketplace. This framework could be taken as an incarnational paradigm for doing mission in traditional, modern, postmodern, neo-colonial, and global India and the world.

---

[74] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible"'s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 45.
[75] Louis Dumont, Basia, Gulati (tr) & Mark, Sainsbury (tr): *Homo Hierarchicus*. (New Delhi. Oxford University Press, 1999).
[76] Makarand Paranjape "Tradition, Modernity and Post-Modernity/Region, Nation, and Internation: Challenges in Theory," http://www.makarand.com/acad/Traditionmodernity.htm; accessed on 10 December 2009.

Following Jesus, the saviour, involves a cost. I agree with Hiebert who said "Many accuse us of religious arrogance when we proclaim Christ as the only Saviour and Lord, but speaking the truth is not arrogance."[77] Hiebert quotes Leslie Newbegin, "To affirm the unique decisiveness of God's action in Jesus Christ is no arrogance; it is the enduring bulwark against the arrogance of every culture to be itself the criterion by which others are judged"[78] He goes on to note, "We must be careful to proclaim the gospel, not our culture. We must also speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15)."[79] Biblical love is not superficial sentiment but a deep commitment to be for the other. We must affirm the full dignity of others—whether traditional, modern, postmodern, neocolonist, globalists—as humans created in the image of God and care enough to confront them. Above all, we must never forget God is in the forefront of his mission and we must listen to the Holy Spirit, and continue to point people to Christ as the way, the truth, and the life.[80]

CONCLUSION

In years following Edinburgh 1910, the world mission and church conferences redefined Christian mission repeatedly as it developed over the past century from an expansionist model to the ecumenical witness of the church. Mission is understood as from everywhere to everywhere. This calls for the church in every country to consider how mission is done in the prevailing context of postmodern, neocolonial, and globalism—forces which present new challenges. This paper has suggested a critical contextual approach drawing from Hiebert's model for doing mission and proposes mission as biblical hermeneutics where Jesus is the hermeneutic response and answer for the early 21st century.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anandan, A. J. "Kingdom in a Kingdom:Methodist Mission in Mysore State 1813-1913; Its successes and Failures" unpublished thesis, Bangalore: SAIACS, 2010

Baskaran, Roderic L. Owen and Jesudason B Jeyaraj. *Inter-Faith Relations and Higher Education* (New Delhi: ISPCK and Lady Doak College, Madurai, 2007

Berger, Peter L., Brigitte Berger, and Hansfried Kellner. *The Homeless Mind: Modernization and Consciousness*, New York: Random House, 1973

Carson, Don, A. *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* Leicester: Apollos, 1996

Cha, Peter T. "Building a Healthy Congregational Culture in Today's Postmodern" http://www.commongroundjournal.org/volnum/v06n01.pdf, *Common Ground Journal* v6 n1 (Fall2008): 21-30

Christopher J.H. Wright. *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2006

Curtis, Brian. "Practical applications of Postmodern Theory for promoting learner autonomy in a foundation studies program", Proceedings of the Independent

---

[77] Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections*, 73.
[78] Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections*, 73.
[79] Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections*, 73.
[80] Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections*, 73.

Learning Conference 2003 Published 20 September 2004, 7 http://independentlearning.org/ILA/ila03/ila03_curtis.pdf?q=ila03/ila03_curtis.pd f, 16 February 2010

Derrida, J. 1974. *Of grammatology*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press

Dillon, Michael. "Another Justice," *Political Theory* 27, no. 2 (1999): 155–75.

Dollfus, Olivier. "Globalization, Families, and Communities in Europe" in Globalization and Indigenous Culture, Inoue Nobutaka, General editor, Institute for Japanese Culture and Classics Kokugakuin University, 1997, http://www2.kokugakuin.ac.jp/ijcc/wp/global/index.html, 20 August 2009

Drane, John W. "Methods and Perspectives in Understanding the New Age" in *Themelios* vol. 23:2, (February 1998) 23-24

Dumont, Louis, Basia, Gulati (tr) & Mark, Sainsbury (tr). *Homo Hierarchicus*. New Delhi. Oxford University Press, 1999

Ellul, Jacques. *The Technological Society*, trans. John Wilkinson New York: Random House, 1964

Foucault, Michel, in Smart, B. "The politics of truth and the problems of hegemony" In D. C. Hoy (Ed.), *Foucault: A critical reader* Oxford : Basil Blackwell, 1986.

Gellner, Ernest. *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion* London: Routledge, 1992

Harvey, David. *The Condition of Post-Modernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Culture Change* Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1984, 1990

Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time,* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson New York: Harper and Row, 1962

Hiebert, Paul G. *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994

Hiebert, Paul G., R. Daniel Shaw, Tite Tiénou. *Understanding Folk Religion: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999

Jeyapragasam, S. "Globalisation and Inter-Religious Relations" in M. Valliammal Baskaran, Roderic L. Owen and Jesudason B Jeyaraj, *Inter-Faith Relations and Higher Education* New Delhi: ISPCK and Lady Doak College, Madurai, 2007,243-246

Kenneth R. Ross. *Edinburgh 2010: Springboard for Mission* Pasadena, California: William Carey International University Press, 2009

Krell, David. *Basic Writings,* ed. NewY ork: Harper and Row, 1977

Lyotard, J. F. *The postmodern condition: a report on knowledge*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986

Mangalwadi, Vishal. *Missionary Conspiracy: Letters to a Postmodern Hind* Mussoorie: Nivedit Good Books, 1996

Manswell, Anthony. "Message, Methodology, And Relevancy Of Postmodernism", http://didache.nts.edu/pdfs/GTIIE_Manswell.pdf , 30 March 2010

Neill, Stephen C. *A History of Christianity in India* Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 1985

Nye, Joseph S. *The paradox of American power: why the world's only superpower can't go it alone* Oxford University Press US, 2002

Nobutaka, Inoue. "Globalization's Challenge to Indigenous Culture" http://www2.kokugakuin.ac.jp/ijcc/wp/global/02inoue.html, 21 August 2009

Paranjape, Makarand. "Postmodernism and India"
  http://www.makarand.com/acad/PostmodernismandIndia.htm, 30 October 2009
_____. "Tradition, Modernity and Post-Modernity/Region, Nation, and
  Internation: Challenges in Theory"
  http://www.makarand.com/acad/Traditionmodernity.htm, 10 December 2009
Pilger, John. *Hidden agendas* London: Verso, 1999
Robertson, Roland. *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*, SAGE Publications
  Ltd, 1992
Rosenau, Pauline. *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences: Insights, Inroads and
  Intrusions* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992
Ross, Kenneth R. *Edinburgh 2010: Springboard for Mission* Pasadena, California: William
  Carey International University Press, 2009
Schön, D. *Educating the reflective practitioner: toward a new design for teaching and
  learning in the professions.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987.
Smart, B. "The politics of truth and the problems of hegemony." In D. C. Hoy (Ed.),
  Foucault: A critical reader, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986.
Stipo, Francesco. *World Federalist Manifesto: Guide to Political Globalization* (Miami,
  USA: Francesco Stipo**,** 2007); Stipo, Francesco "World Federalist Manifesto.
  Guide to Political Globalization" April 10, 2007.
  http://www.worldfederalistmanifesto.com, 30 March 2010
Sutherland, Jim. "Globalization and Christian Missions", 9/2005
  http://www.rmni.org/teaching_papers/Missions/Globalization%20and%20Christia
  n%20Missions.pdf, 29 March 2010.
Sydorenko, Alex. "Believing that one believes", July 23, 2003
  http://www.amazon.com/Belief-Cultural-Memory-Present-
  Vattimo/dp/0804739196, 29 March 2010
Vattimo, Gianni. (Author), Luca D'Isanto (Translator), David Webb *Belief (Cultural
  Memory in the Present)* Stanford University Press; 1 edition, 1999
Vattimo, Gianni. trans. Jon R. Snyder *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in
  Postmodern Culture,* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988
White, Stephen K. *Political Theory and Postmodernism* NewY ork: Cambridge University
  Press, 1991
White, Stephen K. *Sustaining affirmation: the strengths of weak ontology in political
  theory* Princeton : Princeton University Press, c2000
Williamson, J. *Decoding advertisements*. London: Marion Boyars, 1978
Yates, Timothy. *Christian mission in the twentieth century* Cambridge: Cambridge
  University Press, 1994