

# **ANZAMS**

**AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND  
ASSOCIATION FOR MISSION STUDIES**

**PROCEEDINGS  
OF A  
MINI-SYMPOSIUM  
HELD AT  
LAIDLAW COLLEGE  
HENDERSON ~ NEW ZEALAND  
ON  
OCTOBER 30-31, 2009**

Published by ANZAMS  
Aotearoa New Zealand Association for Mission Studies  
c/o Laidlaw College Centre for Cross-Cultural Mission  
Private Bag 93104  
Henderson 0650  
Auckland  
New Zealand

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**ANZAMS  
Mini-Symposium  
30/31 October 2009**

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## *Preface*

On 30-31 October 2009, a diverse group of forty theological students, practising missionaries and mission administrators, mission studies lecturers and enthusiasts, and people engaged in a range of Christian service gathered at Laidlaw College, Auckland, for the Aotearoa-New Zealand Association of Mission Studies Symposium on the theme *From Edinburgh 1910 to Edinburgh 2010 – Witnessing to Christ Today: Perspectives from Aotearoa New Zealand*. These papers are the fruit of their sharing.

In his provocative survey of the current status of Mission Studies globally, John Roxborough, doyen of recent mission studies in New Zealand, raised early in the Symposium, the concern: “it is not clear where the next generation of missiologists is coming from, or what is the life experience and critical dissonance that will inform their academic development.” By the end of the meeting it was clear there is a group of both serious younger academics and mission promoters in New Zealand who are not prepared to let the previous dichotomy between reflection and praxis continue to regulate Kiwi perspectives on Christian witness. They are committed to pursue the developing integration of thought and action Roxborough’s paper had traced historically. The varying foci and scope of the following papers demonstrate this quest.

In presenting these papers for wider circulation we have retained this mingling of theory and praxis by retaining the order of presentation in the symposium. Two of Laidlaw College’s faculty, Steve Graham and John Hitchen, provide biblical “bookends” for the discussion, and examples of what a missional hermeneutic may contribute to biblical studies, with Graham’s overview of mission metaphors and their use in Matthew’s Gospel, and Hitchen presenting the themes of Galatians and 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians as guidelines for mission amongst primal peoples in a post-modern context.

Both Darren Ward, Director of the Christian Blind Mission, in his frank analysis of tensions inherent in the exercise of power in mission, and David Forris, long-time Wycliffe Bible Translator and Summer Institute of Linguistics trainer, as he identifies points in the translation process where the distinction between translation and interpretation is easily blurred, show an exemplary willingness for self-evaluation and self-critique as mission practitioners. A similar call for integrity in both relationships and motivation permeates Rosemary Dewerse’s in-process summary of her doctoral work on making theological education genuinely respectful of cultural difference. Hugh Kemp’s reflection of the evangelistic nature and potential of his approach to historical research of Mongolia’s Christian history also explores the delicate ambiguity of such critically important contextual opportunities in present-day mission. George Wieland’s passionate mission theology balances the careful sociological data-gathering co-researcher Andrew Butcher brings as they interpret how migrant Christian communities understand their experience in their newly adopted Kiwi homeland.

Adam Dodds moves confidently between in-depth analysis of Newbiggin's Trinitarian theology and plumbing its practical implications in his overview of a section of his doctoral work. Jono Ryan provides what may well be the most important theological study of the collection as he grapples, as the New Zealand Coordinator of Servants to Asia's Urban Poor, with the very practical question for them as a mission organisation, as to the sense in which it is appropriate to describe mission as 'incarnational.'

Ross Langmead, Dean and Professor of Missiology at Whitley College, Melbourne, as our Australian guest and representative of the Australian Association of Mission Studies, presents a stimulating and creative overview of what a Christian community can look like in our contemporary context in his contribution to one of the Edinburgh 2010 Study Groups. As a final example of how mission features so largely in our own Aotearoa New Zealand history, and the challenges inherent in describing its contribution for a technologically savvy generation, we include historian Peter Lineham's Power-Point slides, commentary on their composition, and the lists of supporting readings and photos, etc., which he is using to explain mission history in *Te Ara*, a forthcoming on-line encyclopaedia and teaching resource.

We, the contributors, express our deep gratitude to the Centre for Cross-Cultural Mission (C<sup>3</sup>M) at Laidlaw College, and particularly to Ian Dally, its Administrator, for organising the Symposium and compiling these essays for publication. The meeting agreed to re-activate the New Zealand chapter of the International Association of Mission Studies and appointed a new group of executive officers for that purpose.

In assessing the significance of the Symposium, we are reminded of the sage advice the late Harold W. Turner, foremost New Zealand contributor to global Mission Studies in recent decades, gave several of us: "...the most practical thing you can do for the church in New Zealand at this time is, to think." We offer these essays as examples of such practical thinking on mission today, since, as Roxborough's paper suggests, that is what mission studies is all about.

John M. Hitchen,  
Laidlaw College,  
Auckland, NZ.  
February 2010

**ANZAMS  
Mini-Symposium  
30/31 October 2009**

**Programme**

**Friday 30 October**

- 1:30** Registration, welcome and introductions
- 2:00** **Steve Graham** ~ Metaphors of Mission in the Gospel of Matthew: Generating a Biblical Paradigm of Mission through Cognitive Analysis of Selected Metaphors
- 3:00** **Darren Ward** ~ Missions and Power
- 3:30** Afternoon Tea
- 4:00** **John Roxborough** ~ Global Christianities and Mission Studies: an emerging discourse and a sustainable model
- 5:00** **David Foris** ~ Dynamic Equivalence translation
- 5:30** Conversations
- 6:00** Dinner
- 7:00** **Adam Dodds** ~ Newbigin's Trinitarian Missiology
- 8:00** **Rosemary Dewerse** ~ Missiologists as Key-holders for Theological Education Reform
- 9:00** Supper

**Saturday 31 October**

- 9:00** **Ross Langmead** ~ Christian Communities in Contemporary Contexts – an Australian Perspective
- 10:00** **Jono Ryan** ~ On the sense in which we can use the adjective 'Incarnational' in Mission
- 10:30** Morning Tea
- 11:00** **Hugh Kemp** ~ History as evangelism: some initial critical reflection on researching Mongolia's Christian history
- 11:45** **George Wieland & Andrew Butcher** ~ Migrant Theologies – How Migrant Christian Communities in NZ Interpret their Experience Theologically.
- 12:30** Lunch
- 1:30** **John Hitchen** ~ The Place of Primal Religious Groups in Post-Modern Mission
- 2:15** **Peter Lineham** ~ Assessing the Impact of NZ Missionaries on the World Scene
- 3:00** The future of ANZAMS
- 3:30** Close





# ***Metaphors of Mission in the Gospel of Matthew: Generating a Paradigm of Mission from Cognitive Analysis of Selected New Testament Metaphors***

Steve Graham is a lecturer in New Testament and Mission at Laidlaw College, Christchurch Campus, New Zealand. He worked in the Philippines with Servants to Asia's Urban Poor. He is a doctoral student at the University of Queensland, Australia.

## **Abstract:**

In the ongoing search for a new paradigm of mission, the role of metaphors is foundational. This paper critically appropriates the methodology of Sallie McFague particularly her understanding of the interrelationships between metaphors, models and concepts in paradigms. It then surveys recent cognitive approaches to metaphor as a critical methodology to analyse a selection of the metaphors of mission in the Gospel of Matthew (growing plants, fishing, building, salt/ light and sheep among wolves) and attempts to synthesize these and generate concepts of mission for a paradigm of mission that resonates with a post-modern and post-Christendom sensibility.

"A *picture* held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably" (Wittgenstein 1953:115)

"The greatest thing by far is to have a command of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; and it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphors implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars" (Aristotle 1954: 1459a 5-8)

"Images 'feed' concepts; concepts 'discipline' images. Images without concepts are blind; concepts without images are sterile" (McFague 1982:26)

He said to them "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old". (Jesus, Matthew 13:52<sup>1</sup>)

### **Introduction**

The rationale for reflecting on metaphors of mission has both a personal and a disciplinary context. The personal context began almost fifteen years ago with involvement in training people for mission in the Southern Philippines. Living in a city split between Muslim and Christian populations, we were involved in community development among the Muslim community while also conducting ten week 'mission' courses among the neighbouring Christian population. My experience was disappointing and disturbing for me. I found that as I taught concepts of mission I was received with nods and mental assent but then watched the same people stirred and inspired by a completely different mission vision presented by a great orator at a public conference. It became clear that there were levels of understanding that I had not touched. Returning to New Zealand, teaching holistic mission and pastoring a church, I found that I could teach the concepts of holistic mission and have people say "yes but in the end it's all going to burn". It was clear that people were locked into a certain picture that had not shifted. This raised the question of how knowledge was constructed, maintained and resisted change and particularly what non-conceptual dimensions need to be addressed to facilitate conceptual change? Obviously Kuhn's argument that knowledge existed in paradigms was important (Kuhn 1996) and pointed to the role of exemplars, narrative or story, and experience. The statement by McFague above pointed to an interrelationship between concepts and metaphors, suggested much of the energy came from the underlying metaphors and pointed towards the significance of addressing the level of metaphors. The statement by Wittgenstein, also above, precisely described my experience. In the subsequent years I have chosen to focus on seeking to understand the role of underlying metaphors in founding paradigms and generating the concepts of mission theology<sup>2</sup>.

In terms of the discipline of missions studies, it is almost twenty years since David Bosch published his landmark book, *Transforming Mission* in which he argued that "we find ourselves at the moment, in the midst of one of the most important shifts in the understanding and practice of the Christian mission" (1991:xv). Using Kuhn's paradigm theory (Kuhn 1996) Bosch argued that the dominant paradigm in place since the Enlightenment was undergoing change. Bosch sought to outline what he called "elements of an emerging paradigm of mission" (1991: 368-510). While his work has been critiqued in terms of perceived omissions in his elements<sup>3</sup>, there is a deeper criticism that his elements are too conceptual and abstract and fail to coalesce into a genuine paradigm –the kind of compelling integrative vision and interpretive structure implicit in the concept of a paradigm. Having adopted the concept of 'paradigm', Bosch did not address the dynamics of what constellates, funds, empowers and maintains paradigms and thus what is involved in facilitating paradigm change.

Surprisingly, near the end of his book, Bosch himself pointed to an alternative way ahead. Bosch acknowledged "perhaps one cannot really do this by means of *theoria* ... but only by means of *poiesis* (which involves 'imaginative creation or representation of evocative images')" (1991:512)<sup>4</sup>. He continues: "So as to give some ideas of the nature and quality of such multidimensional mission, we might appeal to images, metaphors, events, and pictures rather than to logic or analysis" (1991:512)<sup>5</sup>. In the intervening years a number of writers have taken up this approach and appealed to images and metaphors to "re-imagine mission"<sup>6</sup>.

This is more than an academic exercise. The Consultation on Mission Language and Metaphors (2000) arose as a response to concern that much contemporary language about mission was unhelpful and unbiblical, particularly the western captivity to military and business language. The consultation issued a statement concluding that:

“We encourage Christian mission agencies and local churches to re-examine Scripture and restate their global task in terms consistent with the teaching and mission of Christ. Alternate words and images include blessing, healing, inviting, sowing and reaping, fishing, restoring family relationships, becoming reconcilers, peacemakers and ambassadors.”

The problem is that as Wittgenstein said “A *picture* held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably” (1953:115). Not only are we captives of our own metaphors but “metaphors are often weapons in ideological wars” (Holt 2003:3). As an example of what is felt to be at stake, we need look no further than the title of the recent book by David Hesselgrave, where debates about missions issues are framed as *Paradigms in Conflict* (2006). For all these reasons, there is an urgent need to ground an emerging new paradigm of mission in alternative metaphors to the dominant metaphors of the current paradigm.

However where do we go for alternative metaphors? A number of writers have simply proposed new metaphors (e.g. Messer (1992), Bevans (1991, 2008)). This paper advocates a first move back to the metaphors of Scripture, without suggesting we might not subsequently move beyond them. There are at least three reasons for this first move. Firstly cross-cultural experience points to the reality that immersion in a new culture often awakens us to our own cultural captivity and from a Christian perspective the extent to which our own culture has blinded us to dimensions of the gospel. This is particularly so for Western Christians moving to others cultures which often have more in common with the cultures of the Biblical texts than Western modernity. A possibility is that elements of our modernist mission with which we may feel increasingly uncomfortable were actually never closely Biblical and that our need is not so much to move on from Biblical metaphors as to return to them. That possibility at least warrants a re-look at the biblical metaphors.

Secondly given that the biblical text is going to continue to function as the Scripture of Christian communities then the texts will continue to fund the mission of those communities in ways that idiosyncratic contemporary metaphors will not. If the study of the biblical foundations of mission has ongoing significance and if much of that theology grows out of metaphors then the study of those metaphors has ongoing validity indeed is an ongoing necessity.

Thirdly how do we evaluate proposals for contemporary metaphors? If our theological method recognises any sort of critical correlation between text and context then we are forced to consider criteria not only of contextual relevance but also of Scriptural faithfulness. Unless scholars have done the work of analysis of the metaphors of Scripture we do not have the criteria with which to evaluate any second move of creating new contemporary metaphors. Even if ultimately we feel the need to speak in new metaphors, we need to have relooked at Biblical metaphors so that we have criteria to assess which new metaphors embody key Biblical elements while capturing the imagination with their contextual relevance.

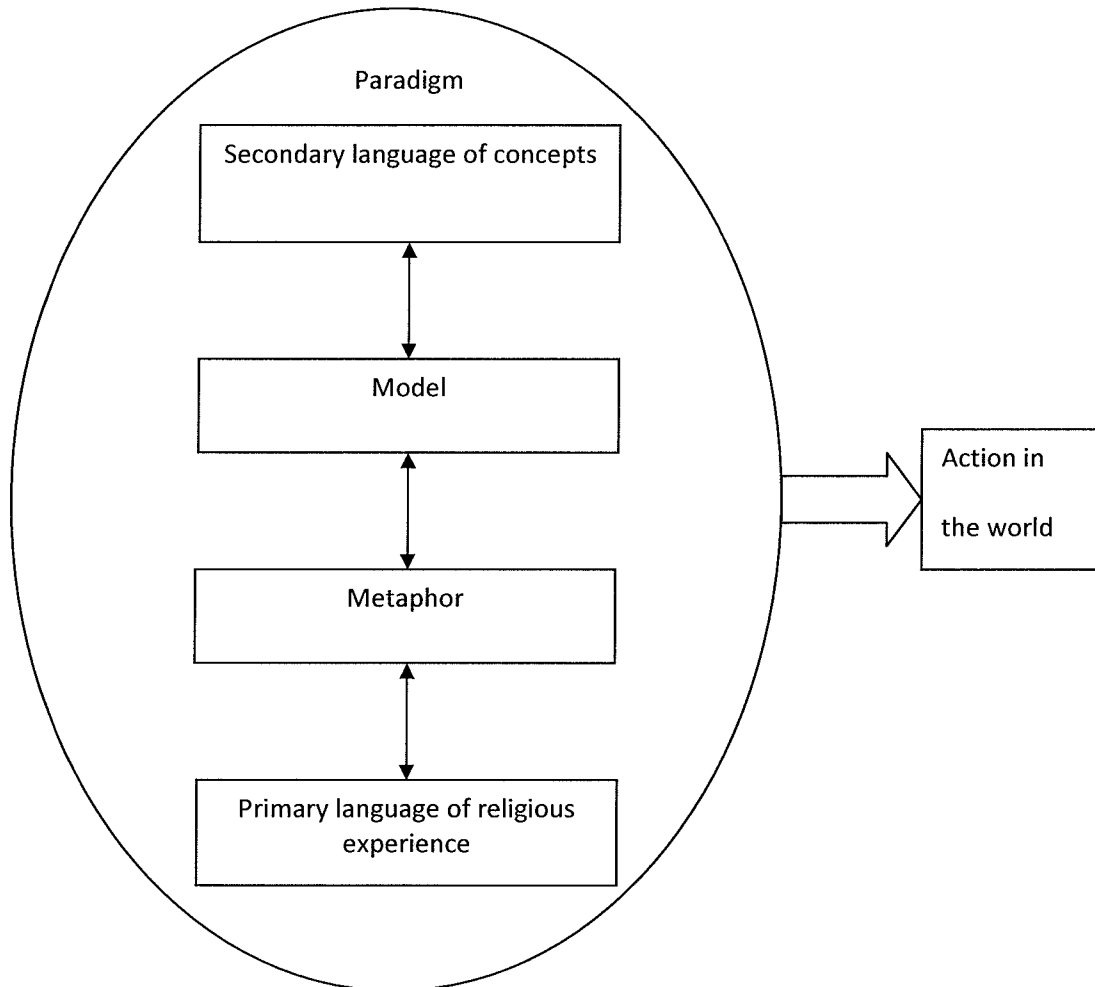
### ***Metaphor and Theology: A Critical Appropriation of the Methodology of Sallie McFague.***

Almost thirty years ago Sallie McFague proposed a framework for understanding and integrating metaphors, models and concepts in theology. She sees metaphors, models and concepts as different levels of religious language that are all important in constituting paradigms but with different functions (see Figure 1 below). Religious paradigms are grounded in metaphors defined as follows:

“Most simply a metaphor is seeing one thing as something else, pretending “this” is “that” because we do not know how to think or talk about ‘this’ so we use ‘that’ as a way of saying something about it. Thinking metaphorically means spotting a thread of similarity between two dissimilar objects, events or whatever, one of which is better known than the other and using the better-known one as a way of speaking about the lesser known” (1982: 15).

A model is then “a dominant metaphor, a metaphor with staying power [and] “suggests a comprehensive ordering structure with impressive interpretive potential”

**Figure 1: Schematic Representation of Religious and Theological Language in McFague’s Idealized Methodology**



(McFague 1982: 23). A concept is an abstract generalization that “orders, arranges, explicates and makes precise the first order revelatory metaphorical language” (McFague 1975:23). Conceptual language “tends toward univocity, toward clear and concise meanings ... In this process something is lost and something is gained: richness and multivalency are sacrificed for precision and consistency” (McFague 1982: 26).

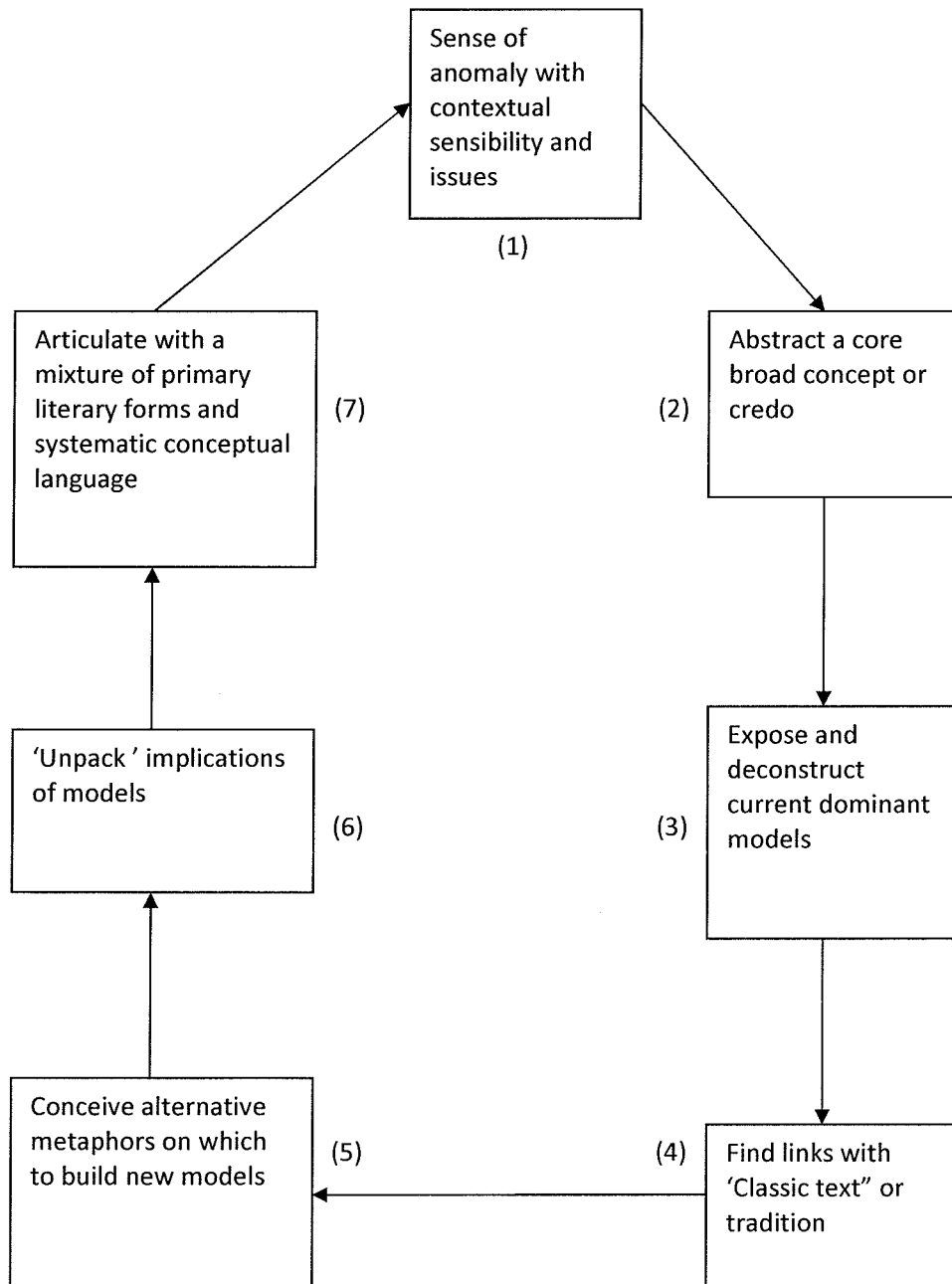
McFague should not be seen as seeking to replace conceptual theology with metaphors but as advocating a symbiotic relationship. She poetically expresses the relation between these as: “Images ‘feed’ concepts; concepts ‘discipline’ images. Images without concepts are blind; concepts without images are sterile” (1982: 26). “Metaphors provide “food” for concepts and concepts provide “sight” for metaphors” (1982: 119).

The key points to emerge from McFague’s understanding is the recognition that certain metaphors end up being taken literally and dominating the understanding, the need to expose these largely unconscious ways of seeing, the need for multiple ways of seeing and the validity of various forms of

religious thinking and speaking particularly seen in terms of western dominance of abstract conceptual thought.

McFague does not pretend to construct theology from a blank slate. She enters the ongoing discussion often naming a profound sense of satisfaction with the status quo and a sense of anomaly between the emerging sensibility and traditional formulations (precisely the state of mission studies identified by Bosch). Her real strength is in the systematic uncovering and deconstruction of current models and thus her methodology can be represented as a process of deconstruction and reconstruction (see Figure 2 below):

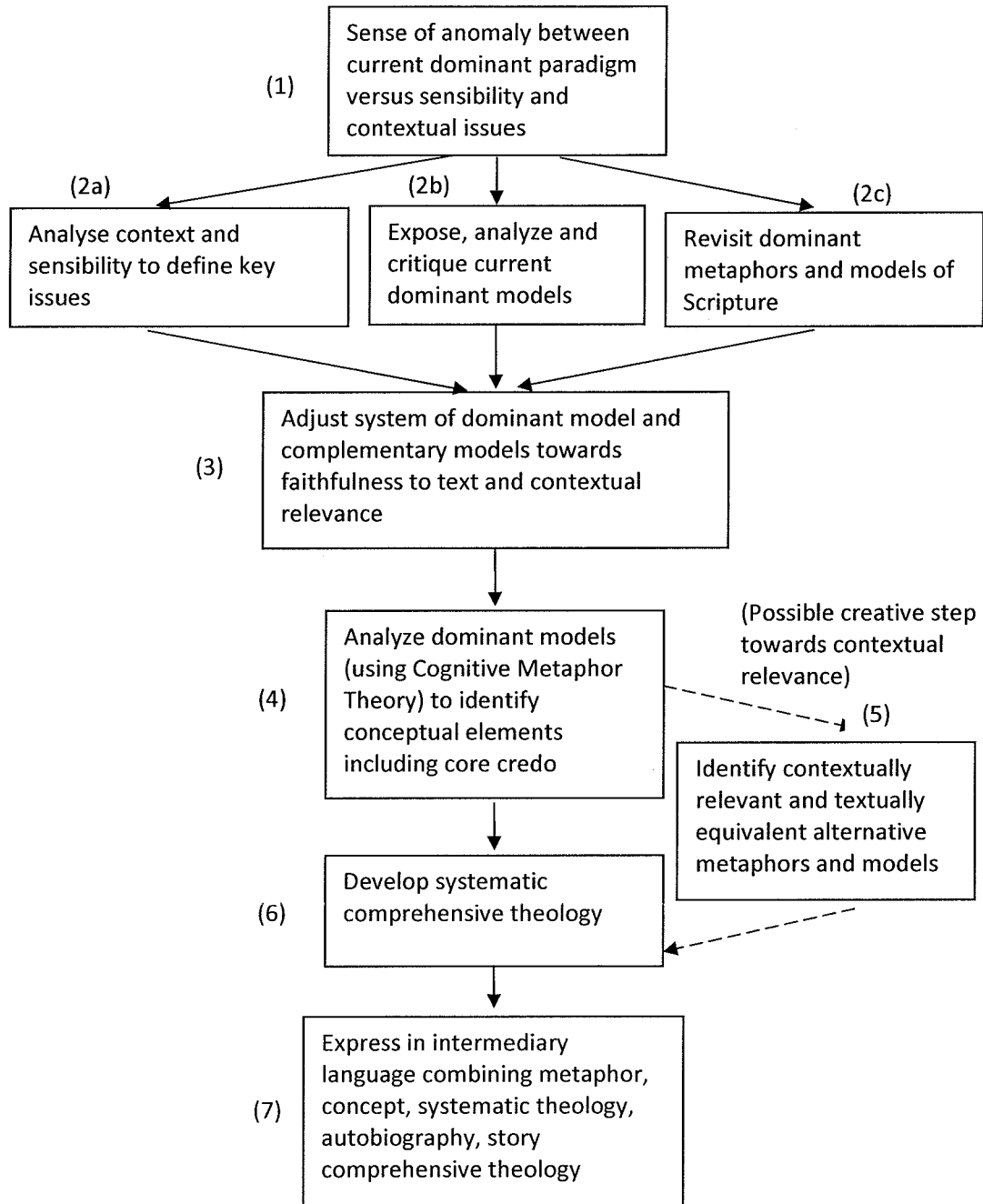
**Figure 2: McFague's Modeled Theological Methodology<sup>7</sup>**



McFague's theological sensibility leads her to propose new metaphors in the name of contextual relevance but it is equally possible to appropriate her framework for a hermeneutical theology that makes a first move of a return to Scripture<sup>8</sup>. A critical appropriation of her methodology with a shift in sensibility towards Scripture is represented below in Figure 3. It is not possible to model this whole process. Much work has been done on the sense of anomaly, articulating contextual issues and exposing current metaphors of mission. This paper focuses on steps 2c, 3, 4 and 6 – revisiting dominant metaphors of Scripture, adjusting dominant models, analyzing the metaphors and beginning to generate conceptual systematic understanding.

The key issues to emerge for her method are: because metaphors have an is/is not tension and only ever partially represent the target domain, it is important to have a plurality of metaphors; one dominant metaphor will function as a model which is complemented with supporting metaphors which cover those parts of the target domain not represented in the dominant model; from this set of a model and supporting metaphors it is possible to generate concepts that give focus and clarity to the metaphors.

Figure 3: Proposal for a Methodology for Metaphorical Theology



**Studying Metaphors: A Cognitive Approach to Metaphor**

While McFague highlights the place of metaphors she does not have a rigorous methodology for analysing metaphors. It is necessary to turn to the cognitive theory of metaphor for such tools. The modern study of metaphors essentially becomes another critical methodology for Biblical studies, a new

set of tools for the tool bag of exegesis. Unfortunately although there have been significant developments in the recent study of metaphors, "the world of biblical studies has gone about its business quietly, unaffected by these tectonic shifts" (Green 2006: xvii).<sup>9</sup> Recent cognitive theory of metaphor is a major departure from the traditional approach defined by Aristotle as "metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else" (Aristotle 1954: 1457b 6-7). Modern metaphor theory begins with I.A. Richards' *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936). Richards' definition is that metaphor is: "two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word or phrase whose meaning is the resultant of their interaction" (1936:93). This represents significant development from the Aristotelian view with a shift in focus from the word to the sentence, the view that metaphor is a matter of thought not just language use, and that it works by interaction (Johnson 1981:18-19). Richards also provides a terminology: 'Topic' for the 'literal' subject and 'Vehicle' as the concept used as a vehicle to explain the subject. Black's essay "Metaphor" popularised and developed the views of Richards. He proposes an interaction view of metaphor in contrast to what he calls the substitution view ("Man is a wolf" equals "man is fierce") and the comparison view ("A is like B in the following respects"). He also proposed his own terms: Frame and focus, as well as principal subject and subsidiary subject. For Black the two subjects are "best regarded as systems of things rather than things" (Black 1962: 44), the metaphor works by applying "a system of associated commonplaces" (page 40) (the layperson's knowledge of the cognitive domain), the metaphor "selects, emphasizes, suppresses and organizes features" (page 44) and the system of relations in the target is reorganised around the system of relations in the source. This implies that for researching metaphor it is necessary to discover this system of associated commonplaces, a challenge for the study of ancient documents from other cultures.

Black illustrates the notion of selection in the following image:

"Suppose I look at the night sky through a piece of heavily smoked glass on which certain lines have been left clear. Then I shall see only the stars that can be made to lie on the lines previously prepared on the screen and the stars I do see will be organised by the screen's structure" (page 41).

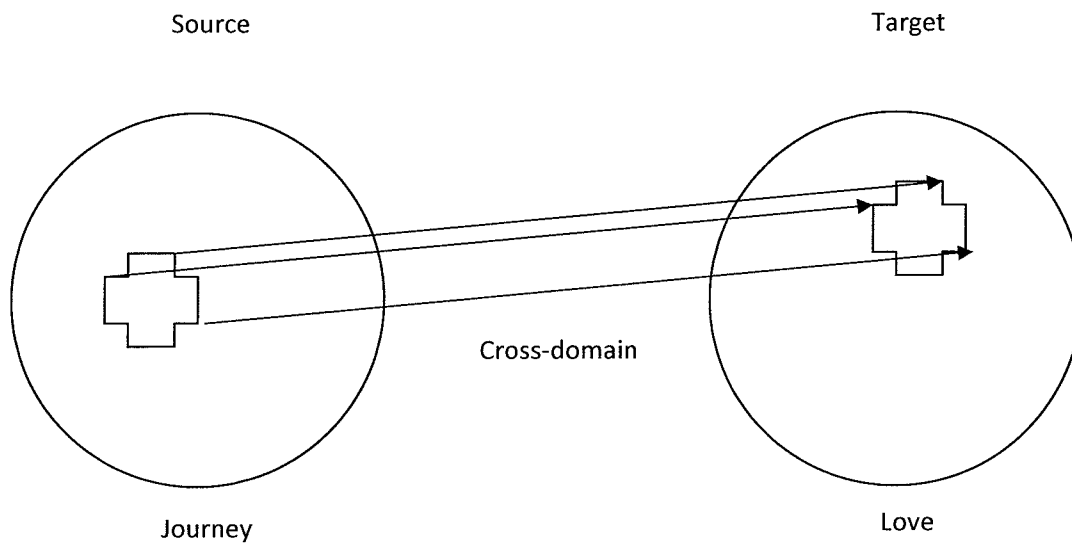
### **Cognitive Theory of Metaphor**

In 1980 Lakoff and Johnson published their book *Metaphors We Live By*. Their definition is that "the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (1980:5). In another work Lakoff says "in short the locus of metaphor is not in language at all, but in the way we conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another" (Lakoff 1993: 203). This approach sees ordinary language as filled with metaphors, that examples of metaphor show systemicity that can be explained by underlying cognitive metaphors and thus metaphor "allows one to *reason about* not just talk about one thing in terms of another"<sup>10</sup>

In this theory metaphor is understood as a mapping between two cognitive domains<sup>11</sup>. The source domain is the domain used metaphorically, the target domain is the domain used literally i.e. the domain the speaker is seeking to clarify using a source from another domain normally written as TARGET DOMAIN IS SOURCE DOMAIN. Figure 4 below illustrates how they see metaphor working. "Each mapping defines an open-ended class of potential correspondences across inference patterns" (Lakoff 1993:210) and "all concepts are regarded to have a generic-level structure as well as a specific level structure" (Liebenberg 2001:113), the GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor, which allows mapping based on common generic structure.



Figure 4: Metaphor in Cognitive Metaphor Theory<sup>12</sup>



LOVE IS A JOURNEY  
 Look how far we've come  
 Its' been a long bumpy road  
 We can't turn back now  
     We may have to go our separate ways  
 The relationship isn't going anywhere

JOURNEY	LOVE
Travellers	Lovers
Vehicle	Love relationship
Travelling in same vehicle	Being in same love relationship
Physical closeness in vehicle	Intimacy of being in the relationship
Common destination	Common goals
Impediments to travel	Difficulties

Another important element is what is called the Great Chain of Being metaphor which they define as “a cultural model that concerns kinds of beings and their properties and places them on a vertical scale” (Lakoff and Johnson 1989:166). This can be summarised as:

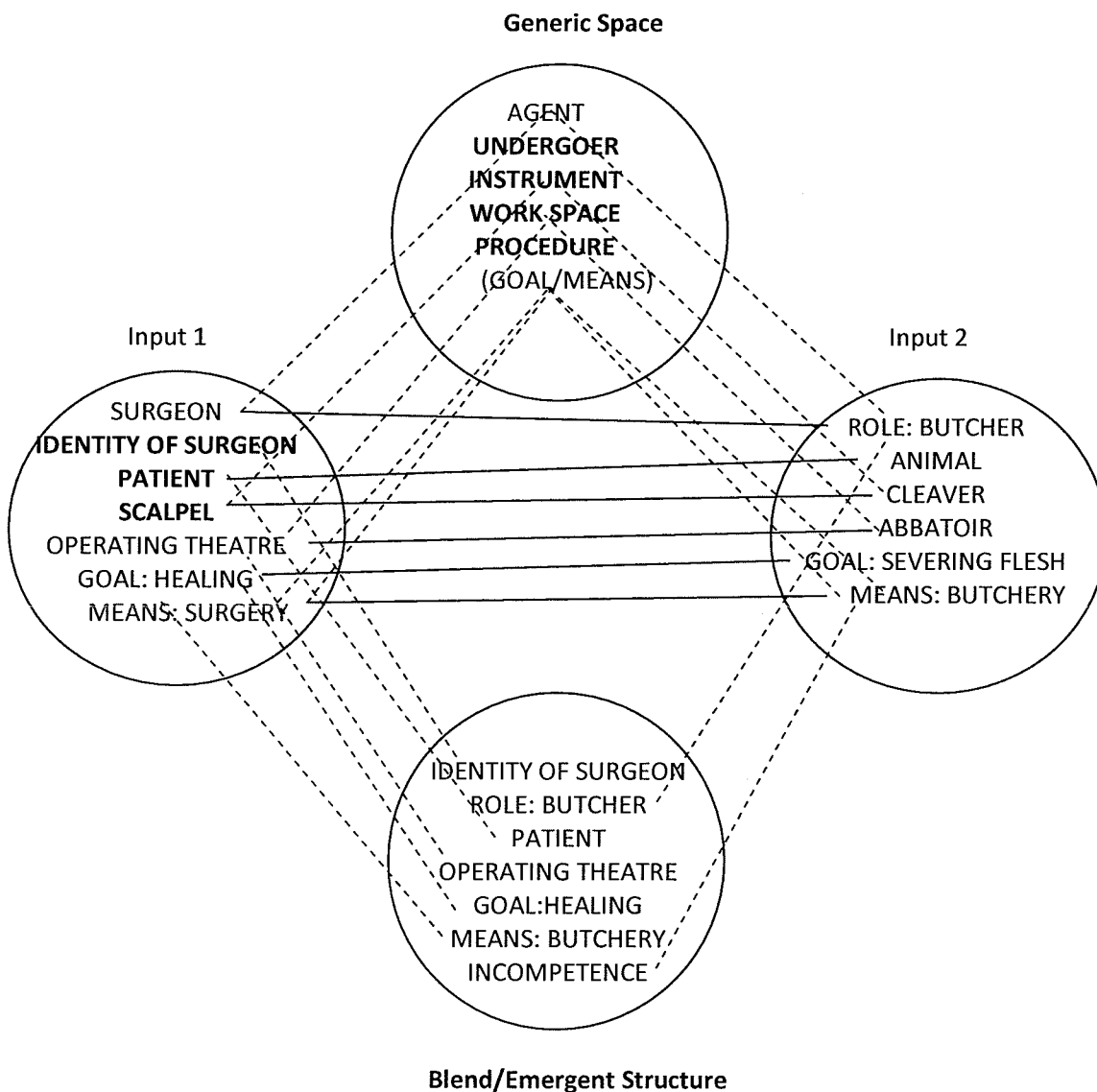
- Natural physical things: have natural physical attributes
- Complex objects: structural attributes leading to functional behaviour
- Plants: biological attributes
- Animals: instinctual attributes
- Humans: higher-order attributes

This is significant for interpretation of parables where source domains are chosen from different levels of the Great Chain of Being with implications for interpretation.

**Conceptual Blending**

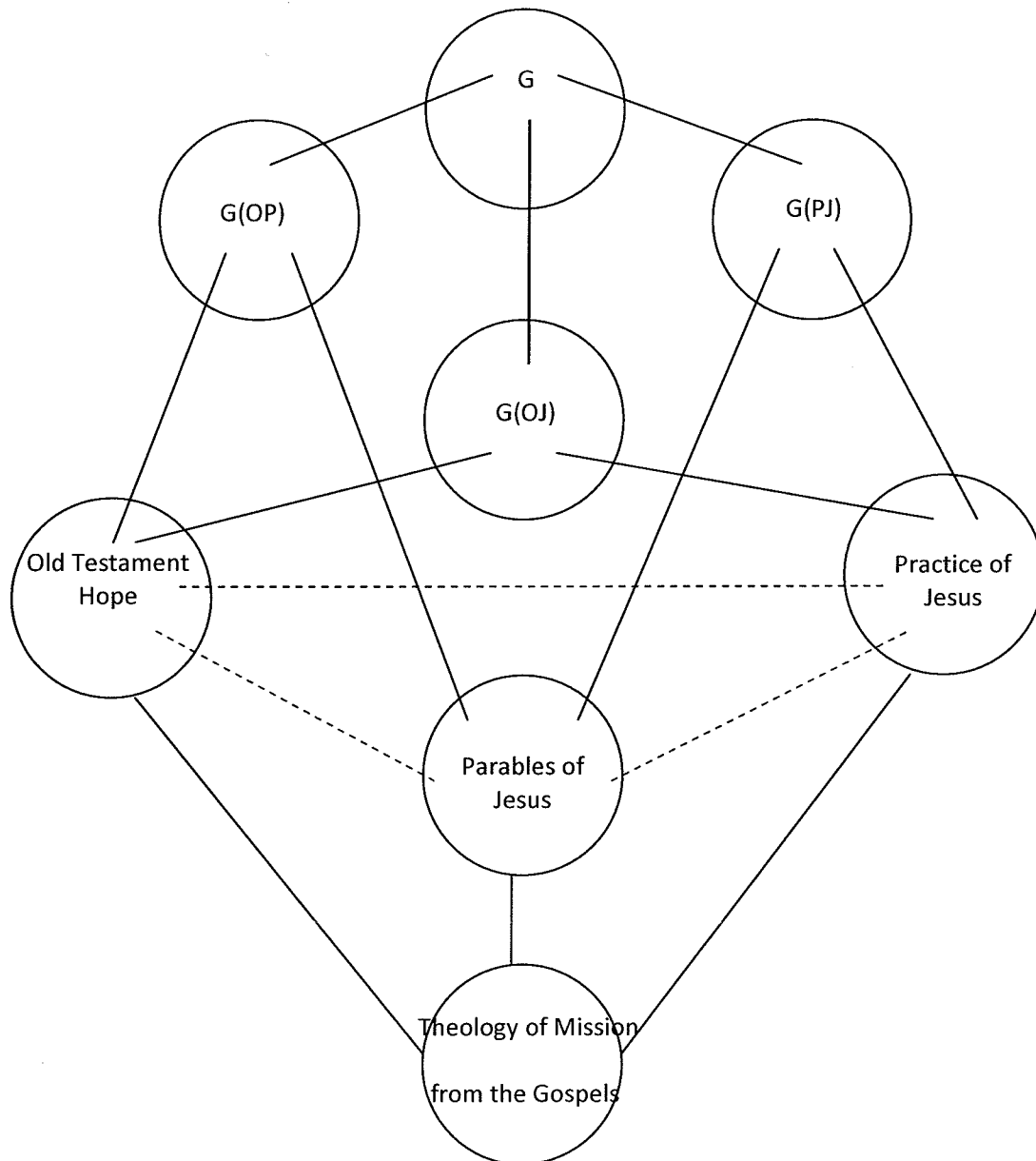
In the last few years “a new theoretical paradigm has emerged within the field of cognitive linguistics” (van Hecke, 2005b:215), called Blending Theory, associated with the names of Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner. Van Hecke explains it most simply as a mapping not between two domains but between four (2005:220). The model involves four “mental spaces” defined as “small conceptual packets... connected to long-term schematic knowledge called ‘frames’” (Fauconnier and Turner 2002:40). As well as making the generic structure a specific space, they make the result of the interaction its own space, called the blend. A key development is the observation that the blend often displays an ‘emergent structure’ i.e. “implications that don’t appear to originate in either the source or the target domain” (p.221)<sup>13</sup>. A well-known example is the blend “THE SURGEON IS A BUTCHER” where the blend has the implication of incompetence that is not a mapping from the domain of butcher but emerges in the blend (shown below in Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Metaphor in Blending Theory: SURGEON as BUTCHER Blend<sup>14</sup>**



The other significant development is the idea of Multiple Blends (2002:279-298), that multiple spaces may blend. At this point the theory as per the title of their book becomes a general theory of "The Way We Think" (2002). This is illuminating in terms of the overall task of constructing a biblical theology. In the case of theology of mission in the gospels it becomes clear that the reader is blending Old Testament expectations and the practice of Jesus while the parables of Jesus become an interpretive key to blend the other two while also constituting a third input (See Figure 6 below):

**Figure 6: Multiple Blends Behind a Theology of Mission from the Gospels**



G: Generic Space; O: Old Testament Hope; P: Parables of Jesus; J: Practice of Jesus

Unfortunately much study of metaphor stops at this point of analysis of individual metaphors. Nielsen (2005) has pleaded for the study of metaphor to fund biblical theology that is construct a biblical theology from the results of the analysis of the range of biblical metaphors. This brings us full circle back to McFague's insights on the role of metaphors in generating conceptual theology.

### ***A Methodology for Generating a Metaphorical Biblical Theology***

Building on modern cognitive metaphor theory as well the theological method of McFague, an integrated methodology for generating a Biblical theology from the metaphors of Scripture would follow these steps:

#### **Phase I: Analysis:**

- identify metaphors in the texts
- map the source domain
- map the target domain
- identify conventional and/or existing metaphorical use of the source domain
- exegete key texts
- identify possible emergent structure

#### **Phase II: Synthesis**

- select the dominant metaphor as model
- identify supporting metaphors and complementary metaphors
- generate themes and concepts
- construct an integrated systematic theology
- express in non-conceptual language

## ***Metaphors of Mission in the Gospel of Matthew***<sup>15</sup>

Why the Gospel of Matthew? In one sense it is a random selection. It should be possible given the contemporary theory of metaphor to select any document, expect to find frequent metaphors and generate conceptual understanding from them. However there are some reasons why Matthew invites a metaphorical analysis. Matthew is commonly recognised as structured around five discourses (Matt 5-7, 10, 13, 18, 24-25). One of these, Matt 10, is recognised as a mission discourse but more importantly is the position and nature of the middle discourse, the parables discourse. It is possible to argue for a chiasmic structure as follows<sup>16</sup>:

Matt 5-7: Present dynamics of the kingdom: discipleship

Matt 10: Living outwards towards the world: mission

Matt 13: *Pictures of the kingdom*

Matt 18: Living inwards in community: church

Matt 24-25 Future dynamics of the kingdom: eschatology

Matthew 13 is the centre. Here Jesus gives seven parables of the kingdom, pictures drawn from domains of growing plants (three parables), making bread, finding treasure, buying pearls and fishing<sup>17</sup>. The discourse concludes with a summary metaphor, quoted at the start of this article: "He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old" (Matt 13: 52). In context Jesus seems to indicate that pondering these seven pictures will cause them to be a fund of understanding that will continue to generate concepts and in that the pictures are open-ended there will be new insights as well as old. It is of course anachronistic but nevertheless difficult at this point to *not* hear Jesus sounding like a proponent of a modern cognitive theory of metaphor.

If we consider the whole gospel it is possible to identify as many as 35 potential metaphors of mission in the Gospel of Matthew (See Table 1 below)<sup>18</sup>. It is important to take a "Selah" moment with just this level of analysis. Aristotle affirmed the genius of using metaphors and Jesus emerges as a master of casting his teaching (in this case on mission alone) in a bewildering plurality of frames. These all delineate some way of seeing the dynamic of God and/or his people in the world. McFague's methodology would celebrate this diversity in ways of "seeing as" and affirm the necessity of a plurality of metaphors<sup>19</sup>.

**Table 1: Metaphors of Mission in the Gospel of Matthew - by Domain**

<b>Domain</b>	<b>Reference</b>
<b>Shepherd and sheep</b> <sup>20</sup>	Matt 2:6; 9:35-36; 10:6; 18:12-14; 25:31-46; 26:31
Road Building	Matt 3:3
Stirring up a brood of vipers?	Matt 3:7; 12:34; 23:33
<b>Horticulture – growing plants</b>	Matt 3:8-12; 7:16-20; 9:37-38; 12:30?, 33; 13:1-9, 18-23, 24-30, 31-32; 36-43; 15:13-14; 21:33-43
<b>Light – lit up city, lamp</b>	Matt 4:14-16; 5:14-16
<b>Fishing</b>	Matt 4:18-20; 13:47-50
<b>Salt</b>	Matt 5:13
Not giving sacred to dogs	Matt 7:6-7
Not giving pearls to pigs	Matt 7:6-7
<b>Sheep in midst of wolves</b>	Matt 7:15; 10:16
Shrewd as snakes	Matt 10:16
Harmless as doves	Matt 10:16
Feast/ wedding banquet	Matt 8:10-12; 9:14-15; 22:1-14
Doctor with sick	Matt 9:12
New cloth/New wine?	Matt 9:16
New wine	Matt 9:17
<b>War/violence(sword)</b>	Matt 10:34-36; 11:12?; 16:18
<b>Domain</b>	<b>Reference</b>
Carrying cross	Matt 10:38
Placing yokes and loads	Matt 11:28-30; 23:4
Bruised reed not broken	Matt 12:15-21
Smoldering wick not put out	Matt 12:15-21
Robbing a strongman's house	Matt 12:29
Leaven/yeast in bread/dough	Matt 13:33; 16:5-12
Treasure	Matt 13:44; 13:51-52
Pearl	Matt 13:45-46
(Not blind) guides	Matt 15:14; 23:16,24
Feeding children (and dogs)	Matt 15:26-27
<b>Building house(temple)</b>	Matt 16:17-20; 21:42-44
Prevailing against gates?	Matt 16:18
Keys (part of building OR steward?)	Matt 16:19
King and servants	Matt 18:21- 35
Workers/sons in vineyard	Matt 20: 1-16; 21:28-41
Yoke and loads on people's shoulders	Matt 23:1-4
Hen gathering chicks	Matt 23:37-39
Steward in house	Matt 24:45-51; 25:14-30

It is impossible within the constraints of this article to exhaustively follow the full process for analysing a metaphor or to examine all these metaphors. The following are selected on the grounds of literary markers of significance, being supporting to significant metaphors or complementary to significant metaphors.

## **Growing Plants**

Growing plants is arguably the dominant metaphor: It is the most frequent metaphor (at least ten passages), and it occurs at strategic points in the narrative: John the Baptist, the Sermon on the Mount (discipleship discourse), the narrative preamble to the missions discourse, the first three of the seven parables of the parables discourse, two of which have extensive explanations and one of the climactic parables of judgement on Israel. The domain of growing plants is a common source of metaphors in the Old Testament and inter-testamental literature e.g. Psa 1; Jer 17:8; Gen 49:22; Isaiah 5:1-7, Ezek 17:2-10, 19:10-14; 21:1-5; 4 Macc 1:29-29; 4 Ezra 8:41-45. Because it is so dominant, it is considered in more detail than the other metaphors.

In Matt 3:10, 12 John the Baptist uses the conventional metaphor EXPRESSION OF CHARACTER AS FRUIT. However John majors on the more forceful elements of the domain (uprooting, axes, cutting down, threshing and burning). Perhaps this analysis helps explain John's later confusion with the ministry of Jesus who avoids the present application of these dimensions except against bad religious leaders (Matt 7:16-20) and later the imminent judgement of national Israel (Matt 21:33-46).

Matt 9:37-38 is the narrative preamble to the mission discourse and here Jesus indicates a present positive harvest and the main problem of a scarcity of workers. This affirms an inherent and inescapable activism to mission i.e. there is a job to be done, though in response prayer is invoked.

The parable in Matt 21:33-41 employs the Old Testament metaphor of Israel as a vineyard, with persons as workers (tenants) rather than vines<sup>21</sup> but with the common Old Testament theme of judgement coming on the vineyard because of lack of fruitfulness. The key issue is producing the fruit of the kingdom (vs. 43-44) but as in the Sower, the precise nature is left undefined.

The most significant passages are the three horticultural parables of Matthew 13. The literary context is "the apparent failure of the kingdom" (Hagner 1993: 366) and "the mystery of the rejection and acceptance of Jesus' word of the kingdom" (Harrington 1991: 197). All three parables indicate a surprising contrast with the Old Testament hope in terms of a present small, hidden, vulnerable and mixed process rather than a decisive powerful intervention.

The parable of the sower contains many conventional metaphors, PEOPLE AS PLANTS, EVIL AS BIRDS, THORNS AS OBSTACLES, SHALLOW SOIL AS FRAGILITY, FRUITFULNESS AS THE DESIRED GOAL. Commentators are divided on whether the emphasis is on the final fruitfulness (by the law of end stress and the threefold fruitfulness paralleling the threefold failure) or the unfruitful soils (from the amount of attention and detail of the first three) and it is unclear whether the yield is extravagant (Hagner 1993: 369) which would point to emphasis (Nolland 2004: 529). It is an argument from silence but the parable is marked by absence of typical Old Testament forceful elements of plowing, pruning, uprooting, threshing, separating chaff and burning and thus emphasizes the vulnerability of the whole process.

Seed as the word of the kingdom focuses on verbal communication as the central dynamic of the kingdom. However there is a surprising and important contrast with Isa 55:10-11 where God's word is water that never fails to produce life. There is a parallel for this sense of vulnerability in 4 Ezra 8:41: "For just as the farmer sows many seeds upon the ground and plants a multitude of seedlings, and yet not all that have been sown will come up in due season, and not all that were planted will take root; so also those who have been sown in the world will not all be saved."

Fruitfulness is a key theme and yet fruitfulness is not defined i.e. the target domain is unclear. However the theme of living with mixed results is present (three failed soils versus the good soil, like the wheat versus the weeds) and particularly with the sower not being identified, this becomes a paradigm for ongoing Christian ministry and mission.

The parable of the wheat and the weeds also has a range of conventional metaphors: PEOPLE AS PLANTS, WEEDS AS NEGATIVE ELEMENTS TO BE REMOVED, ANGELS AS HARVESTERS,

HARVEST AS CLOSURE. There is a change from the conventional metaphor in the Sower, GOOD RESULTS IS FRUIT, to THE EXPRESSION OF CHARACTER IS FRUIT i.e. there is good fruit and bad fruit.

In terms of emphasis the narrative gives extra extended attention to the debate about what should be done about the mixture and the decision to leave the mixture until harvest. This contrasts with the version in the Gospel of Thomas which omits this middle section and thus suggests present mixture is the key issue for the parable.

It is clear God's kingdom agenda embraces the whole world and suggests there is a lack of clarity about who belongs to the kingdom and who does not. This ambiguity seems in tension with the building of the church. However the interpretation brings a measure of definition in that it defines the wheat as "sons of the kingdom" and in the context of the sower and the narrative of Jesus' proclamation, it is most logical to take this as those who have responded to the evangel.

It is explicit that the harvest is at the end of the age and done by angels i.e. not a present human activity, particularly in terms of the separation. The present is marked by mixture and lack of clarity.

The parable of the mustard seed (with its non-horticultural doublet of the leaven) comes between the parable of the weeds and its explanation. Together the doublet emphasizes eventual significance in contrast to small beginnings. In turn this doublet parallels the doublet of salt and leaven (salt and leaven are hidden in mixture; tree and light stand out as visible). The parable of the mustard seed is about the contrast between the fragility of the beginning with the magnitude of the end. The parable employs conventional metaphors of the mustard seed schema as the smallest seed, used metaphorically of smallest quantity or form (e.g. Matt 17:20 of faith) and that this contrasts with a tree (Daniel 4:21 Psa 104:12) as a metaphor of strength, success and glory. From the Old Testament eventual global significance was the given which suggests that the emphasis is on the small beginnings (Carson 1984: 318).

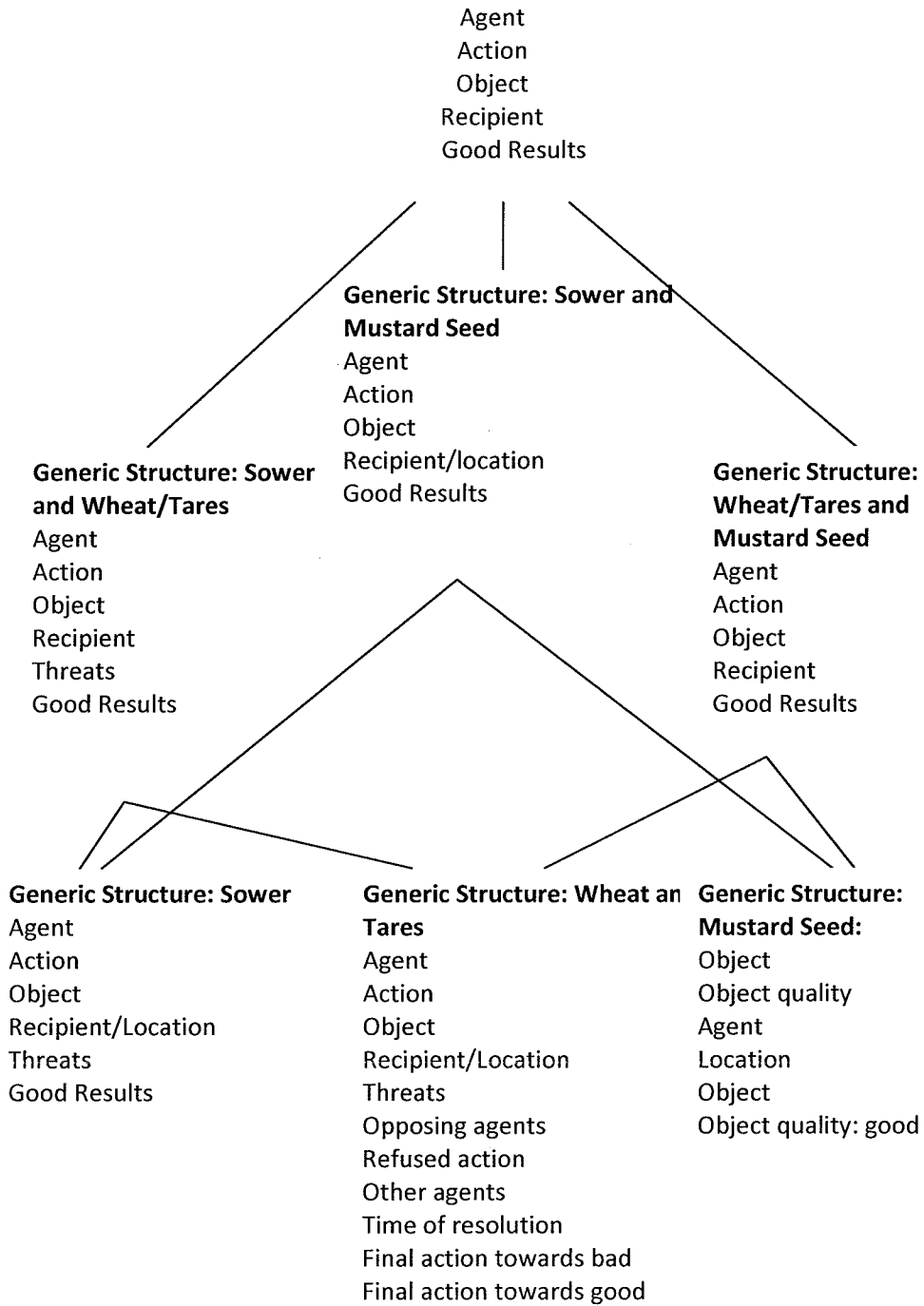
However the growth dynamic is present. This is where the concept of the Great Chain of Being metaphor becomes significant i.e. what does it mean to frame a dynamic in terms of plants that involves unseen biological processes rather than the mechanical metaphor of objects or the relational metaphor of animals and humans? This dynamic is made explicit in Mark 4 with the parable of the growing plant. This domain combines intentional human effort interfacing with 'mysterious' processes a uniquely appropriate interrelationship for picturing mission.

Hagner sees the similarity in all three parables as the kingdom is present - it *has* been planted, it *has* taken root -but in a hidden and secret form (1993:385). Taken together they have important implications for expectations of growth, success and significance. The mustard seed leads to an expectation of eventual significance (bigness to put it crudely). The Sower encourages expectation of unexpectedly good fruitfulness among some but 'failure' among others. The parable of the wheat and the weeds expressly eliminates the expectation of complete corporate transformation through the total elimination of evil.

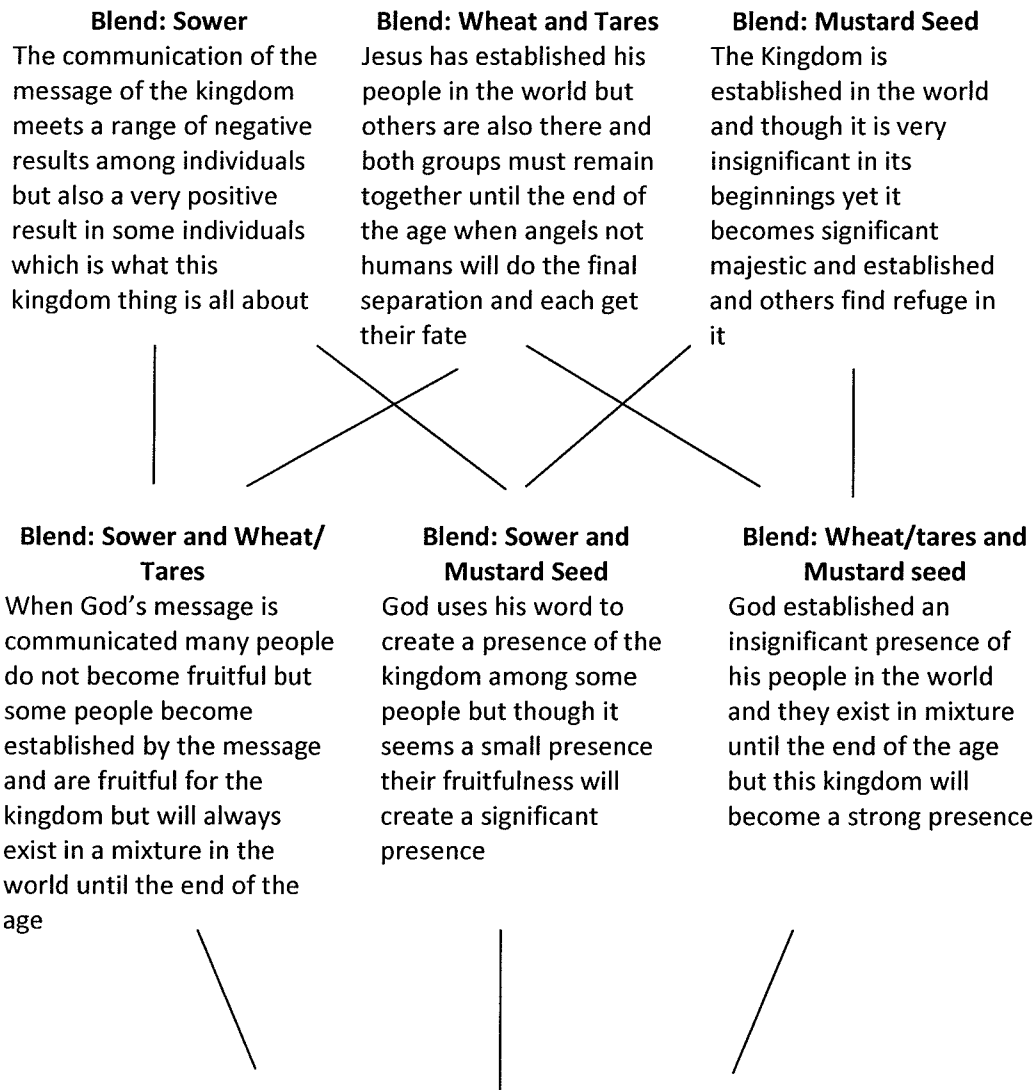
Figures 7 and 8 are attempts at a multiple blend analysis of the three horticultural parables of Matthew 13. The analysis of the blended generic structures in Figure 7 seems to point to a generic structure highlighting the good result given that the kingdom has indeed been planted or established in the earth despite the various threats of each of the parables (the main point is at the top of the figure). Figure 8 is an attempt to name the blended space if these three parables are allowed to blend to form an integrated narrative story of the dynamic of God's mission (the main point is at the bottom of the figure).



**Figure 7 Blends: Generic Spaces for the Three Parables**  
**Generic Structure: Sower, Wheat/Tares and Mustard seed**



**Figure 8: Blends: Emergent Structures for the Three Parables**



**Blend: Sower, Wheat and Tares and Mustard Seed**

God *has* established his kingdom in the earth - in ways that seem insignificant and of mixed success. It happens by a message that fails in all kinds of disappointing ways to produce results with many but for some it does really produce a result and they become the people of the kingdom and produce the actions and lifestyle of the kingdom. But then they live that out always in the midst of others who are not people of the kingdom and this side of eternity it will always be a mixture. And somehow this whole thing works! It will one day be strong and influential and we might get glimpses of that but this side of eternity these people will never completely transform their world. However one day the story will find closure with God's kingdom fully realised through His climactic action.

In summary what does it mean to claim growing plants is the dominant metaphor of Christian mission? It combines hard work with hidden mysterious processes beyond the control of the workers (the biological level). This makes it appropriate in ways that working with materials or objects (building) or animals (fishing, shepherding) or humans (feasting, banquet) is not. It is based around 'words', as the dominant object – 'verbal communication' since 'proclamation' sounds too 'impressive', militant and strong for the scattering of seed. It holds in tension present smallness, hiddenness, vulnerability with eventual success, significance, completion and closure. It also pictures fruitful individuals as the instrument of the kingdom.

To jump ahead to blending with contemporary views of mission this metaphor is incompatible with military notions such as 'taking the city for Jesus' with their connotations of control, power, and force. It is incompatible with a blend with the conquest paradigm of Joshua in the Old Testament. Indeed the parable of wheat and weeds explicitly rejects the highly motivational idea that we might take a city for Jesus, or do mission "till we have built Jerusalem"<sup>22</sup>. With the three parables there is a tension in that the ultimate harvest is not till the end of the age but the kingdom enjoys fruitfulness and harvest now.

It is significant to note that this shift to organic metaphors is widely recognized is the shift from modern to postmodern interpretation, indeed it is possible to argue that the dominant shift has been that modernist paradigm is inherently mechanistic and postmodernism favours organic. As an example in management theory Gareth Morgan in his books *Images of Organizations* (2006) has explored the value of looking at organizations through different metaphors. After considering the current dominant metaphor of "organization as machine" he next considers "organisation as organism". A further challenge comes from a recently published book advocating an Agrarian reading of Scripture( Davis 2009). According to one reviewer, Agrarianism "sets up the ideal of the small-holder closely connected with the land and farming in a diversified way in sharp contrast with *the large-scale industrialized farming of agribusiness* (italics added)" which suggests even our readings of horticultural metaphors will have been conditioned by Western modernist mechanised metaphors. This challenges the reader to deconstruct Western modernist readings even of horticultural metaphors in order to identify the system of associated commonplaces and particularly the earthed and local 'feel' of this cognitive domain in Scripture.

### **Fishing**

Fishing seems to have a significant place in that it is the first missional metaphor applied to the disciples in their initial call and then used in the climactic parable of Matthew 13. However the rest of the New Testament makes nothing of this metaphor. The two occurrences seem so different that some commentators resist any linking of the two (disciples versus angels fishing; fishing as positive versus negative judgement; fishing as present activity versus future eschatological event).

The main significance particularly from Matt 13 is as a supporting metaphor to plants – harvest of plants parallels catch of fish. In the Old Testament fishing is normally a metaphor of judgement (Ezek 9:12; Amos 4:2; Hab 1:15-17; Eze 26:5, 14; 29:3-7).

It is significant that the first metaphor of discipleship is a missional one and a highly activist one. It is perhaps too easy to develop a very mysterious concept of Missio Dei without an equal focus on the traditional activism of the mission activity of the church.

The metaphor emphasizes universal impact: Matthew 13 is distinctive for the phrase "every kind of fish" caught up in the net until the final sorting and this is the only use in the New Testament of the word for a seine net which catches everything in its path. This parable thus emphasises the final universality of the kingdom harvest and the mixture until the final sorting.

### **Building**

Building is not a frequent metaphor in The Gospel of Matthew. In the Gospel of Matthew it occurs in the significant place of Peter's confession of Jesus as messiah and the first reference to the church. However in the Old Testament, inter-testamental literature and later for Paul it commonly parallels growing

plants literally (Jer 29:5) and metaphorically (Jer 1:10) and should be reflected on in terms of the common blend with growing plants as well as its own distinctive dimensions<sup>23</sup>. Like growing plants, building involves work, sequential stages, threats, but on the Great Chain of Being it deals with complex objects rather than biological processes and thus it does have greater connotations of control and planning.

Planting and building are the two quintessential Biblical peace time, settled activities (opposed to war and nomadic lifestyle). Both reflect a commitment to place and seeing the kingdom earthed (rooted and founded). Both promote a gentler ethos than battle.

'Building' is used of the church rather than the kingdom, raising the question of the relationship between growing people of the kingdom and building the church. Appropriately building is a more collective metaphor than the plant metaphor.

### **Salt/Light**

These metaphors occupy a strategic place in the Sermon on the Mount (the first discourse on discipleship) following the beatitudes. Salt and light are both used metaphorically in the Old Testament – light is the more common metaphor. Salt can be used positively (flavour, preservative, cleansing) and negatively (destruction, waste).

They are significant in terms of being surprisingly complementary metaphors to growing plants, fishing and building. If metaphors filter and select, the previous three focus on external action whereas for these influence or impact is a result of internal quality. A metaphor or blend is determined by the target so it is important to interpret these in context of the Sermon on the Mount in general and the beatitudes in particular. The light metaphor is explicitly interpreted as good deeds which in turn should be understood as the outworking of the beatitudes. Those who embody the beatitudes would hunger for justice, engage in mercy, and build shalom. Explicitly transformational influence comes from this broad range of action – though with the paradoxical result that this leads people to praise God and one of the deeds is people of pure in heart and desire to see God. Thus it is difficult to make a dichotomy between evangelism and social action or between so called vertical (Godward) and horizontal (towards people) dimensions of mission.

### **Violence: sword, sheep among wolves, cross**

A pressing issue has been the predominance of military language in modern missions<sup>24</sup>. It is therefore important to consider those images that reflect the use of force and violence. What becomes clear is there is a significant group of metaphors emphasizing the disciples as the objects rather than the subjects of force (sheep among wolves, carrying the cross). These occur in the context of extended propositional discussion of the expected context of rejection and persecution.

Jesus makes the surprising statement that he came to bring not peace but a sword. However Jesus' later refusal to allow swords shows this is clearly metaphorical. But metaphorical of what? The only time Jesus goes on the offensive is against religious leaders. In context the statement about a sword occurs in descriptions of the disciples being persecuted, tried and possibly executed. The sword as an instrument of force is used against the followers of Jesus not by them.

So what can Jesus mean? The two factors that create other options are a distinction between purpose and result (the possibility that the result of Jesus' mission is a sword rather than the purpose) and a slight change in metaphorical emphasis to the sword as representing dividing (i.e. cutting e.g. Solomon about to divide the baby with a sword) rather than war. Jesus is clear that this mission creates powerful division through prompting strong negative reaction (the opposite of the treasure and pearl).

Sheep among wolves is an opposite image to wielding the sword and is also found in the mission discourse of Matthew 10, at a key transition point between specific instructions to the seventy and more general instructions to disciples. The image of sheep among wolves portrays the disciples as the victims of threat and violence rather than the perpetrators<sup>25</sup>. This metaphor is then paired with two other animal

metaphors: shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves. The disciples' only 'weapon' is to be wise because they have no recourse to force.

### ***Generating a Theology of Mission***

The first step is to select and arrange the metaphors. Growing plants is the dominant metaphor. It highlights the elements of harvest (both present and future), work, joy, mysterious processes of growth, fruitfulness, the dynamic of verbal communication, risk, threats and mixture. It is supplemented by fishing which is similar in terms of harvest and work but without the elements of fruitful kingdom living (fishermen do not pay a lot of attention to what the fish in the bucket are doing!) Building is a more standard supplementary metaphor also highlighting work, and process but also highlighting strategy or plan and with more sense of control. It also has a shift in emphasis from kingdom to church as a more defined reality to be built. Building and growing plants are images of settled life. Fishing is perhaps more traumatic (from the perspective of the fish at least) though also reflective of settled life.

Salt and light represent a major complementary set of metaphors. They balance the activism of the dominant metaphors by highlighting the internal quality of the people of God rather their activity. They shift the sense of 'faithful to do' to 'faithful to be' – but a being expressed in the doing of the beatitudes.

Issues of power are central. All the above leave the actors in positions of power and could be seen as patronising and dehumanising. However Jesus introduces another set of complementary metaphors that suggest the dominant reality of mission will be the reverse. Weakness, vulnerability and powerlessness are distinctive and are most significantly portrayed in the metaphor of sheep among wolves.

### ***Concepts***

John Corrie has suggested that one of the key contributions of Bosch was to popularise the concept of 'creative tension' (2001:99). Such a concept proves useful in identifying concepts of mission reflected in the metaphors.

### ***Both Missio Dei and missiones ecclesiae***

It is important to distinguish between God's mission and how the people of God participate in that mission. Mission is first about God's initiative but it would be wrong to underestimate the sense of commission to God's people and the resulting intrinsic activism. Both sides are important.

### ***Both church and kingdom***

Mission must live with the tension of the call to a dual focus on church growth and kingdom action, to holding both ambiguity about who is in and out, out there in the world, with a call to build the church, the community of the kingdom.

### ***Both global vision and local expression***

Since the field is the world, then the old territorial distinction between home base and mission field is invalid, and the implied Christendom conquest model is unhelpful. Christians are partners in one task which is then paradoxically earthed in each local context.

### ***Both word and deed***

There is complex interplay between verbal communication of the message and action of compassion, justice and peace. The main dynamic of the kingdom is words. However fruitfulness for the kingdom appears to be ethical - doing good as the outworking of the values of the beatitudes e.g. honouring poor, being peacemakers, seeking justice, practicing mercy. Yet this is centred on a pure desire to see God and with the end result that people will praise God for the good seen to be done by this countercultural community. Horizontal and vertical dimensions of mission are naturally interwoven.

### ***Both quantity of doing and quality of being***

Protestant and particularly evangelical missions are activist – and that is certainly warranted from the metaphors particularly of the call to harvest. But there is also a complementary emphasis on the church as countercultural community that must demonstrate difference.

### ***Both present harvest and future harvest***

Bosch distinguishes between 'hope for the ultimate and perfect on the one hand and hope for the penultimate and approximate on the other' (1991: 510). Disciples are called to the work of harvest now yet with the clear knowledge that they will not see ultimate harvest and it is not their role to enforce closure.

### ***Both judgement on mission and grace to the world***

Lotz suggests the first dimension of a new paradigm of mission will be "the Judgment of God and Repentance" (Lotz, 14-15) but on mission not the world. Jesus was harsh with one group – the religious professionals. The possibility of badly representing Christ nullifies the *raison d'être* of the church and the validity of the mission.

### ***Mostly powerless and persecuted with a little bit of faithful stewards***

The dominant paradigm is of weakness, in fact persecution. One of the dominant themes recently has been mission in the context of violence and persecution. This is normal Christian mission, while mission as part of the powerful march of civilisation is almost unrecognisable. Christians must live with the cognitive dissonance, the virtual impossibility of blending positions of cultural, social, political and economic power with New Testament models of mission, realising how difficult it is to do this authentically and the absolute need for commitment to servant stewardship and care in any position of power.

### ***Conclusion***

Jesus suggested that those instructed in the pictures of the kingdom would find themselves drawing new and old insights out of a storehouse of treasure. If indeed there is a need for a new paradigm of mission there is a huge storehouse of metaphors images and parables in Scripture to reconsider before searching for new metaphors. The proliferation in the study of metaphor in the second half of the twentieth century has generated a set of tools with which to mine this resource. The Cognitive Theory of Metaphor and Conceptual Blending Theory take seriously the possibility of generating cognitive content from mapping concrete known domains of knowledge to more abstract less well known domains of knowledge. The theological understanding of McFague explains how to work with the fruits of exegesis to construct theology.

With a perspective that resonates with a post-Christendom sensibility, the Gospel of Matthew highlights mission as done from a position of weakness and vulnerability. With a perspective that resonates with a post-modern sensibility that has lost confidence in the myth of progress and objective certainty, the Gospel of Matthew endorses a view of mission much less self-assured and clear about what it is achieving yet confident about miracles of grace. The Gospel of Matthew summons the people of God to action, risk, humility, compassion, justice, liberation and evangelization. With the sense that our views of mission are captive to Enlightenment, Christendom and modernist images, it does prove productive to make a first step of revisiting Scripture to rediscover a more Biblical paradigm of mission grounded in New Testament metaphors of mission.

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# Notes

<sup>1</sup> All Scripture quotations are from the New International Version

<sup>2</sup> This should not be taken as a devaluing of conceptual theology. I have had a number of anecdotal responses to this material reporting the personally transformative effects of a devotional reading of Barth's highly abstract and conceptual *Church Dogmatics* (1961). At an educational level Kolb's experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1983) affirms the transformative effect of abstract conceptualisation particularly in giving handles for processing concrete experience and reflective observation.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. John Roxborough (2001)

<sup>4</sup> The statement defining poiesis is Bosch quoting Stackhouse (1988:85)

<sup>5</sup> I acknowledge a debt to Skreslet who notes this discussion by Bosch, including the quotations, in the rationale for his own proposal for images of mission

<sup>6</sup> E.g. Messer (1992), Bevans (1991, 2008) and Skreslet (2006). Bevans has recently restated a set of metaphors in Ross Langmead's significantly titled *Re-Imagining Mission* (2007)

<sup>7</sup> The most telling critique of McFague is that actually she is not a metaphorical theologian but actually has a pre-existing credo that she expresses in metaphors (Bromell 1993) hence step 2 in the following figure.

<sup>8</sup> McFague's theological sensibility places a strong emphasis on the pole of relevance to contextual sensibility and relatively little emphasis on criteria of continuity, congruence or faithfulness to Christian tradition

<sup>9</sup> E.g. Cognitive Metaphor Theory has been applied to the parables of Jesus by Liebenberg (2001). Conceptual blending has been applied in the last couple of years e.g. Joel Green believes Bonnie Howe (2006) is the first.

<sup>10</sup> A common example of a conceptual metaphor is ARGUMENT IS WAR recognised by the following kinds of expressions: "Your claims are *indefensible*"; "He *attacked every weak point* in my argument"; "His criticisms were *right on target*"; "I *demolished* his argument"; "I've never *won* an argument with him"; "You disagree? Okay *shoot!*"; "If you use that *strategy*, he'll wipe you out"; "He *shot down* all my arguments".

<sup>11</sup> A number of terms are used relatively loosely. Petrie and Oshlag speak of schemas, scripts and mental models. Hugh G. Petrie and Rebecca S. Oshlag, "Metaphor and Learning" in *Ortony Metaphor and Thought* pp.579-609

<sup>12</sup> This is a common example in the literature. The table is from Taverniers (2002: 121).

<sup>13</sup> e.g. "digging a financial grave" van Hecke (2005b:221). It combines GRAVEDIGGING with FINANCIAL (MIS)MANAGEMENT. However digging a grave is usually intentional and happens after death, while financial mismanagement is normally unintentional and is leading to disaster rather than following it. Thus the blend has its own sense of naively taking actions that will lead to ruin.

<sup>14</sup> This diagram is a slightly adapted version of that in Vyvyan Evans and Melanie Green (2006: 406)

<sup>15</sup> Of course a working definition is required in order to select which metaphors to consider. In the process of discussing thirteen elements of a definition Bosch makes the statement: "Christian mission gives expression to the dynamic relationship between God and the world" (1991: 9). At its most general it is possible to identify metaphors that name this dynamic relationship between God and His world particularly through His people. The more precise definition of Christopher Wright is suitably broad: "Fundamentally our mission ... means our committed participation as God's people, at God's invitation and command, in God's own mission within the history of God's world for the redemption of God's creation" (2006: 22-23).

<sup>16</sup> Ewherido presents a survey of views of the structure of Matthew noting Lohr and others have proposed a structure somewhat like this including also features of alternating narrative sections between these discourses. While identifying some weaknesses, Ewherido says "nevertheless the structure makes a compelling case for the centrality of Matthew 13", (2005: 47)

<sup>17</sup> Commentators differ as to whether the chapter has seven or eight parables. The final metaphor is not another presentation of the dynamic of the kingdom but a picture of the person who has understood the previous seven pictures

<sup>18</sup> Some are questionable e.g. new wine and new cloth, stirring up a brood of vipers, not giving sacred to dogs or pearls to pigs, not being blind guides. However it would be possible to argue conservatively for at least 20 metaphors

<sup>19</sup> One of her chief concerns is the idolatry of one major metaphor

<sup>20</sup> Metaphors in bold are addressed in the following discussion

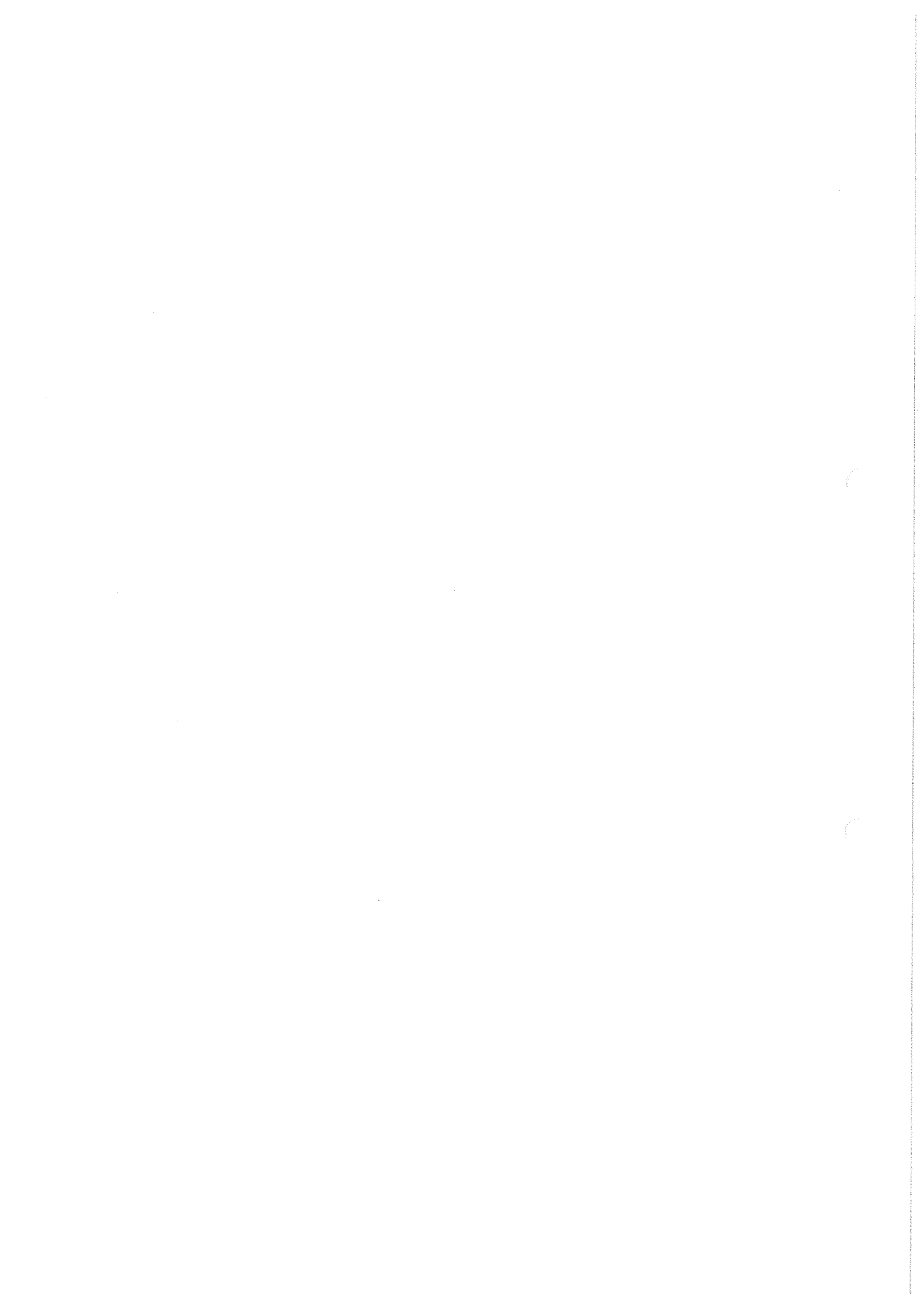
<sup>21</sup> This one is more complicated in that the narrative structures blends with a particular moment in salvation history to metaphorically predict threat and judgment on Israel at the precise and paradoxical moment that Jesus is facing threat and judgment (the tenants kill the son so are punished and ejected)

<sup>22</sup> A reference to William Blake's poem used in the hymn "Jerusalem"

<sup>23</sup> Paul is often accused of mixing his metaphors in "rooted and established" but if so this is a common even conventional mix.

<sup>24</sup> See The Consultation on Mission Language and Metaphor, School of World Mission, Fuller Theological Seminary, June 1-3, 2000. <http://www.ad2000.org/re00620.htm> Date accessed: 18/1/2009

<sup>25</sup> I have not seen wolves with sheep but I have seen dogs attack sheep. They do not stand around and growl at trembling sheep – they try to rip their throats out.



# MISSIONS and POWER

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**Cbm** is an international Christian organisation whose primary purpose is to improve the quality of life of the world's poorest peoples with disabilities and those at risk of disability, who live in the most disadvantaged societies.

In many respects I wonder what I am doing here. I am not a theological scholar, that much will become evident I am sure.

I don't have a message that will draw on academic brilliance or years of considered study.

I don't have the patience or aptitude to do this. I don't have a message laced with references, Biblical or academic.

But I feel I do have a message that is relevant to a discussion on how we 'do mission'. A message based on a study of God's Word as a whole and the love and hope it offers when we apply it in our lives.

As the CEO of a Christian development agency my focus will be on mission in a development sense – how we minister to the world's poorest. However, I believe that the message applies as much to a local context as an international one.

For centuries Christian mission has been an exercise in power.

The form of this power may have differed, from the blood letting power of the early Crusades to the quiet, almost invisible power of the service oriented missionary working with the world's poor.

The question facing Christian mission now is what form this power should take.

It seems an obvious answer to suggest that it is the power of God that we should see at work. Which of course it is – but what does this mean for us as mission workers?

To answer this we need to unpack power in its various forms; political, military, social, spiritual. We will then look to how we engage on the mission field with an understanding of power and what impact it has on the message we take.

If we look at these first three forms of power political, military and social, we look into the human interpretation of power. Some would argue that even in some of the ways we view spiritual power we are looking purely from a human viewpoint.

For centuries mankind has been using political, military and social power to effect change on others. Usually this change is intended to bring compliance with an imposed set of standards that are seen as right, or better than those of the previous power base; where compliance means a level of subservience to an often foreign authority.

Political power sees us attempt to impose a set of governing beliefs on a people based on the model we see as right. For decades it has been a battle ground between democracy and communism,

capitalism and socialism and a range of other ism's intended to enforce a change in how people are governed.

Where the resource rich nations of Africa, the Middle East and Asia have been left bloodied and poor as the Powers of the west have left behind failed political ideologies but no workable system to enable a growing economy based on these God given resources they were fighting over.

Where all that is left behind is a criticism of the people for not having the integrity and intelligence to establish a governance model that is free from corruption and bias.

Military power can be viewed as an extension of political power, but with extra barbs.

It is often used to further the will of small groups or individuals. It is imposed for the strategic benefit of an outside force that has no interest in the local politics or people but only in the land and resources available for exploitation.

Social power is perhaps the most invasive and dangerous of the three.

Whereas political power is initially achieved through either popular support and / or military might, social power attacks at a less obvious level.

It questions the social norms of a society, with scant regard for the historical context these norms have been developed in.

It breaks down the fabric of this society, moulding it to a new way of thinking.

This new way often does not take into account the external environmental, cultural and societal factors that stability was built on.

The Church has been particularly good at effecting this form of power, with the same results as all others who have attempted it – disenfranchised people who have lost a sense of their cultural heritage who enter a struggle to retain this lost heritage only to be crushed by a stronger and often violent force.

This pattern of mission has been seen from the crusades to the war in Iraq.

From the early Christian missionaries who brought disease and land grabs to the current mission programmes imposing a western ideology on communities who do not understand a need for change.

A very practical example of this was a water and sanitation programme I visited where a large part of the programme was about educating children in the importance of face washing.

The American missionaries running the programme were becoming increasingly frustrated at the poor uptake of face washing among the children of the community.

They had invested significant effort in developing and implementing education programmes for the children and saw little change in behaviour beyond the initial lessons.

Why was it failing? They had focused the programme on the children only.

Then these missionaries started talking about the ignorance of parents and especially grandparents.

They couldn't understand why they would not want their children and grandchildren to be free from infection and disease like Trachoma.



What they hadn't done was educate the older people in the community; the ones who had influence in what was done.

They had applied the western idea that if you teach the children you can effect behavioural change.

Yet this was a community that revered elders and would listen to them, follow their command ahead of anything a child or foreigner would say.

They had failed to take into account the local context.

Perhaps however, the most concerning result of this misuse of power is in what the Rt Rev Dr David Zac Niringiye suggests Africa's biggest problem is.

He says the biggest problem is not poverty; it is not AIDS. Africa's crisis is confidence.

What decades of colonialism and missionary enterprise has eroded among Africans is confidence.

Niringiye talks of church leaders, leaders who have large congregations but know nothing of Africa, coming to Africa and the locals deferring to this leader – where they don't even tell him everything they are thinking, out of respect.

This is leaving a gap of understanding for all.

With this backdrop we see an Africa where the base material to build a thriving future is eroded – the confidence of the people in their own ability to lead; the confidence in their own ability to develop their future.

Yet this confidence has been, in part, eroded by missionaries bringing a message of hope, transformation and a future. Where has it gone wrong?

For many of us with a western context, power is something we hold through our knowledge, our wealth and our view that the future is ours to make. Even when that future is the future for others.

How often have well intentioned missions taken to communities in different cultures and tried to apply their view of the future without understanding the cultural, physical and spiritual context of the community they have gone in to?

How would we feel if we had a group of Masai come into our community and tell us we needed to change our ways for no other reason than they believed they were right.

Or how often have Western organizations, churches, development organizations, mission societies, made decisions that will affect the lives of people of another culture from the comfort of an office in New Zealand, America or Europe?

This approach is one that comes from a paradigm of the Great commission – Go and make ...

We head out as though the future is ours to control and make happen, that the job has started and all we need to do is finish it.

When read from the human centre of power, this passage reinforces the "it's all about us" approach; that we are in charge.

What if the approach was based on what could be called the "great invitation"?

When we read from the start of the Gospels we see Jesus call the disciples – “Come follow me. I will make you fishers of men”.

Not “go and make” but “I will make you”.

Suddenly Jesus is the centre.

Interestingly the last words of Jesus to Simon Peter are the same as His first – “Follow me”.

What if the power that was brought into play was the power of the Gospels delivered in the model of Jesus own ministry?

As Christians we believe that Jesus was in fact the most powerful human to walk the earth. Here was the human embodiment of the God that had reined terror over disobedient nations, who could call on this same power at any time.

Yet here we see a different application of power. A power born of love, inclusion and desire for all people to be able to live as God had intended.

In looking at Jesus ministry we see the futility of the human context of power.

Jesus ministered in a time of extreme political, military and social power.

Yet despite not developing for Himself a position of strength in these battles, He built a powerful body that has endured beyond those he challenged.

As we look at Jesus’ example we see the model for current missions to exert power in their work to bring about the Kingdom of God. To fulfil the Great Commission and to share the love of God in all the nations.

Jesus began His ministry by creating credibility in the community he was in.

This was not done by doing what the people expected necessarily but by being true to his calling.

He demonstrated the confidence of someone who was sure of His purpose.

He also worked alongside people. He did not seek to grandstand but to work quietly, teaching, encouraging recruiting followers.

Much of this was done by meeting the needs of those he came across, those who were the poorest in their community, the sick, the lame and the outcast.

Right from the calling of the first disciples Jesus ministry was culturally relevant. He put to Simon and Andrew, fishermen, the opportunity to become fishers of men. Immediately they understood what he was asking.

Why then do we so often take western ideas into the developing world and ask them to follow us to a better future based on concepts that are completely outside of their understanding.

Asking a nomadic tribesman to settle down and grow crops that require constant tending and care is about as effective as if Jesus had asked Simon and Andrew to follow Him so they could help establish a movement that would change the world forever.

Jesus spent much of His time ministering to those society had forgotten or excluded. In the early stages of his ministry we see Him healing the sick, the lame, and the disabled, demonstrating not only His power but His love through this ministry.

In modern society we so often see this group as the last to be helped – Jesus made them the first.

This set Him aside from the rulers of the day and made people sit up and take notice.

Here was a man helping those they had cast aside and gaining credibility for doing it!

But perhaps of most importance in what Jesus was doing was the empowering of those He ministered to.

We read of the healing of many where the command is given to “get up and walk”, “leave your mat and go”...

In these commands Jesus was not just saying OK you are healed but He is saying that not only are you healed now you can have all that life offers.

The recipient of His grace was healed in body, mind and spirit, empowered to take control of their future.

This is the example we should set in our work.

Christian mission has the potential to be the most powerful force in the world, whether we are ministering to our local community or to the poorest of the poor in a distant land.

However this power will not be political, certainly not military and it should not be social.

This power should not coerce or enslave.

This power should set free and empower, for this is the power of God.

This power should be born out in the intersection of the meeting of needs, done because it is a reflection of God’s love and the sharing of the Gospel.

An intersection where the example set demonstrates the story told.

Where the sharing of the Word comes through more from example than preaching, where the ministry is delivered in a way that is meaningful and fruitful in body, mind and spirit.

A powerful Christian mission is the light in a dark world, where the example set is the window to the Love of God where the tensions and power struggles of everyday life are no longer factors inhibiting development and progress.

Sure Christian mission needs to operate in environments where the political, military and social power struggles of a country or community are in force, however it should be obvious that these struggles have no place in the mission.

Christian missions should be active in promoting Human Rights, and exemplary in demonstrating these.

After all we are all made equal in the image of God. This will mean we ask those in positions of worldly power the hard questions.

We will possibly put ourselves at risk to do so, understanding that a stand of faith is in itself a powerful indicator of the power of God.

That justice is worth personal sacrifice.

Christian missions should operate completely separately to the military and not take sides in any conflict.

Even when the battle lines are drawn on the basis of faith (think how many wars have been fought between Christian and Muslim groups in recent years).

Jesus ministered to all regardless of their political or religious persuasion.

Christian mission should be based on fair practice in employment, funding and operational delivery.

Never again should there be a scandal where a leader of a Christian mission is found guilty of achieving financial gain or coercing favours through the work of the ministry at the expense of others.

Christian missions should be active in promoting and practicing environmentally sustainable living. Where in the Bible does it say that we can plunder the environment causing suffering for others.

Christian missions should follow Jesus example of living and working alongside the people we serve, building their capacity to grow, creating with them an environment that encourages growth but respects the local culture.

It must be inclusive of all people and exclude no one. This includes the power brokers who may be inflicting pain and poverty.

After all God loves them as much as he loves the ones affected by their rule.

In short Christian mission needs to shun the worldly temptations of political, military and social power and work to be an example of something completely different.

We should not get involved in playing the power game – albeit more humbly – but we need to believe that the basis of our power is not our professionalism, connections or resources.

These are only tools at our disposal. The basis for our power is our dependence on God – borne out in the way we approach others.

To do anything else risks us becoming God in their lives, crowding out room for God.

We have no more right than a political power broker to tell a person where they should send their child to school, or when that child should go to work.

It is not us that is the saviour but God. We are His instrument, available to be used by Him in achieving His will and fully dependant on Him.

It is this model of subservient power, subservience to a higher power that is pure and holy, that will allow God's power to shine through.

And through this power we will see Christian mission achieve more than we could ever imagine.

We should not underestimate the power at hand here either, or what can be achieved when we call on God.

If we think back to recent times when change has been achieved we can see this power at work.

In the civil rights movement of the 50's and 60's it was this shunning of political power and refusal to be ruled by social power combined with a faith that God was at work that brought about full and equal rights for African Americans.

This movement of God is still impacting on the world today with people opening up to faith through its message.

In the power that came from the small Bible study cells in Eastern Europe where communist rule was broken down or perhaps most notably in South Africa.

In times of enormous persecution and difficulty a man like Bishop Desmond Tutu insisted on living as though he had an invisible army on his side.

When attempts to dialogue with government officials failed he led worship services, showing the oppressors that their power was nothing to the power he called on and believed in.

The stories of God's power overcoming the odds are not limited to the Bible. They are happening today.

They are happening through ordinary people who have done the extra-ordinary. Ordinary people who made themselves available for God to use. People who were focused on achieving the fullness of life for others, even at their own expense. People like Mother Teresa, Lech Walesa in Poland, Martin Luther King Jr, and Desmond Tutu.

These and many many more unnamed others worked alongside people to empower, inspire and equip them to achieve a full life for themselves.

We cannot all be Tutus or Kings but we can be a tool in God's armoury that will be available to be part of an army of ordinary people banding together to show a different answer, one that breaks the shackles of injustice and poverty, one that does not fear the oppressor but stands strong in the strength and grace of a loving God.

When His people stand up and reflect His love, shunning the worldly trappings of what is seen as power we will see more of these events.

This is the power that is available for mission work – let us embrace it, let us live it.

Let us be seen as different. Let us reflect God's power in all its glory and majesty through our own desire to not accept worldly power.



“From Edinburgh 1910 to Edinburgh 2010 - Witnessing to Christ Today:  
Perspectives from Aotearoa New Zealand.”

ANZAMS Symposium : *Laidlaw College, October 30-31st, 2009.*

## Missiology after *Mission*?<sup>1</sup>

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John Roxborough

*Missiology acts as a gadfly in the house of theology, creating unrest and resisting complacency, opposing every ecclesiastical impulse to self-preservation, every desire to stay where we are, every inclination toward provincialism and parochialism, every fragmentation of humanity into regional or sectional blocs . . . .*

*Missiology's task, furthermore, is critically to accompany the missionary enterprise, to scrutinize its foundations, its aims, attitude, message and methods – not from the safe distance of an onlooker, but in a spirit of co-responsibility and service to the church of Christ. (Bosch 1991 p.496)*

One effect of the success of the theological project to place mission at the centre of the Church's self-understanding has been that the language of mission has gained currency across the disciplines. This currency has been encouraged by missiology itself, including through the language of missional churches, and the role missiology was given in debates over social action and evangelism. However while the theology itself may be secure, the currency of the language of mission may not. Mission is widely invoked. Its nature is assumed to be known and understood. Yet if people tire of hearing about mission, as they are likely to do, or come to realise that its undifferentiated invocation solves neither the problems of the world nor of the church, what will be the future of missiology?

There are difficulties in relationship of missiology to theology and to the practice of mission which remain intractable, yet require attention if missiology is to be seen as a promise to the church more than a threat or an irrelevance. In discussing the history of missiology in the theology curriculum David Bosch noted that “The basic problem . . . was not with what *missiology* was but with what *mission* was.” (Bosch 1991, 492). If the theological place of mission now appears secure and the social scope of mission less divisive, one might hope that with the removal of these two problematic factors, the future of missiology has become more certain. Yet it is evident challenges remain. There were also some benefits for missiology in being concerned with a subject that was debated. When mission was contentious people

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<sup>1</sup> See “Missiology after Bosch” (Roxborough 2001) and “Missiology, theology, worship and the church” (Roxborough 2008) also (Kasdorf 1994).

looked to missiology to resolve the differences or to provide support for one view or another. If those needs are removed other functions need to come to the fore if missiology is to be seen as relevant. This situation may also suggest why despite its achievements and its maturity as a discipline, the theological study of mission may still feel itself under threat.

Historically part of the problem with missiology was seen to be that the division of theology into biblical studies, systematic theology, church history and practical theology had no self-evident place for a new subject that championed the intentions of God, the purpose of the church, and the challenges of engaging with culture and religion. The major alternatives of incorporation into practical theology or the creation of independent teaching positions failed to address a disconnect from the life of the church and purposes of God. Attempts at integration which recognized the missionary dimension of all the theological disciplines were theoretically promising, but in practice were frustrated by a lack of shared understanding about what such a dimension required (Bosch 1991, 489-492). Integration and its implications remains an area for serious reflection, but it might be noted that some of the issues are of course problems for theological education generally if not education generally. When disciplines are differentiated they need also to be connected. Pedagogical experience suggests that identifiable sets of disciplines need a combination of specialists and recognition of how each discipline supports and is part of other disciplines.

It is difficult to avoid the fact that missiologists want to tell other people they should be doing things differently. That this parallels the evangelistic tasks of Christian theology and Christian mission provides a certain irony, and maybe some solutions, but the range of evangelistic temptations from arrogance to quietism apply also to missiology in relation to the worlds of church and theology. The self-understanding Bosch articulates may be inspiring for those who identify with missiology, but it also highlights a problematic relationship with both theology and practice. Gadflys cannot expect to be made welcome, and having a desire to “critically accompany the missionary enterprise” is a hard sell if one wants to win friends with mission practitioners, whatever may be said about humility and service.

As long as the general understanding of mission and of theology related to mission were conflicted, particular over social action, missiologists were valued as those expected to lend support to one or other competing sets of understanding and practice. Missiology may still be valued where churches are uncertain of their role in the face of cultural and political change or see themselves as threatened minorities. Where these internal differences and social needs have lost their force, the underlying difficulties remain to be addressed.



Missiology has to take some responsibility for its place in the life of the church. It needs to be in a position that makes it less vulnerable to changes in the popularity of the language of mission. To do that it may be useful to look at some of the successes with which it may be linked, as well as challenges it faces which may be in its own hands to address.

### **1. Missiology: a success story?**

For at least over half a century there has been a consistent effort to restore mission to the centre of the church's thinking and to establish missiology and mission studies as respectable academic disciplines. In 1952, the Willingen meeting of the International Missionary Council found in the formulation of *Missio Dei* an answer to the problem of the theological location of mission. If mission was understood as outreach across frontiers, should it be located in the agencies or in the being of the church, or somewhere else? By locating mission in the nature of God rather than the activity of the church it managed to solve, theologically if not practically, the problem of where responsibility for mission lay.

Despite the formulation of the problem itself reflecting the constraints of Enlightenment rationalism and the answer looking somewhat like kicking the ball upstairs, the theological formulation of *Missio Dei* was discovered to have deep roots in Christian tradition and it has proved itself robust. It is now difficult to conceive of any other foundational theological statement about Christian mission.

*Missio Dei* rates highly on the scale of simply being useful. The solutions it facilitated addressed dichotomies between social and evangelistic dimensions of mission which also appear enduring. Its reception across denominational divides has been extraordinary. Catholics and Orthodox, as well as Conciliar, Pentecostal and Evangelical Protestants, have some significant missiological language in common. The language of Trinitarianism is now reinforced by a common missiology as of the essence of the faith. The scope of mission is now bounded only by the range of interests God has been revealed as having in the world.

In 1961 the integration of the IMC with the World Council of Churches reflected this theology and the belief that it needed to be directly reflected in the structures of the Council by bringing mission into the Council alongside "Faith and order" and "Life and work".

Fears that mission would be swallowed up by church in the WCC may not have been realised, but assumptions about what constituted mission were quickly challenged. Concern that European lethargy would suffocate North American and non-Western missionary energy was addressed by a heightened vocabulary of mission, albeit one whose content was reshaped by the political and this-worldly focus of the Council's

interests in a post-colonial age. The polarizations that followed Uppsala 1968 and the mutual bewilderment between the Evangelical and Ecumenical worlds David Bosch and others observed in the early 1980s proved less absolute and less enduring than expected. By the time his epic *Transforming Mission* appeared in 1991, formally at least, though differences of emphasis and pockets of hostility remained, a Trinitarian theological basis of mission found a common voice across Protestant and Catholic traditions.

In 1992 James Scherer and Stephen Bevans introduced the first of their three volumes on *New Directions in Mission & Evangelization* with an overview of “Statements on Mission and Evangelization, 1974-1991” (Scherer and Bevans 1992 p.xv). The end date of 1991 was easy to explain – it was close to the present and the year of David Bosch’s *Transforming Mission*. But why 1974?

Their summary of significant documents for missiology reached back to Liverpool in 1860, London in 1888 and Edinburgh 1910, and included the meetings of the International Missionary Council in 1921, 1928, 1938, 1947, 1952 and 1961 followed by those of WCC Council of World Mission and Evangelism in 1963, 1973, 1980 and 1989. None of these took place in 1974, nor was there a Catholic event at that time. The significant event was outside the Catholic and Conciliar worlds - the International Congress on World Evangelization held at Lausanne in July 1974.

The Lausanne Covenant may need some updating and the consensus behind its formulation was fragile (Chapman 2009), but it remains one of the core influential missiological statements of the 20th century. In 1972, the International Association for Mission Studies and in 1973 the American Society of Missiology came into being to provide open and committed communities of scholarship self-consciously including Roman Catholics, Conciliar and Evangelical Christians. Both represented the cordial and scarcely restrained joy of discovery across liberal, evangelical and catholic divides. The emphasis was on respectful exchange of views not negotiated conformity, yet many contributed to the embedding of an emerging consensus about what constituted missiology (Escobar 1996)<sup>2</sup>. The tools of a respectable international academic discipline were gradually put in place with these associations, their journals, and an expanding range of serious publications (Anderson 2009). Often done by the same people, mission studies provided models of critical analysis which were less likely to be marked by idealised piety, a guarded defensiveness, or concerns to either prove or disprove the dark side of the missionary enterprise. Without an agenda of seeking to prove that Christianity in non-Western cultures was either good or bad, significant or insignificant, it gave permission to explore the complexities of cultural and religious interaction. When they later appeared, books like Barbara Kingsolver’s *Poisonwood Bible* and critical

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<sup>2</sup> Also in (Gallagher and Hertig 2009 p.219-243).

studies of Christianity and colonialism were seen as essential texts rather than dangerous literature.

Of course Edinburgh 1910, the IMC, and Vatican II had laid the foundations for these developments, and the discovery that Christianity was a world-wide and post-colonial phenomenon not a European religion of empire made it essential.

In the aftermath of Lausanne, numbers of Evangelical and Conciliar missiologists worked to resolve the differences in perspective of their traditions. In the early eighties some saw the contrast as a crisis (Hutcheson 1981), yet a decade later formally at least the degree of accommodation between the polarizations of social action and evangelism was astonishing. Bosch's writings both documented the starkness of the contrast in 1980 between the CWME meeting in Melbourne and the Lausanne Consultation in Pattaya, and the terms of an emerging ecumenical paradigm documented in *Transforming Mission* and the San Antonio CWME meeting and that of Lausanne again in Manila in 1989. Were the parallels to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War just co-incidence (Koschorke 2009)?

As long as people remained to be converted, the story of global Christianity remained to be corrected by the inclusion of the parts of the world with which missiologists had some familiarity, ethical and theological issues required inter-cultural skills that others appeared to lack, and someone was required to facilitate meeting with the people of other faiths who migrated to the West, those who taught missiology could feel useful. They can also point to a number of success stories.

- Whatever the frustrations, missiology has facilitated dialogue between mission theory and mission practice. There are those who value the ideal of being "reflective practitioners".
- As noted, missiology has contributed to the breaking down of the polarization over social action and evangelism.
- It has encouraged cognate disciplines to ask missiological questions. Biblical studies started reading the bible as a missionary text – even if not *all* the Bible is primarily missiological.
- Missiology has encouraged Christian anthropology and seen a reduction in tension between missionaries and anthropologists.
- It has faced the flaws in the theology of Church Growth while allowing its questions and concerns to continue to stimulate.
- Has helped ensure that religious studies and inter-religious dialogue is grounded in the experience of lived religious traditions.

## 2. Missiology under threat

There are however some worrying signs alongside the good news stories and the degree of recognition that missiology has enjoyed. Contextualisation, another missiological child of the 1970s, was championed by theologians and then in some cases sidelined. It has in places been disregarded by those it was intended to help in their quest for cultural authenticity. Mission was seen to be at the heart of the purposes of God and of the nature of the Church, whether or not support for missiology and mission studies is seen as a logical consequence of this affirmation. If theology and other disciplines tire of the language of mission as a source of relevance for them, and as noted, if popular use of the language of mission falters, will missiologists be invited back to carry the discipline further? Is there missiology after mission?

### a) Problems and anxieties

These achievements are substantial, but there are also problems. Despite promising exceptions, it is not clear where the next generation of missiologists is coming from, or what is the life experience and critical dissonance that will inform their academic development.

The redrawing of the maps of global Christianity continues to struggle to find a place for all major cultural blocks as partners around the theological table. We seem to move through a succession of potential hegemonies from the West, to Latin American Liberation Theology, to a choice between re-invigorated Western theologies (Catholic and Reformed), and an African paradigm for all that is non-Western. Asia's theological voices seem to need a new generation of creativity despite a strong heritage. Oceania is problematic – called on to illustrate other people's theories about what ought to be going on and uncertain how to do justice to its Polynesian, Melanesian and European narratives.

The recurring anxieties that surfaced at ASM and IAMS meetings during my experience as a member of IAMS at their international conferences from 1992 to 2008 and at a number of ASM meetings during the 1990s had less to do with theology of religions, about which there was a surprising degree of confidence, than to do with concerns about different sets of colleagues in the mission enterprise:

1. How can we convince colleagues in the academy and seminary that mission is God's and therefore the most important topic in the curriculum deserving of better resources? How at the same time do we convince them that missiology is a scientific discipline?
2. How can we convince the church that it should live up to its identity and reinvigorate its missionary commitment? What part do we have to play in

the missionary reanimation of the church? What role do we have helping all the players understand that the indices of missionary commitment have changed?

3. How can we convince missionary pragmatists and mission agencies that there are missiological questions they ought to be thinking about?
4. How do we convince theologians that mission is “the mother of theology” without appearing to be wanting to tell them what to do?
5. How do we sustain a relationship between theology and praxis?

**b) Removal of a threat is good, but it also reduces a sense of relevance**

While it lasted the contrasts in missiological emphasis and missionary and political vision between mainline and Evangelical Protestants reflected by the Lausanne movement and the WCC helped fuel the study of missiology and its overlapping parallel, mission studies. People looked to missiology to provide the answers they wanted.

As denominations in the West struggled, missiology promised the answers of what we needed to do: help critique church growth, ensure social action was based on theology more than politics, claim the identity of being missionary by our very nature, wrestle with our understanding of other faiths and a theology of religions that did justice to the faith we found in surprising places, struggle with syncretism at home and contextualisation in other cultures, help mission agencies adjust their policies to the new demographic of Christianity as a non-Western religion.

Some of these are ongoing, but they also raise the question whether there are other felt needs in the church that missiology should be well placed to address – not just the needs missiology feels the church ought to be recognizing, but is slow to pick up.

**c) A need for definition remains.**

A stubborn issue has proved to be the basic one of definition. At the 1987 meeting of the Association of Professors of Mission James Scherer sought to pick up the task of defining missiology (Scherer 1987). He noted that such a task had proved elusive despite his and others best efforts and its importance. “Those of us who teach and do research in this area need closer agreement on what missiology is to be able to pursue our goals in a collegial manner, given both the interdisciplinary nature of our subject, and the interconfessional stance we have purposely adopted.”

He noted that Europeans from the time of Warneck (1834-1910) had desired to make the study of missions a science in order to gain academic recognition. Americans from the time of the Student Volunteer Movement and Edinburgh 1910 were primarily concerned to prepare missionaries for overseas service and pastors

to support them. Neither ASM, founded in 1973, nor its journal, *Missiology*, ventured to define “missiology” other than to indicate that it included practically anything of interest or relevance to mission, itself undefined.

In 1978 the Dutch missiologist, Verkuyl, gave a lengthy definition which focused on “the study of the worldwide church’s divine mandate to be ready to serve . . . God who is aiming his saving acts towards this world.” He related missiology to all the theological disciplines as complementary. His approach “mainly related toward theological foundations and goals” in contrast to that of Alan Tippett, the first editor of *Missiology*, who was more concerned with process, context and method. In 1995 Laurent Ramambason proposed that the missiology should be defined by the activity of those who were seen to be doing mission (Ramambason 1999). This grounded missiology in the reality of praxis, and adds a dimension which should not be ignored, yet perhaps begs the question about what ought to be considered Christian mission and how that should be determined.

Clarity about the definition of the concept and content of mission continues to be problematic. It is common for works on mission not to define the term at all. I find it helpful to work with some simple working statements. These are unremarkable except that I am concerned to define the concept before addressing its usage in relation to the church. I also find it useful to separate the overall purpose of the church from the mission of the church outside of itself. I am attempting to avoid the tautology of saying that the mission of the church is mission and of affirming Christian mission as part of the nature of the church without saying that mission outside of ourselves is God’s only or even over-riding purpose for the church.

1. **Mission:** as a concept mission refers to a particular task or responsibility, and by extension a means by which the task is carried out.
2. **Christian Mission:** the purpose of the Church outside of its own community.
3. **Missiology:** the study of Christian mission and the issues that arise through commitment to it.
4. **Mission Studies:** the study of Christian mission including its social and cultural effects.
5. **Purpose of the Church:** includes worship, community and Christian mission.

**d) The recognition of the theological centrality of mission has not translated into appreciation for what mission studies can yet offer the church.**

Andrew Walls has highlighted the importance of mission studies for theology and church history if the church is to understand how it got to be where it is today (Walls 1991). His article is as prescient as ever, though the “structural problems” he refers to seem to lie in a failure of other disciplines to recognize the scope and implications

of missiology rather than internal problems – other than lack of nerve – within mission studies itself. The danger is that of a superficial understanding of what the study of mission and the non-Western church has to offer, thinking that a theological appreciation of the importance of mission is the same thing as coming to terms with its intercultural implications and its relativization of the Western tradition.

There are legitimate concerns about the place of mission in theology and ecclesiology, the place of missiology and the study of mission in the seminary including issues of curriculum and faculty arrangement, and the difficulties of keeping churches “on task” with respect to their call and responsibility outside of their own community life. At the same time it seems to me that efforts to champion the restoration of an over-riding sense of God’s purpose for the church run the risk of theologically overstating the role of mission in the nature of the church, complicated relationships with other disciplines in the theological academy, and failing to achieve the aim of energizing churches preoccupied with liturgy, morality and politics to rise above it all as missional congregations whose identity is fused with the *Missio Dei*. I cannot see a sustained commitment to mission that is not rooted in worship. I can see a church tired of being driven by a missionary identity it does not comprehend or feel inspired to fathom.

**e) The desire to integrate missiology with other theological disciplines takes theology seriously but may blur the contribution that each has to make to our overall understanding of the mind and purposes of God.**

Bosch considers the integration model to be theological preferable to independence or being subsumed under an existing discipline, but considered that integration struggled with the practical reality that other disciplines do not understand what it is about missiology that they are expected to incorporate (Bosch 1991, 492). Bernhard Ott is one who has worked through what a mission-centred curriculum might look like (Ott 2001) having in view an institution which placed a high value on training for mission. Stephen Bevans has reflected on the process of curriculum development at the Chicago Theological Union (Bevans 2005). More recently John Corrie’s *Dictionary of Mission Theology* (Corrie, Escobar, and Shenk 2007) places a high value on integrating mission and theology.

*Missiology should not be seen merely as an outpost of theological investigation, compartmentalized in the curriculum and tacked on alongside biblical theology, hermeneutics, ecclesiology and so on. It is rather that all theology is intrinsically missiological since it concerns the God of mission and the mission of God. This means that all theological categories are inherently missiological and all missionary categories are profoundly theological. This way of thinking . . . has highlighted the Western theological problem of a failure of integration. . . . This book therefore sets*

*out to encourage us all on that journey of integration.* (Corrie, Escobar, and Shenk 2007, xv)

There are problems here as well as a perspective to be taken seriously. If this is Bosch's missiological gadfly in action does it bring us closer to the ideal that missiology is looking for, or does it create a loss of distinctions between the subdisciplines of theology? Is this avoiding turning everything into mission or a well-meaning exercise in missiological imperialism? It seems to go beyond correcting disconnects between faith and action without appreciating some of the benefits of rational analysis. I find it interesting that James Sherer regarded the attempt to correlate missiology to every "discipline in the theological encyclopedia, not to mention the social sciences" to be *a priori* self-defeating. "Missiology must find a way to be holistic, integrative, inclusive, and complementary to human learning without becoming *exhaustive*" (Scherer 1987). Categorization and the formulation of distinctions may be overdone, but it is not of itself an Enlightenment failure, it is rather a necessary task if we are to talk meaningfully about anything. Of course missiology should not be an outpost of theology (though missiology often reminds the church of the importance of what goes on at the margins), but neither should any other dimension of theological thought be disconnected from the whole.

Should missiology be defined by its championing of Christian outreach or differentiated from other disciplines by its multicultural interests and internationalist perspectives? Missiologists need a dialogue of disciplines, we do not need to take them over. Many of us will have a primary discipline in another field, and perhaps missiology is at its best when it encourages this. We can all recognize the importance of the purposes of God without feeling it is our sole responsibility to capture it. Unless missiology seeks to be the servant not the master of matters of concern for the church about its mission it will be deemed either triumphalist or redundant.

Are we facing a lack of interest in missiology because its theology is the new orthodoxy, the markers of identity of the evangelical tradition have moved from mission to morality, mission has not re-energized the church and in any case everyone takes it for granted? Can there be missiology when interest in mission in and from our culture appears to have moved on? Did missiology over-reach itself by its claims to be about what was central to the will of God and the nature of the Church? Are we tarnished by a shift from church growth as concern for lost people to schemes for the salvation of the church presented as concern for the salvation of the world?

Has missiology promised too much to the church and delivered too little? Have statements such as "the only reason for gathering the church is mission" (Kalu and



Low 2008, p.3) driven away commitment to Christian outreach more than inspired a new generation?

Is there a need to apply some classic missiological principles to our own discipline? Does the “euthanasia of the mission” suggest there is a time for missiology to move on from one set of questions to other areas? Does “Missionary methods: St Paul’s or ours?” suggest there is temptation to missiological paternalism which might be ameliorated by trusting the Holy Spirit to provide missiological gifts to others and inviting us to trust the church to be able to answer its own missiological questions?

Does the value of being “reflective practitioners” contain the trap that we really wish that everyone was like us except that we would not know what to do with them if they were? Have we failed to acknowledge that there are different gifts – some of us are better missiologists and some of us are better church planters and evangelists – and that the real need is not for us to all be “reflective practitioners” but to appreciate and learn from one another? Is this a question about what is good for the Kingdom (which it may be) or a desire to reduce the necessary pain of missionary and missiological liminality?

What does it tell us to look at the people who identify themselves with missiology and with mission studies. What do they do? What have we done? What is the glue that holds us together? Where is the next generation of missiologists going to come from, especially as fewer numbers have long term missionary careers involving language learning and cultural adaptation? It is a question to be tested not assumed, but I have the impression that historically people in mission studies:

1. Have another discipline – theology, church history, anthropology, sociology, biblical studies
2. Have an interest in the dynamics of change as people and cultures are affected by Christianity. Are marked by cultural curiosity.
3. Have experience or interest in Christian mission outside the church.
4. Wish to engage others in Christian mission globally and locally.
5. Are willing to ask awkward questions about what is really going on.

The validity of missiology continues to lie in the validity of mission and the importance of the questions it addresses and the intercultural perspectives it brings. There is a sense in which it has to believe in itself even when others may not. Yet we might just do everyone a service by affirming the other disciplines - biblical studies, history, theology, pastoral before sharing our ideas of the centrality of mission or offering to help others out from our experience of crossing boundaries of faith and culture. Like witness to Christ, missiological witness to his mission never ceases to need to earn the right to speak and have a sparing attitude to the divine authority which underlies its calling.

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