

TEN YEARS (2010 – 2020) OF EXCITING MISSIOLOGY IN SOUTH AFRICA: TRENDS AND TRAJECTORIES

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Abstract

Missiology as a theological discipline is dynamic and forever evolving. This dynamism can be observed through trends and trajectories in biblical, theological, and contextual hermeneutics. The authors of this article, by means of literature analysis, scrutinise contributions of some retiring and retired South African missiologists to unearth trends and trajectories in biblical, missiological, and contextual hermeneutics prevalent in South Africa. The authors used the data analysis programme Atlas.ti with a focus on the current four pertinent questions in missiology: What is mission? How should we do mission? What are the goals of mission? What are the contextual issues of mission today and in the near future? The findings reveal interesting trends and trajectories, and points of divergence and similarities, and because of the dynamic nature of missiology, current emerging and established missiologists should continue to shape the future trends and trajectories.

Keywords: Mission; Missiology; Contextual hermeneutics; South Africa; Trends; Trajectories

Introduction

Missiology, the cutting edge of the Christian movement, is dynamic and forever evolving. This dynamism can be observed through trends and trajectories in biblical, theological, and contextual hermeneutics that have emerged on the global as well as national stage. The face of missiology, including trends and trajectories, is expected to change if the issues that preoccupy it change in different contexts.

Current missiological focus areas, namely evangelisation in context, intercultural communication, interreligious dynamics, patterns of mission theology, mission practice and history, women and youth empowerment, and sustainable communities and earth healing remain relevant in these changing landscapes. However, appropriate ways to attend to these focus areas vary from context to context and can be observed in trends and trajectories relating to missiological, biblical, and contextual hermeneutics. Missiology in South Africa and the world has been exciting in this decade. In this article, we aim to unearth trends and trajectories in biblical, theological, missiological, and contextual hermeneutics prevalent in South Africa. Therefore, the central question of this

article is this: What trends and trajectories have emerged in South African missiology from 2010 to 2020? Answers to this question will undoubtedly contribute towards an understanding of the South African theological landscape from a missiological perspective and reveal gaps that need further reflection and research.

In the process of answering the central question in this article, we will first provide a global overview pertaining to missiological discourse. We are conscious that we live in a globalised context and that missiological discourses in South Africa should be read against the backdrop of globalisation. Therefore, in our quest for global impulses and perspectives, we engaged three prominent missiological documents of this decade written by people from different traditions of the Church (Protestant, Catholic and Evangelical) and listened to reports of the International Association of Mission Studies. Secondly, through desktop research, we unearthed the scholarly contributions and discourses that preoccupied some South African missiologists in this decade. Thirdly, we present glimpses based on the gaps found in the works of scholars whose contributions we scrutinised to envisage future trends and trajectories on which South African missiology should focus going forward.

Trends and trajectories in missiology: A global overview as precursor

A global overview is important as a precursor. For this article, we engaged three seminal mission documents that emerged in this decade, namely *Together Towards Life* (TTL) (2013), written by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) of the World Council of Churches (WCC); *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), the pastoral exhortation of Pope Francis of the Roman Catholic Church; and the *Cape Town Commitment* (2010) of the Lausanne Movement. The precursor to these documents is the centenary celebration of the Edinburgh 1910 Conference in 2010, which in many ways set the scene for the issues that were raised in the TTL document, but also indirectly in the *Evangelii Gaudium* and the Cape Town Commitment. The Edinburgh Conference¹ celebrated and reflected on a centenary of world missionary work as well as on considering ways of “Witnessing to Christ today” at the turn of a new century (Edinburgh Conference Listening Group Report 2010:1).

In short, the Edinburgh 2010 centenary conference followed up and further developed the paradigm shift in world mission for the worldwide Church in terms of its emphasis on missional ministry. This shift consists of the following elements: from mission as the Church’s mission to God’s mission (*missio Dei*), and thus from a Church-oriented mission to a mission-centred Church; from world mission and a global Church dominated by Western culture to a worldwide community with a major growth in the global south, with many colours and a multifaceted face; from competition among Churches and missionary organisations to co-operation and unity; from a split between ecumenism and evangelism, dialogue and mission to a more united ministry with the Gospel; from a focus on verbal communication to a more holistic understanding of the Gospel and Christian ministry; from a power-exercising Church to vulnerable communities and a Church among and for the poor; and from male-dominated ministries to full involvement of women, young adults and children in the life and ministry of the Church (Edinburgh Conference Listening Group Report 2010:2). In our view, the TTL

¹ Edinburgh Conference Listening Report, Meeting of the World Missionary Conference, 2-6 June 2010.

broadens this emphasis on the missional ministry of the Church as articulated in the following paragraph.

Essentially, the TTL reflects on Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes and commences with the World Council of Churches' affirmation on mission and evangelism under the auspices of the ecumenical Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME).

In a way, it encapsulates a new ecumenical discernment to seek vision, concepts and directions for a renewed understanding and practice of mission and evangelism in changing landscapes. It also seeks a broad appeal, even wider than the World Council of Churches' member Churches and affiliated mission bodies, so that all can commit themselves to the fullness of life for all, led by the God of Life (TTL 2013:3)!

Through this document, the ecumenical call affirms, on the one hand, that "life in all its fullness is Jesus Christ's ultimate concern and mission (*John* 10:10)" (TTL 2013:4), and on the other, belief "in God, the Holy Spirit, the Life-giver, who sustains and empowers life and renews the whole creation (*Gen.* 2:7; *John* 3:8)" (TTL 2013:4). Moreover, this document affirms that "a denial of life is a rejection of the God of life. God invites us into the life-giving mission of the Triune God and empowers us to bear witness to the vision of abundant life for all in the new heaven and earth" (TTL 2013:4). Missiological discourses and praxes were and continue to be challenged to figure out how and where they discern God's life-giving work that enables God's agents to participate in his mission today (TTL 2013:4). Recognition of "God's mission in a cosmic sense and [affirmation of] all life, the whole *oikoumene*, as being interconnected in God's web of life" (TTL 2013:5), as well as recognition of the Holy Spirit as being essential and central to mission in this document, broadens the horizons of the *missio Dei*². Due consideration is also given to the shift in world Christianity, where the majority of Christians either are living or have their origins in the global South and East where socio-economic poverty and deprivation are endemic realities; migration as a global phenomenon; the emergence of strong Pentecostal and charismatic movements and the fact that people at the margins are claiming their key role as agents of mission and affirming mission as transformation. These are key issues in landscapes that should inform the development of trends and trajectories in theologies of mission, agendas, and practices.

Francis (2013), the current Roman Catholic Church Pope, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* to the Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful, calls the Roman Catholic Church to carry on the proclamation of the gospel in today's world. He asserts that the gospel is at its heart a message of joy as captured in these lines:

The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness, and loneliness. With Christ, joy is constantly born anew (Francis 2013:1).

² The book entitled "'Ecumenical Missiology: Changing Landscapes and New Conceptions of Mission.'" Volume 35, edited by Ross, Kenneth R., Jooseop Keum, Kyriaki Avtzi, and Roderick R. Hewitt in 2016 provides elaborate articulations on this discourse. <https://digitalshowcase.oru.edu/re2010series/25>

In this exhortation, Francis encourages Christians to embark faithfully upon a new chapter of evangelisation marked by this joy. This joy, ever new, should be shared in today's world pervaded by consumerism, complacency, covetousness, the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures, and a blunted conscience. This pervasion has resulted in our inner life being caught up in its own interests and concerns. Consequently, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor (Francis 2013:3). He therefore "invites all Christians, everywhere, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ or at least an openness to letting him encounter them" (Francis 2013:4), so that the truth and goodness of Christ, which by its nature liberates, will grow within them. The assumption is that "any person who has experienced a profound liberation becomes more sensitive to the needs of others" (Francis 2013:9).

The joy of the gospel and its liberating nature should enthuse Christians to an ongoing proclamation of the gospel, as the following verses show: "The love of Christ urges us on" (2 Cor. 5:14); "Woe to me if I do not proclaim the Gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16). These portions of scripture capture what Francis' preoccupations are in relation to mission and evangelism in our contemporary world. He proceeded thereafter by presenting "some guidelines which can encourage and guide the whole Church in a new phase of evangelisation, one marked by enthusiasm and vitality" (Francis 2013:16). These guidelines aimed at addressing questions pertaining to *a*) the reform of the Church in her missionary outreach; *b*) the temptations faced by pastoral workers; *c*) the Church, understood as the entire People of God, which evangelises; *d*) the homily and its preparation; *e*) the inclusion of the poor in society; *f*) peace and dialogue within society; and *g*) the spiritual motivations for mission (Francis 2013:17). Answers to these issues are in the form of guidelines which map theological trends and trajectories that might be considered by the Roman Catholic Church in its mission and evangelisation.

The Cape Town Commitment of the Lausanne Movement (2010) is a confession of faith and a call to action from mainly the evangelical tradition of the Church. The confession of faith section revolves around "The Lord we love" in relation to mission and evangelisation. It is developed in themes such as "We love because God first loved us" (pp. 6-7); "We love the living God" (pp. 7-8); "We Love God the Father" (pp. 9-10); "We love God the Son" (pp. 10-11); "We love God the Holy Spirit" (pp. 11-12); "We love God's word" (pp. 12-14); "We love God's world" (pp. 14-16); "We love the gospel of God" (pp. 17-18); "We love the people of God" (pp. 19-20); and, "We love the mission of God" (pp. 20-21). With reference to loving the mission of God, the Cape Town Commitment elucidates that, on one hand, '*Our participation in God's mission*' has its origin from and is motivated by God, who calls his people to share in his mission, and on the other, '*The integrity of our mission*' in that the *source* of all our mission is what God has done in Christ for the redemption of the whole world as revealed in the Bible.

Further, the Cape Town Commitment's call to action revolves around "The world we serve" in participation to God's mission. It includes bearing witness to the truth of Christ in a pluralistic, globalised world; building the peace of Christ in our divided and broken world; living the love of Christ among people of other faiths; discerning the will of Christ for world evangelisation; calling the Church of Christ back to humility, integrity and simplicity; and partnering in the body of Christ for unity in mission (The Cape Town Commitment 2010:22-47).

Each one of these documents discusses various theological-missiological understandings which capture trends and trajectories and contextual hermeneutics in relation to the Church in general on the global scene. The similarities in contents on issues such as the globalised changing landscapes of the whole creation as the context for mission, God as the source and the initiator of mission, and the call of God to the Church to join him and the role of the Holy Spirit are vividly articulated. There is consensus, we note, that salvation and transformation of the whole of Creation is the aim of God's mission. Of significance in these documents is, on the one hand, the call to the Church to rediscover contextual and authentic expressions as it participates in the *missio Dei* in the globalised world, where migration and complex diversities have become the norm. On the other hand, the need to re-read the Bible afresh to find contextual hermeneutics for transformative applications in mission is explicitly articulated in these three missionary documents.

In tandem with insights from these documents, the International Association for Mission studies (IAMS) continues to highlight the issues and themes deserving further theological and missiological reflection. However, not all the themes or issues are new. In fact, some have been discussed regularly in missiological discourses in the recent past. Nonetheless, reflection on these themes should continue to be part of the missiological agenda for the future. In 2012, at the IAMS congress in Toronto (Canada), issues and themes such as migration, incarnation, understanding of the notion of "home" in relation to migration and migrants including Pentecostal Christianity received much attention. Other important themes that emerged at this conference included: 1) the strong link between the biblical narrative and the narratives and dramas of present-day migration; 2) migrants are not and should not be simply *objects* of our mission, hospitality, and pastoral care. They are also *agents* of mission; and 3) an insistence on missiology not only of theory but one of action—or better, of praxis.³

In 2016 at IAMS in Seoul (South Korea), the conference emphasised the *conversion of the Church* over the *conversion of the 'other'*.⁴ Related to the conversion of the Church was the theme of the multidirectional flow of conversion through ongoing encounters, the notion of spirituality being essential and foundational to missiology, and the way in which we bring together conversion and missiological themes. Further discussions focussed on 1) how conversions and transformations are mutually interdependent and that it is an ongoing process, 2) the nature of conversion itself, 3) questions like: What are we converting from? Moreover, what we are converting to? and 4) the question of the "How?" of conversion and transformation were central matters of discussion.

The upcoming IAMS conference in Sydney (Australia), which would have been addressing the issue of vulnerabilities, power and inequality has been postponed to 2021 because of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the theme of this conference shows that future mission agendas must include addressing vulnerabilities, power, and

³ Listeners' Report, Meeting of the International Association for Mission Studies, August 19, 2012. Prepared by Stephen Bevans, Pavol Bargar, Jacob Kavunkal, Valentin Kozuharov, Susan Nganga and Atola Lungkumer.

⁴ Listening Report, Meeting of the International Association for Mission Studies, August 17, 2016. Prepared by: Melody Wachsmuth, Klippiess Kritzinger, Alison Fitchett, Eun Ah Cho, Varughese John, Thias Kgatla, Jonny Baker.

inequality. This theme resonates with the tenets of missiological discourses covered in those documents.

It is apparent from the foregoing that discourses covered in the missiological documents, together with IAMS-conference inputs, provide us with some of the ‘impulses’, at least on the global scene, important trends and trajectories in biblical, theological-missiological and contextual hermeneutics, and preoccupations relative to missiological discourses during this decade (2010-2020). We will later discuss how South African missiology hinges unto the global trends.

Research methodology

The authors approached the study from a critical realist paradigm and were committed to the belief that there are multiple realities that should be critically engaged. The authors used a qualitative approach because they were interested in the deeper meaning of the core questions within South African missiology. Therefore, the authors analysed the various formulations and articulations of six South African missiologists and used it as a springboard to discuss the future of missiology in South Africa. The authors therefore posed the question: How do the perspectives of various senior missiologists in South Africa allow missiologists to reimagine missiological research and mission practice in South Africa?

The authors were specifically interested in understanding the recent discourse and trends in mission and missiology and therefore limited the scope to the discourse of six missiologists in South Africa. These scholars include JNJ (*Klippiess*) Kritzinger, Thias S Kgatla, CJP (*Nelus*) Niemandt, Nico Adam Botha, H, Jurgens Hendriks,⁵ and Pieter Verster.⁶ The authors made use of purposive sampling to analyse trends in missiology. The chosen six missiologists were employed in public higher education institutions. These include Universities where missiology is taught (i.e. Stellenbosch, Pretoria, Free State, South Africa). Five of the six are retired and one will retire soon. Common among these six missiologists is that they have been in academia for a considerable amount of time and have vast exposure and experience relative to the discipline of missiology in South Africa, and they all belong to Reformed Protestant tradition. These individuals have worked with mission organisations and societies – nationally as well as internationally – to be able to provide basic contours for mission discourse.

To engage their voices, the authors were able to select the ‘final’ words (though they continue working in various capacities) or some of their notable works (that is their much-cited and referenced works) to unearth the trends and trajectories.

The authors limited the quest in terms of their h-indexes, their most referenced works, and in other cases their valedictory lectures, and cases in which they provide an overview of the issues that they regard as critical for missiology to engage. The authors also consulted the festschriften that were published to honour some of these colleagues to

⁵ Jurgens Hendriks was employed at Stellenbosch as a practical theologian, though because of his own work and contributions in missional ecclesiology and theology, the authors decided to include him in the list of contributors in the field of missiology at the University of Stellenbosch.

⁶ (Kritzinger 2008); (Kritzinger 2012); (Niemandt 2012); (Hendriks 2007); (Kgatla 2016); (Kgatla, 2016); (Botha, 2020).

determine issues or concerns which preoccupied the scholarship of these missiologists in relation to South Africa.

The authors then used Atlas.ti software to codify the documents focussing on the four pertinent questions in missiology: What is mission? How should we do mission? What are the goals of Mission? What are the contextual issues of mission today and in the near future? Through these questions, the authors were able to grasp essential understanding(s) that these missiologists have on these issues. The authors then grouped the various codes into code groups that would be able to relate to the four pertinent questions in mission and missiology. Data were then analysed to highlight the trends within missiology from a South African perspective and were then further analysed through comparisons, highlighting contrasts, and recurring themes.

Trends and trajectories in South African Missiology (2010 – 2020)

The study yielded interesting quantitative results. For instance, the question on *How* to do mission turned out to be a contentious and significant question to address in mission discourse in South Africa. It is probably one of the reasons why the researchers were able to identify the highest number of codes (50) that relate to this question. The second highest number of codes (42) relates to the definition of mission. This is followed by the contemporary issues in mission (33); and lastly, the goal of mission (24). In terms of the space and depth of discussion on the goal of mission, it seems that most missiologists have a bit more clarity in this regard. The following section will present a qualitative reflection on the findings of these results and what they reveal about the trends in missiological discourse in South Africa.

What is mission?

Answers to this question highlight the interconnectedness of mission with God, the kingdom of God and its manifestation, salvation of sinners and holistic communication of the gospel, and other various concepts.

The findings of the study reveal that there is much said about God as the initiator of mission in that “it starts with God” or “God as the author” of mission. However, there is also a focus on Christ (“grounded in Christ”), and reference to the crucified and resurrected Christ. The emerging significance shows an increased number of references to the Spirit and mission. However, the reference to the ‘Spirit’ is not as prominent as would be expected. The reference to the role of the Spirit in mission does not receive as much attention as the roles of the other persons in the trinity. Though there is much emphasis on the mission of God as “Trinitarian,” there is an emphasis on one or the other person in the trinity but not as equal an emphasis as there should be. Therefore, the authors submit that missiologists still have a long way to go before they embrace the articulations made in the three mission documents highlighted earlier regarding the role of the Spirit in mission.

There is also a focus on the Kingdom and clear articulation on the eschatological vision of God, who will redeem the world at the end of time, but that in the present – the here and now – the transformation of the present and pressing realities should occur. Therefore, the emphasis is on social involvement, salvation with social justice, and “radical transformation” (not general empowerment but radical salvation in Jesus). More

specifically, there is an emphasis on mission as “political and revolutionary” and the phrase “radical transformation”, which appears (though not too frequently) in the data. Mission is also seen and described within the context of empire, and cultural approaches should not blur the realities of imperial approaches. Mission is about ‘all’ the ‘sent ones’, and there seems to be a conscious and intentional move from a “Church centric” mode of understanding of mission to a “theocentric” one. The data reflects an ambivalent relationship between Church and mission in terms of mission being simultaneously about a “community of witness”, which articulates the embodiment of God’s mission within the life and practice of the Church, and the “essential task” of the Church.

The idea that mission is about “sinners” also surfaces most likely because this is quite central within Reformed Theology, which has shaped all the missiologists considered in this study. However, the notion of *corruptio totalis* (total depravity), which belongs to the reformed tradition, does not receive much prominence nor is extended in the sense of the structural nature of sin in the world even though the word “evil”, which has to do with external forces, is accentuated within the discussion on the Kingdom of God on earth.

Mission is articulated within the data as the “holistic good news communication”, and this serves to counter the “tug war” between the “evangelism gospel” and the “social gospel.” From a rhetorical perspective, this seems to be a contentious issue within the South African context, which is therefore described in such strong-worded terms like “tug-of-war.” Though this might be apparent in the perspective of Reformed theologians, it would be interesting to see the fusion of Pentecostal-missiological perspectives with that of current and emerging discussion and trends in this regard.

Finally, the one issue that has received much agreement among missiologists in the data is the emphasis on “people” in mission. This encapsulates that the notion that mission should be “people-centred” rather than institution and “programme-centred”, and that it is “people” who participate in the mission of God. While this is important, there seems to be quite an imbalance between the position of people in mission than the rest of the cosmos (which has only been squarely placed by one missiologist as part of the emphasis of mission. It should be noted that people are important as far as they are part of the *Oikos* – the whole household of God (cf. Baron and Mangayi).⁷ It would also be interesting to see how the emphasis on people will be engaged with in the emerging context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR)⁸, especially the ushering in of 3D imaging, robotics, and Artificial Intelligence (AI), in terms of decreasing dependency on people regarding certain types of work.

⁷ These missiologists wrote a Study Guide in Missiology at the University of South Africa. It focusses on the mission of God as God’s involvement in the *Oikos*, “Household of God.” However, these scholars draw from the work of the *Oikos* Journey project, the contributions of Ernst Conradie, especially his edited work with Clive W Ayre, “The Church in God’s household. Protestant Perspectives on Ecclesiology and Ecology,” pp.1-185 (Conradie & Ayre 2016).

⁸ Schwab (2016), the founder of World Economic Forum noted “4IR is characterized by a range of new technologies that are fusing the physical, digital and biological worlds, impacting all disciplines, economies and industries, and even challenging ideas about what it means to be human.”

How do we do mission?

The data reveals the considerable emphasis on the question of how mission is performed. There seems to be a sensitivity in terms of “how mission” has been done in the past and a great concern for the integrity of mission. One of the missiologists who conducted the study is of the view that mission should not only be about a mission agent that wants to *know* the other only through literature (concerning beliefs, practices, rituals etc.), but rather through encounters - in which a person opens up, not only to *know* (cognitive exercise) the *other* but to experience the *other*, so much so that the mission agents themselves should be vulnerable and willing to ‘change’ in their own beliefs. This is therefore, based on the ‘experiential’ factor, in which mission agents ‘experience’ the world of others. The notion of ‘encounterology’ becomes an imperative component for doing mission in the post-apartheid context. It is also stressed that the integrity of mission would be to move from a ‘deductive’, theory-practice method to an “interactive theological-practical method.” This links with themes in research where the data shows the use of words such as “contextual”, “cultural analysis”, “dialogue” (towards a possible reformulation of ecclesial beliefs, practices, and traditions”), and a move from the “ontological to hermeneutical” that also relates to the “interactional-change” that needs to take place during mission encounters. This implies an intentional move away from the notion that every community is homogeneous to a notion that they are heterogeneous; this involves a deliberate shift from a copy-paste method to an appreciation for the “self-identification” of the people that participate in mission activities in parallel with the evolving of “self-knowledge” on the part of mission agents. This also echoes and propagates the idea of “respect” for others and therefore a move from “essentialism” towards an “analysis of attitudes.” What also stems from this is the issue of “creativity in mission”, which has been under-estimated as a significant component and imperative for Churches in South Africa.

There is also a trend to speak about mission as a method “in the community”, “discernment with others” and reference to “participatory action research.” It is interesting to see how much the method of mission has to do with words such as “interactionality”, “interdependence” and “discernment in communion”, as well as a “shoulder-to-shoulder towards a common purpose.” The “side of the poor” also goes along with “interfaith encounter ‘in the street’” which brings in immediately the notion of class and a class approach within the centre of discussion of mission practice. The latter issues relate to the notion of “solidarity”, which also has found prominence in the work of South African theologians/missiologists like Allan Boesak, Desmond Tutu, and Steve Bantu Biko. This ‘solidarity’ refers to a ‘black’ (marginalised) solidarity.

The notion that mission should be done through the lens of the “cross” – a “Christological Vision” – becomes the ideal within a society that has suffered immensely through colonisation and colonialism of a special type (apartheid) (where the colonialist and colonised share geographical space). This Christological vision calls for an empathetic mission, a position from which we do not approach mission and contexts from a position of “victory” but from a position of vulnerability. A final thought is the issue of “people” before principles as a way in which mission agents should approach communities in which they do mission.

The issues in mission

The tension around the argument about whether mission comes before or after ecclesiology is common for all these scholars. Yet, they agree that mission should be understood to be before the Church. The data reveals the issues that have been crucial for missiologists to contend with in the South African context. These include issues and challenges such as globalisation, emphasis on the cross, denominational diversity, mission and empire, poverty, postmodernism, the missionary nature of the Church, as well as the Bible as a missionary document. Therefore, reimagining the Church is crucial, especially to reimagine “old ecclesiologies.” There also seems to be a focus on “children as agents of mission”, the “influence of social media” and the impact of “4IR” as some of the evolving issues that have not been addressed comprehensively by these missiologists, as well as in missiological engagements in South African public higher education institutions where missiology is taught. Further, the data highlighted issues related to South African realities such as “violence”, “internalised racism and oppression”, “migration”, and “xenophobia” as issues that preoccupied these scholars. They contended also that mission and missiology in South Africa should not neglect these issues.

The goals and motivation for mission

The data reveals that the goals of mission should be to address the pressing realities and not to opt for a “pie in the sky, bye-bye” approach. These goals should aim to overcome “the powers of evil” and to proclaim the reign of God, of Christ, and the centrality of the cross in the mission of God. Mission agents should therefore be “radically Christocentric” as they allow the “future [kingdom] to invade the present” and to bring forth transformation of the most vulnerable, the marginalised and the poor. Furthermore, mission must bring more “questions to the fore” and continuously foster ‘intercultural perspectives.’ The data also reveals that the motivation for doing mission should be “God” through salvation, not only of people but the “whole of creation,” not only of the “soul” but the *shalom* in God’s Kingdom on earth.

The future of missiology in South Africa

It is apparent from the foregoing that there is enough evidence to believe that these scholars engaged their context. However, these authors perceived that there was hesitation from their contributions and praxes to propagate a ‘radical-Christocentric’ mission approach, which could have brought forth the most unheard voices into mainstream missiological discourse in South Africa. Unheard voices of marginalised groups, such as children, women, and homeless communities, are not yet taken seriously in South African missiology. For example, the focus on ‘children’ as agents of mission as an important issue to challenge and transform the hermeneutics of mission in the future is not taken as seriously as it should be. It will assist with bringing *all* under the “reign of God” and with the conversation of the *other*. There is a definite need for a model that would allow the “encounterology” to be practised. There is also not so much missiological engagement on how one should address the influence of 4IR in terms of challenging ideas about what it means to be human. This remains, therefore, a question on how missiology as a discipline should position itself in the face of this present challenge. There remains also a deep concern from these scholars in terms of how the

previous *how* of mission can be transformed, especially because it has been entrenched in the pattern of the Church. How do we bridge the gap between ‘othering’ towards ‘oneness’ and ‘Oikos (*Household of God*)’? How do we deliver the Church from dichotomies that are not helpful in a diverse post-apartheid context?

It should be also noted that all these questions find a coherent narrative on points relative to praxis such as “mission flows from God,” and as a concern for people, proclaiming the reign of God allows for a dialogue that allows for self-knowledge and self-identification at the same time. This can be done if we adhere to Kritzing (2008) in seeing truth as a person and not a principle and objective. The Church as mission with God is witnessing the truth embodied in the person of Christ by becoming an embodiment of the same truth to communities. It is more about being than doing as affirmed below.

In discussion with the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) Free State’s Partners of Witness Council, it was affirmed that congregations and presbyteries believe that mission is about “being a witness,” not any more a focus on “outgoing” mission. Nevertheless, this does not mean abandoning mission activities such as outreaches. It should therefore be equally stressed that being missional means “being a witness” though proclamation. This means that mission agents are not focussed exclusively on “being” at the expense of action. Rather both being and doing are fused within an adequate understanding of the *missio Dei*.

Of great concern in the data is the grounding of mission discourse to become almost “a pie in the sky” discourse. This can be observed in the reluctance to speak in contextual terms and confront historical and structural issues. There is a failure, on the one hand, to engage explicitly the ‘empire’ that South Africans have to deal with daily, and on the other, coming short towards unmasking (*prophetic posture*) structural issues that impede the *shalom* of God. The authors, therefore, contend that missiological discourse in South Africa has no option, but to opt for *prophetic posture*. This entails unveiling and exposing systemic and structural frameworks that keep on reproducing evil, pain and suffering in society. Therefore, as much as other issues are important, the looming issue of racism, for example, should be squarely placed as a central issue that missiology must address in the South African context. Failure to embrace the prophetic posture has resulted in a pastoral approach that seems entirely consistent with mission practice in the past. Thus, the reluctance to move towards a radical approach that would address South African structural realities as revealed in the data suggests an ongoing commitment from missiologists in the Southern African context. Nevertheless, there is a sense of relief that some missiologists currently affiliated with institutions of higher learning in South Africa have started to address these gaps in their scholarship. We will highlight some of the issues that they are wrestling with in their research in the following section as we envisage missiology post-2020.

South African missiology post-2020

Going forward, in the context of globalised changing landscapes, and specifically with reference to the global south, where multidimensional socio-economic, historical, political and ecological degradation remain real challenges for the Church and its survival, the authors contend that there is a need to subscribe to a missiology that is

biblical, contextual, multidisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and intentionally aimed at holistic transformation. In keeping with our understanding of “mission as the ‘cutting edge’” of a Christian community, that is, its attempts to change the world through projects of evangelism, healing, teaching, development or liberation, missiology has to remain the “systematic and critical study of the missionary (world-changing) activities of Christian Churches and organisations.”⁹ It is an applied theological study and should therefore rely on practical frameworks to realise transformation in any specific context.

Research interests and fields of specialisation and publications of South African missiologists in this decade slightly indicate, we hope, trends and trajectories in the future. In depth analysis regarding motivations that these current missiologists may have pertaining to their declared research interests and specialisation is unfortunately beyond the scope of this article. Nevertheless, they are mentioned here to give a glimpse as to how they engage some key issues in South Africa.

A glance at their ongoing research interests, as captured on Google Scholar, reveals that at the North-West University, for instance, colleagues work on missiological perspectives on issues of children and youth including urban missions. At the University of KwaZulu-Natal, colleagues work on public theology of mission, missiological perspectives, economic ethics, theology of work, ethical leadership, the agenda of the Palestine Kairos Document, the Church, development praxis, ecclesial, and socio-political history of missionary Churches, theology and democracy in South Africa, and the role of the Church in participatory development.

At the University of Pretoria, colleagues work on ecumenical theology of mission, religion, politics, post-colonial literature, African spirituality, and African culture. Colleagues at the University of South Africa are working on a variety of missiological issues, including transformative urban missions and ministry and African Theology; faith communities and community development; women, gender and missiology; oikonomissiology and ecofeminist theology; mission in African cities and local economic development; sustainable development discourse; African Pentecostal Christianity; intercultural theology; and missional theology. Their transformative urban mission focus, for example, has developed into a community engagement project that works towards finding pathways out of homelessness and poverty in The City of Tshwane.¹⁰

Colleagues at Stellenbosch University are working on issues of post-colonial theology, youth movements, and anti-racism, as well as intercultural and inter-religious missiology.¹¹ There is a focus on how the youth would reimagine their identity in a post-colonial society like South Africa. Nel (2013) is specifically interested in youth contributions to the Church, in particular in his own denomination (United Reformed Church of Southern Africa [URCSA]), when he unpacks the projected future of South Africa. His caption on “remixing” and merging of “old” and “new” ecclesiologies and

⁹ Definition of missiology by Unisa faculty found on the website. <https://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default/Colleges/Human-Sciences/Schools,-departments,-centres,-institutes-&-units/School-of-Humanities/Department-of-Christian-Spirituality,-Church-History-and-Missiology/Discipline-of-Missiology>

¹⁰ This community engagement project, the Meal of Peace, started in 2010 and has published two volumes and more than 10 articles. It is a project of the Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology in the College of Human Sciences.

¹¹ The areas of research of Prof RW (Reggie) Nel and Prof Xolile Simon.

the search for new identities features in many of his academic contributions. However, one also observes in his work the impact and integral missional role of young people in the transformation of Church and society. Simon's contributions underscore the integrity of mission in Africa, in particular models and systems that would contribute to change in society. The concept that rings through his research contributions is that of "interculturality." Interculturality would enable the "unity and diversity of cultures."¹²

Colleagues at the University of the Free State (UFS) focus on issues of reconciliation and post-colonial mission and mission engagements in the township precinct in Mangaung.¹³ Baron's work focusses particularly on articulating the processes of reconciliation within the Church and society. He highlights the emphasis on the relationship between the powerful and the marginalised in his research as an important point of consideration within a post-colonial context. The notion 'missional consciousness' at the Church's grassroots level¹⁴ rings through emerging missiological research contributions at UFS since 2019. Baron's work on corruption and the influence of the media in post-apartheid South Africa are some of the focus areas of missiology at UFS.

Finally, colleagues at the University of Western Cape focus on theological issues of mission and development, and ecumenical movement and development.

When grouped into six categories that make the focus areas of the discipline of missiology, (see Figure 1 below)¹⁵ the following picture emerges:

- a) In the focus area of evangelisation in different contexts, there are the works of colleagues Mashau, Mangayi, Kgatle, Knoetze, Le Bryuns, Kumalo, Maluleke, and Nel.
- b) In the focus area of intercultural communication, there are the works of colleagues Maluleke, Banda, Nel, and Simon.
- c) In the focus area of interreligious dynamics, the works of Banda and Mashau were associated with this area of study.
- d) In the focus area of patterns of mission practice, mission theology, and history, the works of Mashau, van Schalkwyk, Mangayi, Le Bryuns, Kgatle, Kumalo, Makofane, Maluleke, Banda, Klaasen, Knoetze, Baron, and Ferreira were associated with this study area.

¹² See his chapter on *Transforming Power Relations* for the definition of "interculturality" in the book edited by Jochen Motte and Andar Parlindungan, "Mission still impossible? Global perspectives on mission theology and mission practice," 2017, pp. 203-215.

¹³ Dr Eugene Baron and Prof P Verster.

¹⁴ See Baron's article The call for African missional consciousness through renewed mission praxis in URCSA, *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, 45(3): 1-19.

¹⁵ This categorisation does not claim to be exhaustive; there are many colleagues who contribute to missiological discourses and development who are not professors of mission studies. This should be seen only as a glance used to support our point of view.

- e) In the focus area of women and youth empowerment, the works of van Schalkwyk, Kgatle, Knoetze, Banda, Nel, and Baron are associated with this study area.
- f) In the focus area of building sustainable community and earth-keeping, works of Mangayi and van Schalkwyk are associated with this study area.

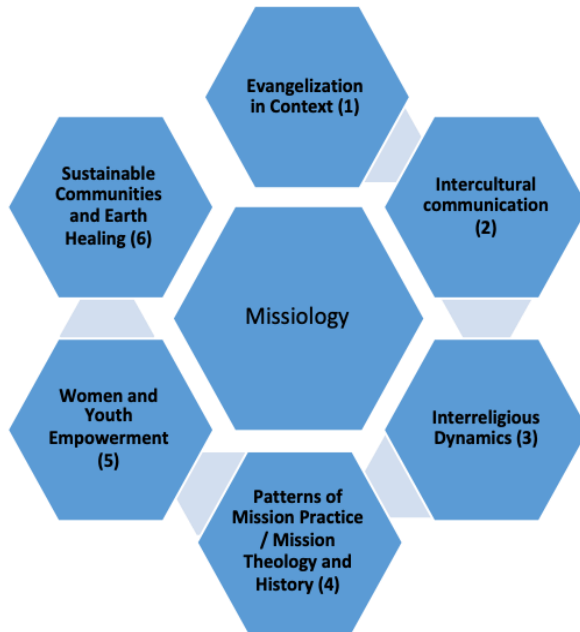


Figure 1: Colleagues associated with the study areas in South African missiological landscape

It is obvious that most South African missiologists continue to work in the focus area of patterns of mission practice, mission theology, and history. As stated earlier, this is perhaps to make missiology connect theory and practice in different contexts. Colleagues' contributions to scholarship and impact in each one of these study areas in missiology in South Africa is traceable through their publications.¹⁶ However, in the lines that follow, we handpicked a few of these publications in *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Missiology* in this decade to support our argument.

In relation to evangelisation in context, Mangayi, for example, highlights the need for the ongoing conversions of the missionary. "These conversions pave the way for

¹⁶ Readers can find the publications of these scholars on Google Scholar, Scopus and ResearchGate to establish readership and impact in academia and the broader society. It is beyond the scope of this article to cover all of that here.

informed mission encounters enriched with insights on cross-cultural communication, mission praxis, and stimulate reflexive engagement and enhance perspectives on contextual praxis” (Mangayi 2017:78-79). In relation to migrated people, Knoetze (2013:40) contends for a missionary diaconate which focusses on proclamation that is anchored at *Koinonia*. Kgatle (2016:333) discusses the impact of the Azusa Street Revival in the early evangelistic developments of the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) of South Africa and its ability to unite people beyond differences of race, gender, age and colour, and Pentecostal experiences. It is worth noting here that evangelisation is associated with the ongoing conversions of the agents of mission by Mangayi. Knoetze anchors it in *Koinonia*, and Kgatle, in relation to the AFM, connects evangelisation with revival which ushered in unity.

With reference to intercultural communication, Nel (2013:557) contends from a post-colonial theological perspective, which frames and remixes intercultural discourse for the sake of social transformation. Banda (2015:151) highlights the role of religion in the life story of the African Renaissance, specifically in terms of offering a “contribution from the praxis of Christian mission as an important adjunct to the realisation of African Renaissance.” We note with appreciation that both Nel and Banda associated intercultural communication with social transformation and the African Renaissance, respectively.

On interreligious dynamics, Mashau and Ngcobo assert that Christian mission co-exists in creative tension with African traditional religions in Africa. “They contend that the notion of life after death would help in making Christianity relevant to Africans by addressing their hopes and fears.” (Mashau & Ngcobo 2016:48). Mashau and Ngcobo’s insights suggest that missiology has an inescapable responsibility to learn more from African Traditional religions.

Regarding the patterns of mission practice, mission theology and history, Klaasen (2017:29) contributes towards an approach to development based on personhood, which is “viewed from the perspective of the types of relationships the self has with God, with other selves and the rest of creation.” Le Bryuns (2015:477) contends for “a public theological engagement that seeks to draw from the African soil and to dream of overcoming all that oppresses and dehumanises.” Baron (2014:145), in relation to homelessness in the City of Tshwane, was in the quest for a missiological praxis which would help homeless people to identify ‘bad habits,’ ‘take them off’ and ‘put on’ new ones with the hope that they will manage to live a life that is better – and valued by others. Makofane (2019:145), in relation to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa, discusses patterns and ways that could assist missionary Churches to be liberated from paternalistic legacies of mission societies. Maluleke engages the life of Archbishop Tutu regarding strategies on remembering, and through these he unearthed Tutu’s own Biblical and historical hermeneutics in “terms of which God always takes the side of the weak” (Maluleke 2019:189). It is encouraging to see missiology being associated with a development project that rebuilds the person in community and uproots dehumanisation, fostering moral renewal and behavioural change, liberation from paternalistic legacies, and God’s preferential option for the weak in South Africa.

In relation to women and youth empowerment, Knoetze (2015:219) also reflects on the impact of TTL and *Evangelii Gaudium* in relation to African child and youth

theology today. Missiological reflections on the African child and youth are much needed, given the fact that Africa is a 'youthful' continent.

Finally, in reference to sustainable communities and earth keeping, Mangayi weaves together *missio Dei* and sustainable local economic development in townships into an articulation of a form of "oiko-missiology" that aims to "promote both human and non-human beings' harmony with the environment" (Mangayi 2016:504). Additionally, van Schalkwyk (2019) attempts to formulate an oiko-theological response to the Amadiba Crisis Committee of Xolobeni's struggle for ubuntu, land, and ecology. Discourse on the ecological dimension of *missio Dei* in relation to sustainable development is not only pertinent but, also urgent given the unfolding ecological crisis.

What is obvious from the foregoing is the omission of missiological discourse on 4IR, as stated earlier. In addition, not much is done on endemic contextual issues, such as gender-based violence and multiple vulnerabilities, as well as the matter of children and their position in God's mission. The issue of globalised cities with associated religious plurality and multidimensional poverty and marginalisation of the poor needs ongoing missiological attention. African expressions of Christianity and their role in building communities should not escape missiological reflection. The issue of mission and health must be revisited as we are in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The ecological dimension of *missio Dei* in relation to building sustainable communities is another issue missiology should not forget going forward. The Holy Spirit's role in the *missio Dei* is also a crucial issue that needs more emphasis.

South African missiologists must rise to contend with these and many other challenging issues staring at us at the dawn of another decade to remain relevant in their scholarship. As a final remark, it should be known that the epistemological landscape has been shifting. The authors speculate that this could be attributed to various factors. Nevertheless, it is probable that the appointment of various missiologists in these institutions that subscribe to traditions other than the Reformed tradition, for example, Pentecostal, Anglican, Baptist, etc., are contributing to the shifting epistemological landscape. Secondly, missiologists that have been driven by change in context in the last decade had also to speak to change in spirituality, which in a sense opens the space in these institutions. One of the results is the increased number of theology students, including missiology, who come from various walks of life and mostly subscribe to a Pentecostal spirituality. The undercurrent for this phenomenon could also be the recent and unresolved racial, cultural, and religious tensions globally and locally. As a result of all these, carving an authentic missiological agenda is inevitable and remains a dynamic undertaking.

Conclusion

This contribution has certainly provided the researchers with glimpses of current trends, trajectories, and biblical and contextual hermeneutics relative to missiology in South Africa in this decade. A scrutiny of the works of some colleagues reveals in vivid ways the contributions these retired/retiring colleagues have made in missiological discourse. It is left to current emerging and established missiologists to continue shaping future trends and trajectories for missiology. There is a need to remain conscious that it is not in the nature of missiology to be idle or remain "pie in the" sky. It remains an applied practical theological discipline.

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