

And a Little Child Shall Lead Them: Implications of the Changing Face of Mission

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“A wolf will reside with a lamb, and a leopard will lie down with a young goat; an ox and a young lion will graze together as a young child leads them along” (Isa. 11:6, NET).

Introduction

In this post-colonial, post-positivist, post-modern, and post-Christendom world, a debate continues as to the legacy of the missionary enterprise over the last several hundred years. Every few hundred years in Western civilization, there occur times of sharp transformation, chasmic divides even, in worldview, values, social, and political structures (Hiebert 2006, 288). Over the last century, seismic shifts have occurred in politics, economics, and social structure, as well as in communication, technology, and globalization,¹ and even in Christianity itself (Hiebert 2009, 108). Many mission leaders echo the call for a renewed “vision of what the new paradigm for missions should be for the twenty-first century” (Hiebert 2006, 288). So, have we appropriately adjusted our vision and understanding of mission? And have we done the necessary reflection on where we've come from and where we are headed (Bosch 1991), so that any new vision learns from the past and listens to what God is doing?

To forget the past and to press on toward the future, toward “Progress” is a common temptation. But it is dangerous to forget. Rather, as the eminent Ghanaian theologian John Pobee says, we must remember and reflect on our history because “a people without memory are condemned to repeat it;” (George Santayana) but with “a sense of history” comes the “concomitant of vitality, vibrancy, and viability” (2009, viii). Thus, we need to recalibrate, to review where we've been, and to come to a “more radical and comprehensive” concept of mission (Bosch 1991, 512), in which we listen to the voice of the Spirit speaking through the global church and reclaim that which is vital, vibrant, and viable in our history. We must recognize past and present errors and renew our vision of humble service to the King, for the building up of the entire body of Christ.

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Spiritual Foundations

In order to hear the voice of the Spirit speaking through the global church², a humbler outlook is required. Jesus not only teaches about humility but also exemplifies it. When the disciples were arguing about which of them was the greatest (Matt. 18:1-5; Mark 9:33-37; Luke 9: 46-48), Jesus responded by saying if anyone wants to be first, he must be the servant of all; he illustrated this by showing them a child and stating that unless they became like a little child, they would not enter the Kingdom of God. By doing this, Jesus was alluding to the future kingdom described in Isaiah where the wolf and lamb, leopard and goat, ox and lion reside together, tended by a small child (Isa. 11:6). Although Jesus has inaugurated His rule, we still don't find these creatures living peacefully, nor do we often find rulers ruling with integrity, humility, and justice. How can we come closer to this peace and justice, to this kingdom we seek?³

Worldly wisdom would say this might be achieved through power, business acumen, good people skills, enough money, or the right organizational structures and strategies. But these traits are not found in the above passages. Rather we find that God regularly is found among the least, the cast-off, and the weak. He uses the humble and those who seek Him. However, because this goes against our human inclinations, we are continually pulled toward that which seems more sensible to us.

But Paul strongly cautions in 1 Corinthians 3 and 4 that what this world considers wise is foolishness to God, and that God rather uses what the world considers foolish to bring about His purposes. And this leads us to ask what is the aim of mission? It is not *our* goals, *our* strategies, and *our* plans; those in a sense can become like the "wisdom of the world" in appealing to our desire for setting the agenda. Rather, the point of mission is submission to Christ and bringing His kingdom.

In Philippians 2, Paul describes Jesus as "emptied Himself...taking on the form of a slave" "and sharing in human nature... humbled Himself..." This emptying reflects a lack of pride, a giving up of control, and obedience to the Father, even to the point of a criminal's death. This type of trust, Jesus says, is embodied in children. In Matthew 11: 25, Jesus says, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent, and revealed them to little children" (see also Luke 10:21). Thus, the epitome of the Gospel, the core of how we are to bring His Kingdom, is seen in the little child.

As Christians, missionaries, missiologists, and/or theologians, we must navigate the rough waters of change between mutually incompatible or even hostile forces (i.e. wolf, lamb, leopard, goat, ox, lion) that we see in globalization, modernism, post-modernism, Western Christendom's theological hegemony, the majority-world theologians, and the world's seeking-lost.⁴ We have no hope of doing so without following Jesus' example, emptying ourselves, becoming the sort of people who can receive his wisdom: "And a little child shall lead them" (JPS Tanakh).

Remembering Where We've Been

In hopes of achieving a better self-understanding, we seek to briefly review Western mission history and learn what kind of a legacy has resulted from Western mission activities. It is difficult to criticize a framework from within that framework. Thus, we need the help of others to accurately assess ourselves.⁵

Our lens lies in seeing the interlacing connections between religion and culture. The intersection of culture and Christianity needs to be seen and understood not only through Western eyes but also through the eyes of those who were the recipients of mission activity.⁶ In the encounter of Africans and others with the modern West, according to Lamin Sanneh, the West was simultaneously the bearer of religion, as well as bearer of “an intellectual tradition critical of religion” called modernism, or the Enlightenment worldview (1993, 15). This worldview, arising in the 1400s, ushered in the Enlightenment,⁷ and is based on science, empiricism, rationalism, technology, and the market economy, with a focus on “materialism as the ultimate reality, on rational positivism,⁸ and empirical testing as final authority of truth, and on a mechanistic worldview” (Hiebert, Shaw, Tienou 1999, 16).⁹

The missionaries' Western worldview had some unexpected consequences. One of the consequences of the reliance on science and rational empiricism was the conceptual separation of the “natural” and “supernatural,” which led to divisions such as “spiritual ministries” and “social gospel,” and, in theology, to systematic theology.¹⁰ The scientific, rational, and empirical worldview engendered naturalistic, non-theistic explanations, assigning to science the realm of fact, while relegating religion and the supernatural to the realm of belief. In this view, faith or religion was personal and private but science was viewed as public truth (Hiebert, Shaw, Tienou 1999, 16-17). This dualistic conception of the world arose from the loss of *telos*, or purpose:

The eighteenth century transferred the holy city from another world to this...[it] witnessed the birth of the doctrine of progress, a doctrine that was to rule—with fateful consequences—well into the twentieth century ... [W]e shall not be wrong, I think, if we take *the abandonment of teleology as the key* to the understanding of nature for our primary clue to understanding the whole of the vast changes in the human situation ... this is what *underlies* that decisive feature of our culture that can be described both as the *division of human life into public and private, and as the separation of fact and value*. (Newbiggin 1986, 28, 34; italics mine)¹¹

This division between public/private and sacred/secular created a dualism called “split-level Christianity,” now “common in churches in the West,” which has “sapped the vitality of churches and limited Christianity to a segment of people’s lives.”¹² Once entrenched, missionaries carried this dualism around the world:

The Enlightenment division of reality into two worlds—supernatural and natural—also influenced the Western mission worldview. Most missionaries taught Christianity as the answer to the ultimate and eternal questions of life, and science based on reason as the answer to the problems of this world. They had no place in their worldview for invisible earthly spirits, witchcraft, divination, and magic of this world, and found it hard to take people's beliefs in these seriously. (Hiebert, Shaw, Tienou 1999, 19)

This division of reality led to the “secularization of science” whereby God and religion were seen as being concerned only with eternal matters such as sin, salvation, or creation, but science was viewed as explaining things that occur in the physical world of the senses. Thus, God was not usually sought for answers to everyday life problems (health, work, family) as these were met by medicine, technology, and education.

Given this separation, Western missionaries often had no answers to the problems falling in their “excluded middle:” those practical, everyday-life, physical problems that they did not believe had any relation to the spirit world.¹³ These missionaries seldom recognized the existence of evil spirits; instead “they denied the existence of the spirits rather than claim the power of Christ over them.” As a consequence of this dualism, “Western Christian Missions have been one of the greatest secularizing forces in history” (Hiebert 2009, 197; Newbigin 1966).¹⁴

Colonialism, the Enlightenment, ideas of progress, and the belief in the superiority of Western civilization all influenced the Western worldview and the missionaries as well.¹⁵ In *The World Is Too Much With Us*, Charles Taber notes, “The superiority of Western civilization as the culmination of human development, the attribution of that superiority to the prolonged dominance of Christianity, the duty of Christians to share civilization and the gospel with the “benighted heathen”—these were the chief intellectual currency of their lives” (1991, 71).¹⁶ This belief in Western superiority caused many to implement the missionary doctrine of the *tabula rasa* whereby nothing in the non-Christian culture was salvaged or reconstituted, rather it all “had to be destroyed before Christianity could be built up” (Pobee 1982, 168 in Hiebert, Shaw, Tienou 1999, 19).

Beginning to Recalibrate

Some missionaries learned that their Western assumptions about the world were negatively affecting their understanding of the Gospel and their ministry. Through their experience in another culture, Hiebert and Newbigin discovered the solution to perceiving their own hidden assumptions: “look at the worldview of another culture and to contrast it with the way we view the world” (Hiebert 2009, 190; Newbigin 1986). As a result, anthropology for missionaries and “Critical Contextualization” were developed as tools to evaluate the entanglements of any culture upon the Gospel and also to shed light on Western culture’s dualisms and bifurcated Gospel (Hiebert 1986, 1994, 1999).¹⁷

Critical contextualization is comprised of four steps: phenomenological analysis, ontological critique, evaluative response, and transformative ministry.¹⁸ The first step, phenomenological analysis, entails studying the local culture to understand the “categories, assumptions, and logic” that people use to order their world. This requires careful participant-observation, keeping in mind the two views of reality which must be considered together: the emic perspective (insider-view, particular, and organized) and the etic perspective (outsider-view, generalized, and comparative).¹⁹ One must reflect on one’s own “categories, assumptions, beliefs, and worldview to understand how these shapes the way [one] thinks,” and withhold premature judgment, for “premature judgments are generally wrong.” After this analysis, one can develop metacultural grids²⁰ for describing and comparing the culture. In the process of developing the metacultural grids, one must constantly return to the emic analysis, checking one’s assumptions and grids against the views of the people (Headland, Pike, and Harris 1990; Hiebert, Shaw, Tienou 1999, 22-23, 33).

The second step in Hiebert’s “critical contextualization” is the ontological critique, which is comprised of two ontological tests: Scripture and reality. In applying these two tests:

Christians must recognize that they read and interpret Scripture in the categories and logics of their own cultures.... The more they read and carefully study Scripture, the more its categories and logic shape their thinking ... [especially] by studying Scripture with Christians from other communities and cultures, because others often see cultural biases more clearly than individuals do themselves. Such intercultural dialogues help Christians see how their culture has shaped their thinking and their interpretations of Scripture. (Hiebert, Shaw and Tienou 1999, 24)

In the process of the cross-cultural “reality” testing, one must examine both one’s own and other’s understanding of reality. It is easy to assume, ethnocentrically, that the way one sees life is “the way things really are.” However, when one genuinely engages and participates in another culture, this can shatter one’s ethnocentrism, enabling movement beyond monoculturalism to the development of metacultural grids, which assist in understanding other cultures (Hiebert, Shaw, Tienou 1999, 27).

Step three in critical contextualization focuses on the local church as it evaluates critically their (own) existing beliefs and customs in light of new biblical instruction and understanding.²¹ And step four takes the local congregation beyond evaluation and reformulation of beliefs to applying the new understandings to life and problems in the community, resulting in “transformative ministry” (28).

A “Critical” Response to a Core Problem

As Hiebert’s critical contextualization assists with analyzing Western cultural assumptions that have affected Western understanding of the Gospel, his approach to epistemology helps in critiquing how Western culture “knows truth.” During the twentieth century, Western philosophers concluded that, given the diversities of cultures, all knowledge was ultimately subjective, and they rejected the earlier modern, positivist belief that objective truth was fully knowable through Western thought alone. Hiebert suggested replacing both the earlier positivism and the later postmodern relativism with an approach called “critical realism.”

Hiebert’s understanding of critical realism developed through his interest in seeing the Gospel translated into various local contexts (contextualization), and this led him to think about the role of epistemology and presuppositions. In contrast to the positivist epistemology of modern Western thought or the instrumentalism and idealism of postmodernism, critical realism maintains the claim that objective reality actually exists but that our understanding of that reality is always limited and, consequently, should be open to adjustment.²²

Critical realism is based on the triadic semiotics of the nineteenth century philosopher, Charles Peirce, who rejected the positivist notion of directly linking form with meaning as well as the instrumentalist equation of mental images with meaning. Instead, Peirce proposed a third way of looking at meaning. For Peirce, “a sign has two objects, its object as it is represented and its object in itself.” In other words, a sign exists as an external, objective reality and also exists in the mind of the speaker. This understanding of signs and symbols as having two “realities” is crucial to understanding Hiebert’s approach to critical realism²³ (Barnes 2011, 75). Thus, Peirce’s triadic semiotics was in direct contrast to traditional Western semiotics that maintained a dyadic sign-object relation, which fostered the perennial dualisms of philosophy embedded in that dyadic relation (Yong 2005, 285).

In Peirce’s triad, Sign-Object-Interpretant, we find a freedom of options, as they are, not “just things, but relational functions” which yields “some significant insight into the nature of experience and reasoning” (Yong 2005, 285; 2000, 573). The implications of Peirce’s nuanced understanding of meaning remain significant: “a qualitative open-endedness of the process of interpretation” which “emphasizes a contrite fallibilism” that still manages to undercut “relativism, skepticism, [and] nihilism ... [and] establishes how human activity proceeds in engagement with the real world” (Yong 2005, 286).²⁴

Peirce’s epistemology²⁵ is essential because “[t]he easy solution is to stress tolerance, to live our own lives and let others live theirs.... [Yet,] [o]ne of the greatest challenges to the Western church is to lay again the theological *foundations of the truth of the gospel* and to train its members how *to proclaim this with humility and love*” (Hiebert 1999, 67). We must recover our confidence in the truth of the Gospel, that the Gospel is the true, grounding meta-narrative; “not just one brick” of a “building erected on another ground-plan.” For “[t]hat was the issue which the earliest Christian thinkers had to face as they wrestled with many

attempts to accommodate the Gospel within the world-view of classical antiquity” (Newbiggin 1995). We face this same issue now. Yet, we live in exciting times that have the potential to open up new vistas of self-understanding and of "the other," including new avenues of humble collaboration.

Reviewing Non-Western Growth and Response

Today’s Christianity is diverse, and all over the world, there are Christians discussing Biblical issues. “Christianity is the religion of over two thousand different language groups²⁶ in the world. More people pray and worship in more languages in Christianity than in any other religion in the world” (Sanneh 2003, 69).

In the preface to *The Changing Face of Christianity*, Joel Carpenter observes that over the last century, the rapid rise of Christianity among non-Western societies has been one of the most important but least scrutinized changes. Christianity is now even more vigorous and vibrant in the global South than among the world's richer and more powerful regions. This creates a noteworthy case of “globalization from below rather than an imposition from the world's great powers” (2005, vii).

Noting the chasmic shifts in the Western world and in Christianity, Hiebert (2006, 2009) and Bosch (1991) stated that a “new paradigm for mission” was needed. “Within a very short period of time the conditions which have produced the phenomena characteristic of Christianity for almost a millennium have largely disappeared,” and “[t]he conditions of African and Melanesian life, the intellectual climate of India, the political battlegrounds of Latin America, increasingly provide the context within which the Christian mind is being formed” because the changes in Christianity since 1945 have come from this “fundamental southward shift” (Walls 1987, 80-81). Given these new realities, a renewed vision is needed for today’s mission.

What does mission look like in this new context? If the majority of the world's Christians live outside the West, if the lands that were the recipients of mission are now home to the majority of world Christians, then we need to expect the practice of missions in general to change and the majority of missionaries can no longer be assumed to be Western. The composition of mission agencies, education boards, and seminaries, and the majority voice of scholars will likely shift as well.

As early as 1944, Archbishop William Temple recognized that “the global feature of Christianity was the new fact of our time” (Sanneh 2005, 4). And the phenomenon has continued to grow and deepen. It is helpful to remember this pattern of global shift is not a new phenomenon for Christianity, whose expansion has always been serial in nature. “It has not maintained a single cultural or geographical center; it has always retained a substantial separate identity; it recedes as well as advances, declines, or dies out in the areas of its greatest strength and reappears, often transformed, in totally different areas of quite distinct culture...which result in a succession of different Christian "heartlands".... Changing

patterns of world order are thus integrally linked to religious history”²⁷ (Walls 1991, 147).

One way to understand these new expressions in Africa and around the world is to “put them in global and historical context,” taking note that the modern labels no longer seem to fit the situation (if they ever did); for, “[u]niquely African types and categories are now emerging, and they deserve their own places on the conceptual maps or, more likely, their own maps.” And “as the charts of Western modernity are inadequate for exploring African Christianity, so are the modern divisions of scholarship.” Thus, a “thoroughly interdisciplinary approach”²⁸ is now needed (Sanneh and Carpenter 2005, viii).

And in the face of new “types,” and in light of the multi-centric facet of the Christian Church, “there can be no automatic assumption of Western leadership; indeed, if suffering and endurance are the badges of authenticity, we can expect the most powerful Christian leadership to come from elsewhere. The same may be true of intellectual and theological leadership; multi-centric Christian mission has the potential to revitalize theological activity and revolutionize theological education” (Walls 2008, 203). In our post-colonial, post-Christendom world, the face of Christianity is shifting, and our view of mission and theological education needs to shift as well.

Over 40 years ago, John Mbiti (1974) argued that the Church had become “kerygmatically universal” while remaining “theologically provincial.” He decried the one-sided dominance of Western theology, which he found impotent in addressing the needs of the emerging church²⁹ (in Ott and Netland 2006, 310). In seeking to redress the situation and find answers to the new global questions, Tite Tienou ponders, “Why has Christian scholarship paid so little attention to the ‘majority of Christians?’” Is it because few Christian scholars, even theologians, agree with Andrew Walls that “the future of the Christian faith, its shape in the twenty-first and twenty-second centuries, is being decided by events which are now taking place in Africa, in Asia, and Latin America or which will do so in the near future” (Walls 1989, 3, cited in Tienou 2006, 44)?

Ever the prophetic voice,³⁰ Walls points out the faith of the 21st century and onward “will require a devout, vigorous scholarship rooted in the soil of Africa, Asia, and Latin America.” Christianity is now primarily a non-Western religion and given present indications it will steadily become more so. Therefore, they are the substratum of the Christian faith and life for the greater number of Christians in the world (Tienou 2006, 43). Therefore, it is no longer a question of whether or not we *include* members from the non-Western world in these endeavors. It is rather a question of whether we as Westerners will join in the global dialogue.³¹

Western Mission Responses

Western missiologists and theologians have responded in various ways to this global shift in Christianity and the rise of world Christianity.³² According to Netland, these shifts plus globalization comprise a “broader phenomenon” which continues to force “many to

reexamine basic questions about Christian identity and the relation of local Christian communities to other Christian groups and traditions. Some of the implications are being explored by missiologists (Hutchinson and Kalu 1998; Taylor 2000a; Tiplady, 2003).” However, according to Netland, the effects of these changes on “the nature and task of theology” have not been explored as much (2006, 15).

In a similar vein, Yong acknowledges that “evangelical theology has had a long and venerable history in the West— with both positive and negative results,” and will likely continue to play an “important role in the emerging world forum.” However, he notes there is “no denying that Latin, American, African [,] and Asian [theologians] will grow in prominence” and will “need to seek out, engage [,] and renew the tradition in dialogue with theologians and perspectives in the Global South”³³ (2014b, Kindle 459-469).

Similarly, to Walls, Sanneh, and Yong, Hiebert recognizes that people cannot “live in their own little worlds” but need to relate to those of other societies more and more, which requires “global systems” and “metacultural grids” similar to and utilizing the methods in his aforementioned “critical contextualization.” He develops his metacultural framework into a “metatheological framework” whereby theologians from around the world dialogue and work together to develop a metatheology,³⁴ a framework that enables them to understand, compare, and evaluate local theologies. However, the process and framework must be inclusive, involve a multidisciplinary approach,³⁵ look beyond traditional boundaries or labels and involve ongoing dialogue (300-303).

In addition to a trans-cultural metatheology³⁶ we need a missional theology. Hiebert, writing with Tienou, shows that theology is a culturally influenced “research tradition”³⁷ whereby our worldview affects “our definitions and perceptions of what constitutes ‘theology’”³⁸ (Tienou and Hiebert 2005, 117-118). The usage of different lenses (“assumptions, questions, and methods”) will lead to different types of theology. For example, the usage of philosophical methods resulted in Systematic Theology³⁹ and usage of modern historiographical methods led to Biblical Theology (119-123). Systematic theology and Biblical theology can be useful lenses in viewing the Bible, but, “we need a third way of doing theology,” which not only communicates the Gospel in human contexts but also takes account of the fact that mission is the central theme in God’s acts on earth and in the Bible (124-125). Utilizing the lens of God’s missional, rescue plan leads us not only to a missional hermeneutic but also to a missional theology.⁴⁰

An illustration of missional theology and a missional hermeneutic can be seen in the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15.⁴¹ James and the Council had to decide if the Gentiles had to become Jews in addition to believing in Jesus and what sort of discipleship must they exhibit. But through their reflection on Scripture⁴² and self-analysis, the Council recognized that they had to adjust their theological understanding of the “Temple” from a physical, earthly temple as the center of Judaism and Judaic Christianity to an understanding that the Christian community is the eschatological Temple of God, into which “Gentiles could be

admitted...without the requirements of proselytism” (Wright 2006, 518).⁴³

Self-reflection and recalibrating one’s understanding of what has gone before in order to create a new vision for the future was the process undertaken by James and the Jerusalem Council that resulted in the new era of mission to the Gentiles. This reflective, conversion-like experience is necessary when crossing boundaries, especially when seismic shifts in status quo occur, such as the Jewish-Christian faith transforming into a predominantly Gentile (Greek)-Christian faith. Such liminal periods of transition are challenging and disconcerting but also full of potential for God to redirect his people, just as He did in the First Century Church.

A number of Western missiologists have had similar “conversion” experiences.⁴⁴ Andrew Walls explains that being a missionary in Sierra Leone “shattered the classical framework” he had so “conscientiously imbibed at Oxford” (Shenk 2011, Kindle 600). The realization, that transformed him from the knowledgeable professor-teacher to an humble observer-learner, was that the second century life and worship he was “pontificating” about, was actually going on all around him.⁴⁵ This, for Walls, “set in motion a radical rethinking of Christian history,” including the idea that “present-day African Christian experience could shed light on ... earlier periods of Christian history” which “suggested there were new ways of interpreting the Christian movement.” In addition, he knew he had to jettison “the entrenched verity that the post-Reformation church was foundational for all subsequent Christian development,”⁴⁶ and subsequently embarked on a “comprehensive new research program.”⁴⁷ Paul Hiebert, Lesslie Newbigin, Roland Allen,⁴⁸ and Vincent Donovan⁴⁹ also experienced dramatic, transformative events that shaped their mission careers and writings. Similar cross-cultural experiences also shape non-Western theologians.⁵⁰

Reflecting on mission practices (in the absence of this conversion experience), Lamin Sanneh observed that some missionaries claimed a unique and normative cultural status for the West, where “spiritual values were assumed to enshrine concrete Western forms,” similar to the colonial “assimilation” policy of the French, Portuguese, and Spanish (1993, 17, 22). But he noticed that for other missionaries the Bible was the greatest authority, “so they set out to translate it into the mother tongue.” The resulting mother-tongue Scripture translation and the linguistic recording of local languages made the supposed superiority of Western culture and religion to be hypocritical. The main impact from this endeavor, he found, was that no matter what “distortions, compromises...or other interference missionaries may have introduced, the shift into the vernacular paradigm in the long run...would excite the local ambition and fuel the national feeling. In this respect, the Scriptures...are preserved in a community of memory and observance, so that in their translated form they continue to speak authoritatively to transmitter and receiver alike” (1993, 17).

Sanneh discovered that in the nexus of Gospel and culture, there is a “vital compatibility between mother tongue cultures and Christianity, however limited or distorted may have been missionary calculations of that compatibility” (1993, 18). In this vital

understanding of the particularity and the translatability of the Gospel was Sanneh's "conversion." He notes "a relevant issue" to mother tongue translation is:

how generalized abstractions about culture and language gave way to details of specificity and concrete experience. The "one" God of missionary doctrine turns out to have "many" names and symbols of local provenance.... In promoting mother tongue translations, then, missionaries and their converts moved beyond universal abstractions...and beyond the reductionism.... Thus, did missionaries discard the premise of philosophical idealism and its contending corollary of scientific positivism without necessarily knowing they were doing so (22).⁵¹

Envisioning Together

What does the future of missions hold, in light of the changes that have taken place? Although he recognizes the shift in Christianity by noting that "gone are the days when thinkers will be able to ignore either historical, cultural[,] and contextual factors or globalization trends in their envisioning and articulating of the theological task," Yong still believes that "Western Evangelicals will continue to lead the theological charge," (2014b Yong, Kindle, 470-472). In contrast, Walls and Sanneh see mission and scholarship as being "from anywhere to anywhere,"⁵² with Africa leading the way.

Looking to the future, "the engagement of [B]iblical thinking and the Christian tradition with the ancient cultures of Asia and Africa could open an era of theological creativity to parallel the encounter with Hellenistic culture in the second, third[,] and fourth centuries," [which] resulted in the great creeds and the beginnings of classical theology; so "[w]ho can say that the encounter with Africa and Asia will not be equally enriching?" (Walls 2008, 203)

While world Christianity was blossoming, many Westerners have still been trying to figure out the convergence of Gospel and Western culture. But, as Newbigin proposed, this process will be easier if we "listen to the witness of Christians from other cultures" (1986).⁵³ If we listen to Christians of other cultures, we might gain a "wider theology of the principalities and powers" and develop a theology of evil, which illuminates the connection between personal sin/guilt and systemic, structural evil, "that has stalled much of Western theological discussion" (Walls, 2008, 203). We might also come closer to being the global body of Christ with Jesus as the head; the disparate parts brought together again since the "dividing wall" separating us has been destroyed in Christ, but the eschatological Temple, the "complete humanity is found only [together] in Christ in his fullness" (203). We would approach the ecumenical unity that Sanneh (2003) referenced, the fullness of Christ that Walls describes.⁵⁴ Paul says we are to be "guides" or "stewards of the mysteries," not gatekeepers or "judges" holding court. We need to hold off judging "before the time."⁵⁵ But together, building up the body of Christ, the possibilities are amazing.

Where Do We Go from Here?

The way forward is through the past and present, in humility and solidarity. As Augustine said, “The way to Christ is first through humility, second through humility, and third through humility. If humility does not precede and accompany and follow every good work we do, if it is not before us to focus on, if it is not beside us to lean upon, if it is not behind us to fence us in, pride will wrench from our hand any good deed we do at the very moment we do it” (Claiborne, Hartgrove-Wilson, and Okoro 2010, 298).

Also, the way forward requires us to remain, through faith, in “interwoven solidarity.” Since,

Christianity is not a garment made to specifications of a bygone golden age, nor is it an add-on whimsical patchwork rigged up without regard to the overall design. Rather, Christianity is a multi-colored fabric where each new thread, chosen and refined at the Designer's hand, adds luster and strength to the whole. In this pattern of faith affirmation, we should stress the importance of interwoven solidarity with fellow believers, past, present, and future (Sanneh 2003, 56).⁵⁶

As we move through the twenty-first century, we need to build on the ideas of critical contextualization, critical realism (utilizing Peirce's semiotics), and missional theology, while constantly leaning on the Holy Spirit for direction. And we will find He will surprise us—just as He did with the exponential growth of the global church.

In doing this, we need to give more attention to the convergence of the topics of pneumatology, missiology, religious pluralism, with a focus on a pneumatological understanding of mission and evangelization in a religiously plural world, for these might give insight into rethinking the Christian encounter with other faiths (Yong 2003).⁵⁷

As mentioned, in moving forward, we need to be more aware of our own worldview and the ways our theology is culturally influenced. But if we hope to do this, we must rely on the Holy Spirit. Yong quotes Harvey Cox as saying he “hopes that Pentecostalism in the twenty-first century will represent the vitality of religious life that overcomes the creedalism characteristic of what he calls the ‘age of belief’” (327, 2011). Cox is pointing out that Christianity in the twentieth century has been characterized by creeds and a cognitive belief system that has not always led to reliance on the Spirit of God, who brings vitality and life. Yong notes that this is not all the Spirit brings: “The goal of the Spirit's activity, however, is not only a manifestation of what some call the *charismata* but the establishment of *righteousness, peace, and justice* (Is. 32: 15-17)” (2001, 44). In *Discerning the Spirit(s)* (2001), Yong depicts the extent and domains of the Spirit's work. “The Spirit is thereby the universal presence and activity of God. It is a universality that permeates both the external structures of the natural and human world and the internal realms of human hearts. It is also a universality that spans the entirety of God's work from original creation, to re-creation to

final creation” (44)⁵⁸. The breadth of the Spirit’s work is stunning: God is present and active both in our lives and in the structures of our world, be they political, social, or religious.

Therefore, given God’s Spirit working in all areas and arenas of life, we can trust Him to bring to fruition that which He has set in motion. For our part, we need to seek Him for more self-awareness, awareness of our theological, philosophical, and epistemological backgrounds, as well as of the history and progressions of world Christianity. We need to release control and develop a healthy sense of humility and grace towards our Christian family in the Global South, trusting God’s Spirit to work in their lives as He does in ours. But this process does not necessitate a letting go of “truth” nor require uncritical acceptance of “local theologies.” However, we must take the log out of our own eye first before trying to take the speck out of our global sibling's eye. We must be humble guides and stewards of the mysteries revealed to us, while dialoguing and learning about the mysteries revealed to them.

So, as we go forward in mission, let us continue to “taste and see the Lord is good” (Ps. 34:8); to taste and know that His “[W]ord is sweeter than honey” and is “light to our paths” in the midst of life and ministry (Ps. 19:10; 119:105, see also 119:103). Let us listen to the Spirit: “For the wisdom of this age is foolishness with God; so, let the one who thinks he is standing be careful that he does not fall” (1 Cor. 3:19; see also 1 Cor. 10:11).

As Andrew Walls, Lamin Sanneh, Amos Yong, David Bosch, Paul Hiebert, and many others have instructed, let us lay aside our desire for control, allowing the Spirit to lead, recognizing that the Spirit is the “chief actor in the historic mission of the church” (Taylor 1972, 1). He will guide us as we maneuver through the eddies of globalism, modernism, postmodernism, the shift of Christianity, and “a little child shall lead them.”

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¹ Hiebert notes that while scholars expound about globalization, studies show that most people still “live in local and regional settings,” so the term “glocal” has emerged to try to describe the local yet global nature of the world we live in (2006, 288-289; 2009, 118).

² The global church is the Church worldwide but here the focus is more on the individual churches making up the global church.

³ I am not intimating that we are capable of bringing about the full installment of the Kingdom of God through what we do; nevertheless, through our lives and through hope, the proleptic effects of God’s Kingdom can be experienced more and more in the here and now. “May your Kingdom come; may your will be done...” (Matt. 6: 10).

⁴ In the process of recalibrating mission, Hiebert notes, “the West today is navigating a sea change that threatens to capsize it. On the surface, cross-waves of debate occur between technological advance and ecological preservation, between the claims of science and the affirmation of other cultures, and between the uniqueness of Christianity and the recognition of other religions. Below the surface, the deep currents of traditionalism, modernity, and postmodernity; of globalism and ethnic particularism; and of truth and relativism collide in different ways in different lands. As Christian theologians and missionaries, we seek to be rooted in [B]iblical thought, but we live in human contexts that profoundly shape our thoughts. It should not surprise us that we are influenced by these currents around us” (Hiebert 1999, 1).

⁵ Newbigin recognizes this inherent difficulty by quoting a Chinese proverb: “If you want a definition of water, don’t ask a fish.” He explains that until he had spent many years in India, he was an “innocent specimen of modern European culture” in that he had “learned from childhood through school and university how things really are, and it was on this basis that [he] could begin to understand and evaluate the world of dharma under the name of Hinduism.” He asks, however, “Where shall I find the stance from which I can study Europeanism? On the basis of what perceptions can I evaluate my own perceptions of ‘how things really are’—perceptions that are part of my mental make-up from childhood?” He continues to observe that, “As a young missionary, I was confident that the critical evaluations I made about Hindu beliefs and practices were securely founded on God’s revelation in Christ. As I grew older, I learned to see that they were shaped more than I had realized by my own culture. And I could not have come to this critical stance in relation to my own culture without the experience of living in another, an Indian culture” (1986, 21).

⁶ Like Sanneh, in the process of reflecting, I myself do not want to “fall into the trap either of vilifying the modern missionary endeavor, seeing it as part and parcel with colonialism, nor of white-washing the abuses and injustices of the colonial rule and “condoning the violent or uncharitable attack on the heritage of others,” (1993, 231). Yet, we must recognize the West’s “ambiguous [at best] legacy of modern development” and colonialism in Africa, but at the same time not naively assume that the non-Western cultures were merely “prelapsarian specimens of primordial purity and innocence” (230, 232).

⁷ Hiebert places the “[A]ge of Enlightenment” from about 1700-1930, with “post-Enlightenment” lasting from 1930 to the present (2009, 65, 71), but sees the “modern” era as lasting from the fifteenth century onwards.

⁸ Hiebert calls this stream of philosophical thought “positivism” (1999). But Amos Yong (2000) and Stanley Grenz and John Franke (2001) use the term “foundationalism,” to denote the idea of being sure of one’s foundational, grounding ideas. The term seems to be a postmodern appellation to describe the philosophy that sought sure foundations.

⁹ For the purposes of this paper, we will call the “modern, Enlightenment” worldview “Western” as it is located in the West and this allows the retention of connections to the Greek-Western mindset. Hiebert (1986) brings out this connection to the “Neo-Platonic worldview of the Greeks” as the origin of the “dualism between spirit and matter (since [the seventeenth century]) which later gets reprocessed in Cartesian dualism. Lamin Sanneh elucidates these connections by noting that “the Enlightenment, the Romantic and the Modern” were “three formative stages of culture consciousness in the West,” and this “[Western] cultural project was often conceived as an alternative to religion...superseding religious injunctions” (1993, 24).

¹⁰ This is found not only in Hiebert’s *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, chapter five, but also in the chapter by Tienou and Hiebert where they describe how “Western philosophical theology is in danger of becoming captive to the methods of Greek logic ... in that the search for a comprehensive system ... implies that humans can grasp the fullness of truth with clarity” (2005, 121-122).

¹¹ Kusmic (1999) also shows how the loss of *telos* and subsequent reaction affected Christians’ understanding of end-times, the Kingdom of God, engagement (or withdrawal) in the world, ethics, reconciliation, and more. In a panel discussion at AGTS in December 2009, Kusmic stated that we must not only “develop a theology of reconciliation pneumatologically” but also that “the main missiological paradigm of the twenty-first century should be a theology of reconciliation, based on where we are and what is going on in the world.” See also Johan Mostert, 2014. “Ministry of Mercy and Justice,” in *Pentecostal Mission and Global Christianity*, edited by Wonsuk Ma, Veli-Matti Karkkainen and J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu. Oxford: Regnum Books International, 162-181.

¹² Hiebert notes that the term and development of the concept originated with Father Jaime Bulatao who coined it in 1962 and elaborated on it in 1992 (Hiebert, Shaw and Tienou 1999, 15). Hiebert (2009) also addressed this situation in subsequent works, developing it further and calling it the “flaw of the excluded middle,” seeing the “secularization of science” (lower tier) and the “mystification of religion” (upper tier) as creating a void or vacuum in the middle, whereby neither science nor religion addressed “the middle level of supernatural this-worldly beings and forces” (196, 198-199).

¹³ Pentecostal missionaries were the exception to this Western missionary analysis as they did believe in the supernatural and did not have the excluded middle. See: ¹³Rodney L. Henry, *Filipino Spirit World: A Challenge to the Church* (Mandaluyong, Metro Manila: OMF Literature Inc., 1986), 131. (Footnoted added by editor.)

¹⁴ Walls contends, “Theology springs out of mission; its true origins lie not in the study or the library, but from the need to make Christian decisions—decisions about what to do, and about what to think. ... the normal run of Western theology is simply not big enough for Africa, or for much of the rest of the non-Western world. It offers no guidance for some of the most crucial situations, because it has no questions related to those situations. The reason is that Western theology—whether of a more liberal or conservative tendency is irrelevant—is heavily acculturated. It is substantially an Enlightenment product, designed for an Enlightenment view of the universe. The Enlightenment universe is a small-scale one; witchcraft or sorcery, for instance, do not exist within it, its family structures have no place for ancestors, the living dead of the family. The frontier between the empirical world and the realm of the spirit, the natural and the supernatural is closed. There is no place for those “principalities and powers” that Paul sees as world rulers routed by the triumphal chariot of the cross of the Risen Christ. The Bible is not an Enlightenment book” (2008, 203).

¹⁵ This swiping analysis may be generally true, but there were a strong minority of missionaries who stood with the indigenous people and against their sending nation’s colonial practices.

¹⁶ Taber grounds these ideas in a description of the function and influence of culture on people's lives and minds. "Culture is learned," "mental" (as in existing in people's minds, versus somewhere in the observable, sensory world), "adaptive" (in that it enables humans to live in varied environments), "shared," "selective," "normative" (in the sense that it "rewards conformity and punishes deviance"), "integrated" (its different parts are supportive), "heterogeneous" (in spite of being able to differentiate between various cultures, members within a society are varied and experience that culture differently), and lastly culture is "cumulative" ("each generation enriching later generations") (1991, 4-6). Another source that wrestles with the connection and synergistic effects of culture and faith is *Down to Earth: Studies in Christianity and Culture, The Papers of the Lausanne Consultation on Gospel and Culture* (Coote and Stott, eds. 1980). Lamin Sanneh also elaborates on this idea in *Encountering the West*: "In the rise of modern consciousness in the West, especially since the European Reformation, culture has assumed an important place in intellectual circles, so much so that when the West extended its domination over much of the world it has been assumed that Western culture and customs had accompanied the political and religious expansion. Notions of Western cultural superiority found a congenial niche in the Christian missionary enterprise where spiritual values were assumed to enshrine Western cultural forms, so that the heathen who took the religious bait would in fact be taking it from the cultural hook. Indeed, in numerous cases, culture and religion, as sanitation and salvation, were for many missionaries one and the same thing. There was no better harbinger of the new creation than silent plumbing, no brighter hope than electricity and no higher symbol of a redeemed humanity than the modern biomedical system. ... All this makes it understandable, though not entirely justified, that missionaries should be accused of cultural insensitivity, and of being unable or unwilling to separate the religion of the Bible from its Western cultural encapsulation" (1993, 23).

¹⁷ Hiebert's proposal also gave scope and precision to the otherwise nebulous term, "contextualization."

¹⁸ The four steps of critical contextualization are used as the basic structure for Hiebert, Shaw and Tienou's book *Folk Religions* (1999).

¹⁹ The *etic-emic* distinction originated as a linguistic term that Pike coined in 1954 in his descriptive grammatical theory Tagmemics. Other anthropologists (such as Harris, a decade later, in 1964) began utilizing this distinction and then later philosophers, psychologists, and others picked it up. Hiebert credits Ken Pike and other Bible translators like Jacob Loewen, H. A. Gleason, Eugene Nida, William Rebyburn, and William Smalley "as some of the early pioneers of applying anthropological insights to missions" (1994, 9).

²⁰ The importance in this is to balance the etic with the emic and vice-versa. This "metacultural grid" gives one a "position of detachment outside both views [etic-emic] that enables them to translate from one view to the other, and to compare and test them" (Hiebert, Shaw and Tienou 1999, 33).

²¹ I think implied in this is the assumption that the local church has part or all of the Scripture in their own language, in order that they can accurately read and understand God's Word for themselves.

²² Hiebert (1994) notes that Larry Laudin, C. S. Peirce and Ian Barbour directly influenced his thinking on this; however, it appears that Peirce's critical realism and semiotics proved foundational for Hiebert's version. He states that Peirce, "one of the fathers of critical realism," called it "critical common-sensism," which by its nature "strikes a middle ground between positivism, with its emphasis on objective truth, and instrumentalism, with its stress on the subjective nature of human knowledge. It affirms the presence of objective truth but recognizes that this is subjectively apprehended. On another level...it challenges the definition of "rationality" in both positivism and instrumentalism that limits rationality to algorithmic logic. In so doing, critical realism offers a third, far more nuanced, epistemic position" (1999, 69).

²³ Peirce's semiotics has other significant implications: Amos Yong proposes a pneumatological framework that draws in great part on "the experiential and epistemological issue of how... biblical insights... can be empirically confirmed." Yong utilizes Peirce's triadic semiotics numerous times (2000, 2005, 2014a, 2014b). He points to the "human activity of sign interpretation [semiotics] as "one of the more fruitful lines of response;

[m]ost helpful...is the North American philosophical tradition, particularly the triadic semiotic of Charles Sanders Peirce and, building on Peirce, the metaphysics of experience of Donald Gelpi.” Yong also found Peirce helpful in “justifying a metaphysical framework sufficient for the science-religion dialogue...and a pneumatological theology of creation” (2005, 280, 285).

²⁴ The full quote explains more completely: “On the one hand, insofar as *signs are grounded in their objects* in some respect, *their interpretants are constrained in those respects*; thus, *interpretation cannot just be a subjective matter*.... On the other hand, insofar as signs produce interpretants in certain respects, not only can interpreters miss the respects with which the signs are communicating; in addition, *all interpretants are necessarily vague* in their various respects and *thus demanding of further interpretation*. Thus, *all interpretation*, because it cannot just be an objective matter capable of definitive settlement, *is fallible*. In practice, certain things are decided upon in that their interpretants provide for settled courses of action. But *given the qualitative open-endedness* of the process of interpretation, *one cannot predict when future events may call the settled interpretant into question*. For these reasons, *Peirce’s semiotics avoids the fallacies of rationalisms* that ignore the groundedness of ideas in real objects, and of empiricisms that ignore the open-endedness of interpretants in the signifying process. It *emphasizes a contrite fallibilism* over and against either a positivistic objectivism that fixes beliefs on the basis of presumed (but unreal) access to the objects of inquiry or a relativistic subjectivism that fixes beliefs on the basis of only social conventions. So, although it is true that ‘semiosis is in principle without absolute beginning, as well as without end,’ it is also true that relativism, skepticism, or nihilism is undercut, since Peirce’s triadic semiotic establishes how human activity proceeds in engagement with the real world” (2005, 286). Peirce’s thought also included the important idea that the “context of inquiry is always a community of inquirers,” not an individual and in the idea. But his most influential contribution for evangelicalism and for critical realism was his grounding idea that “thought has access to the truth of reality;” in essence “truth is the conformity of a *representamen* [sign] to its object, *its* object, ITS [sic] object, mind you’,” since “[f]or Peirce, far from the truth being subjective, all truth is extremely objective” (Yong 2000, 577, italics in original). The reason for this is that “there is a correspondence relation between propositions and reality. The difference is that Peirce recognized the complex operations of thinking. He understood the correlation of our assertions with reality takes place not directly but only by means of a semiotic process of interpretation. And this process is a triadic relation between signs, objects, and interpretations that arise from various experiential perspectives. These respects of interpretation yield successively more determinate aspects of previously less determinate signs” (Yong 2000, 577).

²⁵ But Pike cautions, “What in non-theistic intellectualism replaces the belief in God? The answer seems to be that belief in God may be replaced by *belief in an epistemology* (a system of how we know what we know and of the validity of that knowledge); or by *trust in a philosophical system of reality*; or by *moral trust in scientific assumptions*, explicit or tacit. ... the choice of a set of assumptions is a moral *choice*... not something which merely “happens” to a person...” (1962, 16). And yet, Kelly Monroe Kullberg’s books, *Finding God Beyond Harvard* (2006) and *Finding God At Harvard: Spiritual Journeys of Thinking Christians* (1996, reprinted in 2007), remind us that often there are 7000 others who have not “bowed to Baal” (1 Kings 19:18; Romans 11:4) and thinking critically is still an option which is not necessarily mutually incompatible with trust in God.

²⁶ According to sources, the number is now close to 3,000, at 2883, as of November 2014. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible_translations; <https://wycliffe.org.uk/wycliffe/about/vision-whatwedo.html>, accessed February 8, 2015.

²⁷ According to Walls, this religious history was noted first by historians, such as Roland Oliver (1952, 1956) and later David Barrett (1970). Shenk notes “Efraim Andersson’s 1958 *Messianic Popular Movements in the Lower Congo* went largely unnoticed” (Shenk 2011, chap. 4). Walls himself comments on the phenomenon as early as 1976, saying, “Africa was appearing as the Christian heartland.” But already, in denoting the historians first, I’ve neglected the African scholars who saw this change in “religious history,” namely C. G. Baeta (1968), Lamin Sanneh (1983), Ogbu Kalu (1996), and E. Kingsley Larbi (2001) among others. Yet, as Walls notes, “the nature of this process was long in coming to notice ... not before the years of decolonization” and even still,

“neither the churches of the North nor those of the South have yet taken in the full implications of this major movement of the Christian heartland, the theological academy least of all perhaps” (2002, 118; 2006, 77).

²⁸ Tite Tienou also suggested the necessity of “international and interdisciplinary scholarship” (2006, 51).

²⁹ Many years later, Schreiter similarly notes that we must “examine how fully participative Christian communities around the globe have become in the totality of the church, and to what extent a colonial mentality still remains (2002, 15)” (cited in Ott and Netland 2006, 310).

³⁰ In his *Christianity Today* article about Andrew Walls, Tim Stafford notes that Walls’ insights probe Christian history “to gain a prophetic vision of what ‘Christianity’ really means across an extraordinary diversity of times and cultures” (2007, 87).

³¹ Amos Yong comments on the “vernacularization of Christianity,” noting that “Asian Christian theology itself is increasingly dominated by local concerns and motivations even as indigenous voices and perspectives are sounding forth with urgent clarity,” which is exemplified “in the fairly recently published three-volume *Asian Christian Theologies*. The central motif around which materials were collected and considered for inclusion in these volumes is that of “local theology.” By this, the editors mean theology incarnated or contextualized specifically in the various regions” (2014b, chap. 1). “Local theology” as used here is what Hiebert calls “self-theologizing,” which he says is the next step beyond critical contextualization (1986, 1988, 1994).

³² Philip Jenkins as well as Doug Jacobsen have described this phenomenon: Philip Jenkins. 2003. *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, and Douglas Jacobsen. 2011. *The World’s Christians: Who They Are, Where They Are, and How They Got There*. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.

³³ Yong feels Ott and Netland’s (2006) *Globalizing Theology*, and Jeffrey Greenman and Gene L. Green (2012) *Global Theology in Evangelical Perspective* lead the way in this endeavor (2014b, endnotes).

³⁴ “Hiebert states clearly the problem and the solution: “To move from local theologies to an understanding of transcultural truths revealed in Scripture, we need a metatheology, a theological reflection on how local theologies should be done and how to mediate the dialogue among them” (2006, 306). Hiebert also notes that Western theology is a form of “local theology” as well.

³⁵ Hiebert gives two necessary components and four requisites for the metatheological grid. The two necessary components include Peirce’s semiotics and the epistemological foundation of critical realism. These, he felt were significant for understanding the relationship between form and meaning and the nature of truth; both of which are necessary foundations for conversation about God’s revelation and theology related to revelation (2006, 303-304). In addition, Hiebert saw four requisites as necessary for the development of a metatheology: (1) Scripture is viewed as divine revelation and the final authority, (2) the need to distinguish between God’s revelation as recorded in Scripture and human understandings articulated in theologies, (3) the church recognized as a hermeneutical community, and (4) reliance on the Holy Spirit. Here Hiebert makes the important point that all too often “we depend primarily on human reason to discern truth,” but we “must be humble about the limitations of our knowledge and learn to discern the understanding that comes through the Spirit” (2006, 303-307).

³⁶ Hiebert’s presentation of what a metatheology encompasses is significant in three ways. First, he not only recognizes theology as a local endeavor, but also acknowledges that, by nature, it is a global enterprise in which all need to participate: “theologies...seek to communicate the gospel in local contexts, but also affirm the oneness of the gospel for all humans” (2006, 302). Second, he notes the necessity of global inclusion; for, the number of diverse voices involved in the dialogue will affect the fullness of our metatheology. Third, his

approach gives us a good foundation for understanding theologians and missiologists who write from different perspectives (like Amos Yong's global theologizing) because he provides an interdisciplinary perspective.

³⁷ Hiebert and Tienou note, "each research tradition is embedded in a worldview—the fundamental assumptions it makes about reality. Different answers or "theories" are offered to the key questions, and competing ones are debated until one or the other emerges as accepted doctrine, reigning until it is further questioned" (2005, 117)

³⁸ One of the main points of Hiebert and Tienou's chapter was a definition of theology that recognizes "there are no culture-free and history-free theologies, [and] we all read Scripture from the perspectives of our particular contexts." Yet, "this does not mean we can know no truth," rather, "we must never equate our theology with Scripture, and that we need to work in hermeneutical communities to check our personal and cultural biases" (2005, 122).

³⁹ One problem of Western philosophical theology is "the danger of becoming captive to the methods of Greek logic." An example of this is the West's "search for a comprehensive system based on ...logic implies that humans can grasp the fullness of truth with clarity. It leaves little room for the ambiguities of life, the mysteries that transcend human comprehension, and the wisdom that can deal with the contradictions and paradoxes of a rapidly changing world" (Hiebert 2005, 121-122).

⁴⁰ In analyzing systematic theology and Biblical theology, Hiebert laments that the theme of God's missional heart for his world is all but absent in these two theologies. This idea of a missional theology, a "missional hermeneutic" from which to interpret the whole Bible is the subject of Chris Wright's *Mission of God*, where he establishes that there is a missional grand-narrative which draws together the whole of the Bible and biblical history. Wright states his objective was "not only to demonstrate...that Christian mission is fully grounded in the Scripture ...but also to demonstrate that a strong theology of the mission of God provides a fruitful hermeneutical framework within which to read the whole Bible. ...[For] mission is what the Bible is all about; we could as meaningfully talk of the missional basis of the Bible as the biblical basis of mission (2006, 26, 29). To further elucidate, Wright explains that in a missiological approach we are referring to: "the purpose for which the Bible exists; the God the Bible renders to us; the people whose identity and mission the Bible invites us to share; and the story the Bible tells us about this God and this people and indeed the whole world and its future" (31)

⁴¹ Strong and Strong (2006) note that in remaining faithful to Luke's intent, "we can only secondarily derive lessons from the council's actions (Fee and Stewart 1993, 105-112);" yet, the approach by the Jerusalem Council "reveals a successful way in which diverse Christian communities with different theological concerns achieved consensus." And this lends credence to Hiebert's Anabaptist perspective, which says, "we guard against subjectivity by remaining faithful to Scripture, the leading of the Holy Spirit, and the check of the hermeneutical community" (Hiebert 1994c, 100, quoted in Strong and Strong 2006, 128).

⁴² The main text is Amos 9:11-12, with Hosea 3:5, Jer. 12:15, and Isa. 45:21 included as well.

⁴³ In the referenced section, Wright extensively quotes Bauckham (1996, 167-169). See also Strong and Strong's discussion on this missional, theological, hermeneutical, and reflectional process (2006, 128-132).

⁴⁴ Harold Dollar, after discussing the "conversion of Cornelius" and the "conversion" that Peter went through in the process of becoming willing to go to Cornelius, states that the idea that the "messenger of conversion must experience conversion can be shown throughout the history of the church." And Dollar gives several examples of contemporary missionaries who experienced "conversion" (Donovan 1978; Richardson 1974; Olson 1978). He ends by saying, "But the one thing that seems to be clear, both from the Bible and from the history of missions, is that those who are called to preach the message of conversion to others must inevitably also experience a radical reorientation themselves. And this conversion is a process that will involve struggle and failure but will eventually liberate the messenger and the message" (Dollar 1993, 14-18).

⁴⁵ Walls reflects, saying, “I still remember the force with which one day the realization struck me that I, while happily pontificating on that patchwork quilt of diverse fragments that constitutes second-century Christian literature, was actually living in a second-century church. The life, worship, and understanding of a community in its second century of Christian allegiance was going on all around me. Why did I not stop pontificating and observe what was going on?” (Shenk 2011, chap. 4)

⁴⁶ Walls continues, “The conceit that Western Christendom was the lens through which all of Christian history and theology was to be viewed was nothing more than a self-deluding provincialism” (Shenk 2011, chap. 4).

⁴⁷ According to Shenk, “Andrew Walls and Harold Turner recognized that they were living in the midst of a dynamic situation of which the Western academy in the 1950s was largely ignorant. ... How could the Western university legitimately claim to be a university if it closed its eyes to these burgeoning developments in Africa, the South Pacific, Latin America, and Asia? Among other things, this phenomenon was calling into question the leading theories about religion and secularization. Furthermore ...the specialization in every field of study posed problems. To study phenomena like new religious movements the resources of multiple disciplines were needed” (2011, chap. 4).

⁴⁸ For Allen the transformation came during the Boxers’ siege of Peking. Allen “had observed at close range the hostility of the Boxers toward the Christian community... [and] was especially disturbed at the taunts thrown at Chinese Christians [calling them ‘foreigners’].” He felt “this relationship was shaped by the model and assumptions of the missions rather than by the cultures of the peoples among whom missionaries worked. And it created dependency on the mission rather than indigenous resources” (Shenk 2005, 197).

⁴⁹ Interestingly, one formative aspect of Donovan’s “conversion” was reading Roland Allen’s writing, especially about how Allen “pleaded that the Church be placed on its own feet...for an indigenous Christianity” (Paton 1960, xvi) and how “having the Spirit...being led themselves by the Spirit was all that was needed for communion;” (1960, 194) as well as how “missionaries should look to the apostolic missionary example as a corrective” (Sanneh 2008, 233-234). Allen’s influence combined with Donovan’s experiences in East Africa, where after seven years at the mission, they had “no adult Maasai practicing Christian,” Donovan decided he couldn’t see persisting with “mission in the old style,” and rather said, “I suddenly feel the urgent need to cast aside all theories and discussions, all efforts at strategy—and simply go to these people” to be among them; which required “upending and redefining a century or more of missionary practice and teaching.” He came to the conclusion that “Western missionaries must renounce the view that civilization was required to disinfect indigenous people and render them tidy enough to receive the gospel.” Thus, Paul’s missionary method and his missionary spirit (trusting the Spirit) seemed to resonate with Donovan. The final proverbial “nail in the coffin” of Donovan’s traditional missionary ideas came when a Maasai elder explained that God ‘has searched us out and found us. All the time we think we are the lion. In the end, the lion is God;’ ...the Maasai saw the issue not so much as missionaries discovering the Maasai and preparing them [for the Gospel], as about God [already] being there for the Maasai. ...[This] was in fact a huge stride in mature discipleship, and it blew away all the meandering stratagems and hesitant steps of organized mission.” Donovan notes that the Maasai taught him well though it took a long time for the lesson to sink in. In light of his transformation, Donovan suggested “missionaries should only accept the part assigned to them in Christianity’s serial expansion rather than try to run the whole show themselves” (Sanneh 2008, 234-239).

⁵⁰ Lamin Sanneh experienced a similar but different transformation. He says he launched on a journey for the connection between faith and reason, culture and theology. For this journey, Sanneh says he relied on Newbiggin’s writings and musings in which “faith supersedes reason, though, in a surprising turn, faith is consistent with reason.” Sanneh says this transformation process is reflected in two of his books: *Encountering the West* and *Whose Religion Is Christianity?* Yet, subsequent to these books and numerous discussions with students, he “was left wondering about what effect I could have on students with a hardened secular worldview” (2012, 250). This nexus of faith and culture continued to plague him, both in church and in the classroom (256). Sanneh eventually found a spiritual rest in the idea that the “love of God is not ours to bargain with [and] the nature of love is expressed better in leaving footprints,” (258) and in Anselm’s notion, ‘O, Lord you are not

only that than which nothing greater can be conceived, but you are greater than all that can be conceived.’ [For] God is than whom is nothing greater, Reason glimpses the truth of God to come upon its own fullest scope: the more of truth reason discovers, the more of its own breadth and depth it attains. That intrinsic connection the Trinity embodies and demonstrates uniquely. Worship becomes the natural and logical next step in the Trinitarian experience of God, for it is in worship that truth can grasp us genuinely, the point at which reason fulfills its own end, who is God” (269).

⁵¹ Hawaiian Christians are an example of this principle: “Richard H. Dana Jr. noted in a report in the New York Tribune in June 1860 that the missionaries of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions had in 40 years taught the people of Hawaii ‘to read and write, to cipher and sew. They have given them an alphabet, grammar, and dictionary; preserved their language from extinction; given it a literature and translated into it the Bible and works of devotion, science and entertainment.’ ... You could be Hawaiian and Christian or Christian and Hawaiian, it amounted to the same thing as far as Christianity was concerned, for parallel conjunctions occurred... Jewish and Christian or Christian and Jewish, Gentile and Christian or Christian and Gentile.... Expanded over time and across space, we hear repeated echoes of this theme of one God active in the midst of many cultures, and of many cultures renewed from a common faith in one God” (Sanneh and Carpenter 2005, 215-216). Sanneh’s book, *Encountering the West*, also gives specifics to this principle, illustrating the nexus of faith and culture, with translation’s utilizing, penetrating and renewing of culture. “By translating the Bible, missionaries actually strengthened local cultures rather than weakened them, as many histories of mission in Africa have asserted. Moreover, by engaging in the translation process, missionaries themselves are often won over to become defenders of local culture.” Sanneh goes on to claim that mother-tongue translations allowed local people to form their own interpretation of the Scriptures against what might have been proposed by the missionaries. The very fact that the Christian Scriptures could be translated (as opposed to the situation in Islam, where the Holy Qur’an can only be understood and interpreted from the original Arabic text) conferred a dignity on local cultures that formed in turn the basis for the reassertion of African cultures in nationalist and independence movements. These are intriguing hypotheses that Sanneh extends even further in this book, proposing that such vernacularization is intrinsic to the nature of Christianity, and that current global processes should be read through this lens. Rather than incessantly apologizing for the modern missionary movement as an unremitting act of colonial imperialism, Christians and others should focus upon how missionaries supported and promoted local cultures to make them players in the new global realities” (Schreier 1994, 779-780).

⁵² Walls expounds on this idea, saying that by the twentieth century, “God called a New Church into existence to redress the balance of the Old.” And since the Church now has many centers, “new Christian impulses and initiatives may now be expected from any quarter of the globe.” In addition, Christianity in Africa is “numerically and qualitatively, no longer on the sidelines of Christianity;” it is “no pale copy of an institution existing somewhere else.” Rather it must be seen not only as a “major component of contemporary representative Christianity” but as the “*standard Christianity of the present age*” and as such we need to “*look at Africa today in order to understand Christianity itself*” as well as the “*determinative new directions in Christian thought and activity*” (Walls 2002, 119). The obvious global character of Christianity is not new in that it has always been a global faith, for “earlier centuries saw it spread across the whole Eurasian land mass and deep into East Africa. The exceptional period of Christian history, when Christianity seemed to belong essentially to the West, is the one from which we have just emerged: the period of the Great Migration and that immediately preceding it. With its return to a non-Western religion, Christianity has reverted to type” (Walls 2008, 202).

⁵³ Newbigin asks, “[H]ow can we move from the place where we explain the [G]ospel in terms of our modern scientific world-view to the place where we explain our modern scientific world-view from the point of view of the gospel? Part of the answer will be to listen to the witness of Christians from other cultures” (1986, 22).

⁵⁴ It can no longer be the whole of Western Christianity taking the Gospel to the whole world. “All our representations of humanity are partial and incomplete; complete humanity is found only in Christ in his fullness” (Walls 2008, 203). Walls castigates, saying, that the enormity of the task requires all of us. “Christ is

full humanity, and it is only *together* that we reach his full stature. ... There are not two, but an infinite number of segments of partially converted social reality within the church. ... each is a building block belonging to a new temple still in process of construction. Like them, *each is an organ necessary to the proper functioning of a body under Christ's direction*. Only *together* will they [we] reach the fullness of Christ which is the completion and perfection of humanity” (Walls 2008, 204; italics mine).

⁵⁵ This is found in 1 Cor. 4: 1-5 but also the idea of the “wheat and the tares” is applicable (Matt. 13:36-40).

⁵⁶ Craig Ott (2006) uses this quote in his “Conclusion” of the edited volume, *Globalizing Theology*.

⁵⁷ A place to begin further study would be with Yong (2003; 2005; 2014a; 2014b) as well as with Karkkainen (2002; 2011). In Yong’s (2003) article, he concludes with five useful theses which need further discussion in order to develop a pneumatological theology of mission and evangelization in a religiously plural world: Thesis 1: A viable contemporary theology of mission and evangelization is necessarily pneumatological; Thesis 2: A viable contemporary theology of interreligious ecumenism can be understood in part as an outgrowth of a pneumatological theology of intra-Christian ecumenism; Thesis 3: A pneumatological theology of mission and evangelization in an interreligious context is able to safeguard the perennial tension that exists between dialogue and proclamation; Thesis 4: A pneumatological theology of mission and evangelization will also enable a truly “crucicentric” and, hence, liberative solidarity to emerge in the interreligious encounter; Thesis 5: On a practical level, a pneumatological theology of mission and evangelization in a religiously plural world will need to be especially alert for what the Spirit is saying and doing in and through the churches, to be sensitive to the presence and activities of religious others, and to be discerning about the broader context of Christian ministry (308-310)

⁵⁸ Yong, in this same article, goes even further to provide “three axioms of a pneumatological theology of religions” which include: 1) “God is universally present and active by the Spirit ... If human society includes politics, economics, and so on ... what is the Spirit doing in those arenas of human life? If human culture includes arts and religions, what are the purposes of the Spirit in those domains of human experience?” 2) “God’s Spirit is the life-breath of the imago Dei in every human being and the presupposition of all human relationships and communities. This means there is a pneumatological dimension to each human individual that sustains intersubjective communication, interpersonal relationships and intentional, rational, moral, and spiritual life. All engagements with the “other”—whether that other be human others, the world, or the divine—are pneumatologically mediated.” And following from these, 3) “The religions of the world, like everything else that exists, are providentially sustained by the Spirit for divine purposes... Unless one is prepared to say that all forms and expressions of human culture are anti-theistic, one cannot arbitrarily separate out one dimension of culture—the religious aspect—and label it, as previous generations of theologians have, as either a solely human effort to reach God or as demonic. Rather, all human endeavors reflect either God’s permissive or active will toward ultimately divine purposes centered around the full revelation of Jesus Christ and the impending kingdom of God” (2001, 47-48).