

# A long walk to obedience: Missiology and mission under scrutiny (1910-2010)



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## Dates:

Received: 08 Sept. 2016

Accepted: 17 Jan. 2017

Published: 17 May 2017

## How to cite this article:

Knoetze, J.J., 2017, 'A long walk to obedience: Missiology and mission under scrutiny (1910-2010)', *In die Skriflig* 51(2), a2192. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v51i2.2192>

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This article describes the discipline of missiology and mission over the last century since Edinburgh 1910 followed by two world wars to Edinburgh 2010, as a long walk to obedience – a walk in discerning God's will. Even in biblical times, mission as spreading the gospel to those who do not yet believe in the Trinitarian God, was under scrutiny from within and outside the church (cf. Ac 10-11, 15 and Galatians). Throughout history until today it was never different. This article looks at the development of mission over the last 100 years from a Western (mainline missionary churches – MMCs) perspective. The development of missiology as a subject and theological discipline will be described along the lines of some of the mission conferences. Attention will be given to the following questions: What does it mean to be obedient to the mission calling in a broken and traumatised world? Is there a credible way of redeeming mission and missiology from its own past?

## Introduction

This article describes the discipline of missiology and mission over the last century – since the Edinburgh 1910 mission conference (Edinburgh 1910 further on) and two world wars to the Edinburgh 2010 mission conference (Edinburgh 2010 further on) – as a long walk to obedience. At the Edinburgh 1910 there was a vision and optimism to evangelise the world. Instead, the First World War broke out in 1914. Since 1914 until 2014, a century later, mission and the discipline of missiology have come a long way. From evangelising the nation at Edinburgh 1910 the motto changed to a softer 'Together Towards Life' at Edinburgh 2010. This development of mission and missiology as a theological discipline will be described along the lines of some of the big mission conferences while attending to the following question: What does it mean to be obedient to the mission calling in a broken and traumatised world at a specific time?

Bromiley (1985:35) indicates that obedience (*hypakoe*) implies a religious decision: 'The denotation is not the ethical attitude but the religious act from which it derives (1 Pet 1:14)', for example, the Medical Missionary Sisters view:

Obedience to their missionary calling as a journey into life and a journey into God, inspired by and giving birth to a spirituality 'shaped by and experienced within many different contexts and cultures in which we are in mission'. (Saayman 2007:138)

Obedience, then, is understood as traumatised people in a broken world (or church) participating (journeying) in the *missio Dei* in different times and situations, always listening again to the Lord and to the world in discerning God's will (making religious decisions). The concepts of *listening*, *hearing* and *discernment* are strongly present in obedience.

God's involvement in this world is also strongly related to his listening to and hearing the cries of his people (Ex 3:7) as well as the cry of creation (Rm 8). This article wants to scrutinise the obedience of the church to God as the initiator of mission, listening to the Word as the grand narrative of mission, and reading it as a missional text (Wright 2006). This article will also listen to God together with the broken church full of traumatised people as well as the cries of traumatised people in a broken world. The article engages in the journey to obedience, looking and listening to the 'old paradigms' as displayed in the mission conferences of the last century while discerning a new way in which missiology can be executed.

Verkuyl (1981:19) describes the task of missiology to be scientifically-critical about the perceptions (*vooreronderstellingen*), motivations, structures, methods, relations and church policy in the fulfilling of the mission command. Following Verkuyl, this article will engage scientifically-critical in the journey of obedience (discerning moments) over the last century, taking a broad historical

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overview and understanding of the mission conferences, focussing on what or to whom the church listened.

## Description of missiology and mission

This article works with the following concepts: *missiology* as one of the disciplines in theological science, and *mission* as the church's practice of its faith in the world.

### Missiology

Missiology as discipline can be described as history, elentics and apologetics (Bavinck 1960). In understanding missiology as history, elentics and apologetics, it is important to be scientifically-critical in the interpretations and understanding of these elements of missiology. Olson (2013:176) indicates history as a network of social forces and events that affect each other. No historic event can be independent, unconditioned, unchanging and complete. Thus, the following question arises: How did the understanding of elentics and apologetics influence the history of Christianity from Edinburgh 1910 to Edinburgh 2010 and vice versa? Elentics and apologetics may be interpreted as the historic reflection on the deeds of salvation of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the whole world, focussing on the realisation of God's kingdom through the communication of the whole gospel with word and deed, and the whole Law of God to all people (Verkuyl 1981:19). Elentics and apologetics is thus to react with hope, gentleness and respect to the historic events in this world (1 Pt 3:15).

According to Bosch (1991):

Missiology, as a branch of the discipline of Christian theology, is not a disinterested or neutral enterprise, rather it seeks to look at the world from the perspective of commitment to the Christian faith. (p. 9)

Religious decisions have to be made. The church has come a long way since Edinburgh 1910, where mission was viewed as *missiones ecclessia*, to Edinburgh 2010 where missiology is viewed as *missio Dei*. In these discussions of missiology as *missio Dei*, much more attention must be given to the following question: How do the acknowledged deeds of God in history relate to the *missio ecclesiarum*? A further question relates to the criteria used to analyse historical processes: Are researchers also looking primarily at history or must they look at history as the place where the *missio Dei* is fulfilled, focusing on the Messiah and his kingdom? The *missio hominum*<sup>1</sup> also refers to non-church work of people working for the good of society and, as such, taking part in the *missio Dei* unintentionally or intentionally (Verkuyl 1981:18, 19). One of the most important relations in missiology throughout the century is the interdependence among the *missio Dei*, *missio ecclesiarum* and the *missio hominum*.

1.Nico Smith (2002) also wrote an interesting article on the relation between *missio Dei* and *missio hominum*.

### Missiology and ecclesiology

Kung (1968:5) says the church's 'essence' is expressed in changing historical forms. He (Kung (1968:5) continues to show that the New Testament does not describe the church first and foremost according to a specific doctrine that needs to be worked out in practice, but as reality. 'The real church is first and foremost a happening, a fact, a historical event.' May it be called an act of obedience? The image of the church in the first three decades was determined not along 'ecclesiological' lines, but by the opposition (a hostile state) and through 'apologetics' concerned with the one God and with Christ (Kung 1968:6). From these remarks it is clear that elentics and apologetics were related to the essence or being of the church. Moltmann (1975:xvi) indicates that the church must move 'away from a pastoral church, that looks after the people, to the people's own communal church, among the people'. The church must be a living hope among people and not stray into social isolation. Van Engen (1991:20) writes: 'Around the world, one of the most neglected areas of missiological research has been ecclesiology.' Nearly a decade later it is echoed differently by Kirk (1999) that the church is still focusing on going to the mission fields, thinking of mission as a vital activity of the church among many other activities. 'Mission as an essential 'being' of the Church has not yet been properly recognised' (Kirk 1999:20). In this regard it might be stated that mission organizations are an indication of the 'misunderstanding' of the church's calling as participant in the *missio Dei*. Para-church mission societies may also be viewed as the conscience of the church, where the church was not always obedient to its calling.

An essential question to be answered is the following: How does *missio hominum* influence or relate to our ecclesiological understanding? It is of great importance that all the different configurations of ecclesiology must be viewed as an integral part of both missiology as science, and mission as practice (Goheen 2011:1-6). Verkuyl (1981:20) is correct in his assessment that the principle of '*Ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*' is also applicable to *missiones ecclesiarum* and also of the society ('*societas semper reformanda*'). Missiology is not only about the method of mission, but also the structure of the church as *missio hominum* in (a traumatised) society. Kung (1968:6) makes it clear that the essence and the form of the church can neither be separated nor are they identical. Missiology and mission are about obedience to the calling of God within a specific context that implies a religious decision. It is through the faith community that missiology as science becomes mission practice. More recently, Baker (2013) describes missiology as inherently and necessarily interdisciplinary, and he concludes that missiology must be described as history, theology and anthropology. He continues to add a fourth aspect, namely missionary practice upon which history, theology and anthropology focus all their attention.

### Mission

Voetuis (1588-1676) was the first Protestant to develop a theology of mission (Bosch 1991:256). According to Voetuis'

comprehensive description of mission, the goal of mission is the conversion of 'Gentiles' (*conversio gentilium*), church planting (*plantatio ecclesiae*) and the glory and manifestation of God's divine grace (*gloria et manifestatio gratiae divinae*) (Kritzinger 2011:10-20). Bosch (1991) describes mission as the practice of our faith as:

Christian mission gives expression to the dynamic relationship between God and the world, particularly as it was portrayed, first, in the story of the covenant people of Israel and then, supremely, in the birth, life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus of Nazareth. (p. 9)

According to Bevans (2010:7), mission at Edinburgh 1910 was an exercise of power, the power of Christendom aimed at the 'heathendom', the power of the West against the 'rest'. Mission was described in military terminology and missionaries were referred to as 'soldiers'. Other military metaphors such as 'army', 'crusade', 'marching orders' and 'conquest' were also used. Bosch (1991:389-393) describes how it was only after the First World War at the Brandenburg Missionary Conference in 1932 that Karl Barth became one of the first theologians who articulated mission as an activity of God himself. It was at the Willingen Conference of the International Missionary Council in 1952 that the idea (not the term) of the *missio Dei* first surfaced. Willingen recognised a close relationship between mission as solidarity with the incarnate and crucified Christ, and *missio Dei* in a broken and traumatised world. In the development of the *missio Dei*, it became clear that the church did not have its own mission.

From the above it is clear that as long as mission was an activity of the church (1910), the world as the 'other' must be conquered through power (think of the early crusades in this regard). However, when the church was traumatised by her own acts and participation in the two world wars and recognised her own vulnerability, she listened differently. Because mission is now viewed as an activity of God himself, the attitude towards those 'not yet part' of the church changed. Looking at the century it seems that listening, obedience and discernment are in a continuous process, because the church is in a relationship with a living God. Thus, '[u]ltimately, mission remains indefinable; it should never be incarcerated in the narrow confines of our own predilections' (Bosch 1991:9). Mission has so many configurations that it is best described in terms of 'Mission as ...' (Bosch 1991:368-510), or as 'People who ...' in Wright's *The mission of God's people* (2010).

## Historical developments of missiology

Putting missiology and mission under scrutiny from Edinburgh 1910 to Edinburgh 2010, we must put mission history into the mainstream of history, because we are always dealing with *missio hominum*. According to Elphick (1995), there are the following two criteria:

First, the thought and actions of religious people – their doctrines, rituals, spiritual experiences, and individual and corporate

moralties which must be studied with the utmost seriousness and interpreted with empathy. Second, these 'religious' phenomena must be embedded in the many contexts of their time: political, intellectual, social and economic. (p. 11)

In the discussion of obedience it is important to be scientifically-critical about the religious actions of the church within the context of the last century. Leon Rousseau (2013) describes the First World War as chapter one in the insanity of the next 60 years between 1914-1976 when 120-160 million lives were lost. During the Second World War, Hitler was responsible for 21 million, Stalin for 62 million and Mao for 77 million deaths. Against this background of the Western world the following missiological developments took place.

### Different names

Looking at the different names given to what is understood as missiology gives us an overview of different understandings or perspectives of missiology. Bavinck (1960) gives the following overview: Gustav Warneck talked about '*Missionslehre*' or mission theory. In 1909, Kuyper talked about '*prothetiek*' from *protithestia* [added on to the congregation] as it is used in the Book of Acts. Kuyper also used alternatives like *auxaniek* [multiplication, growth] and *halieutiek* [fishers of men]. According to Bavinck (1960:xvi), Kuyper finds 'apostolic', insofar as it refers to the apostolate, as an office inappropriate. Donald McGavran works with the term *church growth* (*auxaniek*). It is clear that these understandings of mission have a focus on the growth of the church. In North-America the term used by Robert Speer was *missionary principles and practice*. In the Netherlands the term *theology of the apostolate* was used by A.A van Ruler, J.C. Hoekendijk and others. H.N. Ridderbos and H. Bergema opposed this term, because, according to them, the term *apostolate* was understood as '*marturia, didache, kerygma*' and as an authentic authority or an office, and not as '*apostolein*', [to be sent] (Verkuyl 1981:15-16). It is my understanding that the same arguments can be followed regarding the use of *missional* or *mission*. The one term focuses more on the mission-intention and the other more on the mission-dimension. Although there is a consensual recognition that missiology is an interdisciplinary study of God's mission, it is still described by different names. To designate this interdisciplinary study, some universities use 'missiology' (NWU),<sup>2</sup> some use 'science of mission' (PUC),<sup>3</sup> and others 'intercultural studies' (Fuller Seminary),<sup>4</sup> or 'world Christianity' (Boston University).<sup>5</sup>

The focus of missiology was, and in some instances still is, on the 'growing of the church' (*missiones ecclesias*). The understanding is that if the church is growing it will influence the society and make it a better place, while if missiology first focuses on the kingdom, the *missio Dei* where God is working in the society, then the church will grow. It seems as if names

2.North-West University, South Africa.

3.Protestant University in Congo, Kinshasa, The Democratic Republic of Congo.

4.Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California, United States of America.

5.Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts, United States of America.



like *Intercultural Studies* or *World Christianity* are focussing on being more focussed on the society than the church.

## Development of Missiology as discipline

Because mission has always been an activity of the church, the science of mission was not treated systematically – it actually developed from mission practice.<sup>6</sup> Only isolated ideas, brief remarks and some references are found from the church fathers. According to Bavinck (1960:xii), the ancient church conducted missionary work in its own cultural milieu and concentrated on the relation of the Christian faith to the heathen philosophy until missions<sup>7</sup> focussed more and more on Northern Europe. Bosch (1991:226-230) describes how mission expanded from the known world (Europe) through colonialism to other parts of the world. The Latin word *mission* was closely related to the Trinity and the now termed *missio Dei*. The new word *mission* is historically linked to the colonial era by which the Western ecclesiastical system was spread to the rest of the world. Because the mission's focus in Northern Europe was on firm and established tribal bonds, individual conversions were almost impossible. Thus, the management of missions needed to be understood anew and required a new orientation. Long before the development of missionary science or theory, ideas on the methods of missions were expressed and this makes missionary science much older than it appears to be. An excellent example of missionary science is the *Summa Contra Gentiles* of Thomas Aquinas. In his work, Aquinas shows the embarrassment and the difficulty Christians experienced in sharing their faith with the Mohammedans (Bavinck 1960:xiii). This makes it clear that missiology as discipline, and mission as practice are interdependent as well as the fact that missiology was first of all not theologially (theoretically) developed, but the theology grew from the practice. Other examples are the works of Allen (1912 and 1956), Warneck and other theologians' descriptions of Paul's 'missionary methods', and the undeniable link with his theology and his 'Sitz im Leben' (Bosch 1991:123-124).

Verkuyl (1981:21-25) describes the development of missiology as one of the six theological disciplines along the following historical lines: Schleiermacher was the first theologian giving attention to the place of missiology as a separate theological discipline. He thought about mission as cultural-historic and placed missiology within the field of Practical Theology. However, he gives more attention to missiology in his *Ethik (Ethik)* where mission is not viewed as a universal calling, but rather a cultural responsibility to take the Western culture to other cultures. This relates closely with the view of mission during colonialism as well as mission as intercultural studies as presented at Fuller University. Kuyper placed missiology in what he called the Diaconology group of subjects, where the office (*ambt*) of the deacon is studied.

6. It is noteworthy that most missiological chairs at universities, until the end of the 20th century, were filled with lecturers who started out as missionaries rather than academics.

7. It is to be noted that Bavinck and Anderson are talking about missions – plural. This might indicate an earlier understanding of the church as the origin of different missions, against the *missio Dei*.

Despite of the interwovenness of missiology with the other theological disciplines, Bavinck (1960:xx) pleads that missiology should be treated as an independent subject, but not isolated from the rest of the diaconal subjects. Bavinck criticises Kuyper for putting missiology under the *Disdascalische* subjects, because mission is more than *didache* and *didaskalai* – it is also *diaconia* and he added *koinonia*. Verkuyl (1981) proceeds by showing that Gustav Warneck (1877) puts missiology in three subject groups: mission history within church history; biblical foundation within biblical subjects; and mission theory within practical theology. Diem (1967) placed missiology within systematic theology, especially within the dogma of the Trinity and eschatology. Verkuyl (1981) continues with Myklebust who wrote about the 'integration' or 'independence' of missiology and argued for independence. Verkuyl then argued for missiology as a complimenting science. From the above arguments it is clear that missiology was from the beginning an inter- as well as an intra-disciplinary science. It must be noted that these were the views from a Western perspective and are greatly influenced by our ecclesiology.

## Influential conferences

Looking at the development of the theology of mission among the Protestants in the 20th century, it seems that, at first, mission as practice determined missiology as science. Anderson (1961:1-16) speaks of a fundamental reformulation of the theology of mission along two lines: first, 'the progressively deepening confrontation of Church and mission with theology' as indicated by the questions asked at the great international missionary conferences; and second, 'the progressive narrowing of the gulf between Church and mission' from 1900 when mission was seen as the primary responsibility of societies rather than churches up to the present integration of church and mission.

The mission conferences will be discussed from the views of Anderson (1961) and Bosch (1991) 30 years later. It is noteworthy that observing from different contexts and times they focused on different aspects in the conferences. Anderson (1961:4-7) discusses the first development along the lines of the following conference questions:

Looking back, the question may be asked about the church's view on and involvement in the society just before the First World War in 1914. At Edinburgh 1910, viewed as the first true world missionary conference, the major question was simply 'How missions?' Bosch (1991:369) describes the major concern at Edinburgh as the absence of missionary enthusiasm in the churches of the West, and the question of the relationship between church and mission was hardly touched. As previously stated, the church or mission societies viewed themselves as a triumphant army who was going to conquer the world. In his study of Bavinck, Visser (1999:102) argues that the Trinitarian basis for mission was already firmly established at Edinburgh and understood as the church's participation in the mission of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. If it is accepted that the now known

*missio Dei* was already firmly established and the church viewed itself as 'a triumphant army', it might raise some questions on the understanding of the Trinity. What was the influence of the '*sitz im leben*' of Europe on the understanding of God before the First World War?

The discussion at the Jerusalem Conference of 1928 in Israel is summarised by Anderson with the question 'Wherefore missions?' The major threats to Christian mission were seen as secularism and syncretism, and the whole question of theological presuppositions was on the table. Bosch (1991:369) shows that considerable attention was given to the relationship between the older and the younger churches and that the issues like the division of the world into two geographical areas, namely Christian and non-Christian, remained unchallenged. Listening to these statements the influence of the First World War is noticed, but it seems as if the church or mission societies still regarded itself as superior and untouched by the brokenness in the world.

At the conference in Tambaran, Madras, India (Tambaran 1938 further on), the meeting realised that they have to reconsider their roots. The question on the table was 'Whence mission?' [Mission from which origin?]. The centripetal and centrifugal character of mission was discussed (Visser 1999:110). The discussion led to the nature of revelation, its locus and authority. The Second World War cut this discussion short. In the discussion of Bosch (1991:369-370) he notes that the distinction between Christian and non-Christian countries was, in principle, abandoned. Dividing lines no longer ran between Christianity and paganism, because all people were looking for hope. The church was traumatised by the two world wars and realised at best that all of us are 'Christopagans'.<sup>8</sup> According to Bosch, it was the first time the recognition started to dawn; that church and mission belong together. I recognise the important role missionary societies played in these first mission conferences. It is clear that ecclesiology did not play a major role in the discussions, although missionary societies were closely linked to the church. It was only when the question about the origin of mission was asked that ecclesiology became part of the discussions as indicated in the conferences that followed.

At the conference in Whitby, USA (Whitby 1947 further on), the question being asked was 'Whither missions?' [Mission to what purpose?]. Mission was defined by evangelism<sup>9</sup> which must be understood as more than common witness. This led to the first step towards launching an ecumenical study on the 'The missionary obligation of the church'. The question may be asked what was or is the Good News (*euangelion*) that the church must bring into a traumatised world? After the Second World War the orientation of the church towards the world changed from church as conqueror

8. Viola and Barna (2008) argued in their book *Pagan Christianity?* that the church in the 1st century was an organic entity that expressed itself far differently from the institutional church of today.

9. Evangelism is understood as 'that dimension and activity of the church's mission which, by word and deed and in the light of the particular context, offer every person and community, everywhere, a valid opportunity to be directly challenged to a reorientation of their lives ...' (Bosch 1991:420).

of the world at Edinburgh 1910, to church in solidarity with the world at Whitby 1947.

The World Council of Churches was formed in 1948 and at the conference in Willingen, Germany (Willingen 1952 further on) it was the first time that a council of churches existed side by side with a missionary council. According to Anderson (1961:6), the question 'Why missions?' was asked at Willingen 1952. Bosch (1991:370) indicates that the shift from a church-centred mission (Tambaran 1938) to a mission centred church took place. It is here where the idea of the *missio Dei* surfaced clearly for the first time (Bosch 1991:390). This was an important religious observation (decision). The salvific work of God precedes both church and mission – the one is not subordinate to the other. The shift came from the church being the sender to the church being the one sent. It was found that more theological questions were asked after the world wars, because it was realised that all people, living in a broken world, are traumatised. The church cannot save the world, but God can. The focus moved from church planting to the realisation of God's kingdom that happens through reconciliation. The church has a doxological and maternal function (Visser 1999:110). From this understanding it is clear that the interdependent focus of mission between the world and God shifts from conquering the world towards focussing on God.

At the Ghana Assembly of 1957-1958 (Africa), the missionary enterprise engaged itself with the most radical question in its history: 'What is the Christian mission?'. The opening statement, received at this conference, was 'The Christian world mission is Christ's, not ours' (Bosch 1991:370). Bosch continues to describe Newbigin's summary of the conference as follows: first, 'the church is the mission' – we cannot talk about the one without the other; second, 'the home base is everywhere' – every Christian community is in a missionary situation; and third, 'mission in partnership' – the end of every form of guardianship of one church over another. It seems that the interdependence between *missio Dei* [the church is the mission], *missio ecclesia* [the home base is everywhere] and the *missio hominum* [mission in partnership] came together in Ghana.

The New Delhi Conference of 1961 in India was a joint conference between the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches (WCC). This evolution meant a momentous shift in the understanding of church and mission, and the WCC authorised a study project on 'The Missionary Structure of the Congregation'. At the next meeting of the WCC in Uppsala, Sweden (1967) two reports served: one from the Western European working group and one from the North-American Working Group. Bosch (1991:382) comments that both reports had little to say about the 'missionary structure of the congregation', but had a profound influence on the meeting. The Europeans identified the goal of mission as '*shalom*'<sup>10</sup> and the North Americans

10. Maybe it relates to the labour unrests in Europe.

identified it as 'humanisation'.<sup>11</sup> This almost seems in contrast to the definition of Whitebys 1947 of mission as 'evangelism' or was it a 'new humanitarian' definition of evangelism? Mission became an umbrella term; it was overtaken with health and welfare, youth projects, economic and social development, and activities of political interest groups. 'The distinction between church and world has for all intents and purposes been dropped completely' (Bosch 1991:383). Taking a scientific-critical interpretation, it is clear that the church is no longer defined by elentics and apologetics, and therefore has no hope to offer.

This almost complete the identification of the church with the world. The world's agenda would eventually lead to embarrassment and frustration of the church and the world because of the inability of the church to carry out the world's agenda. At the Uppsala (1968) and Bangkok, Thailand (Bangkok 1973 further on) conferences, the embarrassment, with particularly the local congregation, was on the table; the parish system was called immobile, self-centred and introverted. At the Bangkok 1973 conference (WCC), it was said: 'Without the salvation of the churches from their captivity in the interest of the dominating classes, races and nations there can be no saving church' (quoted by Bosch 1991:384). The conviction was that a new understanding of mission will lead to the renewal of the church. The church is there for God's mission. Uppsala and Bangkok were faced with societal evil where millions of people were faced with starvation, oppression and exploitation, and they did not try to spiritualise it. Bosch (1991:385) indicates that Hoekendijk and others who attacked the institutional church, represent a view that leads to absurdity, because there can be no talk about the church's involvement in the world if its right to exist is disputed *a priori*. During the mid-1970s the understanding grew that it is only possible to talk about a mission's responsibility towards the world and in solidarity with the world if mission is understood in ecclesial terms, elentics and apologetics. Bosch (1991:386) refers to Berkhoff '... that the church can be missionary only if its being-in-the-world is, at the same time, a being-different-from the world'.

The assembly of the WCC in Nairobi, Kenya (1975) was different – more sober, and the message took the form of a prayer for the churches. The brokenness of the church was realised. The church was still criticised, but the notion was the biblical idea of 'for judgement to begin with the household of God' (1 Pt 4:17). At Nairobi, the church was reaffirmed, as the assembly's agenda was supplied by the church rather than by the world.

In 2012 the WCC approved the statement of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME): 'Together Towards Life: Mission and evangelism in changing landscapes' (TTL) as the official statement of the WCC. The long walk to obedience and the religious decisions, made over a century in understanding mission, is clear in TTL. TTL mission is

<sup>11</sup>It is believed that the absence of Martin Luther King at the conference and the political context in North-America as well as industrialisation in Europe influenced the different goals.

Trinitarian based with a definite focus on the work of the Holy Spirit. Attention is also given to the shift in the praxis of mission. Mission is no longer defined by 'mission to the margins', but rather by 'mission from the margins' (Keum 2013:5). The following questions are addressed in TTL:

- How and where do we discern God's life-giving work that enables us to participate in God's mission today?
- From a renewed appreciation of the mission of the Spirit, how do we re-envision God's mission in a changing and diverse world today?
- How can we reclaim mission as a transformative spirituality which is life-affirming?
- As threats to the future of our planet are evident, what are their implications for our participation in God's mission?
- What are the insights for mission and evangelism – theologies, agendas and practices – of this 'shift of the centre of gravity of Christianity'?
- If there is a shift of the mission concept from 'mission to the margins' to 'mission from the margins', what then is the distinctive contribution of the people from the margins?
- What kind of missional action can the church take in the midst of economic and ecological injustices and crises on a global scale?
- How can we proclaim God's love and justice to a generation living in an individualised, secularised, and materialised world?
- What are the ecumenical convictions regarding common witnessing and practising life-giving mission in a world of many religions and cultures?
- How can the church renew herself to be missional and move forward together towards life in its fullness? (Keum 2013:4-8)

From the above questions it is clear that the church is rethinking her elentic and apologetic role as an instrument of God in relationship with society.

## Conclusion: Missiology under scrutiny

It is my conviction that different names or understandings of mission and missiology are determined by the understanding of the relation and interdependence of the *missio hominum*, *missio ecclesia* and the *missio Dei* within a specific context. It is also in relation to these three concepts that mission and missiology come under scrutiny.

First and foremost, *missio hominum*: it must be said that missiology came under scrutiny because of a theological and ecclesiological understanding of the church as superior to the world. This is clearly seen in the close link between colonialism and missiology. The church viewed itself as the sender and not the one being sent to incarnate the gospel in the world. Accordingly, this led to the unwillingness of the church to get involved in mission which, again, led to para-church mission organisations taking up the missionary task of the church. It is noteworthy that Diem in Verkuyl (1981:21-25) placed



missiology within systematic theology, especially within the dogma of the Trinity and eschatology. Missiology has everything to do with our understanding of God within a specific context.

Secondly, *missio ecclesia*: missiology comes under scrutiny because of ecclesiology. From the above mentioned conference themes it almost seems as if the church fled into the mission field to help her not to face her own (theological) problems from within the church. Missiology and mission came under scrutiny, especially in the Western world because of the ecclesiological understanding that mission is something the church does to people outside the church. At Edinburgh 1910 the church or mission organisations viewed herself or themselves as conquerors of the world. The church viewed herself as superior and not part of this world and its problems and 'withdrew' from this world in such a way that mission organisations were formed to fulfil the mission calling of the church. After the Second World War, the Western church was traumatised and struggled with its identity, asking questions about God. It was only at Willingen (1952) where mission was, as in the Bible, linked to the church. The church was not viewed as something outside the world, but stood in solidarity with the world in its brokenness. The Western church was not true to her home context, as the church only had a mission calling for the world and no mission calling in her own context. In rectifying this, the development of the missional church movement in the last three decades have been seen by, for example, Leonard Sweet, Alan Hirsch and Nelus Niemandt where the focus is more on the immediate impact of the local church or the mission intention.

Thirdly, *missio Dei*: missiology came under scrutiny in this century because of questions from the biblical science, especially New Testamentici, for example about Jesus' identity – the historical Jesus versus the proclaimed Jesus. The authority of Scripture was also questioned by people like Bultmann with his view to demythologise the New Testament so that it can be acceptable to modern people. In the middle of the 20th century, the scientific quest for the historical Jesus lost its momentum due to the arguments of Schweitzer and Bultmann that historical arguments are irrelevant to faith. The founding of the Jesus Seminar in 1985 in the USA led to several controversial statements which were followed by the 'New Reformation' theologians in South Africa.

It is indicated in this article that mission and missiology was and is indeed under scrutiny for many reasons. However, this scrutiny mainly has to do with the fact that mission and missiology is not a dead science, but an ever-living science,

because of its involvement with the relationships between histories, anthropology, context and theology in the current world. What does it mean to be obedient to the mission calling in a broken and traumatised world at a specific time? Berkhoff (1979:415) states 'that the church can be missionary only if its being-in-the-world is, at the same time, a being-different-from the world'. On our journey to obedience we need to listen again to the histories, the people, the context and the Trinitarian God.

## Acknowledgements

### Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationships which may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

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