MISSION AS FRONTIER-CROSSING AND IDENTITY FORMATION:

AN INTEGRATING CONTEXTUAL MISSIOLOGY

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Abstract

This paper introduces preliminary parameters of an integrating contextual missiology (ICM). It develops the thematic and methodological aspects of cultural, ethnic and religious frontiers and identities in mission and missiology: mission as frontier-crossing (MCF) and mission as identity formation (MIF). The themes and methods have evolved in classical, contextual and ecumenical mission orientations and praxes under one or more of the four sub-fields of missiology. ICM proposes a three-fold shift to describe and map MCF and MIF, connect the sub-fields, and allude to the integration of aspects from other disciplines. The first shift is from a 'missional theology', which tends to be all encompassing, a-contextual and pragmatic, to a missional 'theology-crossing frontiers.' The approach is grounded on, amongst others, (1) a theology of mission and (2) a theology of religion. Both sub-fields wrestle with the tension among mission Dei, MFC and MIF. The second shift is from a history of mission which duplicates themes from church history and focuses exclusively on missionary or denominational histories to (3) a missional hermeneutic as a critical mission historiography. It can be applied to delineate and analyse historical and contemporary case studies of MFC and MIF in three important phases of a historical theology of mission: 'mission history', 'World Christianity' and 'Global Christianity.' The last shift is from general theories of mission practices and pragmatic strategies of congregations to (4) theological-hermeneutical and empirical-missiological approach. It focuses on the patterns of events and narratives in mission praxes of social, ethnic and religious strangers (e.g. indigenous or migrant witnesses) in local and global contexts. New directions from this approach, an integral part of the ICM of the future, have emerged from the past and current patterns of MFC and MIF – the hubs of missional education and formation of individuals and congregations.

Key words: Contextual Missiology, Theology of Mission, Theology of Religion, Missional Hermeneutic

Introduction

Thematic and methodological surveys from the 1970s (Bosch 1974; 1982; Scherer 1985; Saayman 1998; Kritzinger 2002; 2004; Skreslet 2006) and a detailed encyclopedia of Jongeneel (1995) outline the broad mission and missiological trends. The trends have informed the four sub-fields of missiology. According to Scherer (1985), the first intercontinental survey (Myklebust 1955/1957) of mission and missiology only included 'Western Protestant Ministerial Training.' The sample of the second survey (Myklebust 1987 and 1988) was more representative and 'global and ecumenical.' But earlier descriptive studies rarely conceptualised the frontier dimension, 'the church crossing frontiers'

(Bosch 1991) within critical and constructive frameworks to map and evaluate the place and role of church, mission and missiology in different epochs and contexts. Therefore, this paper proposes mission as frontier-crossing (MFC) and mission as identity formation (MIF) as an integrating theme and method (ology) for theologies of mission and religion, mission theory, practice and history. In other words, the integrating contextual missiology (ICM) seeks to develop MFC and MIF and connect contents and methods from the sub-fields of missiology and cognate disciplines. Like any other integrating theme or metaphor, MFC and MIF in the ICM are, in the words of Van Engen, 'selected on the basis of being contextually appropriate and significant, biblically relevant and fruitful, and missionally active and transformational' (1996:23; italics added).

Intercultural theology[1] would be a fitting interpretative framework of contextual missiology to underscore these defining aspects of MFC and MIF in all the sub-fields of missiology in South Africa. It recognizes that classical, contextual and ecumenical missiologies[2] contribute to the theological, missional and methodological development of MFC and MIF. For now, this paper conceptualises MFC and MIF and briefly outlines the preliminary implications for linking the sub-fields for a comprehensive and contextual missiological education and formation, namely (1) theology of mission, (2) theology of religion, (3) history of mission, and (4) theory and practice of mission and ecumenism. The first section conceptualises frontier-crossing as its major mission theme and method. It connects frontier-crossing with a theology of mission (or 'missionary theology')[3] which is qualified by a 'missionary dimension' and a 'missionary intension.' The aim is to describe the particularity, uphold the integrity and expand proposals about the integrating function of the contextual missiology – each of the four sub-field. Section 2 introduces a two-pronged theological justification (theologies of mission and religion – sub-fields 1 and 2) for MFC and MIF in a cultural and religious pluralistic world. The third section expands on a 'missional hermeneutics of history' (Schumacher 2007) to propose a critical mission historiography for a 'history of mission.' It acts as the basis for connecting MFC and MIF to three phases of a historical theology of mission: denominational 'mission history',

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[1]   There are different approaches to intercultural theology as a form of contextual theology or missiology. As described by Ukpong, the sociological-approach is much more appropriate for missiological reflection on mission, and missional and identity formation in diverse African frontiers and contexts. It "seeks to develop a holistic inculturation theology that creates encounter of the Christian message with both the religious and the economic, political and social context, and that seeks a radical interpretation of the Christian faith using an African conceptual frame of reference [assumptions and worldviews]" (1999:108). It combines the features of the revolutionary (critical and prophetic socio-economic) and inculturation (dynamic gospel and culture) models of 'mission as contextualisation' (cf. Bosch 1991:490-496). Intercultural theology can act as an overarching framework or paradigm for missiology, ecumenics and comparative religious studies. But it 'has a broader scope' than these studies since it 'explores the inter-confessional, inter-cultural and interreligious dimensions of Christian faith' (Küster 2005:429). One should also take note of the debates about renaming missiology as intercultural theology or ecumenics in the West (Küster 2003; cf. numerous articles in missiological journals).

[2]   Arguments about whether both classical and contextual or ecumenical missiology can be taught at universities today, is beyond the scope of this paper. For a description of the themes of classical and contextual or ecumenical missiologies, see the detailed biographical categorisation of Skreslet (2006) and the issues outlined by Botha, Kritzinger and Maluleke1994**.** On the choices made at South Africa universities, follow the overviews of Saayman (1998) and Kritzinger (2002; 2004).

[3]   Bosch pleads for 'missionary theology' to emphasise the integrity and particular contributions of missiology. It complements a theology of mission to which all the theological disciplines can contribute. In order to understand the relation between church and mission and its implications, we need 'to develop a missionary theology, not just a theology of mission' (Bosch 1995:32; cf. 1991:489-98).

'World Christianity' and 'Global Christianity.'[4] The conclusion indicates the new trends for research and why *missio Dei* theologies of mission and religion need to conceptualise frontier-crossing and identity formation (under each of these phases) within both theological-hermeneutical and empirical-missiological studies.

Frontier-crossing in Mission and Missiology

Arias uses the concept of 'boundaries and frontiers' to differentiate between the 'centri-petal' and 'centrifugal' dimension of mission. As far as the latter is concerned, Christian mission from its beginning has been centrifugal mission — going from the centre to a periphery in the world. Mission cannot remain at any centre, it has to move to new boundaries and frontiers: 'to all peoples everywhere;' 'to the whole world;' 'to the whole creation;' 'to the end of the earth;' and 'to the end of time' (Arias 1982:74). Arias retains the classic understandings of frontiers as crossing geographical boundaries and borders. But he also broadens the nature, scope and locus of MFC. He correctly emphasises MIF, namely the 'centripetal' dimension – the being and identity of hospitable (welcoming) witnesses and a congregation as 'the salt of the earth, the light of the world, the city upon a hill, the leaven in the dough' (:75). Both contextual evangelical (Costas 1977:90; 1976; cf. Shenk 2001:104) and 'mainline' (Bosch 1984:14) ecumenical missiologists offer basic conceptual parameters within which to place MFC and MIF as objects of contextual missiology. Costas and Bosch conceptualise frontier-crossing at the interface of church, mission and theology in Latin America and South Africa respectively.

Reviewing the interaction of church and mission in Latin America (from 1960 to 1976), Costas uses frontier-crossing as common ground among mission, church and missiology. More specifically, frontier-crossing integrates the evangelical (invitational and trans-formational) and 'confrontational' (prophetic) dimensions of mission and missiology in the following conceptual framework:

> Since mission is a frontier-crossing event where the Gospel crosses the frontiers of the world, provoking a response to the God who has spoken redemptively in his son Jesus Christ, missiology is a discipline of the crossroads. By 'crossroads' is meant: (1) the meeting point between the sent-forth community (the Church) and the receiving community (the world); and (2) the confrontation of the forces of history – ideologies, political and economic systems, social and religious movements – in the midst of which mission takes place (Costas 1977:90).

Shenk correctly includes the late Costas as one of 'the leading proponents of missional ecclesiology.' Costas had 'advocate[d] a vision of missional ecclesiology integrally related to missional Christology' from 'the actual *social location* of the church*' in Latin America (2001:104: original italics). Costas kept the tension between the experiential and faith (transcendental) aspects of frontier-crossing. Both are necessary to understand and discern together with a community of believers what the meaning and implications of MCF and MIF are for them and the world. Thereby frontier-crossing and theological reflections go together.

Referring specifically to action and reflection in Africa, Bosch insists that 'missionary theology…deals with life and death issues' – concrete and existential realities (1974:15). It is a 'new [contextual] approach,' characterised by a 'basic openness towards others.' The

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[4]   Sanneh differentiates between 'World Christianity' and 'Global Christianity'. The former refers to 'the movement of Christianity as it takes form and shape in societies that previously were not Christian.' The latter pertains to 'the faithful replication of Christian norms and patterns developed in Europe' (2003:22).

approach considers a series of tensions which result from living 'in-between' denomina-tional, religious and cultural orientations and identities (Bosch 1982:6; 10). Bosch aptly summarises the frontier-crossing nature and task of missiology, namely 'Missiology is, after all, theology-crossing-frontiers' (1975:30). In a critical reflection on the work of Bosch, Mofokeng asserts that 'a contextual mission theology as a critical reflection has to be developed *in* these places [e.g. 'churches', 'townships', city streets', 'football stadiums', 'wine and maize fields'] "by the Christian community (across racial, gender, colour and denominational lines)…'" (1990:177; original italics).

The summary of Bosch (1982; 1991) will suffice to describe the nature and role of missiology in theological education, and serve as background to MFC and MIF. Bosch (1991:490-491) critiques the now well-known categorisation and approaches to missiology in theological education. First, the discipline of missiology becomes a dimension of another theological discipline – being incorporated as a sub-discipline into, for example, of Prac-tical Theology (PT) or Church History (CH). Secondly, as an independent discipline, missiology attempts to duplicate the sub-fields (both contents and methodologies) of other theological disciplines. Lastly, the major mission(ary) dimensions (from each of the sub-fields) of missiology are integrated into the other disciplines. Bosch concludes that this integrationist approach seems more adequate. But its 'integration strategy' (1982:19) is a subtle form of marginalisation; and thus also problematic. Due to particular interests and workloads of academics, the integrative strategy undermines the intersection of church, mission and missiology in and between the sub-fields. The three models impact inter-disciplinary teaching, research, and partnerships with churches and mission organizations negatively. With MFC and MIF as integrating theme, the ICM therefore develops three constructive proposals, which are rephrased here, about the distinctive nature and integrity of missiology as 'theology-crossing frontiers.'

The ICM understood here as a borderland discipline, "has in the first place a critical function and operates as a leaven in theology – sometimes a gadfly" (Bosch 1982:27). It 'acts as a gadfly in the house of theology, creating unrest and resisting complacency…' (Bosch 1991:496). The other two functions of the ICM, which are based on the 'the complementary, yet independent' dimensions of Gensichen (1971 in Bosch 1982:31) per-tain to the particularity of MFC and MIF in missiology, and to the theological dimensions shared by all theological disciplines. First of all, it is informed by the 'missionary dimensions', for example it integrates the *mission Dei* theologies and missional eccle-siologies, of other disciplines (Bosch 1991:494; 496-497). Secondly, the ICM stresses the 'missionary intension' as it accompanies and interacts with the churches crossing-frontiers and their identity formation in the pluralistic worlds in all continents. Discussing the implication of these two as models of formation, Kritzinger asserts that "Both the missio-nary *dimension* (the integrating principle) and missionary *intention* (the explicit study of the theology and praxis of mission) are important in the training of pastors" (Kritzinger 2002:128).

The constructive part of this paper suggests how these two dimensions or models can determine the development of MFC and MIF in each of the four sub-fields of the ICM as 'theology-crossing-frontiers' in pluralistic contexts. It hints at the contributions of two sub-fields, theologies of mission and religion, to the debates about missional theology and missional ecclesiology which have intensified during the past fifteen to twenty years.

Frontier-crossing and Identity Formation in Theologies
of Mission and Religion

The theology of mission addresses, amongst others, the problem of the institutionalisation of the church and the 'Southern turn of Christianity.' On the other hand, the theology of religion seeks to explore new trends in the ethnic and religious frontier-crossing ('mission-in-reverse') from the 'South' to the 'North' and the contributions to religious plurality and, possibly, the 'dechristianization of the West' (1991). Hence, the contextual theology draws from theologies of mission and religion to reflect on MFC and MIF in local and global contexts. This requires different theological-hermeneutical and epistemological approaches to missional theology and missional ecclesiology. Bosch (1989; 1991) and others (Gort 1996; Hoedemaker 1999; Sundermeier 2003; Hock 2006) have explored and applied these approaches to *missio* Dei, MFC and MIF. Bosch (1961) developed the concepts and the rational for a 'missionary theology' and applied it to MFC and MIF in the Dutch Reformed Church in the 1960s.

Gort (1996:68), an ecumenical missiologist, points out the limitations of broad definitions and general contours of mission theology and contextual practices or strategies. He suggests a responsible epistemological approach which is based on contextualisation. It deals with the tensions between reality in and beyond this world, working with the dialectic of 'theory and practice' (praxis). The approach ensures that:

> Adequate missiological reflection will be reflection on normative biblical witness *to* and the historical continuation *of* the dynamic mediated relation between heaven and earth, whereby the multiplicity of human need is met by the plenitude of divine mercy. (1996:68, original italics)

In two essays on missiology and epistemology in *To Stake a Claim* (1999), Hoedemaker also critiques the short-comings of broad and a-contextual missional ecclessiologies. He concludes that in its response to the fundamental realities, predicaments and outcomes of frontier-crossing in pluralistic contexts, an adequate missional ecclesiology should focus on mutual conversion and transformation, and self knowledge amidst the concrete conditions and places. But this is impossible, asserts Hoedemaker, when a missional ecclesiology lumps together every theological theme or mission and church activities under 'missional' and *mission Dei* concepts. Similarly, developing these concepts into a generic *mission Dei* theology to deduce principles for church praxes also affects a missional ecclesiology. Bosch (1975:11) aptly captures this historical problem of the integrationist approach to mission and missiology: namely, "'we share Bishop Stephen Neill's conviction that 'when everything is mission [or 'missional'], then nothing is mission [or 'missional'], we would also have to say: 'When all ['missional'] theology is missiology, then nothing is missiology.'"

Hoedemaker presents a contextual missional ecclesiology which stresses the self understanding and identity of community of believers. He emphasizes their existential and transcendental experiences of cultural and religious frontiers. He also rejects the incorporationist and integrationist approaches to the conceptualisation of *missio Dei* theology and ecclesiology in missiology and other disciplines. He states,

> A missional ecclesiology is not a doctrine of the church in which everything is subordinated to a mandate for a missionary activity which supposedly precedes, supersedes, and encompasses all community building. Neither does it refer to a theology that places everything that the church is and does under the umbrella concept of *mission Dei*. It is an effort to reconsider the theological self-definition of the church in the perspective of an emphasized eschatology and in that way to help concrete communities of Christians to

relate their identity to their experience of the predicament of [e.g. of cultural, ethnic and religious] pluralism (1999:227; original italics).

Communities witness under concrete historical and current conditions which shape their missional ecclesiologies – their motifs, outreaches and identity formation. Bosch construes this as part of the paradigmatic ('Christendom') problem which has impacted on how the biblical motif of discipleship has informed communities and the modern missionary movement (Bosch 1989; cf. 1961). Three constant motifs in the mission of Christ had motivated and guided the early church, but:

> The modern missionary period, spawned in part by the colonial expansion of the West and profoundly influenced by the Enlightenment, appears to have been different in several respects. For one thing, the unity of the threefold manifestation of Jesus' mission broke asunder. The empowerment of the weak, the healing of the sick, and the saving of the lost did not always go hand in hand (1989:18; cf.:3; 1991:98-108).

As response the problems of institutionalisation of the church and religious pluralism, Bosch situates 'costly discipleship' and its three motifs within a future 'missionary theology' of frontier-crossing. It is:

> a missionary theology [which] will be a theology of *costly discipleship*, which includes the elements of suffering and servanthood. On the whole, we in the west have lost that kind of theology ever since the year 313 AD when an imperial edict declared Christianity as a legitimate religion. Since then the church in the West has, in some way or another, been linked to the dominant power base. This has plagued even our missionary outreach to the third world (1991:493, italics in text).

In order to subvert 'Christendom' in the West or some of its manifestations in African Christianity, discipleship as frontier-crossing should emulate the encounters of Christ with the social and religious strangers on the margins. The mission motifs of Christ, namely 'serving, healing, and reconciling a divided, wounded humanity', (Bosch 1991:494) can inspire and sustain costly discipleship as a theological motif and mode of MFC and MIF. The next section illustrates the application of a *historical theology of mission* as a critical reflection on MFC and MIF in the context of a 'Christendom' paradigm.

In *Jesus, die lydende Messias, en ons sendingmotief (*'Jesus, the Suffering Messiah, and our Mission motif'; 1961)[5] Bosch applies a theology of mission ('missionary ecclesiology') to the Dutch Reformed Church 'crossing inner boundaries', in South Africa, between 1954 and 1976.[6] It is a survey of classical and contextual theological dimensions of frontier-crossing. The exclusive political and ethnic boundaries which had been drawn in the 1940s and 1950 caused suffering and led to violence in the townships. The Christians "suffer and observe how their church buildings are burnt down" as a result of the "floods of unrest which broke loose in South Africa" (:35l; my translation). Bosch challenges the theological and ideological reductionism of mission to the crossing of inner boundaries – the crossing of the ethnic (White-Black) frontier. Instead of the motif of the suffering Christ, the

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[5]   Although Bosch had completed the manuscript in March/April 1960, just after the Sharpville massacre, it was published in 1961.

[6]   As outlined in the next section, the major parts of *Being Missionary-Being Human* (Saayman 2007) sketch the turning points in the social history of the Dutch Reform mission according to three notions of frontier-crossing: (1) crossing geographical borders into other African countries: (2) 'crossing inner boundaries' amidst the major socio-political changes and the challenges of racial and ethnic 'borders' in South Africa; (3) crossing borders 'To the Ends of the Earth' as a possible response to crises in the self-understanding and identity of Afrikaner Christian communities since 1990.

ideological and pragmatic interest of keeping the identity of the 'Volk' intact and securing the destiny of the 'Volk' had largely determined the mission motifs for crossing-frontiers. Hence communities in Townships have become suspicious of both the missionaries and the Black (African) Reformed Christians. The reductionism isolated missionaries and other witnesses and their congregations from the suffering of others in the townships. For the majority of witnesses and congregations in the Afrikaner communities, the destiny of the 'Volk' as mission motif has superseded the motifs of the suffering Christ and the suffering of others. On the other hand, although the biblical motif of suffering is sound and has political and social consequences, these consequences cannot be the motif for crossing-frontiers. Secondly, the institutionalisation of 'Volk Christianity' ('Christendom') eclipsed the suffering of Christ as motif for frontier-crossing and identifying with the suffering of others.

With regard to a theology of religion, religious plurality compounds the problems of 'Christendom' and the institutional churches in the West and Africa. It compels Christians to reconsider their ideas, attitudes and communication of the Gospel to religious 'others.' Bosch states:

> Because of the dechristianization of the West and the multiple migrations of people of many faiths we now live in a religious pluralist world, in which Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, and adherents of many traditional religions rub shoulders with each other daily. This proximity of others has forced Christians to reexamine their traditional stereotypical views about those faiths (Bosch 1991:3).

In a different sense, this is also the subject of missiology as theology crossing-religious-frontiers in Africa. It is a missiology which aims to reexamine the motivations and practice of interreligious encounters and dialogues between Christians and adherents of African Traditional Religions and Islam. The three religions have shared 'the same 'African traditional culture' and coexisted peacefully despite the recurring conflicts in some countries (Nkulu-N'Sengha 1996:533). Nevertheless, the salvation of both the social (the poor) and religious (both the poor and the rich) 'others' remains one of the most difficult challenges of 'costly discipleship' as crossing the ethnic and religious frontiers.

After a survey of the importance and a discussion on comprehensive nature of *mission Dei* and witness since Willingen, Pachuau (2000) proposes that crossing religious frontiers and a 'theology of religions' should be the integrating theme in missiology. As it complements the main aim of frontier-crossing in a theology of mission, Hoedemaker correctly builds on a theology of religion to define missiology. Missiology "focuses on the investigation of conditions and possibilities for the communication of the gospel in the context of cultural and religious plurality and secularization, and on the effort to provide theological justification for such communication" (1999:208). The more adequate *mission Dei* theologies and missional ecclesiologies[7] in and for pluralistic contexts redefine this frontier

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7   *Transforming Mission* (1991) portrays missiological paradigms within which to place, amongst others, the crossing of ethnic and religious frontiers, for example Luke-Acts. The model of 'Luke-Acts: Practising Forgiveness and Solidarity with the Poor' (Bosch 1991:84-122) deduces perspectives from theologies of mission and religion to addresses the missional and pastoral identity crises of being a Jewish or Gentile Christian community. According to Bosch, crossing geographical frontiers in Luke-Acts serves as a vehicle for crossing ethnic and religious frontiers. Similarly, Scherer states that mission as frontier-crossing was redefined theologically and missiologically during the early post-Willingen 1952 *missio Dei* theology. That is, "The particularity of mission in the ecumenical age consisted not so much in the crossing of geographical frontiers as in *crossing the frontier between faith in Christ as Lord and unbelief*" (Scherer 1993:197; original italics).

from theological and religious perspectives. To communicate the Gospel in the contexts of religious plurality in Africa and the West, Hock (2006) puts *missio Dei* and the identity construction within the theology of religion and history of religions. In a critical response to the 'translatability' theory – African Christian indigenous agency and identity formation – of Sanneh,[8] he asserts, "The prospect of analyzing processes of the construction of religious identities in an inter-religious African setting is more important" than the "hunting for 'similarities'" (2006:274).

The theology of religion of Sundermeier indicates what this could imply for a contextual missiology. It provides hints for *mission Dei,* Christian freedom and religious identity formation as justification for mission in religious pluralistic contexts. Sundermeier builds on recent anthropological discussions of personhood and identity formation as a process. But he argues that in the process, the mystery of *mission Dei* and freedom qualifies the identity of Christian mission and four key parameters. First, God is the source of mission and takes the initiative to encounter human beings. As a response to God's mission, loving God and the neighbour grows in the space of freedom. Secondly, the church-crossing-frontiers should recognise and appreciate the freedom, dignity and friendship of social and religious 'others.' Thirdly, the discussion of adherents of other religions in the contexts of friendship and freedom constitute *missio Dei* and the theologies of mission and religion. Fourthly, the relationship and dialogues with 'others' become, as understood in this paper, some resources for the missional formation from outside-in (2003:561-270; 272-273).

As the overall preferred framework for a historical mission theology (theologies and histories of mission and religion) of frontier-crossing in Africa**,** intercultural theology and hermeneutics[9] therefore includes the redefinitions and approaches to *missio* Dei, MFC and MIF as part of 'World Christianity' and 'Global Christianity.' The next section outlines a 'missional hermeneutics of history' as a critical mission historiography in the historical theology of mission.

'**Missional Hermeneutics of History' as Critical Mission Historiography**

'Missional hermeneutics of history' (Schumacher 1997), a critical mission historiography, delineates the socio-cultural, religious, economical and political complexities of frontier-crossing and identity formation: particularity, exclusion ('immunization'), 'subjugation and exploitation', 'enslavement,' violence against 'others' and genocide on the one hand; intercultural and interreligious dialogue, inclusion, humanisation, healing, reconciliation and emancipation on the other (Bosch 1982:28; 1991:98-108;494-495: Hoedemaker *et al* (1993). It is precisely because of these dual (negative and positive) consequences of mission history that Schreiter (2002; 1997) proposes reconciliation as a 'new paradigm' for a historical mission theology. The 'missional hermeneutics' (Schumacher 2007), critical mission historiography (Hoedemaker *et al* 1993), and crossing-frontiers in the social history of mission (Saayman 2007) can provide the parameters for this emerging paradigm. The approaches show how the 'missionary dimension' and, particularly, the 'missionary

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8   Hock (2006) criticises the 'translatability' theory of Sanneh for neglecting the 'processes of both intra-religious [e.g. within Christianity or Islam] and inter-religious [e.g. between Christianity and Islam] negotiation' in Africa. Nevertheless, the ICM is interested in different forms of frontier-crossing in and through both 'World Christianity' and 'Global Christianity.'

9   In fact, referring to some of the same theological and political institutions in Africa, Küster (2005) has described the frontier themes and processes from within intercultural theology as the overarching framework for missiology (theology of mission and theology of religion), ecumenism and comparative religion (theology of religion*s*).

intention' of theologies of mission and religion can guide the incorporation of different issues and modes of frontier-crossing into frameworks. They clarify the nature and role of the historical mission theology in the church and missiology.

Historical mission theology is a sub-field of contextual missiology which investigates the crossing of cultural, ethnic and religious frontiers with regard to denominational 'mission history' (Saayman 2007), 'World Christianity' and 'Global Christianity.' These histories are three dominant phases in the:

> The history of Christian mission [which] extends from apostolic times to the present. Missiological investigations of this history will seek to discover what can be known about the growth of the Christian community in specific times and places, about the social [particularly the cultural and religious] factors that seem to have shaped this complex set of stories about the developments of innovative forms and expressions of Christian faith and community in diverse settings, and about the institutions, groups and individuals that have contributed most significantly to these outcomes (Skreslet 2006:193).

The 'introduction of the missionary dimension' (Bosch 1982:28) or 'missional dimension' Schumacher (2007) underscores 'the complexities of crossing' frontiers and identity formation in the three phases of the history of mission.

With this dimension the contextual missiology avoids both the dangers of subordinating 'mission history' under church history and duplicating themes of church history in 'mission history.' Secondly, it takes *missio Dei* theology or historical theology of mission beyond the mere denominational 'history of missions' (the mission activities of churches). With the 'missionary intention' of the history of mission, Schumacher describes "The whole history of the church… [as] a story of missional engagement with ever-changing cultures in which the gospel has been propagated" (2007:432). He suggests a 'missional hermeneutics of history' as 'an intentional cross-cultural discipline.' It aims at the formation of attitudes (…spirituality) and the cultivation of skills in 'cross-cultural' communication and engage-ment on the frontiers. The 'missionary intention' also informs a suggestion that crossing the boundary between 'belief' and 'unbelief' should determine what missiology can contribute to church history or how 'mission history' could be approached, namely:

> What is called for, as we think about integrating as sense of mission throughout our curriculum, is not so much offering (or requiring) more courses or more assignments that overtly fall under the exotic category of 'mission history.' Rather, our curriculum goal should be to cultivate a missional hermeneutic of history. By this I mean a frame of historical reference which embraces the ongoing encounter of the Christian faith with unbelief and with rival religions, along with the integration of new believers from such backgrounds into the church, as central to the whole sweep of church history… (:432).

The critical mission historiography of Hoedemaker *et al* (1993), which parallels the missional hermeneutic of history, casts light on the consequences and implications of MFC and MIF from within Western (missionary) Christianity, 'World Christianity', for example African Christianity,[10] and 'Global Christianity.' In a critique of the mission praxes in the classical (modern) missionary and ecumenical movements,[11] Hoedemaker *et al* discuss the

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[10] The 'genre of African historiography', as interpreted and applied by Kalu is relevant here. It 'emphasizes the religious experiences, practices, and initiatives of Africans as the starting point of the story of the encounter with Christianity' (2003:250).

[11] Mission in the missionary movement, with Edinburgh 1910 as the boundary marker and the missionary theology of Leslie Newbigin as example, represents the classical ecumenical missiology. The mission of the

methodological implications of the geographical expansion and transformation of Western Christianity. The authors analyse the themes and theologies informing the old and new mission historiographies.

In contrast to the older mission historiography,[12] the new critical mission historiography interprets the modern missionary movements, including denominational mission histories, as *the first experiment in serious intercultural and interreligious communication. Thereby, it became an essential factor in relativising the territorial identification of Christendom and the Western world.* Ultimately, it turned out to be one of the most important presuppositions of the 20th century mission praxes of the ecumenical movement. Hence, they maintain that the following themes should inform a mission historiography of frontier-crossing in the missionary movement as *the* foundation of ecumenical movement: the "coming of age or maturation and pluralisation of 'Christendom' during the first phase of the western missionary movement; the emergence of the 'non-Western Christendom', that is 'World Christianity' as a form of religious and cultural globalisation; and the challenges of interreligious dialogue, and poverty and wealth" (1991:47-48; my translation).

When Bosch was consolidating his two decades of missionary theology in the 1980s, the theme of 'mission as globalisation' was introduced to reflect on the 'Southern' turn of Christianity.[13] In *Globalization in Theological Education* (1993) educators uses 'cross-cultural' and interreligious case studies to explore the issues and implications for the church and education. Roozen *et al* (1993) poses the main question which is still relevant to missional education and formation in the church and missiological education:

> What does it mean to minister faithfully and effectively within the new reality of interdependence and globalization? How does one prepare leaders for building up a church able and willing to respond to the challenge of global witness and service? (:4, italics in text).

In four of the six chapters, the standard themes[14] in mission are still relevant to the missional hermeneutic as a critical mission historiography and the integrating contextual missiology. It is imperative to develop and apply the diversity of cultural, ethnic and religious frontiers and identity issues and questions to each of the four sub-fields of

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ecumenical movement, starting from Amsterdam 1948 and expressed in the ecumenical theology of Conrad Raiser, exemplifies contextual ecumenical mission praxes (Hoedemaker 1993:80-87).

12   It underestimates or ignores the socio-economic, political, cultural and religious frontier-crossing dimensions of both classical and contextual or ecumenical mission praxes. Hoedemaker *et al* (1993:47-48) reject the reductionism of mission and the history of the missionary movement. They argue that everything about the movement cannot be summarized under the concept of evangelization and mission as a marginal phenomenon of Western colonial expansion.

13   During the late 1980s/early 1990s, historians of mission and 'World Christianity', and other theological educators introduced and experimented with local and global case studies of the crossing-frontiers. As part of the process of reframing missiology, Dana Robert (1989) and Thomas Norman (1990) explored with the issues under the theme of mission and globalisation. Identifying the conversation partners was the key theme: was it the church, communities and/or institutions of higher education? Thomas proposed that missiologists should welcome a new paradigm in theological education. It should involve 'a shift…from parochialism to globalization'; 'from maintenance to missional ministries'; 'from clericalism to equipping the people of God for shared ministries' (1990:22).

14   Some of the key themes are 'Evangelism' as Globalization (Paul Hiebert), 'Ecumenical/Interfaith Dialogue' (Jone Smith), 'Cross-Cultural Dialogue' (Robert Schreiter) and 'Justice' (Evans and Evans). As a response to the main question (i.e., who are the conversation partners?), they propose that church leaders and educators should grapple with the themes from within particular theological, historical and practical dimensions of local and global mission. Referring to the various frontiers in local and global contexts, George (2000:192) concludes: "The frontiers obviously are permeable so that a two-way traffic is possible that results in being mutually missionized and transformed."

missiology. The rest of this paper alludes to what might be possible and the new directions for the proposed contextual missiology.

Although the frontier-themes is not fully conceptualised, *Mission is Crossing Frontiers: Essays in honour of Bongani A Mazibuko* (2003) explores a spectrum of classical, contextual and ecumenical issues relevant to all the sub-fields of missiology.[15] On the other hand, some of these issues in this volume are relevant to the certain periods outlined in *Being Missionary-Being Human* (Saayman 2007). Saayman sketches the turning points in the social history of the Dutch Reform mission according four waves (1779-1834; 1867-1939; 1954-1976; 1990-). The last three waves are interpreted in terms of 'crossing boundaries.' Mission as crossing geographical borders into other African countries charac-terises the second wave. Thereafter, **'**crossing inner boundaries' highlights 'mission out-reaches' in the third wave, namely in contexts major socio-political changes and the challenges of racial and ethnic 'borders' in South Africa. Mission-crossing borders 'To the Ends of the Earth' deals with the crises of self-understanding and identity in Afrikaner Christian communities since 1990, namely how 'we are viewed by others' which 'depends very heavily on how we view *ourselves*' in a democratic South Africa (:122). Saayman argues that some of the church members have welcomed this new phase of mission-crossing international borders precisely to avoid confronting the identity crises and crossing racial and ethnic frontiers in South Africa. The themes of the third and fourth waves provide glimpses into historical socio-religious factors which still impact on MFC and MIF, whether or not denominations journey together in mission and services[16] (cf. Bosch 1961). This can be addressed by situating the mission and service of a particular church in the decades of these two waves (1950s-) and relating it to other churches and communities.

Recent theological-hermeneutical and empirical-missiological studies have built on orientations[17] from all the sub-fields of missiology to MFC and MIF in 'mission history,' 'World Christianity' and "Global Christianity' from the perspective of 'mission as globali-sation.' They indicate the value of the social sciences for a contextual missiology which endeavours to explore the most recent directions.

Conclusion – New Research Directions for the Integrating Contextual Missiology

The research of Prill (2007) and Ponce (2007), which can be grouped under the new directions for the disciplinary group Practical Theology and Missiology at the University of Stellenbosch, illustrate the significance of current orientations and approaches to *missio Dei* theology, frontier-crossing and identity formation in local and global contexts. This concluding remarks hint at some of the new thematic and methodological directions for a contextual missiology of the future.

First, all the sub-fields of missiology provide the contents and methods for studying frontiers and 'grass-roots' missional identity formation within local and global contexts. In *Global Mission on our Doorstep: Forced Migration and the Future of the Church* Prill (2007) demonstrates the theoretical and empirical value for a theology of mission which

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[15] For example, see the essay of Haney 2003, 'Congregational Ministry in Frontier Crossing: The Challenge of Religious Pluralism.'

[16] I n fact 'denominational partnership, frontier-crossing and identity formation' would be a fitting theme to describe the nature of interactions between congregations of the Dutch Reformed Church and the Uniting reformed Church in Southern Africa.

[17] For a well constructed mixed-methodological approach which combines these orientations in missiology, see Faix, Tobias 2007 and the bibliography of the article. Also compare the approaches of Prill (2007) and Ponce 2007.

differentiates between the missionary dimension and intension to study mission, migration and frontier-crossing. It allows for the conceptualisation of thematic and methodological perspectives from other theological disciplines and the social sciences. Hence his empirical-missiology of migration and strangerhood (strangers, refugees, asylum seekers, etc.) is part of a new direction in research on mission as globalisation which includes the 'Southern' shift of Christianity, 'World Christianity' and 'Global Christianity.'

Secondly, the contextual Practical Theological study of Ponce (2007) applied theological-hermeneutical and empirical methodologies to develop a 'grounded theory' on the suffering Christ and 'costly discipleship' in the life-narrative of crossing-frontiers, for example the Filipino migrant workers in the Netherlands (Ponce 2007). This quantitative (survey of attitudes) and qualitative (theological-hermeneutical and life-narrative) study investigated the experience, spirituality, belief and theological models of suffering. The fact that the "belief in Jesus, the Holy Spirit and suffering can inspire people [migrant witnesses] to nurture values of self-esteem, solitude, justice and the moral norms of autonomy, respect and human rights [and dignity]" (Prill 2007:170) is significant for mission as the church-crossing local and global frontiers today.

Thirdly, the studies of Prill and Ponce show that the classical and contextual themes remain relevant for a contextual missiology which attempts to understand why and how Christian communities introduce and sustain mission praxes for and from the frontiers or margins today. In addition to comments on 'mission in reverse' and partnerships with Christian migrants, Ponce insists on a 'paradigm of mutuality' which have the possibility of influencing the self-understandings and identities of Christians and their communities positively. In this paradigm "Christian migrants from the South become agents of change; they become agents of mission in a postmodern, post-Christian West" (2007:94). One of the main challenges is being a welcoming and prophetic community on the one hand, and the willingness to be a witness to one's own culture on the other. But how can Christians welcome, receive from and respond to the presence and witness of migrant Christians as social, ethnic and religious strangers in Britain (Prill 2007) and South Africa? This is the acid test for the missional education and formation of individuals and communities for witness and service today (cf. Roozen *et al* (1993:4).

Finally, the research of Prill and Ponce is relevant for a contextual missiology which 'acts as gadfly in the house of theology', accompanies the church and explores the actualisation of past and present mission issues and themes in the contexts of frontier-crossing and identity formation. It contributes to current theoretical-hermeneutical and empirical research on the 'translatability of the gospel' and the prospects of both 'mission in reverse' (from the 'South to the North') and reciprocal mission ('South' and 'North'; 'South' and 'South') as Pilipino or African migrant witnesses cross frontiers and adopt multiple identities, for the sake of survival, on the 'highways' and in foreign lands (Prill 2007:37-38).

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