

MISSIOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION

JNK Mugambi¹
Centre for Contextual Hermeneutics
University of Stellenbosch

Abstract

The objective of this paper is fourfold. Firstly, it presents a critical review of the contexts which have shaped missiological research in the twentieth century, with particular reference to Africa. Secondly, it highlights the presuppositions which have shaped research in missiology in the various historical contexts in Africa, and the logical outcome arising from those presuppositions. Thirdly, the paper offers some suggestions on approaches that might improve the quality of missiological research in the context of 'globalization'. Fourthly, the paper proposes possibilities for constructive contribution to the debate on 'globalization', from the perspective of missiological research.

1. Introduction

For clarity, it is important to make a distinction between missiology (theological study of mission) and mission history. Missiology is akin to dogmatics and systematics, while mission history is an aspect of the history of churches (their demographic and geographical expansion or decline, from one period to another). From a missiological perspective, mission is an integral part of the definition of the Church. A Christian social institution which bears the name 'church' without a missionary vocation, is defective. Conversely, a 'Christian' organization or individual claiming to be in mission, serves an ideological rather than a theological function when operating without ecclesial identity.² Since the colonial period, missionary agencies and individuals have 'invaded' Africa with the objective of extending their 'civilization' and 'modernization' over the peoples they have conquered. Their work has been an extension the secular incorporation of Africa into the North Atlantic world. Thus the missionary enterprise, by seeking to extend various brands of Christendom into Africa, has been the most 'globalizing' agent amongst all Euro-American initiatives on the continent.

Theologically, it matters much, whether the numerical spread of Christianity is credited to a missionary, or to God. If the ideological view-point is presupposed, the achievements of missionary individuals and agencies take precedence over the power of the Holy Spirit to inspire converts. Missionaries compete for the African soul, and boast of the number of converts they have won. Missionary success is often measured in terms of the numerical growth of 'daughter churches' in Africa. Many African converts have rejected this view of mission, and maintained that they became Christians not *because* of what missionaries have done, but *in spite* of it. Research conducted on the rise and growth of African independent churches invariably confirms this point.³

1. Dr JNK Mugambi, Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies, University of Nairobi, Kenya, was Associate Professor in the Department of Religion at the University of Stellenbosch during 1999.

2. JNK Mugambi, *The Biblical Basis for Evangelization*, Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 7ff.

3. See David B Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa*, London: Oxford University Press, 1968.

Missiological research can be conducted from the view-point of the missionary, or from that of the convert. The results of research will be determined by the view-point that is presupposed. If the research presupposes a missionary's view-point, Africans will be portrayed as 'depraved savages' in need of rescue from the dungeons of hell. The objective of mission, from this viewpoint, is to 'convert' the 'pagans', 'heathens' and 'primitives' into 'civilized', 'modern', 'Christians'.⁴ The word 'Christian' in this context has an ideological, rather than a theological, connotation. The missionary takes the role of 'master', 'leader', 'lord'. The culture of the missionary is presumed to be 'superior' and 'Christian', while that of the convert is presumed to be 'barbaric' and 'primal'. Modernity is portrayed as a positive process, despite its destruction on the cultures it overruns. Mission, from this view-point, becomes a project of 'civilization'. In East Africa, the name for a missionary during the colonial period was *Bwana* - Lord, because the missionary church hierarchy was in the same social ranks as the colonial administrators and settlers, who were called *Bwana* - In the colonial system, the expatriate Church hierarchy was the official representative of African interests in government. This was an ironical situation.

It is also possible to conduct missiological research from the view-point of converts.⁵ From this vantage-point, the missionary is portrayed as an intruder into African society, who is rejected as an 'invader' or received as a 'guest', depending on the relationships established. The choice of perspective is arbitrary. Africans would prefer the view-point which respects their attitudes and responses, rather than one that denigrates their humanity.⁶ This point has been strongly highlighted by Robert Chambers in his recent book, *Whose reality Counts?: Putting the First Last*, published in 1997. He writes:

*All powerful uppers think they know
What's right and real for those below;
At least each upper so believes:
But all are wrong; all power deceives.*

*So we can ask:
How much is the reality we perceive
Our own creation as uppers?
What are the realities of lowers
And how can they be expressed?*

*Whose knowledge counts?
Whose values?
Whose criteria and preferences?
Whose appraisal, analysis and planning?
Whose action?
Whose monitoring and evaluation?
Whose learning?
Whose empowerment?*

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- 4 See, for example, William Howells, *The Heathens: Primitive Man and His Religions*, New York: Doubleday, 1962.
- 5 See for example, Louise Pirouet, *Black Evangelists: The Spread of Christianity in Uganda, 1891-1914*, London: Rex Collings, 1978.
- 6 See, for example, Basil Davidson, *The African Genius: An Introduction to African Social and Cultural History*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969.

*Whose reality counts?
Ours or theirs?*⁷

In most parts of tropical Africa, Christianity is hardly a century old.⁸ Its introduction into the interior of this continent coincided with the project of colonization, and in many instances the missionary enterprise has been hardly distinguishable from the colonial enterprise. This observation is now commonplace, and there is no need for belabouring it. However, there are subtle details worth highlighting in order to refine the generalizations that often overshadow the particularities of specific efforts of missionary agencies and individuals from various denominations and countries. Among contemporary African scholars, Lamin Sanneh⁹ and Kwame Bediako¹⁰ are renowned for their insightful caution against generalized lampooning of the missionary enterprise. At the same time, the critical caricatures of missionaries by African creative writers - such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o,¹¹ Okot p'Bitek,¹² Mongo Beti¹³ and Chinua Achebe¹⁴ - cannot be easily dismissed, based as they are on real encounters, however exaggerated, between European and North American Missionaries on the one hand, and African prospective converts, on the other.

In the epistles, St. Paul teaches that in order to establish a local church it is not necessary for a missionary to make himself indispensable by overstaying in the community to which he has introduced the Gospel. As soon as possible, the local community of converts should take responsibility for the running of the church. The missionary should move on, or return home as soon as the local community has become conscious of its responsibility. It is true that the ecclesial community resulting from this approach to mission will not be a replica of the church from which the missionary comes. However, this is as it should be, because the church need not be uniform in cultural expression and social identity.

One of the shortcomings of the modern missionary enterprise has been its pervasive tendency to establish 'daughter churches' in the mission fields. This tendency has resulted in paternalism on the part of missionaries, and resentment or dependency on the part of the younger churches. Resentment has led to church independency, while dependency has led to ecclesial communities that are culturally alienated from their social environment. Missiological research in the twenty-first century is challenged to highlight those initiatives which have constructively endeavoured to make the local churches responsive to the cultural and religious heritage of the communities to which the converts belong.

The European reformation helped to indigenize the Church in western and northern Europe. Concomitantly, the European renaissance provided the ideological foundation for Europe's ascendancy in world trade and politics. In the same way that European churches cultivated their national identities in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the twenty-first century should become the time when African churches forge their African identity -

7. Robert Chambers, *Whose Reality Counts: Putting the First Last*, London: Intermediate Technology Development Group, 1997, pp. 100-101.

8. The term 'tropical Africa' is preferable to 'Sub-Sahara Africa'. The former is descriptive, while the latter is emotive.

9. Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991.

10. Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*, Edinburgh University Press, 1995.

11. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *The River Between*, London: Heinemann, 1964.

12. Okot p'Bitek, *Song of Lawino*, Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967.

13. Mongo Beti, *Poor Christ of Bomba*, London: Heinemann, 1965.

14. Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, London: Heinemann, 1963.

theologically, structurally, and liturgically. Without that cultural reconstruction, African Christianity will remain only a veneer, without a deep impact on the values of individuals and communities in Africa.

It is in the interest of the modern missionary enterprise to facilitate this reconstruction, by creating an environment conducive for African Christian scholars to articulate their perception of the Christian faith as Africans, without inhibition and censorship. The European Reformation provided such an environment. In retrospect, Euro-American Christianity ought to be an asset, rather than a hindrance, in the development of self-governing, self-propagating and self-supporting local churches in Africa and elsewhere. Since Henry Venn articulated this three-pronged goal of mission, it has been honoured more in default than in compliance. It was for this reason that Roland Allen wrote his book *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?*¹⁵

The dependence and indebtedness which Africa suffered at the end of the twentieth century is the consequence of paternalistic relationships which the modern missionary agencies nurtured on behalf of, or in obedience to, the foreign policies of their respective metropolitan governments. Can Christian missionary agencies in the twenty-first century provide new models of partnership and fraternity which restore the self-esteem of African Christians and churches? If there was commitment towards such a goal, ways and means would be found to achieve it.¹⁶

2. The Hegelian dialectic and missiological research

Friedrich Hegel is credited with having provided the philosophical framework within which contemporary occidental thought - including theology - is organized. According to Hegel, history flows in time through a dialectical process with the sequence of Thesis > Antithesis > Synthesis = New Thesis > Antithesis > Synthesis ... This framework is embedded in most occidental theory and practice.¹⁷ In cross-cultural relationships, occidental dialectical thinking presupposes that the 'Thesis' is provided by the occident, which is 'perfect' while the invaded cultures are the 'Antithesis' and 'imperfect'. Missionary relations with the people in the mission-field are shaped by this dialectic, which also dominates cross-cultural relations in other sectors of life. In practice, this dialectical relationship can be sketched within the context of Africa, as follows:

EUROPE - MISSIONARY	AFRICA - PROSPECTIVE CONVERT
Degree of perfection 100%	Degree of Perfection 0%
Christian	Pagan, Heathen
Theistic	Animistic
Holy	Profane
Angels	Evil Spirits
Saints	Ancestors
White	Black
Civilized	Primitive
Decent	Barbaric

15. Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* London: World Dominion Press, 1912; Second Edition, London: Lutterworth Press, 1968.

16. For an evaluation of Christian Aid in the twentieth century see Michael Taylor, *Not Angels But Agencies*, London: SCM, 1995.

17. Colin Brown, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*, London: Tyndale Press, 1968, p. 121.

History	Prehistory
Affluent	Destitute
Democracy	Anarchy
Illegitimacy	Legitimacy
National	Tribal

The ideological goal of mission, according to this dialectic, is to bring Africans from 'imperfection' to 'perfection', and convert them from 'animism' to 'Christianity'.¹⁸ At the economic level, the missionary task has conventionally been understood to consist in rescuing the destitute Africans from perishing. The prospective convert is expected to have no opinions of his own. His mind is a 'clean slate' upon which anything can be 'written'. It is for this reason that Africa has been viewed as a battleground for competing religions and ideologies. Even denominations of the same religion consider it normal to compete for souls in the same locality, despite the confusion such competition causes in the local community.

Most occidental missiological research has not been free from these presuppositions and prejudices. Despite H. Richard Niebuhr's famous analysis of the diverse possible relationships between Christianity and culture, most missiological research has been shaped by the dialectical view that occidental culture is the standard against which all other cultures must be evaluated.¹⁹ In his book *The Meaning of Revelation*, Niebuhr wrote:

We can speak of revelation only in connection with our own history, without affirming or denying its reality in the history of other communities into whose inner life we cannot penetrate without abandoning ourselves and our community.²⁰

There are, of course, a few exceptions to this general picture. Notable among them is Eugene Nida, who observed:

During some ten years as Secretary for Translations of the American Bible Society, I have become increasingly conscious of the tragic mistakes in cultural orientation which not only express themselves directly and indirectly in translations of the Scriptures but in the general pattern of missionary work.²¹

The 'tragic mistakes' to which Nida was referring, had to do with the stereotyping and attitudes of condescendence that have characterized the encounter of North Atlantic missionaries with the peoples of other regions.

In his book *Transforming Mission*,²² David Bosch cites Johannes Warneck,²³ who in 1909 identified two 'supernatural' and four 'natural' foundations of Christian mission. Both the 'supernatural' and the 'natural' foundations are formulated in such a way as to be consistent with the Hegelian dialectic. The 'supernatural' foundations refer to the scriptural authority for the missionary vocation - 'the great commission'; and to the monotheistic emphasis of the Christian faith. The implication is that other religions do not have such 'supernatural' foundations. The 'natural' foundations are similarly formulated:

18. For a critique of this evolutionist theory of African Religion see JS Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, Second Edition, London: Heinemann, 1990.

19. H Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951. 1941.

20. H Richard Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation*, p. 82, cited by Macquarrie in *Twentieth Century Religious Thought*, London: SCM, 1963, p. 348.

21. Eugene Nida, *Customs and Cultures: Anthropology for Christian Missions*, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954, p. xi.

22. David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1991, pp. 4-5.

23. Johannes Warneck, *The Living Christ and Dying Heathenism*, New York: Flemming H Revell, 1909.

- a) The absoluteness and superiority of the Christian religion when compared with others;
- b) the accessibility and adaptability of Christianity to all peoples and conditions;
- c) the superior achievements of the Christian mission on the 'mission fields'; and
- d) the fact that Christianity has, in past and present, shown itself to be stronger than all other religions.²⁴

Bosch further cites J Verkuyl²⁵ and H Dürr,²⁶ who distinguished between 'pure' and 'impure' motives for Christian mission. This distinction is, again along the Hegelian Dialectic. The 'pure' motives would correspond with Warneck's 'supernatural' foundations. Among the 'impure' motives are the following:

- a) the imperialist motive (turning 'natives' into docile subjects of colonial authorities);
- b) the cultural motive (mission as the transfer of the missionary's 'superior' culture);
- c) the romantic motive (the desire to go to far-away and exotic countries and peoples); and
- d) the motive of ecclesiastical colonialism (the urge to export one's own confession and church order to other territories).²⁷

Bosch also cites Walter Freytag²⁸ and J Verkuyl, referring to four other missionary motives, which are based on dialectical dichotomies:

- a) the motive of conversion, which emphasizes the value of personal decision and commitment - but tends to narrow the reign of God spiritually and individualistically to the sum total of saved souls;
- b) the eschatological motive, which fixes people's eyes on the reign of God as a future reality but, in its eagerness to hasten the irruption of that reign, has no interest in the exigencies of this life;
- c) the motive of *plantatio ecclesiae* (church planting), which stresses the need for the gathering of a community of the committed but is inclined to identify the church with the kingdom of God; and
- d) the philanthropic motive, through which the church is challenged to seek justice in the world but which easily equates God's reign with an improved society.²⁹

According to Bosch, the modern Christian missionary enterprise is in crisis as a consequence of basing Christian mission on a dialectical and dichotomous relationship between missionaries and their prospective converts:

Whilst the zeal for mission and the self-sacrificing dedication evidenced in these circles must be applauded, one cannot help wondering whether they are really rendering a valid and long-term solution. Our forbears may perhaps be pardoned for not having been aware of the fact that they were facing a crisis. Present generations, however, can hardly be excused for their lack of awareness.³⁰

The cultural and intellectual arrogance embedded in the missionary enterprise has made it difficult for missionaries to learn from the peoples they go to evangelize. This arrogance

24. Bosch, op. cit., p. 5

25. J Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978.

26. H Dürr, Die Reinigung der Missionsmotive, *Evangelisches Missions-Magazin*, Vol. 95, 1951, pp. 2-10.

27. *ibid.*

28. Walter Freytag, *Reden und Aufsätze*, Vol. II, Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1961.

29. *ibid.*

30. *ibid.*, p. 7.

is inconsistent with the humility of Jesus Christ, and with the constructive appreciation of St. Paul. The centre of gravity of Christianity has shifted from Europe and North America to Africa and South America. This shift challenges the Christians of Europe and North America to attune themselves to the reverberations of Christianity in other parts of the world in the third millennium.

3. Missionary historiography

Missionary historiography in Africa has been dominated by the perspectives of the North Atlantic sending agencies, rather than those of the receiving African communities. To the readers in the North Atlantic, the reports of successful missionary work would be expected to generate more patronage and support. Thus Euro-American missionary historiography has been co-extensive with the secular penetration of Europe and North America into Africa. The dissemination of these reports among African students (as textbooks) would inevitably create the impression that Euro-American missionary agencies are indispensable to the evangelization of Africa. This impression is only partially correct, because the bulk of evangelization has been achieved by Africans themselves, among their own communities and as missionaries to other areas on the continent.

Unfortunately, in popular usage the word 'missionary' has been reserved for European and North American individuals working in Africa, and has not normally been applied to Africans working in areas and countries other than their own. This usage has given Christian mission in Africa a racial tint, with all the prejudices and stereotypes that go with caricatures. Africans going out of their own cultures to proclaim the Gospel have been called anything but missionaries - 'catechists', 'evangelists', 'lay leaders' 'teachers' and so on. What are the qualifications of a missionary, other than going out into the world to preach the Gospel? There might be a subtle reason for the distinction which missionary historiography has made between 'foreign missionaries' and 'African evangelists'. Here is an example. An English missionary, Rev. E.W. Thompson, in a description of the Methodist Church of the Gold Coast, submitted for the International Missionary Council Conference at Tambaram, India in 1938, commented:

The African of the Gold coast, like other West Africans, has always been ready to profess his new religion and eager to spread it among others. Wherever he goes he seeks out the company of those of his own denomination, builds a church and starts Christian worship in the mode familiar and dear to him. The beginning of the Gold Coast mission was typical. In the year 1834, a young African, De Graft by name, climbed aboard the sailing brig *Governor Maclean* at Dixcove and asked the somewhat astonished captain to bring back with him in his cargo on his next voyage a packet of English Bibles. De Graft was one of a little company of young Africans at Cape Coast who had learned English and had formed a fellowship for the study of the Christian scriptures. Captain Potter was a Christian. On his arrival in London he pled the cause of the Gold Coast before the missionary committee, and returned not only with his Bibles but also with the pioneer missionary, Dunwell.³¹

Was Dunwell the pioneer Methodist 'missionary' in Cape coast? Thompson thought so, but De Graft and his colleagues would have hardly concurred, if they were alive and ready to respond to that report. A recently published book on the history of missions in Sudan, is

31. Rev. EW Thompson, 'The Methodist Church of the Gold Coast', in *The Growing Church: Tambaram Series, Vol. II*, London: Oxford University Press, 1939, pp. 4-5. The whole volume is written from the perspective of foreign missionaries, not from that of African converts.

premised on this same approach. Considering the negative media coverage of that country in the 1990s, the book does not help to restore the broken humanity of these suffering people. Rather, it reinforces the stereotypes without indicating that a large number of the trained South Sudanese live in exile.³²

If missionary historiography views African 'evangelists' only as agents for extending the pioneering initiative of the foreign missionary, then indeed the credit would be claimed by the missionary. However, if Christian mission is a response to the challenge of Jesus Christ to proclaim God's salvation to all humankind, then the Holy Spirit takes the credit for any converts won in the enterprise. Missionaries and their African counterparts then become partners and colleagues in proclaiming the Gospel. Roland Allen highlighted these two conceptions of mission early in the twentieth century, in his book *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* He observed that the modern missionary enterprise had deviated from the Pauline model, which considered mission as God's business, and deteriorated to a project of self-glorification through competitive and often antagonistic missionary societies.³³

Missionary triumphalism has tended to obscure mission as a *divine initiative*, and to exaggerate the missionary accomplishment in winning African converts, as if Africans were docile receptacles of the Christian message as packaged by the missionary. The unfortunate consequence of this imperialistic attitude has been the rise of thousands of African 'independent' churches, challenging the missionary claims to authority as initiators of African conversions to Christianity. Almost invariably, these churches have been premised on the belief that it is God (through the Holy Spirit) who saves, not the missionary. The missionary is credited with introducing his brand of Christianity to Africa, and for facilitating translation of the Bible into African languages. These worthy missionary labours, however, are not a guarantee for conversion. The Holy Spirit inspires the converts to respond positively to the Gospel.³⁴ The role of the missionary as 'messenger' is accepted as ambiguous, since it involves both acculturation and evangelization. Independent churches reject the claim of the missionary to 'win' African souls for Christ. This is the prerogative of the Holy Spirit.

The gospel according to St. Mark presents the public ministry of Jesus from the perspectives of those on whom He had a dramatic and immediate impact. Every individual and group He encountered was changed by the contact. The twelve disciples followed Him immediately they were invited to follow Him (Mark 1: 14-20; 3: 13-19). Huge crowds followed Him wherever He went (Mark 3: 7-11). Even evil spirits obeyed Him (Mark 1: 27-28). Although the other canonical gospels do not portray as much sense of urgency as the gospel according to St. Mark, all of them concur that the Gospel was 'Good News' to the people whom Jesus encountered in His public ministry. How has the story of the introduction of Christianity into tropical Africa been told? Who has told it? With what objectives? To whom has it been told? In what language is it been told? Is Christianity as presented in Africa by the modern missionary enterprise 'Good News'? These are important questions for missiological research.

32. F Pierli, MT Ratti and AC Wheeler, editors, *Gateway to the Heart of Africa: Missionary Pioneers in Sudan*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 1998.

33. Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* London: World Dominion Press, 1912; Second Edition, London: Lutterworth Press, 1968.

34. Many a devoted missionary has spent many years in Africa, preaching, studying an African language and translating the Bible, but won few or no converts. Others have spent less time and effort, and many Africans have become Christians. It is impossible to predict the outcome of missionary labours in terms of the number of converts.

During a workshop for Nordic doctoral candidates of missiology at Stavanger, Norway, in August 1998, these questions featured in a particularly striking way, especially when the candidates were challenged to explain how they perceived their research projects in relation to the 'objects' and 'objectives' of their study. Many of the doctoral proposals tended to focus on the work of North Atlantic missionaries, or on the impressions of such missionaries concerning their own encounter with African culture. Unfortunately, the attitude of cultural and religious superiority has tended to hinder appreciation of African culture, even among the most altruistic of missionaries. Self-criticism is hardly expressed, and self-congratulation is plentiful in missionary historiography. Even when a missionary fails to win converts after prolonged efforts, the blame is thrust on the hard-hearted Africans, who refuse to accept the Good news of salvation. It hardly ever occurs to the chroniclers that the Christian message may have been inadequately presented, or even distorted in the process of missionary outreach and encounter.

4. Denominational historiography

Most missiological research in the twentieth century has tended to be particularistic and specialized. This particularistic character can be explained partly by the norms of epistemological enquiry in the North Atlantic during the twentieth century. Under the influence of empirical science research in humanities has shifted further and further away from generalization towards particularization. Medieval theology was universalistic and deductive. Catholicism was not just an ecclesial concept - it was a world-view. The European Renaissance, which facilitated the liberation of philosophy from theology, remained bound within the deductive mode of reasoning - presupposing universal truths which had to be discerned in particular contexts and cases. Modern empirical science, and the technology based on it, could not be entirely liberated from deductive thought. The paradox of modern empirical science is that its axioms are deductively presupposed, while at the same time they are inductively verified. This paradox has been operative in the modern missionary enterprise, and also in the missiological research which has documented that enterprise. The Gospel has universal validity, but every missionary agency and individual has claimed to 'go out into the world and make disciples of every creature' (Matt. 19: 28).

The proliferation of competing denominations in tropical Africa has puzzled many African critics of the missionary enterprise. The reasons for competition and rivalry have been more political and economic, rather than doctrinal and ecclesial. Thus the modern missionary enterprise, far from facilitating social cohesion in tropical Africa, has been one of the most divisive factors in the in the twentieth century. The missionary scramble and partition of tropical Africa has followed the same pattern as the political Scramble and Partition of the Africa, as enshrined in the Berlin Treaty of 1885. In the same way that the Berlin Conference arbitrarily partitioned Africa between the European powers, so did the modern missionary enterprise arbitrarily partition Africa amongst themselves. Ecumenism in African Christianity has been constrained by this background. During the twentieth century, the situation has been compounded by the emergence of new denominations and sects in Europe and North America, which entered the competition for African souls in very much the same way as traders had competed for African slaves in an earlier period.

The scandal of division within Christianity has done more harm to the missionary enterprise, than any external threats to Christian mission. If Christian mission is aimed at proclaiming the kingdom of God in the name of Jesus Christ, why do Christian missionaries compete among themselves in the mission-field? If the proliferation of denominations and agencies is justifiable for missionaries and missionary agencies, does it

not follow logically that such proliferation is also justifiable for the local churches resulting from the missionary enterprise? Such has been the reasoning behind the proliferation of 'independent' churches in Africa. Liberalization in the missionary enterprise has produced a 'liberalized Christianity', more by default than by design.

The denominational self-centredness introduced through the modern missionary enterprise has done, and continues to do much more damage to Africa's social cohesion than ethnic identity. It is tragic that in the name of Christianity and modernity missionaries would be ready to divide their African converts along denominational lines, which often cut across families, households, clans and nations, with disastrous consequences. If Christianity has come to Africa so that we might have life in abundance, how is it that the modern missionary enterprise is such a divisive social factor in tropical Africa? How is it that the pauperization of the continent continues despite the 'christianization' of Africa's peoples? African Christians often find it difficult to understand and appreciate the cultural, and ideological foundations of the competing Euro-American missionary agencies which scramble for African souls.

While African church leaders have no difficulty in identifying, simultaneously, with evangelicalism, Pentecostalism and ecumenism, their missionary sponsors would expect these threads of Christian witness to be kept separate. At the same time, the declared 'evangelical' objectives often contradict the actual impact of missionary activity. In the end, it turns out that many missionary agencies, beyond their stated objective of winning their own converts in the 'mission-field', tend to further the foreign policies of their respective metropolitan governments, by dispensing 'aid' and propagating the national ideologies of the 'donors'. The linkage between Church and State in the dispensing of 'aid' and facilitating 'development' in the mission-field has led to the affirmation that in Africa there is hardly any difference between a missionary and any other foreigner.

Interestingly, the Church Union negotiations and Bilateral Agreements between various denominations in Europe and North America seem to have little or no significance and relevance among the 'daughter churches' in contemporary Africa. Thus ecumenism in Europe and North America rarely finds its way into local African church life and thought.

5. Missiological research in the context of Africa's colonization

Throughout the colonial period, most of the ethnographic reports sent to Europe and North America from Africa were written by Christian missionaries who worked and travelled in direct contact with the African 'natives'. Their objective in writing these reports was mainly to record their daily, monthly and annual activities and encounters with the 'heathens' they had come to convert. These reports, in turn, would serve as the basis for mobilizing financial, material and moral support at home. If the reports were exaggerated, it was because such exaggeration might move the readers in Europe and North America to give more support. The famous and influential German philosopher Georg Friedrich von Hegel, in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* could write that Africans had neither a culture, nor a religion worthy of note. According to Hegel:

The characteristic feature of the Negroes (Africans) is that their consciousness has not yet reached an awareness of any substantial objectivity - for example, of God or the law - in which the will of man could participate and in which he could become aware of his own being. The African, in his undifferentiated and concentrated unity, has not yet succeeded in making this distinction between himself as an individual and his

universality, so that he knows nothing of an absolute being which is other and higher than his own self.³⁵

This prejudiced attitude persisted throughout the colonial period, and still influences missiological research in the North Atlantic institutions today. There is a large body of research which concurs with the view that ancient Africa has a cultural and religious heritage with much older documentation than the Hellenic intellectual tradition which is the cradle of modern Euro-American thought. For example, some of the theorems of Pythagoras were adopted from Egyptian geometry. Henry Olela, a Kenyan philosopher, has observed:

Because of their mathematical knowledge, the ancient Africans of Sais were able to calculate the height of a pyramid as well as the distance of a ship in the ocean from a given point on land. But in the history of philosophy written by Eastern philosophers, these two discoveries have been falsely attributed to Thales. Euclid adopted the ancient African method of determining the distance of a ship at sea (Euclidean Theorem 1.26).³⁶

Olela has shown that many of the philosophical ideas attributed to the early Greek thinkers were in fact adopted from ancient Egyptian thought whose cultural foundation was in Upper Egypt. On Aristotle, for example, he writes:

He (Aristotle) went to Egypt with Alexander the Great. He had access to priestly material in the Temples and he freely acquired books from the Library at Alexandria. He adopted the Egyptian notion of the unmoved mover. Creative process developed from disorder (chaos) to order. This process was performed through mind and word. . . or pure intelligence. He also adopted the doctrine of the soul as discussed in the Book of the Dead.³⁷

Martin Bernal in his book *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, has highlighted the great indebtedness of the ancient Greek civilization to ancient Egypt, and shown that in European scholarship between 1785 and 1985 there has been a systematic destruction of the evidence of this indebtedness, in order to confirm the myth of African and Semitic cultural inferiority in relation to Europe. Commenting on his research project, Bernal writes:

These volumes (*Black Athena*) are concerned with two models of Greek history: one viewing Greece as essentially European or Aryan, and the other seeing it as Levantine, on the periphery of the Egyptian and Semitic cultural area. I call them the 'Aryan' and the 'Ancient' models. The 'Ancient Model' was the conventional view among the Greeks in classical and Hellenistic ages. According to it, Greek culture had arisen as the result of colonization, around 1500 BC, by Egyptians and Phoenicians who had civilized the native inhabitants. Furthermore, Greeks had continued to borrow heavily from Near Eastern cultures.

35. GWF von Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975; revised edition, 1989, p.177. Cited by DA Masolo, *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*, Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1995, p. 4. (First English translation was issued in 1861 and reprinted in New York by Dover, in 1956).

36. Henry Olela, 'The African Foundations of Greek Philosophy', in RA Wright, ed., *African Philosophy: An Introduction*, Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1984, pp. 77-92. See also his book, *An Introduction to the History of Philosophy: From Ancient Africa to Ancient Greece*, Atlanta, Georgia: Select Publishing Company, 1980.

37. Henry Olela, op. cit.

Most people are surprised to learn that the Aryan Model, which most of us have been brought up to believe, developed only during the first half of the 19th century. In its earlier 'Broad' form, the new model denied the truth of the Egyptian settlements and questioned those of the Phoenicians. What I call the 'Extreme' Aryan Model, which flourished during the twin peaks of anti-Semitism in the 1890s and again in the 1920s and 30s, denied even the Phoenician cultural influence. According to the Aryan Model, there had been an invasion from the north - unreported in ancient tradition - which had overwhelmed the local 'Aegean' or 'Pre-Hellenic' culture. Greek civilization is seen as the result of the mixture of the Indo-European-speaking Hellenes and their indigenous subjects. It is from the construction of this Aryan Model that I call this volume 'The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785-1985'.³⁸

During the second half of the twentieth century, similar methods of negative stereotyping have been used to denigrate Africa, through photographs in newspapers and video clippings on television. Dramatic examples are the horrors of the famine in Ethiopia in the 1970s; the famine in Karamoja, Uganda in 1980; the civil war in Somalia in 1990; the Rwanda civil war in 1994; and the famine in south Sudan in 1998. Television pictures appeal to emotions much more effectively than words in newspapers and reports. Today it is hard to read a positive story about Africa in a European or North American newspaper, or watch a positive news item on any of the television channels in those countries. Even when African scholars make such positive stories available, the stories will be appropriately edited to reflect the pervasive stereotype of Africa.³⁹

During the colonial period, ethnographic dispatches served a similar purpose as news reports do today. Even now, some North Atlantic church agencies use the same kind of adverse publicity in raising funds for their relief work in Africa. The worst of Africa is portrayed, in the hope that donors could give more money out of pity and sympathy, as this missionary hymn echoes:

*Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;
Weep o'er the erring one, lift up the fallen,
Tell them of Jesus, the Mighty to save.*

*Rescue the perishing,
Care for the dying,
Jesus is merciful,
Jesus will save.*

*Though they are slighting Him, still he is waiting,
Waiting the penitent child to receive:
Plead with them earnestly, plead with them gently;
He will forgive if they only believe.*

*Rescue the perishing
Care for the dying,
Jesus is merciful
Jesus will save.*

38. Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, Vol. I *The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785-1985*, New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1987, pp. 1-2. See also, DA Masolo, op. cit., pp. 20ff.

39. The author has direct experience of this distortion and stereotyping through the media reporting of his interviews in both Europe and North America.

*Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter,
Feelings lie buried that grace can restore,
Touched by a loving hand, wakened by kindness,
Chords that were broken will vibrate once more.*

*Rescue the perishing,
Care for the dying,
Jesus is merciful.
Jesus will save.*

*Rescue the perishing, duty demands it;
Stretch for thy labour the Lord will provide:
Back to the narrow way patiently win them;
Tell the poor wanderers a Saviour has died.*

*Rescue the perishing,
Care for the dying,
Jesus is merciful
Jesus will save.⁴⁰*

The ideological impact of such negative publicity is tremendous. Africa is portrayed as the continent where nothing positive can be found, where nothing good happens, and where only chaos thrives. This portrayal has not changed since the colonial period. Neither the mass media, nor missionary ethnography, seems to be interested in changing the negative stereotypes about Africa. A typical example of such reporting is the famous work by Placide Tempels, who wrote about *Bantu Philosophy*, in 1945:

Before we set about teaching these Africans our system of philosophical thought, let us try to master theirs. Without philosophical insight, ethnology is mere folklore. . . We do not claim, of course, that the Bantu are capable of formulating a philosophical treatise, complete with an adequate vocabulary. It is we who will be able to tell them, in precise terms, what their inmost concept of being is. They will recognize themselves in our words and will acquiesce, saying, 'You understand us: you now know us completely: you 'know' in the way we 'know'.'⁴¹

Pervasively, missionaries became the representatives and spokesmen for Africans to the colonial and imperial authorities. It was assumed that Africans were incapable of speaking for themselves! Jeff Hynes comments that during the colonial period, the missionary enterprise had much more in common with the colonial enterprise than with the quest of Africans for liberation:

Before examining politics and religion in Africa in the contemporary period, an analysis of the colonial era is undertaken in order to place the independence decades in proper perspective. To this end, I argue...that the roots of the contemporary relationship between religion and politics in Africa can be traced back to the period of European colonialism, which lasted from about 1880 to about 1960. During this time there was, by and large, a clear affinity between Christian missionaries and colonial administrators; this did not rest solely on their shared 'Christian-ness', as it were, but was also bolstered by their shared 'European-ness'. That is to say, even though Christian officials and missionaries may, on occasion, have been unhappy with certain

40. *Golden Bells Hymn Book*, No. 433. Scripture Union, Nairobi.

41. Placide Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy*, Paris: Presence Africaine, 1959, p. 36.

aspects of colonial policy - such as European settlers' confiscation of African land in the 'white highlands' of Kenya - there were generally many more points of agreement than disagreement between religious and secular colonial personnel. Both parties, religious secular were, after all, pursuing the same aim: to bring the benefits of European civilization (as they saw it), including the Christian God, to as many Africans as possible. During the early years of the twentieth century, however, many Africans left the mission churches to join the growing number of African independent Churches because they were seen as more in tune with Africans' religious needs than the hierarchical European-dominated mission churches.⁴²

This paternalism still prevails, as illustrated by the existence of a large cohort of 'experts' on Africa, which continues to perpetuate old prejudices and stereotypes, as if nothing at all has changed in the continent during the past five hundred years since Vasco da Gama sailed around the Cape of Good Hope, in 1498. Africans are still reported to be incapable of knowing what is good for themselves - 'experts' from abroad have to serve as middlemen and spokesmen (and spokeswoman, of course). The mellow voice of African scholarship is often drowned by the din and clamour of these 'experts', backed as they are with grants and project portfolios from the governments and research institutes of the metropolis.

One wing of this cohort of expatriate expertise takes the shape of secularist mission, channeled through secular non-governmental organizations. The creed of this wing is that religion (Christian or otherwise) is irrelevant for Africa's incorporation into the global market. The most important objective is to convert Africans into consumers of manufactured goods, and producers of raw materials. The African cultural heritage is despised as a hindrance to the 'modernization' of the continent.⁴³ Modernization is considered a positive value, despite its ambiguous consequences in North Atlantic societies.⁴⁴

The other wing is exemplified by the revival of aggressive missionary campaigns in Africa, targeted specifically against Islam and African traditional religion. The Bible is presented as the answer to Africa's quest for meaning in the context of rapid social change. Biblical literalism is taken for granted, even though the doctrinal foundation of literal biblical hermeneutics is not critically scrutinized. Biblical 'literalism' is contrasted with biblical 'liberalism', as if the former were a virtue, and the latter, a vice. Paul Gifford has documented the initiatives of this wing in several of his publications.⁴⁵ An example of this kind of 'evangelism' is Reinhard Bonnke, from North Germany. During the 1980s and 1990s he mounted heavily funded and widely advertised rallies in various African capitals, preaching the depravity of Africans and the worthlessness of their cultural and religious heritage. Gifford reports:

... since everything before one's commitment to Jesus is evil, African culture has nothing good in it. 'Witchcraft' is the only category with which Bonnke can treat of it. There is no understanding of the varieties of, say, traditional healers. All institutions through which Africans have been humanized over the centuries are despised and rejected. Thus Bonnke described the results of a crusade in the interior of Zaire: 'Satanic structures as old as the hills were smashed'.⁴⁶

42. Jeff Haynes, *Religion and Politics in Africa*, Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1996, p. 2.

43. See for example, Goran Hyden, *No Shortcuts to Progress*, Nairobi: Heinemann, 1983.

44. For more discussion on this point see Robert Chambers, *op. cit.*

45. Paul Gifford, *The Religious Right in South Africa*, Harare: Baobab Books, 1988; ed., *New Dimensions in African Christianity*, Nairobi: AACC, 1992.

46. Paul Gifford, 'Reinhard Bonnke's Mission to Africa, and His 1991 Nairobi Crusade', in *New Dimensions in African Christianity*, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

The fact that evangelists like Bonnke receive huge funds to stage such campaigns, indicates that the old Pharisaic attitude to Christian mission is still prevalent in some quarters in Europe and North America, despite the alleged claims of 'secularization' and secularism in the North Atlantic societies. The Pharisaic stance in missiology presupposes that Christendom, as inherited from medieval Europe, is somehow destined for the 'christianization' of the rest of the world, which will otherwise be condemned to hell unless it is 'won' to Christ. This stance is antipodal to the Pauline approach, which is constructively critical of cultural pluralism, rather than naively condescending.

6. Missiological research in the context of decolonization

It is difficult to find, within the modern missionary enterprise, any official proclamations which supported African nationalist struggles for self-determination. Conversely, most missionary agencies identified themselves directly with the colonial enterprise. It is true that a few missionaries, in their individual capacity, sympathized with the plight of Africans under colonial regimes. Such sympathy was manifested in calculated support for African campaigns against colonial domination. In all such cases, however, the missionaries involved had to be cautious and avoid being charged for subversion of the colonial state, and therefore, of the empire. They also had to dissociate their personal views from the official policy of the agencies or churches for which they worked.⁴⁷ The list is small, and would include such names as JH Oldham,⁴⁸ Bengt Sundkler,⁴⁹ Trevor Huddleston,⁵⁰ and Thomas Beetham.⁵¹ The co-operation between the missionary enterprise and the colonial state is well documented.⁵²

Most missionaries believed, sincerely, that colonization was for the 'good' of Africans, in the same way that the Church, as an institution, justified the slave trade until slave labour became unprofitable after industrialization of most production processes, especially in agriculture and mining.⁵³ The Clapham Group which pioneered the campaign for abolition of the slave trade in England, led by William Wilberforce, did not represent the official view of the Church in Britain. Rather, the group was opposed by the clerical hierarchy, because of challenging an industry of which the Church of England was a major beneficiary at that time.⁵⁴ The campaign for abolition of the slave trade succeeded on economic and political grounds, not on moral and religious ones. The campaign against *Apartheid* followed a similar pattern. Only in the late 1980s, after three centuries of oppression, was racism condemned as sin and heresy.

The doctrinal condemnation of racism was the result of pressure from the victims of racism, not from the empathy of its beneficiaries. Even then, evangelical campaigns continued to be organized in Africa, justifying the oppressive systems which imperialism and colonialism had sustained for decades. In August 1975, Carl McIntyre convened an international evangelical conference under the banner of the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC) in Nairobi, during which he proclaimed that the Unilateral

47. For a discussion of this point see Gerald West, *Biblical hermeneutics of Liberation*, Second Edition, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995.

48. JH Oldham, *Christianity and the Race Problem*, London: SCM, 1926.

49. Bengt Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, Oxford University Press, 1948.

50. Trevor Huddleston, *Naught for Your Comfort*, London: SPCK, 1957.

51. Thomas Beetham, *Christianity and the New Africa*, London: Pall Mall, 1967.

52. See for example, Roland Oliver, *The Missionary Factor in East Africa*, London: Longman, 1965; AJ Temu, *British Protestant Missions*, London: Longman, 1972.

53. On this point see Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, London: Andre Deutsch, 1964.

54. See Garth Lean, *God's Politician: Wilberforce and His Struggle*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1981.

Declaration of Independence (UDI) by the settlers in Southern Rhodesia was justified, because that regime was preserving a 'Christian civilization' in Africa. He criticized African governments which, through the Organization of African Unity, had condemned the UDI under Ian Smith. The evangelist was reprimanded for publicly abusing the hospitality of Kenyans. On national television, he arrogantly demanded an apology, and was subsequently asked to leave the country.⁵⁵

In 1985, South African theologians and church leaders issued the *Kairos Document*, which challenged the international community to make a choice, between supporting injustice and combating it.⁵⁶ It was a confessional statement of faith which declared that it is impossible to be neutral whenever and wherever injustice is perpetrated. Neutrality in such a situation amounts to the support of injustice. What is the implication of the *Kairos Document* for missiological research?

Is it possible for a researcher to be 'neutral' when documenting the response of the victims of oppression? In view of the fact that the attitudes and orientations of individual human beings are shaped by the norms in which they are socialized, it is impossible to be ideologically neutral. However, it is possible to be empathetic - to put oneself in the situation of others, to feel with them, and suffer with them. There is a sharp distinction between *empathy* and *sympathy*. Most missiological research in the context of Africa's decolonization was at worst an instrument of the colonial system, and at best sympathetic to the victims of colonialism. Sympathy and pity, however, cannot improve the lot of the oppressed and exploited. What Africa needs is *empathy*, accompanied by retribution.

7. Missiological research in the context of the *Cold War*

In a recent book on 'globalization', Titus Alexander uses the following words to define ideology:

Ideology may be defined as the beliefs and assumptions of a particular society or social group. Ideology is not just an abstract set of ideas, but basic principles embedded in rituals, institutions and patterns of existence. It is a collective - and selective - memory, retaining ideas and assumptions for interpreting experience, answering fundamental questions, formulating aspirations and informing decisions. It enables people to act without going back to first principles. It creates a shared sense of meaning and purpose within which people develop their own ideas, goals and measures of achievement. Above all, it unites people in times of crisis.⁵⁷

From this perspective of 'ideology', the modern missionary enterprise has been integral to the ideology of imperial conquest which characterized the nations of Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Berlin Conference of 1884-85, and the treaty which emerged from it, signified the imperial ideology of that period. The Berlin Treaty divided Africa between the powerful nations of Europe without any reference or consultation to Africans themselves.

Likewise, the missionary *scramble* and *partition* of Africa was just as arbitrary. Christian missionaries sought protection from their respective governments not merely because they needed security, but because they shared in the general view of their

55. The author was in Nairobi at that time, and the incident was widely reported in the daily press.

56. *The Kairos Document: A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa*, London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1985.

57. Titus Alexander, *Unravelling Global Apartheid: An Overview of World Politics*, Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1996, p. 230.

contemporary compatriots, that Africa was a place to be claimed by the respective European powers, for strategic, economic, political and religious objectives. One hundred years later, when the cold war made imperialism dysfunctional owing to super-power wrestling, the ideological stalemate forced the antagonists to make a deal amongst themselves. The collapse of the Soviet Union left one super-power as the claimant to global influence. Globalization has to be understood in this historical context, and missiological research is entangled in this ideological history.

Philip Mason, in the Burroughs Lectures which he delivered at the University of Leeds in 1956, commented:

My subject is Christianity and Race. There are plenty of problems in the world today which have to do with Race; a great question-mark hangs over Africa and it is hard to guess whether in the end any of the colonial nations will keep the goodwill of Africa, and whether, if the present antagonism with Russia continues, Africa will end on our side or theirs.⁵⁸

Twenty years later, in 1977, a tract was published which portrayed Africa as a spiritual battlefield, in which the 'good' forces of capitalism were competing with the 'evil' forces of communism, over the souls of Africans. Its author, Brother Andrew, had spent many years smuggling Bibles across the 'Iron Curtain'. In the introductory chapter, he wrote:

Africa has been a violent and dangerous land since the first explorers pushed into what was then called the Dark continent. But the Africa of today is not just a remote, strange place where men of primitive cultures wage their own private wars. It has become much more than that. It has become the scene of the most important struggle on the face of the globe - a battle between the forces of God and the forces of evil. The battle for Africa is on; and, lit or not, every one of us will emerge individually from that battle as winner or loser. I am going to urge you in this book to join in the battle for Africa, but admittedly not for any lofty motive. We who sit in comfortable lands thousands of miles away from Africa must get involved in the fight for our own survival's sake. What does Africa have to do with us? Everything! A Revolution has come to Africa, and if it overwhelms that continent, it will move on to a closer battleground. Its ultimate target is you and every person you love and hold dear. Its ultimate goal is the eradication of all that is good and beautiful. We will be its victor, or every one of us will eventually be its victim.⁵⁹

The tract emphasized that the super-powers were 'locked in a fight, with Africa as the prize'. This was true politically, economically, militarily, and racially. The most important aspect of this battle, according to the author, was the spiritual one, in which Africa must be 'won' for Christ and for the West. Mission, according to this view, must serve the ideological purpose of winning Africans to the side of capitalism. Harold Lindsell is much more explicit in defending capitalism as a 'Christian' ideology, and dismissing socialism as evil.

Who in his right mind would choose the tyranny of socialism? Who would be naive or stupid enough to deprive himself of all he has to gain by refusing place his confidence in free enterprise? The choice is really a choice between freedom and slavery, between statism and individualism, between some form of theism and atheism, between a view of man tooted in matter or man made in the image of his creator, between democracy and totalitarianism, between that which is rational and that which is irrational, between the truth and the big lie, between the ethics of the Ten commandments and the rootless relativities of

58. Philip Mason, *Christianity and Race*, London: Lutterworth, 1956, pp. 11-12.

59. Brother Andrew, with Charles P Conn, *Battle for Africa*, London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1977, pp. 16-17.

Marxism, between a universe governed by law which gives man the necessary beneficent rules for life versus a mechanistic material view of life based on matter without spirit. It is a choice between love and hate. It is as simple as that.⁶⁰

This 'Christian' justification of capitalism is not a new idea. During her reign in the 19th century, Queen Victoria sent a famous message to two African chiefs, in which she attributed the greatness of imperial England to Christianity. Many merchants also attributed their prosperity to their Christian identity, despite the exploitative structure of mercantilism. 'England has become great and happy by the knowledge of the true God and Jesus Christ', Queen Victoria wrote, while a Manchester capitalist of the same period wrote: 'Jesus Christ was Free Trade, and Free Trade was Jesus Christ'.⁶¹

In a recent evaluation of the public role of African Christianity, Paul Gifford writes that although Africa's plight in the mid-1990s is glaringly evident, there is no consensus on the causes or remedies.⁶² Gifford, like Robert Chambers, and Jeff Haynes, traces the conventional wisdom of Africanists since the 1960s, which can be summarized as follows:

- In the 1960s, modernization was assumed to be the key to Africa's progress. Constitutions patterned on the Westminster model of 'democracy' were dispensed to the former colonies in decolonization arrangements that were brokered in the European capitals - London, Paris, and Lisbon. Power was handed over to an elite which was expected to replicate the model of the 'welfare state' in Africa. This modernization approach failed, because it assumed that modernization would diffuse from the centre to the periphery, and trickle from the top to the bottom, without seeking the will and mandate of the governed. Civic education was considered unnecessary at that time, because the African populace was assumed to be ignorant of their own needs.
- Disillusionment loomed large during the 1970s, when it became clear that the policy of modernization made African countries even more dependent on their former colonial masters. Neo-colonialism became a familiar word, especially in African scholarship critical of the modernization model.
- During the 1980s a new approach was championed, focusing on non-governmental organizations. The failure of African economies to grow was attributed to the lethargy of state bureaucracies. It was suggested that non-governmental agencies would serve as catalysts of 'development. Many foreign agencies flocked into Africa, overshadowing churches and missionary organizations which had been associated with charity work for decades.
- The 1990s opened with a new chorus from the Bretton Woods institutions - Structural Adjustment. The new refrain was that there must be political reforms before African countries could expect aid from the World Bank and IMF. Interestingly, this new refrain came only after the end of the cold war. During the cold war, African countries could expect to receive patronizing grants, as long as they voted with the right ideological bloc.

Where has the Church been during this period of Africa's economic decline? On one hand, there has been much rejoicing in missionary circles, that Christianity in tropical Africa is numerically expanding by leaps and bounds. As early as 1968, David Barrett predicted that by year 2000 tropical Africa would be the most 'Christian region' in the

60. Harold Lindsell, *Free Enterprise: A Judeo-Christian Defense*, Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale Press, 1982, p. 179.

61. Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, London: Andre Deutsch, 1964, p. 136.

62. Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role*, London: Hurst and Company, 1997.

world. Since the missionary enterprise has been associated with modernity and progress in tropical Africa, how can this paradox be explained? How can the agents of modernization rejoice while the product of their labours is the opposite of the stated goals?⁶³ Strangely, North Africa is not included in such predictions - it is considered as part of the 'Middle East', despite the fact that all countries of North Africa are founding members of the Organization of African Unity. Who decides what is 'African' and what is not?

8. Villagization of the globe

During the cold war, the world was divided into three 'worlds'. The 'first world' consisted of the countries which practised Capitalism, and viewed multi-party parliamentary system as 'democracy'. The 'second world' consisted of the countries which practised Socialism, and organized their political systems to reflect this mode of economic organization. These two 'worlds' were engaged in vicious ideological warfare and a frightening arms race. The 'third world' consisted of the rest of the world's nations, who were the majority.

The competition between the first two 'worlds' for influence amongst the peoples and nations of the 'third world' led to condescending patronage and manipulation of the politics and economies of the countries of Africa, Asia and southern America. Every international encounter was coloured by these ideological relations. It mattered very much to which ideological camp one was committed. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, marked the end of the cold war. Capitalism, the surviving ideology, then embarked on a process of consolidating its hegemony over the whole of humanity. It was in this context that the talk of 'globalization' entered the international fora. What does globalization mean? Who is globalizing? What is being globalized? What is the goal of globalization? These are important questions, which it is worthwhile to ask and answer comprehensively.

Since the end of the cold war, international deliberations are littered with slogans that suggest that the world has become 'one' and should be further integrated into one global economic system. However, the old labels continue to be used. The 'Third World' remains in third place, even though the 'First' and the 'Second' worlds closed their ranks more than a decade ago. For those who take this view of 'globalization' for granted, the challenge is how to adjust or find a niche in the 'global village'. However, for those to whom the new situation provides an opportunity for critical reflection on the modern economic and political history of the world, the slogans refer to concepts that are open to thorough critique. Four related processes are associated with the 'new world order':

- globalization
- liberalization
- privatization
- democratization

These processes are closely related, and are designed to achieve a common goal - integrating the world's economy into one system, in which the flow of capital, services and manufactured goods across the globe will be unrestricted in time and space. Such 'free' flow, however, will not apply to natural resources, which are designated as the common heritage of humankind. The affluent nations should have free *access* to these resources, and also to the markets where they can sell their manufactures, services and capital. This in

63. On this question see JNK Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction: African Christian Theology After the Cold War*, Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1995; John Mihevc, *The Market Tells them So: The World Bank and Economic Fundamentalism in Africa*, Accra, Ghana: Third World Network, 1995, pp. 238-9.

summary is the doctrine of the World Trade Organization (WTO), which has succeeded the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT). Cees J Hamelink summarizes the practical (rather than theoretical) function of the Bretton Woods institutions as follows:

If we look again at communication in the global village, the picture has changed. The global interdependence is rather a dependence of developing nations upon rich, industrialized nations for their information. The public access is really only granted to those with the economic resources to afford the communication infrastructure. The better understanding between peoples amounts in fact to the imposition of the socio-cultural values of the powerful nations upon the rest of the world. This all suggests that the economic context of international communication is an essential element in the shaping of an unequal communication flow as part of a global pattern of economic dependency.

This unequal flow of communication goods and services accurately reflects the unequal flow of economic goods and services - understandably, because international communication in the past decades has become a manufacturing industry engaged in the production and distribution of hardware (like transmitting equipment) and soft-ware (like programmes and training). Communication in the global village can only be demystified if it is seen as a form of industrial production and as related to the historical development of industrial production. As such communication is dialectically linked with the global politico-economic system: shaped by it and maintaining it, expressing it while being simultaneously its expression.⁶⁴

Several observations can be made about the predicament in which the people of Africa find themselves, as victims of 'globalization' rather than its beneficiaries:

- a) Globalization is not new. It is a process which started before the Christian era, with Alexander the Great. It was improved by the Romans. The British and the French took over, and more recently, the Americans. This historical frame of reference should remove any illusion that the new world order is anything new. What is new is not the economic system, but its exploitative and integrating intensity. Emmanuel Wallerstein comments about the emergence of the modern global economic system in Europe:

In the late fifteenth century and early sixteenth century, there came into existence what we may call a European world system. It was not an empire yet it was as spacious as a grand empire and shared some features of it. But it was different, and new. . . It is an economic but not a political entity, unlike empires, city-states, and nation-states. In fact, it precisely encompasses within its bounds... empires, city-states, and the emerging 'nation-states'.⁶⁵

The Bretton Woods Institutions regulate the functions of this global economic system, as Susan George explains:

The bank [World Bank] is the visible hand of the programme of unrestrained, free market capitalism. The Bank's first function is to be an instrument of integration through the market. This market is (or should be) co-extensive with the world; like that of the Church, its vocation is universal. All nations and all people must become ever more tightly bound to it. In this setting, the doctrine of export-orientation finds its natural home. All countries must trade as much as they can and rely for their subsistence first on the world market, last on their own resources.

64. Cees J Hamelink, *The Corporate Village*, Rome: IDOC, 1977, p. 5.

65. Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, New York: Academic Press, 1974, p. 15. cited in Duchrow, p. 213.

Until quite recently, even in wealthy countries, communities provided for most of their wants from their domestic, local economies. What they could not find close at hand, they sought at the regional or national level. Only rarely, usually for luxury items, would they have recourse to the world market. This historical pattern has been turned on its head: we are now exhorted to satisfy our needs first from the international, global market, then the national or regional one and so on, down the ladder to the domestic economy, lowest of all. The Bank's second function is to act as a guide. Those who believe that its own doctrine is that of *laissez-faire* are mistaken. The Bank is, in fact, far more interventionist than the interventionist governments whose policies it seeks to transform. If the Bank were to leave people and societies alone, anything could happen - they might operate not on the basis of the marketplace but on principles of reciprocity, redistribution or solidarity. In modern societies, the state has attempted, with greater or lesser success, to organize redistribution and solidarity. Thus the state, like the traditional society based on reciprocity, is under threat from the Bank.⁶⁶

- b) The dialectical distinction between *destitution* and *affluence* has always been present in national and international politics and economics. However, never before has it been so systematically regimented.
- c) The division of humankind into three worlds is also not new: It also dates from the ancient Greek city-states, between Athens and Sparta. In George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, it is symbolically presented as the war between Mr Jones and the Animals.
- d) Globalization is not a global phenomenon - it is a village phenomenon, in which an overgrown village has established a mechanism of extending its power and influence over the rest of humankind. It is a tributary system, in which any nation which refuses to pay tribute is punished, first with sanctions, and if necessary, with conquest.
- e) Religion is not isolated from international politics - it provides the legitimation for it, either supporting the status quo, or challenging it. Will missiological research legitimize 'globalization' and all that it entails, or provide a forum for the critique of contemporary principalities and powers?

In April 1997 I addressed a Seminar in Kansas City, Missouri, where I shared a platform with Prof. Jose Miguez Bonino, of Argentina. I emphasized that we were now in a new world order, and we could take a new look at our theological presuppositions in the context of the new social, economic and political realities after the cold war. Bonino was convinced that nothing has changed, because the end of the cold war had brought nothing new in terms of economic relations between the North and the South. This may be true in Latin America. In tropical Africa, however, there certainly is remarkable change - not for the better, but for the worse.⁶⁷

More people have died since 1990 than throughout the cold war. These deaths, through civil strife, have occurred in vain, because of changes instigated through a process called 'democratization'. Why did Africa need to be 'democratized' after 1990? Did we not need 'democracy' in 1960? Did we not need it in 1920? Did we not need it in 1885? Is it not ironical, that our former colonial masters are the ones insisting that we should be 'democratic' in order to win their favour? Why was money for civic education not available

66. Susan George, *Faith and Credit*, pp. 248- 249.

67. Papers presented at that Workshop are published in *Mission and Transformation in a Changing World: A Dialogue with Global Mission Colleagues*, New York: General Board of Global Ministries, Untied Methodist Church, 1998.

in 1960, but was available in 1990? Why were Christian churches not interested in 'civic education' in 1960, but were suddenly interested in it in 1990? The point here is not to apportion blame, Rather, it is to indicate that there is more politics and economics in missiology than meets our eyes in print. What then is the way out?

Since 1990, I have suggested that the time has come for us to seek new paradigms and new metaphors for explication of our theology. The paradigm of *Reconstruction* has been very inspiring to me. The more I think about it, the more inspiring it is to me. It seems to me that the Exodus motif in African Christian theology has served a very useful purpose at a particular time in Africa's history. However, it is no longer viable as a clarion call in the challenges and tasks with which the Church in Africa must deal in the new century and millennium. The rhetoric of the liberation model is dialectical, confrontational, antagonistic, exclusivist, reductionist. Such rhetoric was ideologically consistent with the cold war, and with Marxian dialectics. Today, this approach will only delay our constructive action, to our detriment.

The reconstructive paradigm is post-exilic. Whereas the Liberation paradigm has Moses as the paradigmatic figure, the Reconstruction Paradigm has Nehemiah as the paradigmatic figure. An application of the reconstructive Paradigm on the ministry of Jesus shifts the focus of biblical texts. Rather than Luke 4:16-22 (Isaiah 61:1-2), we focus on Matt. 5: 17-20. Jesus becomes the architect of social reconstruction. When he marches to Jerusalem from Galilee in the third year of his public ministry, a multitude joins him, made up of the new community which appreciated the dawn of a new era. Social reconstruction has to do with this kind of restoration of self-esteem, for individuals, first, then for a whole community.

9. Missiological research in the context of globalization

What are the factual parameters of globalization, within which mission is conducted, which missiological research must take into account? This section will make a few hints on this question, without trying to be exhaustive.

After the cold war, the emergence of mono-polar politics and economics has left the world with a mono-eyed vision. Although 'democracy' presupposes pluralism and liberalization, these ingredients of 'democracy' are understood only in terms of mono-polar economics and mono-polar politics. It is in the context of this mono-eyed vision that Africa was stampeded into multi-party politics and 'free-market' economics at the end of the cold war, with tragic consequences in many countries. According to the 1992 UNDP Human Development Report, the richest 20% of the world's population receives 82.7% of world income; while the poorest 20% receives only 1.4%. The full distribution is as follows:⁶⁸

<i>World Population</i>		<i>World Income</i>
Richest	20%	82.7%
Second	20%	11.7%
Third	20%	2.3%
Fourth	20%	1.9%
Poorest	20%	1.4%

68. 1992 UNDP Human Development Report. See also, Ulrich Duchrow, *Alternatives to Global Capitalism*, Heidelberg: Kairos Europa, 1995, p. 15.

The 1999 UNDP Report shows that the situation has deteriorated since 1992, as follows:⁶⁹

Shares of World GDP:

Richest	20%	86%
Middle	60%	13%
Poorest	20%	1%

Shares of Exports of Goods and Services:

Richest	20%	82%
Middle	60%	17%
Poorest	20%	1%

Shares of Foreign Direct Investment:

Richest	20%	68%
Middle	60%	31%
Poorest	20%	1%

Shares of Internet Users

Richest	20%	68%
Middle	60%	31%
Poorest	20%	1%

Most of these poorest people are in Africa. What can 'globalization' mean for Africa under these circumstances? What are the missiological implications of this situation? What does it mean to be in mission in this context of Africa's structural pauperization?

UNCTAD estimates that three to six corporations control a high percentage of trade in the following commodities:⁷⁰

Sugar	60%
Bananas	70-75%
Crude Oil	75%
Tin	75-80%
Tea	80%
Copper and Bauxite	80-85%
Wheat, Coffee, Cocoa, Cotton, and Jute	85-90%
Pineapples and forest products	90%
Iron Ore	90-95%

These are the primary products which form the backbone of the economies of many countries of tropical Africa. Yet the trade in those commodities is controlled by corporations based not in Africa, but in the OECD zone. Under these circumstances, how can Africa respond to the forces of 'globalization'? The language has to change in the first place. It is not 'globalization', of scattered villages but 'villagization' of the corporate globe. Titus Alexander observes:

In 1992 there were over 37,000 global industrial companies worldwide, of which 34,280 (91%) were based in the West., with over 170,000 foreign affiliates, almost half of these in the Major World. Over half of all global companies are based in just five

69. 1999 UNDP Human Development Report, p. 2.

70. Jack Nelson Pollmeyer, *Brave New World Order: Must we Pledge Allegiance?*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1993, p. 11.

countries - Germany, Japan, Sweden, Switzerland and the USA. The top 100 companies, excluding banking and finance, owned US\$ 3.4 trillion in assets in 1991, about a third of foreign direct investment worldwide. The top ten companies controlled a quarter of these assets. The top 500 companies owned US\$ 31 trillion in assets in 1994.⁷¹

New jargon has suddenly erupted in political, anthropological and missiological literature - globalization, liberalization, privatization, democratization, structural adjustment. There appears to be too little, or no readiness at all, to critique this jargon. Africa is subjected to a new totalitarianism, in which African countries have to 'liberalize' all sectors of society, or perish. They cannot penetrate the markets of the OECD countries, but they have to open theirs for both dumping and experimentation.

While African countries are compelled to open their borders and societies to 'global' markets, protectionism and immigration restrictions become more stringent in the OECD countries. It is much easier for a European and a North American to travel as a missionary to Africa, than for an African to go to Europe or North America for the same purpose, even if he could afford it. Although Europe and North America are mission-fields as post-Christian regions, immigration restrictions are such that Africans are not expected to take Christianity to those regions, except as guests of Christians. Such are a realities of the contemporary world ruled by the ideology of 'globalization'. The following conditions are invariably set by the IMF for debtor countries in Structural Adjustment Programmes:

1. Wage Freezes - reducing the buying power
2. Social Spending Cuts - Hospitals, schools and social services are affected
3. Removing subsidies on foods - the price of staple foods increases
4. Currency Devaluation - Prices of exports fall; prices of imports rise; exportation instead of consumption
5. Profits are diverted elsewhere - Corporations benefit, rather than citizens.⁷²

The validity of these policies can hardly be critically discussed, because the Bretton Woods Institutions are above criticism. They are like Church dogma.⁷³ There are two ways of approaching the process of 'globalization'. One way is to take 'globalization' for granted and accept it without question. The other way is to unmask the undeclared interests for which 'globalization' is a cipher. A few scholars have started this process of demystification and 'demythologization'. Among them are David Korten, Ulrich Duchrow; John Mihevc; Rebecca M Black; Jack Nelson Pollmeyer; Titus Alexander and Graham Hancock. In his book, *When Corporations Rule the World*, Korten observes:

The excluded, for whom the globalized economy has little to offer, have three basic choices: 1) give in to the inevitable and live on the scraps scavenged from relief agencies or refuse piles, slowly starve, or commit suicide; 2) seek the comradeship of violence and live from the spoils of crime and pillage; or 3) join with others in the recreation of human communities delinked from the global economy. The first of these

71. Titus Alexander, *Unravelling Global Apartheid: An Overview of World Politics*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996, p. 92.

72. Source: IMF; Duchrow, *Alternatives to Global Capitalism*, Heidelberg: Kairos Europa, 1995, p. 103.

73. On this point see Susan George, *Faith and Credit*, London: Penguin, 1994; John Mehevc, *The Market Tells them So: The World Bank and Economic Fundamentalism in Africa*, Accra, Ghana: Third World Network, 1995.

options needs no elaboration. The latter two define competing visions of the human future: one of doom and one of hope.⁷⁴

According to Titus Alexander, Trans-National Corporations transcend national jurisdictions owing to the following factors:

1. Sheer size enables global corporations to maintain their dominance through advertising, economies of scale, cross-subsidies, transfer pricing and innovation as well as giving them influence over regulators, retailers and suppliers.
2. Product demarcation enables companies to target distinct sectors of particular markets.
3. Price Leadership acknowledges certain brand goods like Heinz, Malboro, or Mercedes as 'price leaders' which sell for as much as the market will bear.
4. Strategic Alliances or partnerships between global companies based in different countries allows them to develop new advantages, spread risks and benefit from the economies of cooperation, scale and synergy. Sharing development, marketing and production of new technology is widespread.
5. Corporate Conquest enables large firms to buy out, undercut, intimidate or otherwise exclude smaller competitors.
6. Cartels: Companies continue to form open or secret agreements to share out markets between them.⁷⁵

Is there an alternative model which churches in mission can offer in response to the totalitarianism of the 'free market'? Ulrich Duchrow has proposed some alternatives in his book *Alternatives to Global Capitalism*. Another response is articulated by Rebecca M. Black in her book *Do Justice: Linking Christian Faith and Modern Economic Life*. David Korten also has interesting alternatives, which view religious groups as possible partners with secular non-governmental organizations that are committed to the search for viable alternatives.⁷⁶

10. Conclusion

In the conclusion to his book *Capitalism and Slavery*, Eric Williams writes an insightful paragraph which is as appropriate and instructive as I conclude this paper:

Politics and morals in the abstract make no sense. We find the [European] statesmen and publicists defending slavery today, abusing slavery tomorrow, defending slavery the day after. Today they are imperialists, the next day anti-imperialist, and equally pro-imperialist a generation after. And always with the same vehemence. The defence or attack is always on the high moral or political plane. The thing defended or attacked is always something that you can touch and see, to be measured in pound sterling or pounds avoirdupois, in dollars and cents, yards, feet and inches. This is not a crime. It is a fact. It is understandable at the time. But historians, writing a hundred years after, have no excuse for continuing to wrap the real interests in confusion. Even the great mass movements, and the anti-slavery mass movement was one of the greatest of these,

74. David Korten, *When Corporations Rule the World*, West Hartford, Connecticut: Kumarian Press, 1995, p. 256-7.

75. Titus Alexander, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90.

76. Ulrich Duchrow, *op. cit.*, Rebecca M Black, *Do Justice: Linking Christian Faith and Modern Economic Life*, Cleveland, Ohio: United Church Press, 1992; David Korten, *op. cit.*

show a curious affinity with the rise and development of new interests and the necessity of the destruction of the old.⁷⁷

The challenge of Eric Williams is as applicable to historians as it is to missiologists, economists and political scientists. It is as relevant to the past as it is to the present. Africa is still regarded as an object of academic study in some North Atlantic institutions. But to what extent do the 'Africanists' take seriously the views and interests of Africans themselves? To what extent are the perspectives of African scholars taken seriously? Whose reality counts? Somehow, it appears that there is great interest in doing 'direct research' in the villages of rural Africa, by-passing the direct research which African scholars have themselves conducted.

More often than not, these 'direct' researches confirm the old prejudices and stereotypes. It is not surprising therefore, that there is much mis-information about Africa in the print and electronic media in Europe and North America. While it is true that African scholars constitute the elite in the continent, the same applies to scholars in the North Atlantic. However, the ideological assumptions between Africanist and African scholars do not coincide. This point has been amply illustrated by Vincent B. Thompson in his two books *Africa and Unity: The Evolution of Pan-Africanism* and *The Making of the African Diaspora in the Americas 1441-1900*.⁷⁸

As we enter the 21st century, it will be wise for Africanists to take African scholarship (conducted by Africans) more seriously than during the century that is now ending. Today is fashionable for Africanists to campaign for 'democratization' in Africa. Did 'democracy' become a necessity for Africans only after the cold war? Will it be a necessity when the priorities of the power brokers change again? It is time that Africans were left alone to evolve their own political and economic institutions. But leaving them alone would also mean keeping off from Africa's resources. Since the World Trade Organization views the world in terms of economic liberalization and privatization, it is unlikely that this option would be heeded. Missionaries and missiologists interested in Africa cannot afford to ignore the reality of this challenge. Missiology is a theological undertaking. However, it cannot be abstracted from ideological frames of reference and universes of discourse.

Theologically, it is important for missiologists to discern the earthly form of the heavenly Kingdom which is promised by the Gospel. When Jesus proclaims that the kingdom of God is at hand, how should this proclamation be interpreted in contemporary Africa, considering the social reality outlined in this paper? There are no easy answers to this question, but one thing is certain - globalization is the recipe for the systematic pauperization of Africa. How can missiology respond to the 'principalities and powers' which have contributed to this pauperization? Future missiological research will need to face these questions with courage and determination, and avoid being conformed to the norms of this 'globalized' world order.

77. Eric Williams, op. cit., p. 211.

78. Vincent B Thompson, *Africa and Unity: The Evolution of Pan-Africanism*, London: Longman, 1969; *The Making of the African Diaspora in the Americas 1441-1900*, Harlow, Essex, UK: Longman, 1987.