
The future of mission and missiology in a radically changing world¹

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Opsomming

Die toekoms van sending en sendingwetenskap in 'n radikaal-veranderende wêreld

Sending en sendingwetenskap word tans deur 'n radikaal-veranderende en hoogs uitdagende wêreld in die gesig gestaar. Teoloë – van Voetius en Warneck tot Bosch en Van Engen – het in die verlede die wêreld vanuit hulle perspektief benader. Die geglobaliseerde en post-moderne wêreld bied verskeie nuwe uitdagings. 'n Christologiese benadering is nodig. Die kruis van Jesus moet sentraal staan in die sendingonderneming. Die missio Dei moet altyd vanuit hierdie perspektief benader word. Die belydenis dat Jesus die Here is, moet juis ook in die wêreld van dekolonisasie en die vierde nywerheidsrevolusie bevestig word. Wanneer sendingwetenskap aan openbare universiteite doseer word, moet dit steeds in ag geneem word.

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Abstract

Mission and missiology are facing a rapidly changing and extremely challenging world. In the past, theologians – from Voetius and Warneck to Bosch and Van Engen – engaged the world from their perspectives. The globalised and postmodern world poses new challenges. A Christological approach is needed. The cross of Jesus must be central in the missiological endeavour. The missio Dei must always be viewed from this perspective. The confession that Christ is Lord must not be disregarded in the world of decolonisation and the fourth industrial revolution. The task of teaching missiology at a public university must take this into consideration.

Trefwoorde:

Missiologie; veranderende wêreld; kruis; *missio dei*; openbare universiteit.

Keywords:

Missiology; changing world; cross; *missio dei*; public university.

1. Introduction

Mission is one of the most wonderful endeavours on earth. Missiology, the scientific discipline studying all aspects of mission, is equally wonderful. Without mission, there is no church. Without missiology, there is no theology. But is missiology not a latecomer in the theological field? Can we then state that mission is the most essential aspect of the Christian Gospel and that theology without missiology is dead, especially in the new environment where mission and missiology are greatly challenged? Can the essence of mission be linked with a deep Christological approach? How can the *missio Dei* be developed to explain the Trinitarian and especially the Christological essence of mission and how can this approach bring about new possibilities in the new challenging world? To answer these questions, it is necessary to investigate the different aspects of mission and missiology.

2. Mission from inception to the present

Mission did not only start with Paul. Mission started with God reaching out to human beings. It culminated when Christ became human and sent out the church to glorify Him in all aspects. In Christ, mission and missiology found their true grounding.

Many aspects of missiology, as an academic discipline, have been discussed and explained. Voetius' threefold explanation of the goal of mission, namely the conversion of the unbelievers, the planting of the church, and the glory and manifestation of the grace of God (see Verkuyl, 1978:21) as well as his engagement with mission as such played an important role in putting the scientific study of mission forward. One cannot underestimate the importance of Voetius' contribution. He opened the theological world to the importance of mission. Since Voetius' contribution, missiology remains an essential aspect of all theological deliberations. Missiology was, in essence, only considered more fully in Warneck's (1903) important contribution, *Evangelische Missionslehre*. Warneck emphasised that there is a twofold basis for mission, namely the sending God and the desiring human in need. God is the *auctor primarius* for mission. God is the One who initiates and completes mission. The church is not the main author of mission; the circle within the church (*ecclesiola in ecclesia*) is the vehicle for mission (see Bavinck, 1977:6). The desiring human is also calling for mission to come to him/her for salvation. This does not mean that the desiring human is the co-author of missions, but rather the one needing the salvation. With his introduction to missiology, Bavinck (1977) emphasised crucial aspects as relevant, with his view on elenctics as the way to approach religions, other than Christianity. He does not have a total negative view of other religions, but he is of the opinion that one must proclaim the Christian faith to others. With his new introduction to missiology, Verkuyl (1978) made a new relation to missiology possible with his emphasis on the then called third-world theologies. Mission is now not only the proclamation of the gospel to the inhabitants of the third-world (two-thirds world) countries by missionaries from the first world, but the total proclamation of the gospel from all to all. Jongeneel (1991:336) proposes extensive missiological aspects, and explains that mission is one of the most comprehensive theological disciplines and that the benediction of Jesus – “peace be unto you” – should be regarded as essential for missions for the world. Peace, in all implications of the word, therefore, becomes the aim of mission. Referring to the new ecumenical paradigm in missions with his magistral missiology, *Transforming mission: Paradigm shifts in theology of mission*, Bosch (1991) opened up a total new relation of missiology among

the churches. Taking his cue from his understanding of the *missio Dei*, he explains how mission is a comprehensive endeavour deeply entrenched in Jesus' existence and salvific acts. Jesus determines mission from his incarnation to his second coming. A new ecumenical paradigm is possible from this perspective. Bevans and Schroeder (2006) took their cue from Bosch and developed it much further with their explanation that missiology is constants in context. Seeking the essence of mission in the constants of the gospel in the ever-changing world leads to a new understanding of faith and church. With the emphasis on the mission of God, C. Wright (2006) underlines the value of deep exegetical encounter. He explains that mission is the act of God in Jesus, the Lord. Skreslet (2012:15) brings a new perspective regarding mission from everywhere to everywhere. This comprehensive view makes it possible to view mission totally holistically. Van Engen (1996:105-126) puts the church in the centre of the discussion regarding the church as God's missionary people, and mission as the crossing of borders of God's people, with the view to transforming the world. The church remains God's missionary people when she is true to Christ the Redeemer. The church is one holy, universal, apostolic church and should be missionary in *kerugma*, *diakonia*, *koininia* and *marturia*. Van Engen opens the way for the church to become missionary in essence.

Presently, many authors contribute to the development of these ideas. Roxborough (2014:123) explains that "as a concept, the idea of mission refers to a particular purpose, task, or responsibility as well as to an overall purpose". This means that the purpose of the church includes Christian mission, in relation with the "Church outside of its own community". Missiology is then the theological engagement with the given aspects of mission. Roxborough (2014:123) concludes: "The validity of missiology continues to lie in the validity of mission, in the importance of the questions it addresses, and in the intercultural perspectives it brings to the issues of the day. In a sense, missiology must believe in itself, even when others may not. Being under threat is hardly new in its history. Whatever its context, however, missiological witness to God's mission, like direct witness to Christ, never ceases the need to earn the right to speak."

This means that mission is a witness from and to the living God. Missiology becomes more than yet another discipline. It becomes the discipline of honouring God's own mission in the world. Missiology answers from God's perspective to a challenging world.

Paas (2016:37) also explains that the youthful (*sic*) character of missiology means that many issues are under discussion. Even the legitimate place of missiology is challenged because of postcolonial and decolonial criticism. Another challenge is the fact that some regard it as much too wide and that everything becomes mission. Langmead (2014:67), however, suggests “that missiology ought to celebrate its interdependence with the rest of theology, prod theological education to be missiological throughout, draw more on resources beyond the theological”.

Mission is, therefore, as a young (*sic*) discipline, able to engage in other disciplines. Although the legitimacy of missiology is challenged, the Christological essence of mission forms the full scope of it. From this perspective, it relates to a new world where God reigns.

In a seminal article, Bunkowske (2018:12-22) lists the trends in missiology to reply to these challenges. All these trends are possible reactions to the challenges of the radically changing world. He draws the following conclusion: “Missiology is about the Son of Man (Jesus) coming to ‘seek and to save the lost’ (Luke 19:9). It is about God using human beings as His instruments or vehicles for getting His ‘means of grace (oral, written and visual Word of God)’ to the many ‘lost and dying people’ of this world.” and “At this point in time Missiology has been established as a special ‘set of eyes’ (a theological discipline) through which we view and do theology” (Bunkowske, 2018:21). In this regard he views missiology as the mother of all other disciplines.

The challenge remains to understand mission from a deep Christological view. Bunkowske (2018:12-22) rightly states that missiology is all about the incarnation. The essence of mission is always deeply grounded in the birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension and second coming of Jesus Christ. From this perspective, new life is possible in Christ and the believer must be the vehicle to spread this new life to all.

In conclusion, all these perspectives show that the scientific discipline of missiology is extremely important in a world of many challenges. To speak of God is also to speak of mission, because God is radically involved in this world through the mission of the Son and the mission of the church. Some explain new aspects of mission, but it remains crucial to regard mission always from God’s involvement in the world.

3. A radically changing world facing missiology nowadays

The present world is a radically changing and totally new world. In an important monograph, Pocock, Van Rheenen and McConnell (2005) explain the changes mission and missiology were already facing at the time. They refer first to globalisation: New York is now also in New Delhi, Manila in Los Angeles. The demographic impact is clear where migration, AIDS, and children at risk are all relevant issues. There is also a religion quake: A change from world religions to multiple spiritualities. Knowledge moved from modernism to postmodernism. Another massive change is the change from Christendom to global Christianity. The motivation for mission changed from the fear of hell to the glory of God. Spiritual warfare is the centre of discussions. Mission moves from operations to creative access platforms. A new sense of working together also emerges: from individuals to networks. Regarding the use of money, there is a movement from self-support to international partnerships. There are technologies leading to virtual worlds. One can add other aspects such as the present radical implications of decolonisation and the fourth industrial revolution.

Van Gelder (2013:42-45) mentions the following challenges: Many Christians now live as minorities in sometimes even hostile environments. There are also challenges in the way in which the emerging Christian communities and the traditional Christian communities in the West regard various issues of faith. This includes the reading of the Bible and the application of it in the lives of the people. "Many of these Christians have an inherent understanding that all of life is spiritual, with the presence and agency of spirits in the material world being self-evident, while also understanding the active agency of God in their midst through the Spirit of God."

Yip (2014:403) challenges missiology from the perspective of postmodernism and decolonisation: "While postmodern anthropology can lead to nihilism, it does expose the weaknesses of traditional anthropology, including the notion of an objective description of another culture and the notion that culture is homogeneous, coherent, and integrated."

Yip (2014:408) also challenges the notion of contextualisation. Many of the theological and missiological concepts of contextualisation are challenged. Culture is so diverse that it is impossible to engage in contextualisation as it could be in the past.

An important new trend is how social media influence all aspects of the present environment. In this regard, Van den Berg (2018; 2019) refers to

the many implications for theology. Van den Berg (2018:13) explains: “An orientation within this hybrid and flexible space is embodied in the analysis of the possible use of Christian motifs on Twitter. This search creates possibilities for a new language, logic and meaning. Digital religion is a significant expression of contemporary lived religion. To negotiate the use and meaning of Christian motifs used on Twitter implies a sensitivity to the culture informing daily life.” He then observes in social media new “fluid forms of normativity and authority” (Van den Berg, 2018:174).

The relation to God in this new world of communication calls for new understanding. The question in this regard remains whether the general revelation may ever become on par with the particular revelation in Jesus Christ and the written word. There is only one true way to know God and that is in Scripture, in Christ. The relevance of social media regarding mission and missiology must, however, not be underestimated.

There can be no doubt that the recent outbreak of COVID-19 poses a huge challenge, not only to the world, but also to mission. The world has changed radically. COVID-19 is also, in a certain sense, the failure of science, because there is such a struggle to contain it. Even vaccines, although speedily developed, cannot contain the virus immediately. The issues of the sinfulness of human beings, the wrath of God, forgiveness of sin, the implications of salvation and eternal life, of the cross and resurrection are radically important. Although the virus is not the result of specific sins of specific human beings it is also clear that the human condition is a condition under sin of terrible needs and wants and pandemics. Humanity is in deep trouble and is facing massive new challenges. A sound theological reply to the challenges is needed. In this regard, mission is crucial. Mission always has been on the forefront of the challenges facing the world.

Venter (2020:70ff.) regards the new challenges in human civilisation as immense and asks if it is not the start of a new Axial Age. He calls for dialogue and vision in the encounter with the fourth industrial revolution. He posted six elements of a matrix of a new vision, namely “the reality of a personal Triune God, the cosmos as creation, the human as *imago Dei*, the possibility of transformation or a *novum*, and a teleological historical process”. This new vision is acceptable, but his view on confessional theology must be developed further (Venter 2020:6). According to him, confessional theology as method is not applicable in the new situation of theology, although he still accepts confessions such as Nicea as fully relevant. He regards the emphasis on the Bible text as extremely important, but he explains that a new hermeneutic is necessary. To my mind, the confessions should underlie

a deep confessional theology needed especially in the changing world. I understand confessional theology as theology that undergirds the protestant confessions. Confessional theology is theology that deeply explains that mission should always accept the Christological world view. Missiology should be confessional, because all theology refers to a specific kind of “confession” and missiology should be clear on the confessional status of its endeavours. Missiology should, therefore, clarify from which confessional commitment it continues.

A deep Christological vision from the confessions, namely the Apostolic Confession (12 Articles), Nicea, Athanasius, the Belgic Confession, The Heidelberg Catechisms and the Confessions of Dort, are always needed, as well as emphasising the cross as radical viewpoint in mission, and the resurrection as the culmination of salvation.

4. Christological approach to missiology

Taking all these challenges and trends into account, there must be a definite view that mission and missiology must be grounded in Christology. This does not mean that the Triune God is not totally involved. Without the eternal existence, the cross, and the resurrection of Jesus, there is no mission. Without the deep Christological implications of the Divinity of the Man Jesus Christ, the clear understanding of mission is blurred. A *Theologia Crucis*, or theology of the cross, must always be the main element of mission and missiology. The theology of the cross must, however, always be linked to Nicea, namely that Christ is verily God and verily human. The proclamation of the Divinity of Christ in the *Theologia Crucis* is essential for understanding mission in the world. It touches on all aspects of life, including the way in which missions should not only be regarded as the salvation of the individual, but also as social justice. To be relevant, missiology must, therefore, engage this confession deeply. Regarding the Biblical aspects of missiology, a Pauline perspective is all important. Nothing is more essential for Paul than to know Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2-5).

And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. [a] 2 For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3 I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. 4 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, 5 so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.

Thiselton (2000:212) explains how this passage emphasises that Paul did not want to use the rhetorical methods of the ancient Romans, which were well-known at that time, to convey his message, but that he wanted to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ and that gospel is the gospel of the crucified one. For Wright (2013:1233), Paul conveys a mystery, but it is a revelation of the righteousness of God seen in the justification of the sinner on the cross. Ellingworth and Hutton (1994:46) refer to the fact that the tense used in the reference to “crucified” has the implication that it was something that had happened in the past but is still relevant in the present. Orr and Walther (1976:162), however, emphasise how the Roman world regarded death on the cross as scandalous. This means that Paul paradoxically refers to the wonder of the Gospel. Because the Spirit empowered Paul, there is also a close relation between the gospel of the crucified one and the Spirit (Prior 1985:49). Conzelmann (1981:s.p.) explains in depth the implication of the cross: “Rather, the object of theology is the cross, the act of salvation which actualizes itself in the word: the determination of man by the arrival of the word, and the determination of the word by the cross.” Mare (1976:s.p.) refers to the relation of the cross of Christ and salvation: “Paul says he came with the sole purpose of centring his attention on the truth concerning Jesus Christ – on the fact and meaning of his crucifixion. The ‘for’ (gar) introducing this verse confirms the statement of v. 1 about his simple proclamation of the cross. It was not sufficient for Paul to tell about Jesus and his life; he also had to tell about his death for sinners (Acts 10:37-43). Christ died on a Roman cross at Jerusalem and his death was effective then and is effective now to bring forgiveness to sinners (Gal. 2:16).” Van de Beek (1998:150-152) emphatically explains the fullness of the death of Christ on the cross in his Christology. Jesus continued until the end to bring reconciliation by being a sin-offering, the One given by God for the community to be saved. The cross is, therefore, essential. One must regard mission in light of the cross. Christ carries the world on the cross. One must agree with Van de Beek. In this world, the cross stands as the point of reference for all missions and for missiology. Without the cross, no hope and salvation is possible. One must regard Christology from the perspective of the cross. The cross is followed by the resurrection as proof of Jesus as Son of God.

Mission must, therefore, in this world be mission of the cross. At the cross, God is present in this tragic world. At the cross, one sees God’s reply to the world. The glory of the resurrection fulfils what happened on the cross.

The challenges of COVID-19 must also be viewed in this regard. The immense challenge of this virus can be encountered only by looking at the cross. The world is in deep trouble because of sin, but the Son of God handed

Himself over on our behalf for the sin of the world. In Him and in the cross, one sees God's involvement in the world, even in huge calamities. Turning to the cross is the way in which missions can deal with the outcry in need of human beings and the world.

This message must be proclaimed by Paul regardless of persecution. Therefore, the passage in 1 Corinthians 9:16-18 is all important.

16 For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! 17 If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. 18 What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make full use of my rights as a preacher of the gospel.

Paul's apostleship must be understood from the "dimension of necessity or compulsion" (Thiselton, 2000:55). He could not have remained silent. This is one of the most essential aspects of mission. Wright (2013:1510) mentions that Paul could not escape it, even if he wanted to. Mission is indeed compelled by God. Missiology testifies to that. Mission, therefore, also has to do with the task of the church to proclaim the gospel. From the Christological grounding, the church is led by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the salvation. Compelled by the Holy Spirit, the cross of Jesus Christ is proclaimed. Mission has to do with *kerugma*. The church must proclaim the message of the salvation in Christ. This is clearly not the only perspective. Aspects such as *diakonia* and *marturia* are also very relevant, but the essence remains the *kerigmatic* proclamation of Jesus as the crucified and risen One.

5. The Triune God and mission

From the deep Christological emphasis, it must also be explained that the mission of God is also Trinitarian. God the Father and God the Holy Spirit are involved in the tremendous movement of God to human beings. However, the Father is always the Father of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ that is sent from the Father and the Son. Christ is immediately in the centre of all mission and missiology again. Niemandt (2015:103) regards the Together Towards Life document of the World Council of Churches as an explanation of the main aspects of Trinitarian mission: "My conviction is that the TTL document provides mission and Missiology with a dialogue partner that reminds the church, and those who practise theology – especially Missiology – that we are together on a journey towards life. The changing

landscapes on this journey remind us that the church finds itself in the liminal space between an institution and a community of sent disciples participating in God's mission. The Spirit is the guide, reminding us that we can find the Father's Son among the least and the marginalized." One must agree with Niemandt that it is essential to understand mission from the perspective of the Triune God's deep involvement in the world. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in their unity, reach out to the most desperate in the world and to the world in its deep need. One must proclaim that the unity in the Godhead determines mission.

6. The *missio Dei/Trinitatis* revisited

Mission is always *missio Dei* or *missio Trinitatis*, if understood correctly. Jonker (2008:64) warns against the Barthian interpretation of the *missio Dei*, where the *missio Dei* becomes universalism, that all are saved and that the church becomes only a vehicle of general empowerment and not the vehicle of the proclamation of the radical salvation of God IN Christ. Mission as *missio Dei* must always be radically Christocentric, confessing that only in Him there is salvation and eternal life. The implications of the *missio Dei* are of utmost importance. The honour and glory of God should be emphasised in all aspects of mission. Mission must be about God, who reaches out to human beings. He must be honoured as the Father in his glory as creator. He must be honoured as the Son in his redemption of the world. He must be honoured as Holy Spirit in the renewal of human beings and the community. Mission is the full acceptance of God in his glory. From this honouring of God, mission moves out to the world. As servants of the Triune God, mission is the confession of the eternal hope for the world.

In this regard, one should revisit Bosch (1991:389ff). The shift from an understanding of mission primarily in soteriological, cultural, ecclesiastical, or salvation historical terms to an understanding of the "intrinsic interrelationship between Christology, soteriology and the doctrine of the Trinity, so important for the early church" (Bosch, 1991:389) led to a new understanding of the *missio Dei*. Bosch (1991:390) accepts that Barth clearly influenced the concept of the *missio Dei* from his theology. This means that mission is understood from the very nature of God. Father, Son and Holy Spirit have an important relation in the *missio Dei*. The Father sent the Son, and the Son sent the Holy Spirit, and Father sent the Son, and the Holy Spirit sends the church into the world with mission. It is not the church *per se* that articulates mission; but the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit do. Bosch (1991:392)

writes in this regard, “it cannot be denied that the *missio Dei* notion has helped to articulate the conviction that neither the church nor any other human agent can ever be considered the author or bearer of mission. Mission is primarily and ultimately the work of the Triune God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, for the sake of the world”.

Bosch (1991:392) admits that there are many challenges to the concept of *missio Dei*, but that it still remains most relevant for mission. In a world full of challenges, it is important to realise that the concept of the Triune God as the author of mission is extremely relevant. Jonker’s criticism, however, needs to be understood. When the concept *missio Dei* leads to universalism, one could challenge it. God’s grace is total and universal, but Barth’s concept of universalism does not do justice to the salvation in Christ.

Bosch had a good grip on the challenges in the world in the 1980s and 1990s and how missiology must answer these challenges. However, his views on the emerging ecumenical paradigm did not yield the expected results. It was too general to have a radical influence from a missiological perspective on the needs of human beings. Although he did mention evangelism and the importance of salvation, it did not become specific.

Concerning *missio Dei*, Bevans and Schroeder (2006:296) mention that mission is the participation in the mission of the Triune God. A new perspective is proposed. They regard the main constants, in which *missio Dei*, as the participation in the mission of the Triune God, must relate: Christology, ecclesiology, eschatology, salvation, anthropology, and culture. All these aspects are challenged in the new world in which we are living in a specific way. They put forward the following answers: a Spirit Christology inclusive and pluralist; a servant ecclesiology with communion in mission; an inaugurated and realised eschatology; holistic salvation; positive views of anthropology, and critically positive views on culture (Bevans & Schroeder, 2006:296). Bevans and Schroeder (2006:297-298) explain the essence of their views as follows: “A number of theologians today speak about the paschal character of the Trinity’s life and missions. The mutual giving and receiving that is constitutive of the divine communion is mirrored, first, in the sending of the Spirit into the world. Through the Spirit, in other words, God’s mystery is turned ‘inside out’ and so is fully present within the warp and woof of cosmic and historical processes. In a second move of self-giving, God’s mystery is present in the historical person of Jesus through the self-emptying of the eternal Logos” (Phil. 2:6-11).

Many positive aspects can be inferred from their views on *missio Dei*. It speaks to the challenges of the present world. However, the essence of a deep understanding of the salvation in Jesus Christ is lacking. The wonder of the salvation of the One for others in the love of God for his enemies must be the most essential aspect of mission.

In a recent article, Konz (2018:333ff) suggests that the missiological concepts of the “Great Commission” (Matthew 28:18-20) and *missio Dei* must be revisited. He calls for a more Trinitarian view of mission and is of the opinion that emphasis on the Great Commission needs a more nuanced approach from the *missio Dei*, in order to understand the relationship between divine and human agency in mission. He understands the Great Commission as a second-order and the *missio Dei* as a first-order approach to mission. The emphasis on the Great Commission led to a disregard for human agency. Referring to Barth, he addresses mission from the perspective of Divine activity. In conclusion, he lists seven aspects. His most important contribution is that God is always first in mission and that human beings and the church are second. Christ in his humanity makes human mission possible. In following Christ, Christian mission must proclaim his Lordship even under persecution. In mission, one should be humble. Finally, he writes: “The mission activity of the church should thus be understood dynamically and pneumatologically: Christians cooperate in the divine *missio* not simply because they are sent by him but because and as they are led and filled with the Spirit of Christ, who not only sends, but leads, accompanies, and includes them, by grace, in the revelation of his Word and works to the world, and his continuing redemption thereof” (Konz, 2018:342-343).

One must always view mission from the perspective of the Triune God. God is the author of mission. In the present world, it remains essential to proclaim the glory of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Lordship of Christ is, however, non-negotiable. It is also clear that the Great Commission is radically Trinitarian and must not be viewed as second to the *missio Dei*. One must hold on to both in mission in this challenging world.

Taking all the different aspects into consideration, the emphasis from God’s involvement in the *missio Dei* is of great importance. God the Father, in the cross and resurrection of his Son, through the Holy Spirit is the One who changes, through the church, the terrible needs of the world in his kingdom to new opportunities. The most desperate person can know that God in the *missio Dei* vows for him/her. It is essential to emphasise the needs of people. Radically linked to Jesus Christ, new hope is possible.

7. Missiology in the new world

Finally, postcolonial and decolonial perspectives are important. It is indeed very relevant to ask whether missiology can still be taught at a secular university and how this should be envisaged in a time when transformation and decolonisation are prevalent. Although the challenges of transformation, decolonisation, and the fourth industrial revolution are real, missiology must always be true to the most essential aspects of the proclamation of the crucified and resurrected Christ. It is impossible to delete missiology from theology and view theology as acceptable without it. Missiology is essential to all theology. However, this should be accomplished by a deep biblical exegetical and hermeneutical engagement. The challenges of transformation, decolonisation, and the fourth industrial revolution should be engaged from Scripture.

Schoeman (2019:9) envisages a movement towards the future of congregations as missional churches, in which a prophetic ministry is all important. The movement to the missional church is positive and one should accept it as long as it does not cause less attention to evangelism and traditional missionary work. To lead people to Christ remains hugely important.

Regarding postcolonialism and decolonising theology in Africa, Urbaniak (2019) lists three theses:

Thesis one: "Giving Africanness, and African religiosity, in particular, its due place in theological reflection requires a methodological shift from a postcolonial critique to a decolonial turn" (2019:2).

Thesis two: "For Christian theology to be decolonised, African religiosity needs to be considered as a multifaceted phenomenon in its own right and engaged as a proper theological locus, also by white theologians" (2019:4).

Thesis three: "Engaging African religiosity as a vital aspect of decolonising Christianity in a context like ours may be fostered by problematising the relationship between the categories of blackness and Africanness and thus also by rethinking the dichotomy of whiteness and blackness as a key theoretical lens for BT in South Africa, post-1994" (2019:7).

Maluleke and Maluleke (2007:503ff) are deeply concerned by the way in which mission was, in their view, a colonial project, oppressing people. He even refers to Rahab as metaphor of a colonised land. She became powerless and misused by the colonisers. Even in postcolonial Africa, Africans are still

bound by their rulers. According to Maluleke and Maluleke (2007:507), one must totally redefine mission, “in order not to make postcolonial mission into an Oxymoron”. They (2007:513) even view present mission as complicit in the continuation of colonialism. One must totally rehabilitate Christian mission and not only speak of *missio Dei*. One must also explore the nature of the *Deus* anew. One must re-evangelise Africa, because the old evangelism was largely oppressive (Maluleke & Maluleke 2007:524). The African condition should be taken into account: “Postcolonial mission will do battle at several levels; the plight of women, imperialism, stubborn colonies and the tragic postcolonies of our material and imagined worlds. Postcolonial mission entails an honest consideration of the colonies that persist, the interface between the colony and the postcolony, and an equally honest analysis of the postcolonial condition” (Maluleke & Maluleke 2007:525). They still regard Jesus Christ as the centre of mission and accept Bosch’s thirteen elements of mission as relevant. They view the change from the “imperative to the subjunctive – ‘mission in bold humility’ as acceptable” (Maluleke & Maluleke 2007:525).

Taking these challenges into consideration, it must, however, be stated that the essence of the gospel may never be compromised. One must ask the question whether it is only a Western concept of the gospel that is rejected in postcolonial theology. Certainly, there are many concepts in theology that need to be changed, because many link it to Western philosophical views. The gospel is vibrant and relevant in a new world. However, there must always be constants that should be accepted. The moment Jesus’ death on the cross for the salvation of many is not central in any theology, there is danger. New interpretations are in order as long as they are in clear relation with the confession of Jesus as Lord.

It must be mentioned that African theologians such as Turaki (1999) and Afeke (2000; 2002) are very critical on aspects of decolonial theology, especially the challenge to the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. Turaki (1999:328) mentions the danger of watering down the “Biblical affirmation of the finality of God’s revelation in Jesus the Messiah”. Afeke (2002:204-205) especially explains that leadership in Africa needs a new vision from the perspective of the Word of God. Afeke (2000:111) also regards the inculturation in the New Testament as important, because it “does not change the divine revealed message of the gospel”. Mokhoathi (2018), however, regards decolonial understanding of Christ’s relation to African religions as one of mutuality.

The answer for mission and missiology lies in the deep exegetical and hermeneutical engagement with Scripture and then, from this engagement, to proclaim Christ as the Crucified One. The confessions should be acknowledged in this regard. There is no other possibility than to honour Jesus Christ totally in this regard.

8. Conclusion

The future of mission and missiology should always be radically Christocentric. The crucified and resurrected Christ is the beginning and end of mission. Missiology should engage from this perspective in the present and future challenges of the world. One must also regard the *missio Dei* as extremely important in the glory of the cross and resurrection. One must also view the deep and radical needs of the world from the perspective of God's involvement. When human beings in this world have nowhere to turn to, the church through the *missio Dei* in mission reaches out to them. This is the hope of the cross. Only then will mission and missiology have a future.

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