

# **Historical Models of Engagement to Teach Mission in the Complex Public Arena**

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Designing contemporary Missiological studies and curriculum became a crucial aspect for the continuity of missions' work worldwide. As a Christian missionary historian, I have examined the historical models of missionary engagement by the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century missionaries in the Asian context particularly in India. My Ph. D thesis on "*Christian Missionaries and the Birth of New Social Consciousness among the Depressed Castes: A Case of the Malas and Madigas in Colonial Coastal Andhra, India 1850-1950*" was submitted to a public research university where an effort has been made to make the study of Christian Missions an academic field of study and created a space in the Social Sciences' research field in contemporary India. Simultaneously, there has been an increasing amount of scholarship and research interest into World Christianity themes in recent times. Missions and Missionary work are prominently taking place in the complex public arena where public engagement models are needed. The question is what should the teaching of mission look like in our increasingly complex public arena? An attempt has been made to reinvent a few historical models of engagement to teach mission in the complex public arena, especially in educational institutions by combining both social and missional aspects. The paper exemplifies models which the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Protestant Christian missionaries used in public ministry and some of these models could be used to teach future mission personnel.

The nineteenth century was a great century for Protestant missionary work and Christian missionaries acted as '*agents of change*', through their evangelistic and philanthropic activities towards the growth of education and economic mobilization. Christianity as a 'social religion' created institutions for the betterment of society. The reasons behind winning the trust of future converts by the Christian missionaries was their understanding of the former's social problems and the fulfilment of some social obligations that came with an opportunity. They found no excuse to serve humanity where it was dutiful to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, visit the sick and so on (Taylor 1913:88). Christian missionaries in India conducted their ministry activities as evangelistic missionaries, educational missionaries, medical missionaries, and itinerant missionaries with a primary aim of Gospel acceptance by the people. The aim and method of Christian mission is always evangelism or evangelization (Horner 1968: 122). For God and God's Mission (Frances Adeney), the development of a theoretical framework for teaching Mission involves a multi-modeled approach in the Divinity Schools, Schools of Religion, Theological Seminaries and Theological Schools of Colleges and Universities and such a model comprises a combination of multiple approaches that could be found in the history of missions. We confess in the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and believe in the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of human kind. In preparing members for mission in the

teaching of Missiology, we foster unity and public engagement by ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. The following models are suggested and adopted from my thesis with sources and citations.

### **Ecumenical Teaching Model:**

This type of methodology for missionary teaching will bring out any conflicting differences among denominations and foster unity in teaching practices. Adopting to the grassroots ecumenical missional practices followed by pioneering missionaries is a way to ecumenical rapprochement. Good faith, a zeal of the missionary spirit, a desire for fruitful work, mutual accord, ability to see the opposition in a fuller light and respecting 'otherness' would promote a continual growth of ecumenical spirit and learning (Ratzinger:1987).

As a precursor to the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, the foundational activities of the Christian Missionaries in India serve as a classic example of the early ecumenical spirit among the missionaries. Anthony Norris Groves indirectly accomplished the establishment of the American Lutheran Mission near Guntur and Rajahmundry. He wrote a letter in 1834 to the Synod of the American Lutheran Churches seeking support for German CMS missionary Rev. C.T.E. Rhenius of Tinnevely. The Church Missionary Society at Madras had advised the collector of Guntur, Mr. Henry Stokes, to persuade Rev. Heyer of the General Council of the Pennsylvania Ministerium to be stationed at Guntur. This initiative may be termed as one of the first examples of perfect ecumenism in the Mission history of India. Rev. Heyer was a pioneer missionary who can be considered the founder of the Guntur Mission of the American Evangelical Lutheran Missionary Society in 1842 where for over a year after his arrival, he conducted worship services for the English officials and European residents of the East India Company. A geographical arrangement of mission engagement was done in good faith with friendly understanding and cooperation. The World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh (1910) launched an ecumenical movement that attempted to coordinate the institutionalized revival evangelistic movements such as that of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (Stanley: 2009). In seminaries and in academic institutions, ecumenical cooperation and coordination in the training of teachers and scholars on ecumenical Christian doctrine promotes the betterment of one another's observations and mutual appreciation. Going beyond one's denominational learning levels in areas of missional education, social action, and theological dialogue fosters interdependence and a multi-dimensional perspective among the participants.

### **Apostolic Teaching Model:**

“The missionary is a necessary person, involved in essential functions in the life of the church, because it is through him the church fulfills its obligation to reach out in the mission” (Horner 1968:122). Among the manifold motives that drove the Christian missionaries for far off countries was their passion for the spread of Christianity through “apostolic fathering.” They found no excuse to serve humanity where it was dutiful to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, visit the sick and so on. (Taylor 1913: 88). The missionaries used the evangelistic practices of conversionism and activism while discharging their evangelistic services. The late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Christian missionaries conducted their ministry activities as evangelistic missionaries, educational missionaries, medical missionaries, itinerant missionaries, and as industrial missionaries with a primary aim of Gospel acceptance by the people. With remarkable qualities as those of self-denial and selfless devotion, the missionaries discharged their daily duties with unquestioning fidelity for the establishment of the missions in the world missions arena. The modest and unwearied attitude of the missionary (often accompanied by his amiable wife) together proved themselves to be the right people for the missionary calling. During natural calamities like famines and diseases, the charitable conduct of the missionaries was appreciated by not only the depressed castes but by the higher caste people as well. While touring the villages, the missionaries lived in tents which were pitched just outside the village, or in the open field, or under tree shades.

As teachers of the gospel and to prepare student-missionaries to undertake the comprehensive objective of evangelizing the nations, training on the apostolic calling in matters of educational ministry, medical ministry, agricultural and industrial ministries is to be taken to a new level with practical and apprentice training. This contribution alone is more than the agenda of direct evangelism. Also in the ‘Apostolic Tradition’ of life-transforming catechism instruction model, the Bible is given a prominent place followed by gospel hearing, baptism preparation, admission of baptism and become mature disciples in Christ. Through a ‘lived experience’ the preachers proclaim, ‘love one another,’ ‘encourage one another,’ ‘greet one another,’ ‘forgive one another,’ and ‘bear one another’s burdens’ (Kreider 2014: 259).

### **Language Acquisition Teaching Model:**

At the beginning stages of missionary work, teaching of Gospel was much hindered due to language barriers where the missionaries needed to learn the local languages. In 1840, Rev. Samuel. S. Day (American Baptist Telugu Mission in Nellore) had acquired proficiency in the Telugu language in order to increase his interaction with the local people. (Orchard and McLaurin

1925:128). Likewise, other missionaries gave their utmost attention to the study of local languages and met constantly with the natives to achieve progress in the spoken language. When they were able to speak fluently, they started visiting the surrounding villages and preached the Gospel. Some missionary societies decided on a two-year language examination comprised of the study of native languages and native religions.

Students of mission are increasingly paying attention to learn at least one new language for future mission positions. With the help of newly emerging audio-visual technologies and instruction by native language teachers, a positive impact on quick language learning can be achieved. Language missionary activity can be divided into two areas: the Translation Model (William Carey's Model) and the Functional Proficiency Model (Samuel S. Day's Model). As the majority of Bible translation has already been completed in major world languages since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we tend to pay more attention to the Functional Proficiency model. Foreign language instruction begins with the learner's interest levels and choosing a language that is relevant to their proposed missionary undertaking. All through the five stages of language acquisition (Pre-production, early production, beginning fluency, intermediate fluency, and advanced fluency), a dynamic process of comprehensive teaching can be done by native speaking teachers. A reexamination of the methods and outcomes of new language learning is critical and an important part of the linguistic model. In an applied linguistics model, the understanding of the language structure, epistemological rules, articulation and similar procedural criteria define the general character of the right language acquisition skills by mission personnel. While in foreign lands, preaching in local languages is preferred as incorporating the use of indigenous tongues into the worship services makes the target audience feel "I have maintained my language, I still maintain my culture today, and I'm proud of the fact that I have."

### **Indigenous-Driven Teaching Model or Non-Ethnocentric Teaching Model:**

During the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, World Christianity quickly moved from a "missionary-driven" model to an "indigenous-driven" model. Increasingly indigenous people are more and more connected to their past with pride, despite accepting the gospel teachings and becoming followers of Christ. This is due to a drive towards primordial and culture-preserving techniques (including worship styles) and a heightened awareness within native and tribal communities. In the light of emerging nationalisms, the politically deconstructed identity-based native Church represents the actual indigenous model. Instead of teaching along the line of forcing change on indigenous Christian communities (as with the traditional ethnocentric

models), mission practitioners allow local cultures to flourish simultaneously with bringing people to accept Christ as their personal savior. Any attempt of manipulation and exploitation of the native cultures and attempts to show 'otherness' as "inferior to that of the dominant society" are not recommended and to be discouraged. Students of Mission may understand ethnography as a study of the principal characteristics of the social and cultural life, and an examination of the human agencies that shed light on the relationship between social life and social structures. They study ethnography to explore the scope and dimension of an explicitly ontological status of distinct social groups. The students will know the anthropological assumptions of the nature of the society within the spheres of the social, religious, material, and cultural life of the indigenous peoples.

Missionaries in foreign lands have an important role in preparing their communities for an eventual transfer to the indigenous model by providing in-depth training to native leadership and helping make internalized development a priority among indigenous converts. The aim is to evangelize and still leave native cultures intact. However, any practices that are incompatible with the teachings of Christianity, for example the practice of idolatry and image worship, are advised to be discarded. Keeping in view the quickly changing self-governing patterns among the indigenous peoples, mutual respect is to be fostered between missionaries, cultural groups, missional anthropologists, and lay leadership.

### **Self-Offering Teaching Model:**

In the utmost imitation of Jesus Christ who made the ultimate gift to mankind, the purpose of the missionaries is to offer themselves in a self-giving model and are meant to love, accept, embrace, receive and welcome "others." The late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century missionaries showed "pietism" and offered their "whole person" to missionary undertakings. Mission students are to be taught along the lines of self-giving, self-denying, and self-disciplined ideals to live to the level and work among the people. The spirit of love, penitence, and prayerfulness are to be taught for spiritual awakening and renewal.

### **"Social Change Agent" Teaching Model:**

Christianity as a "social religion" and Christian missionaries as "social reformers" created institutions for the betterment of converts and aspirant converts in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The philanthropic activities of the missionaries in areas such as education and economic development played a major role in the improvement of the material lives of the converts. The growth of social consciousness and an aspiration for social change among Christian converts was a byproduct of

the Christian missionaries' evangelistic work. Social change is a process where an idea of social consciousness is a medium through which people consciously attempt to minimize their deprivation, to secure social justice, and to uphold themselves to a differentiated status. It is an organic solidarity that covers the consciousness of the individuals endowed with unity for possible inductive results. (Gehlke 1915:161). Students of mission are taught about understanding peoples' structural determinants, processes, and the directions for social change. To make mission practitioners into social change advocates, they are given training as educational missionaries, medical missionaries, industrial missionaries, and so on.

### **Inculturation Teaching Model:**

For its long-term continuation on foreign soil, Christianity needs to be naturalized for its adoption, and students of mission are taught on similar grounds for "intercultural openness." Christianity in a contextual undertaking adopts and assimilates into the indigenous customs and cultural patterns of the people in question. Contextualization of Christianity calls for dynamic changes by incorporating the customs of the land to assist non-Christian relatives and their extended families to join the ranks of the Church. "Indigenization of Christianity" is a better way for converts to embed their faith in the indigenous and social order of their society. Elements of native traditions and ceremonies are retained in worship practices and social relations. Varied forms of social imagery are also retained such as music, architecture, attire, and other such practices (Woodburne1921:75). New approaches of contextualization and inculturation are invented while presenting the Gospel message to non-Christian cultures. The forms of native worship and meditative elements found in world cultures may be retained as a direct approach to God.

### **Ecological Mission Teaching Model:**

In his work *The Eternal Now*, Paul Tillich affirms the biblical idea that human beings have dominion over all things-in the sense that humankind has the power to save or destroy all things (Tillich 1963: 55). As part of liberation theology, the Ecological Mission Teaching Model imbibes a balanced responsibility towards our creation. Denominationally adopted themes, such as caring for creation, vision, hope and justice, and the stewardship of creation, explains ecology as grounded in the biblical vision of God's intention for the balance and wellness of creation. This model provides us with a Christian understanding of the human role in creation and the ways we care for it for a sustainable future. The ELCA's *Caring for Creation* expresses a call to pursue justice for creation through active participation, solidarity, sufficiency, and

sustainability, and states the commitments for pursuing wholeness for creation, which is expressed through individual and community action, worship, learning, moral deliberation, and advocacy (ELCA). Missional practitioners may understand the earth as a living system within which we humans live in a relationship of interdependence with other members of the earth's community. (Conradie 2006:70). Relationship between human-kind and nature are taken to the level of tree-planting projects, sustainable agricultural practices, and recycling materials, which are taught to the students. Awareness about ecological integrity models of social justice, non-violence, and caring for our creation addresses the issues facing the global ecological imbalances. Further, students will take part in ecumenical dialogues and inter-religious pacts with an ecological worldview and perspective. Missiology conferences should make a point to incorporate ecological themes and discussions into their agendas.

**Conclusion:**

The above-mentioned models are useful for Christian mission teaching in seminaries and theological departments that have ranged from social, cultural, and theological aspects to face the challenges in teaching Christian mission in the complex public arena. Theological instruction in our currently diversified society is to be carried out on functional lines by denominations beyond their own characteristic doctrines with a combination of knowledge and practical training.



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